



UNIVERSALITAS & PERVASIVITAS

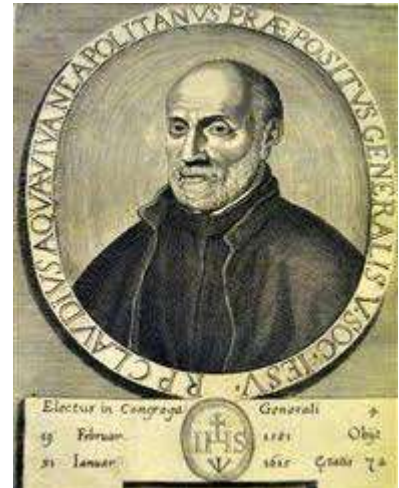
il costituirsi e diffondersi della S.J. e suoi echi (1540 - 1773)

DI A. PISANI

Schede autori Atti costitutivi, ordinamenti, agiografie, etc.

Claudio ACQUAVIVA (1543-1615)

Fifth General of the Jesuits, born October, 1543; died 31 January, 1615. He was the son of Prince Giovanni Antonio Acquaviva, Duke of Atri, in the Abruzzi, and, at twenty-five, when high in favor at the papal court, renounced his brilliant worldly prospects, and entered the Society. After being Provincial both of Naples and Rome, he was elected General of the Order, 19 February, 1581. He was the youngest who ever occupied that post. His election coincided with the first accusation of ambition ever made against a great official of the Order. Manareus had been named Vicar by Father Mercurian, and it was alleged that he aspired to the generalship. His warm defender was Acquaviva, but to dispel the slightest suspicion, Manareus renounced his right to be elected. Acquaviva was chosen by a strong majority. His subsequent career justified the wisdom of the choice, which was very much doubted at the time by the Pope himself. During his generalship, the persecution in England, wither he had once asked to go as a missionary, was raging; the Huguenot troubles in France were at their height; Christianity was being crushed in Japan; the Societas Jesu was expelled from Venice, and was oppressed elsewhere; a schism within the catholics was immanent; the pope, the Inquisition, and Philip II were hostile. Acquaviva was denounced to the Pope, even by men like Toletus (q.v.), yet such was his prudence, his skill, his courage, and his success, that he is regarded as the greatest administrator, after St. Ignatius, the Societas Jesu ever had. Even those who were jealous of him admitted his merit, when, to satisfy them, the fifth and sixth Congregations ordered an investigation to be made of his method of government. The greatest difficulty he had to face was the schism organized in Spain by Vasquez (q.v.). The King and Pope had been won over by the dissidents... But finally, through the mediation of ...Robert Parsons (q.v.), who was highly esteemed by Philip, the King was persuaded of the impolicy of the measures, while Acquaviva convinced the Pope that the schism would be disastrous for the Church. Deprived of these supports the rebellion collapsed. Simultaneously the Inquisition was doing its best to destroy the Order. It listened to defamatory accusations, threw the Provincial of Castille into prison, demanded the surrender of the Constitutions for examination, until Acquaviva succeeded in inducing the Pope to call the case to his own tribunal, and revoke the powers which had been given to the Inquisition, or which it claimed. Finally, the Pope, who had always been unfriendly to the Societas Jesu, determined to change it completely. The Emperor Ferdinand implored him not to act; the College of Cardinals resisted; but the Pope was obstinate. The bull was prepared, and Acquaviva himself was compelled to send in a personal request to have even the name changed, when the death of the pontiff saved the situation--a coincidence which gave rise to accusations against the Jesuits. His successor, Gregory XIV, hastened to renew all the former privileges of the Order, and to confirm its previous approbations.



During Acquaviva's administration, the protracted attrition, between the Dominicans and the Jesuits, took place, and was carried on with some interruptions for nearly nine years, without either party drawing any decision from the Church, the contestants being ultimately ordered to discontinue



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the discussion. It was Acquaviva who ordered the scheme of Jesuit studies, known as the "*Ratio Studiorum*" (q.v.), to be drawn up which, with some modifications, has been followed to the present day. Six of the most learned and experienced scholars of the Order were summoned to Rome, who laid out the entire plan of studies, beginning with theology, philosophy and their cognate branches, and going down to the smallest details of grammar. When finished, it was sent to the different Provinces for suggestions, but was not imposed until 1592...

The period of his generalship was the most notable in the history of the Order for the men it produced, and the work it accomplished. The names of [Suarez](#), Toletus, [Bellarmine](#), Maldonatus, [Clavius](#), Lessius, Ripalda, [Ricci](#), [Parsons](#), Southwell, [Campion](#), Aloysius Gonzaga, and a host of others are identified with it. Royal and pontifical missions to France, Russia, Poland, Constantinople, and Japan were entrusted to men like [Possevin](#), and Bellarmine, and [Vallignani](#). Houses were multiplied all over the world with an astonishing rapidity. The colleges were educating some of the most brilliant statesmen, princes, and warriors of Europe. The Jesuits were organized; the heroic work of the missions of Canada were begun; South America was being traversed in all directions; China had been penetrated, and the Jesuits were the emperor's official astronomers; martyrs in great numbers were sacrificing their lives in England, America, India, Japan, and elsewhere; and the great struggle organized by [Canisius](#) and Nadal to check the Lutheranism in Germany had been brought to a successful conclusion. The guiding spirit of all these great achievements, and many more besides, was Claudius Acquaviva. He died at the age of seventy-one, 31 January, 1615. [Jouvency](#) says the longer he lived the more glorious the Societas Jesu became; and Cordarius speaks of his election as an inspiration. Besides the "Ratio Studiorum," of which he is substantially the author, as it was under his initiative and supervision that the plan was conceived and carried out, we have also the "Directorium Exercitiorum Spiritualium S.P.N. Ignatii," or "Guide to the Spiritual Exercises" which was also suggested and revised by him. This work has been inserted in the "Corpus Instituti S.J." More directly his are the "Industriae ad Curandos Animae Morbos." As General, he wrote many encyclical letters, and he is author of nearly all the "Ordinationes Generalium" which were printed in 1595, with the Approbation of the Fifth General Congregation. Many other documents and letters, relating chiefly to matters of government. are still extant.

Jouvency, *Epitome Hist. Soc. Jesu*, IV; Crétineau-Joly, *Historie de la Comp de Jesus* III; Varones Illustres, V, 79; *Menologium S. J.*, 31 January.

T.J. CAMPBELL - Transcribed by Michael Donahue - A.M.D.G.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VIII. — New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat. 1910. <http://catholicism.academic.ru/13561/Claudius_Acquaviva>

Vedi anche: [Profilo biografico di Claudio Acquaviva stilato da Mario Rosa per il Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani](#)