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Robert Bellarmine; Saint and Scholar by James Brodrick, S. J.

Review by: Joseph Vinci

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are to be congratulated on their excellent presentation of this fine work, which, it is to be hoped, will find a large circle of readers.

(CHANTILLY-OISE)

Hasso Jaeger, s.J.

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Translated by Hilda Graef
Oxford

James Brodrick, s.J. *Robert Bellarmine; Saint and Scholar*. Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1961. x+430 pp. \$5.75.

Amateurs and scholars in the field of the Counter Reformation will welcome this book on the life and times of the diplomat-theologian, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, who survived his age unscathed and became a saint despite numerous disputes with popes, princes, and reformers. Though basically a condensation of a two-volume work by the same author, which appeared in a limited edition some thirty-three years ago,¹ this new study is entirely rewritten and reflects the writer's maturity and restraint especially in those chapters dealing with Galileo, the divine rights of kings, the limited temporal powers of the popes, and free will. Seemingly written with the admonition of the Jesuit stylist, Gracían: 'Corto y bueno—dos veces bueno,' the later book excels in its brevity and greater clarity; it suffers, however, from lack of a bibliography and valuable notes in which the former abounds.

Robert Bellarmine (Roberto Bellarmino) was born in Monte Pulciano, home of Poliziano and numerous other luminaries of Italy, in 1532. At an early age, he joined the then obscure Jesuit Society against the judgment of his relatives who feared it might jeopardize his advancement. By sheer weight of his brilliance and godly example which also militated against him, he nevertheless achieved various distinctions and offices leading to the cardinal's hat. His unrelenting pursuit of truth brought upon him the wrath of temporal as well as spiritual rulers and probably cost him the papal throne, a goal he did not relish 'for the good of his soul'. Such a man, who personally exemplified what he preached with Erasmian zeal, was clearly a menace to those who aspired to the privileged status of pre-Reformation Europe. Cardinal Borgia wrote: 'Bellarmine deserves to be elected [Pope] for his goodness, but his great rectitude and integrity of character are against him . . .'.

¹ *Life and Works of Blessed Robert Bellarmine* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1928).

Bellarmino's four-volume *Controversies* on faith and morals was quoted in all disputes by reformers and counter reformers with respect if not always with reverence. In the Molina-Báñez polemic on grace and free will he was inclined to favor the Jesuit *Molinistas* against the Dominican *Bañistas*, but as arbiter he steered a neutral and critical course correcting and amending with irrefutable logic and Biblical substance. The author takes his cue from Bellarmine and objectively expounds both causes with generous excerpts although he leaves no doubt as to where his sympathies lie.

How much inspiration Bellarmine retained from his ultraliberal teacher, Juan de Mariana, whose espousal of tyrannicide embarrassed the Society, Father Brodrick discreetly does not estimate; the deft touch of the old master is, nevertheless, unmistakable in his disciple's thesis denying the divine right of kings. Bellarmine's frank stand not only failed to woo James I of England to Catholicism but spurred the hypersensitive ruler to impose the loyalty oath on all his subjects. This occasioned a lively controversy between Bellarmine and the offended sovereign. Neither was Bellarmine's other thesis limiting papal authority to spiritual matters and tolerating it in temporal affairs well received. Under Sixtus v this book spent an uncomfortable purgatory in the Index until rescued by Urban vii.

The distinction of what was God's and Caesar's was further maintained by Bellarmine in his defense of Rome's claims in Venice against the Doge and Senate. After they had been excommunicated and the Republic placed under interdict, Fra Paolo Sarpi, a dissenting religious with Protestant leanings, arose to champion their cause in an exchange of pamphlets expressed in brilliant Italian. Bellarmine, whose political acumen was sharper than the irascible Pope's, was quick to grasp that such tactics merely rankled erring sovereigns. Through his good offices peace was soon established between Rome and Venice.

The author's consummate skill as an historian is best revealed in his annotated chapter (the only one in the new book), on Galileo's first trial, which Father Brodrick draws mainly from Antonio Favaro's twenty-volume *Le opere di Galileo*. His portrait of Galileo depicts a genius with very human faults whose disposition for losing friends and alienating people by his sparkling, biting satire hardly fitted him for the role of public supporter of the heliocentric theory of Copernicus. Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler had also contributed to this revolutionary

concept but prudently refrained from baiting the incredulous as Galileo had done. In the ensuing trial at which Bellarmine presided, Galileo could count on many noted prelates: B. Castelli, L. Maraffi, Mons. Ciampoli, C. Clavius, and Archbishop Piero Dini. In no way, as Father Brodrick documents, was Galileo forced to abjure, but the author spares no churchman, including Bellarmine, for incompetency in judging Galileo.

By his action Bellarmine incarnated what Ignatius de Loyola visualized in spirit: reform without favor, unfettered learning and scholarship, and a capacity for daring and independent thinking. Despite the key role of this fascinating figure whose life and work helped to set the course of the Jesuit Society in its formative years, relatively little has been written on Bellarmine in our times though certainly not for lack of basic materials. Father Brodrick's thorough biography, far from exhausting the field, has opened rich new veins for further study.

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J. Russell Major. *Representative Institutions in Renaissance France 1421–1559*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960. 182 pp. \$4.

J. Russell Major. *The Deputies to the Estates General in Renaissance France*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960. 201 pp. \$6.50.

J. Russell Major studies the practical aspects of French political institutions in the period extending from 1421 to 1615. However, only the second of the books reviewed here covers that entire period. The first does not go beyond 1559 but can be supplemented by another publication by the same author: *The Estates General of 1560* (Princeton, 1951). Moreover, Professor Major intends to deal later with the rest of the period.

In his entire research, J. Russell Major has made extensive use of the French national and local archives, especially when he studies (in *The Deputies to the Estates General*) the procedure followed on the local level to select the Deputies and the numerous legal and practical details relevant to their selection and final reception in the Assembly.

In Part I of *Representative Institutions* Professor Major comes up with the idea that Renaissance monarchy was not basically characterized by the emergence of the bourgeois class into the political sphere but rather