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Maurice Whitehead, *English Jesuit Education: Expulsion, Suppression, Survival and Restoration, 1762-1803*, Farnham, UK and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2012. xx + 266 pp. Figures, tables, notes, appendices, bibliography, and index. £70 UK (cl). ISBN 978-1-4094-4882-2.

Review by Ronald A. Binzley, Independent Scholar.

In the fall of 1795, at the recently founded Stonyhust College in Lancashire, Charles Plowden together with other members of the English ex-Jesuit community busily prepared accommodations for the college's students, nearly all of whom were refugees from the defunct Liège Academy. The previous year, with French armies threatening political revolution in the Principality of Liège, the Academy's staff and students had fled across the channel, abandoning an institution the English ex-Jesuits had painstakingly constructed in the two decades following the papal suppression of the Society of Jesus. Now, as Plowden labored with his ex-Jesuit brethren to make Stonyhurst a viable school, his mind filled with angry ruminations over the task's gloomy familiarity. Since 1762, the year the Paris *parlement* suppressed the English Jesuits' oldest college, St. Omers, he had three times helped evacuate persecuted English Jesuit schools to new and safer political jurisdictions.[1] Writing to his ex-Jesuit colleague John Carroll, who then served as the only Catholic bishop in the United States, he reflected bitterly on the need to rebuild yet again. "[T]his is the work," he wrote, "which we have been employed in for more than 30 years, always making colleges, to see them successively destroyed by Parliaments, Kings, Ministers, Popes & sans culottes." [2]

The English Jesuits' more than thirty-year struggle to preserve their educational mission is the subject of Maurice Whitehead's groundbreaking new study *English Jesuit Education*. Previous scholarship has tended to see the period of the English Jesuits' suppression (1773-1803) as an inconsequential interlude between the work of the original English Jesuit Province and that of its restored successor. In his meticulously researched book, Whitehead thoroughly demonstrates the inadequacy of such a view.[3]

Far from a sterile interlude, this period witnessed the complete remaking of English Jesuit education. Exploiting the unprecedented pedagogical freedom allowed by the Jesuit order's dissolution, the suppressed English Jesuits profoundly reshaped the curriculum of the secondary education that they offered. As Whitehead argues persuasively, this curricular reform reveals that the suppressed English Jesuits were, contrary to the anti-intellectual stereotypes perpetuated by the "Jesuit myth," active participants in the eighteenth-century Catholic Enlightenment. What is more, the reforms they effected would influence Jesuit education internationally after the Jesuit order's complete restoration.

Whitehead's study has a chronological arrangement. The first two chapters sketch the history of English Jesuit education from its Elizabethan-era origins up to the suppression of St. Omers. In these early chapters, the author provides necessary background to the educational work of the suppressed English Jesuits as well as a rich description of the structure and functioning of English Jesuit pre-suppression schools. In the next four chapters, Whitehead chronicles the suppression. This section of the book first analyzes how, during the 1760s, the English Jesuits salvaged much from their suppressed schools in French territory to build two new colleges—one for primary and the other for secondary education—in Bruges, then a city of the Austrian Netherlands. It then investigates the destruction of

these colleges in the wake of Pope Clement XIV's 1773 brief that suppressed the Jesuit order worldwide. In the final three chapters, which represent the heart of the study, the author explores the restructuring of English Jesuit education at the Liège *Académie anglaise*, the successor institution of the suppressed Bruges colleges, and the impact of the Academy's innovations on the restored Jesuit order.

Among this book's many strengths is the light it sheds on the origins of the eighteenth-century polemic against Jesuit education, which played such a large role in the creation of the Jesuit myth. As the eighteenth century progressed, the Jesuits faced increasingly harsh criticism from educational reformers throughout Catholic Europe who claimed Jesuit schools failed to provide their students with much knowledge that had any practical usefulness for earthly happiness or the health of the state. The vulnerability of the Jesuits to such charges resulted largely, as Whitehead's study helps show, from their order's early educational triumphs.[4]

In its inaugural century, the Society of Jesus built Europe's first true educational system, which was guided by the strictures of the *Ratio Studiorum*, the plan of studies that the Society had codified in 1599. When adopted, the *Ratio* represented the forefront of educational improvement. Drawing on elements of Christian humanism particularly as manifested in the *modus parisiensis* (the name given prevailing practices in the University of Paris' collegiate system), it prescribed a chiefly classical curriculum meant to inculcate character, reasoning ability and eloquence. To promote the active acquisition of these attributes, it required students to undertake not only written and oral exercises but also the performance of public "spectacles," such as debates and theatrical productions. During the seventeenth century, the *Ratio* enabled the hundreds of Jesuit colleges across Europe to train young men effectively for secular professions and court life. But in the century of lights, the effectiveness of these colleges waned as the education they provided no longer seemed novel but more and more ossified and useless.[5]

