

REVIEW

Robert Aleksander Maryks

*The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews:
Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity-of-Blood Laws
in the Early Society of Jesus. Studies in Medieval
and Reformation Traditions 146*
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In this highly engaging and remarkably erudite book, Robert Maryks examines the evolution of discriminatory purity-of-blood laws within the Jesuit Order beginning at the end of the sixteenth century (legally by the Fifth General Congregation in 1593). In contextualizing this development, Maryks offers a useful background that examines the experience of conversos from the late fourteenth until the middle of the sixteenth century in Spain, with special attention to the purity-of-blood laws and the broader anti-converso politics of the period. He lavishes important attention on early legislation and discussions of the mid-fifteenth century (with detailed focus on the works of Alonso de Cartagena and Alonso de Oropesa) and the further developments from the middle of the sixteenth century (with attention to the purity-of-blood statutes of Archbishop Silíceo and the defense of those statutes by the judge, bishop, and inquisitor Diego de Simancas).

The increasing concern with purity of blood and the growth of anti-converso sensibilities throw into sharp contrast the observation that Christians of Jewish ancestry played prominent roles in the first generations of the Order and the initial anti-discriminatory approach of the Jesuits, which Maryks casts as an act of bold resistance to religious and political currents of the day. In Chapter 2, Maryks examines the pro-converso policy of the early Jesuit Order. Noting that tensions still highlighted relations between old and new Christians within

the Order, Maryks reviews Ignatius of Loyola's own Jewish interests (theological and later proselytizing), his run-in with the Inquisition and suspicions of marranism, as well as the converso stock of many of the early and closest members of his circle and successors. Early Jesuit leadership, Maryks contends, valued the spiritual and educational suitability of candidates over their lineage.

In some of the bitter struggles for power within the Order, especially after Loyola's death in 1556 and the election of Diego Lainez in 1558 as second Superior-General, however, anti-converso accusations and discussions surfaced. In some cases, an endorsement of anti-converso legislation appears to have been a means by which some tried to mask their Jewish ancestry. The discrimination against Jesuits of Jewish lineage gained momentum after the death of Superior General Francisco de Borja in 1572. An Italo-Portuguese anti-converso lobby rose to prominence, with support from the newly elected Superior General Everard Mercurian. Maryks ties the discussion over converso background to broader political developments within the Church, including an anti-Roman movement by Iberian Jesuits, known as *memorialistas*. Maryks focuses important attention on what he terms a converso-phobic memorial apparently authored by Benedetto Palmio, which reviewed and at times recast a good deal of the early history of the Order. The election of Claudio Acquaviva in 1581 further cemented the image of the converso character of the *memorialistas*. In this context and elsewhere, some cast the Society as a "synagogue of Jews," criticizing the early leadership and orientation. Throughout the book, Maryks evinces remarkable facility with the texts, carefully analyzing both their language and arguments, and an impressive ability to contextualize them by focusing on specific developments as well as broader issues.

In the final chapter, Maryks examines the pro-converso writings and Jesuit opposition to purity-of-blood discrimination in the last quarter of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, with particular emphasis on Antonio Possevino, Pedro de Ribadeneyra, Diego de Guzmán, Juan de Mariana, and Garcia

Girón de Alarcón. Possevino, for example, argued that lineage distinctions were vestiges of paganism and contradicted the Jesuit tradition. Further, he asserted that Jesuits of Jewish descent were among the Society's most effective and learned members. While Possevino agreed that many Jewish converts had returned to Judaism, he did not believe this could justify a prohibition against admitting other conversos to the Christian faith. The volume concludes with two helpful appendices—the Memorial of Benedetto Palmio (1523-98) and Pope Nicholas V's *Humani Generis Inimicus* (1449), which opposed the 1449 purity-of-blood legislation and freely admitted and accepted all faithful converts, even from Judaism, as good Catholics.

Maryks has crafted a scholarly and exciting volume that explores a fascinating theme with care and sophistication. Simultaneously, Maryks provides a nuanced account of the development of the early Jesuit Order and a broader history of key themes in early modern political and religious history revolving around the status and activities of conversos. This is a remarkable book that will be of great interest to a diverse range of scholars from many different fields of study and research.