In his opening chapters, Whitehead eloquently describes how the English Jesuit schools followed the typical Jesuit trajectory, an initial flourishing followed by a slow descent into mediocrity. Although not the focus of his study, Whitehead provides a concise and informative account of the seventeenth-century educational work of English Jesuits. Especially rich is his description of St. Omers, the English Jesuit college in Artois that provided secondary education. For much of its first century (1593-1693), St. Omers offered perhaps the best academic preparation that English Catholic youths could obtain and proved especially proficient in drama and music. The accomplished Jesuit playwright Joseph Simons joined the school's staff for a time as did Jesuit composers Antoine Selosse and Anthony Poole.[6]

Like Jesuit schools elsewhere, St Omers eventually suffered a decline due to the failure of those at the head of the Jesuit hierarchy to recognize the need for fundamental revisions to the *Ratio*. After 1700, new knowledge, growing commerce and the increasing centralization of states required different educational approaches. Prior to the suppression, English Jesuit schools changed little, and, as a consequence, many of their students likely agreed with the disgruntled St. Omers alumnus Charles Carroll of Carrollton, later a signer of the American Declaration of Independence, who complained that his education had been one "only fit for Priests" (p. 39).

Whitehead's chief concern in this volume is to relate the history of the English Jesuit schools during the period of the suppression. Delving into numerous continental archives previously untapped by historians, he uncovers in unprecedented detail the complex politics that led to the repeated dissolution of English Jesuit schools. Particularly notable is his treatment of the 1773 destruction of the two Bruges colleges and their reconstitution at Liège, which plainly reveals the economic and educational concerns that animated Catholic civil authorities tasked with carrying out Pope Clement's suppression brief.

In the Austrian Netherlands, civil powers had always viewed the English Jesuit schools first and foremost as a financial asset. In fact, at the time of the Jesuit order's 1762 expulsion from France,

Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa and her chancellor, Wenzel Anton, Prince of Kaunitz-Rietberg, welcomed the English Jesuits, despite strong reservations regarding Jesuit education generally, precisely because of their schools' economic promise. Through municipal officials in Bruges, the court of Vienna knew very well that, like the town of Saint-Omer previously, Bruges was likely to reap substantial benefits from the revenue English Jesuit schools could generate through boarding fees, the visits of noble English families, and the normal operations of academic studies. The two Bruges colleges proved so lucrative that Vienna wanted the papal suppression handled in such a manner that the now ex-Jesuits would continue running their schools as secular priests. When the Privy Council in Brussels virtually drove the ex-Jesuits out of Bruges in a misguided quest for wholly imaginary "treasure" it believed the Society to be hiding, the empress and her advisors were disgusted with the council's incompetence.

Unlike Austrian authorities, François-Charles de Velbrück, the prince-bishop of Liège, valued English Jesuit schools as much for their educational merit as for their economic worth, a fact that does much to explain his determination to provide them with a safe haven in his realm. During the eighteenth century, the English Jesuits had a stronger academic reputation in Liège than elsewhere because of the kind of school they ran in that principality. Since 1624, they had maintained a college there (named the English College) for tertiary study in philosophy and theology. Although the *Ratio* gave no place to science in secondary education, it did encourage its cultivation in higher studies, which were pursued mainly by clerics but also by some laymen. At the English College in Liège, scientific teaching achieved a high level of excellence. Over the years, its staff included a number of Jesuit scientists and mathematicians whose publications earned them international renown, including Thomas Hildeyard, who in 1720 constructed a working steam engine, in all likelihood the first in continental Europe.

Very much engaged with the century's new learning, particularly in the natural sciences, Velbrück, whom Whitehead calls "a committed apostle of the Enlightenment," conducted a gentle diplomacy with the suppressed English Jesuits (p. 123). In the process, he not only managed to retain the English ex-Jesuits and their college of higher studies but also had what remained of their two Bruges colleges grafted on to that college. The resulting institution, the Academy, was the first English Jesuit school to have primary, secondary and tertiary education all taking place within its walls.

Whitehead's chapters on the Academy uncover a history of educational innovation and development previously unknown to scholars, one that completely overturns prevailing views of the eighteenth-century English Jesuits' educational work. Historians of British higher education as well as those of British Catholicism have conventionally regarded the Academy as a makeshift operation of little lasting significance. While many recognized that the school helped preserve the Jesuit order institutionally during the bleak decades of suppression, it was generally presumed that its ex-Jesuit staff merely continued to employ the Society's worn-out pedagogical methods. Whitehead's book makes this interpretation of educational stasis untenable.

For all their destructive effects, the suppression and the forced relocation of the Bruges colleges to Liège created unprecedented educational opportunities, which the Academy's first president, John Howard, and his handpicked successor, William Strickland, eagerly seized. With the Jesuit order formally suppressed, Howard could restructure his school's instruction heedless of the *Ratio's* prescriptions. In part due to his close association with the English Canonesses of the Holy Sepulcher, a female religious house at Liège, he knew precisely the kind of changes he wished to make. In the early 1770s, the Canonesses' prioress Christina Dennett had dramatically reformed the curriculum of a secondary school that her house ran for English-speaking girls. In addition to more conventional instruction, Dennett added such subjects as account-keeping, geography and natural history. As Howard rebuilt Jesuit secondary education at the Academy, he ignored the *Ratio's* ban on the sciences by adopting reforms similar to those of Dennett, only more far reaching. Surely benefitting from the superb tradition of science teaching at the school of higher studies, the Academy instructed its

secondary students in the kinds of subjects Dennett had introduced as well as the sciences of physics and astronomy.

Whitehead cogently argues that, in light of what he has discovered of the Academy's curricular reform, scholars must rethink the place of the English Jesuits within the spectrum of eighteenth-century British education. Rather than purveyors of antiquated learning, these priest-educators provided "an amalgam of classical, scientific and philosophical education" the compass of which exceeded that of England's great public schools, its prominent private schools and even most dissenting academies (p. 134). In the author's estimation, the Liège Academy's curriculum was on a par with the greatest of the dissenting schools, the Warrington Academy, which built its curriculum on the ideas of its most well-known teacher, the philosopher and theologian Joseph Priestly. Indeed, Whitehead even presents some suggestive evidence of Warrington's influence on the thinking of Liège Academy presidents Howard and Strickland. Whether influenced by that school or chiefly the currents of "enlightened" Catholic educational reform on the continent, the Academy's ex-Jesuit leadership participated in an educational revolution. By integrating the sciences and such practical arts as book-keeping into their curriculum, the English Jesuits joined with reformers throughout Europe in crafting educational schemes suitable for a more commercial and industrialized age, populated increasingly by an urban middle class.[7]

This already valuable study would have benefited from greater attention to the context of the educational work of the English Jesuits within the world of English Catholic education generally. During the French Revolutionary Wars, several English Catholic educational establishments besides the Academy fled home from the continent. One wonders how the curriculum of Stonyhurst compared with that of Old Hall Green and Crook Hall, the two schools that English secular clergymen established as successors to their destroyed Douai College. Of possible interest too would be a comparison of Stonyhurst with the plan of studies adopted by the college at Oscott, a school founded in 1794 with staunch support from the most partisan English Catholic followers of the Enlightenment.

Whitehead's volume also raises indirectly a question that deserves careful attention from all scholars working on subjects connected with the Catholic Enlightenment. In the past generation, the literature on that movement has grown in scope and richness, but a problematic consequence of our growing knowledge has been a loss of clarity about what precisely the phrase "Catholic Enlightenment" means and which individuals should be included among its adherents. Today, the "Catholic Enlightenment" labels a broad range of intellectual currents related to such diverse matters as education, theology, ecclesiastical government, devotionalism and spirituality. To oversimplify for the sake of brevity, scholars tend to present "enlightened" Catholics as those taking positions that acknowledge the rights of reason and who are cognizant of earthly happiness as well as eternal salvation.[8]

In the realm of education, Whitehead has established beyond any doubt that the English Jesuits, with their new emphasis on science and practical knowledge, participated in the Catholic Enlightenment. But were the English Jesuits "enlightened" Catholics in all aspects of their thinking? For instance, Howard, the chief architect of the Academy's curricular reform, believed strongly in contemporary prophecies and miracles, not a spiritual orientation typically labeled "enlightened." [9] To do justice to the complexity of figures such as the Academy's first president, scholars must discover a more precise language of analysis.

While one can make minor criticisms about Whitehead's decision not to take up certain ancillary matters, he brilliantly addresses the vital issues—the politics of the suppression and the nature and sources of educational reform. His study represents the finest piece of scholarship yet written on any aspect of English Jesuit education and will long remain the definitive study of English Jesuit educational reform in the age of Enlightenment. The book is especially recommended to historians and students of European higher education, British Catholicism, the Catholic Enlightenment and the Society of Jesus. The author's generous use of primary documents in his text, his analysis of the book culture at the Liège

Academy, and his several appendices containing primary documents including the plan of studies for the suppressed Jesuit schools, all make this work an important tool for researchers.

## NOTES

[1] Although contrary to customary English usage, “St. Omers” is the way in which the English Jesuits chose to spell the name of their school. The origin of this unusual spelling has always been a matter of speculation. Whitehead proposes that the lack of an apostrophe “almost certainly resulted from Flemish linguistic influence: the name of the town of Saint-Omer in Flemish is Saint Omaars.” (p. 3, note 3).

[2] Charles Plowden to John Carroll, 27 October 1795, 6-P-9, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives of St. Mary’s Seminary and University, Baltimore, Md.

[3] For studies containing this notion of an inconsequential interlude, see Bernard Ward, *Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England, 1781-1803*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909) and especially Hubert Chadwick, *St Omers to Stonyhurst: A History of Two Centuries* (London: Burns and Oats, 1963). For essential background regarding the eighteenth-century English Jesuits and their suppression, see Geoffrey Holt, *William Strickland and the Suppressed Jesuits* (London: British Province of the Society of Jesus, 1988) and Holt, *English Jesuits in the Age of Reason* (London: Burns and Oats, 1993).

[4] For Jesuit myth, see Geoffrey Cubitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). On the significance of Jesuit education for the myth’s power to convince, see especially pp. 240-249. For a concise summary of the eighteenth-century polemic against Jesuit education generally, see Ulrich L. Lehner, “Introduction: The Many Faces of the Catholic Enlightenment” in Lehner and Michael Printy, eds., *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 1-62, esp. pp. 29-35.

[5] For the development of the *Ratio* and the importance of the *modus parisiensis*, see John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), especially pp. 200-232. To read the *Ratio*’s text in a modern English translation, see Claude Paur, ed., *The Ratio Studiorum: The Official Plan of Jesuit Education* (Saint Louis: The Institute for Jesuit Sources, 2005).

[6] For those interested in contextualizing the English Jesuit educational program with the entire Jesuit enterprise, see John W. O’Malley *et al.*, eds., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) and by the same editors, *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

[7] Whitehead describes the direct influence of the Academy and later Stonyhurst on the development of Georgetown Academy in the United States, which was built and staffed by former English Province members or individuals trained in the Liège Academy. For the development of Georgetown, see Robert Emmett Curran, *The Bicentennial History of Georgetown University. Vol. 1: From Academy to University, 1789-1888* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993).

[8] The seeming plurality of what historians had once simply labeled “the Enlightenment” has generated a good deal of scholarly discussion of late. For a summary and analysis of this debate as it relates to understanding of the Catholic Enlightenment, see Lehner, “Introduction,” pp. 2-12. Some of the most important works on the Catholic Enlightenment in Britain include Eamon Duffy, “Joseph Berington and the English Catholic Cisalpine Movement, 1772-1803,” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1972); Joseph P. Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment: John Lingard and the Cisalpine Movement, 1780-1850* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos Press, 1980); Patrick W. Carey, *An Immigrant Bishop: John England’s Adaptation of Irish Catholicism to American Republicanism* (Yonkers, NY:

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U.S. Catholic Historical Society, 1982); Mark Goldie, "The Scottish Catholic Enlightenment," *Journal of British Studies* 30 no. 1 (1991): 20-62, and Goldie, "Alexander Geddes at the Limits of the Catholic Enlightenment," *Historical Journal* 53 (2010): 61-86.

[9] For more on Howard's belief in unusual supernatural phenomena, see Ronald A. Binzley, "Ganganelli's Disaffected Children: The Suppressed English Jesuit Province and the Shaping of American Catholicism, 1762-1817" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011), pp. 36-37.

Ronald A. Binzley  
Independent Scholar  
[ronald.binzley@gmail.com](mailto:ronald.binzley@gmail.com)

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