

AN APPROACH TO ENGLISH ANTI-CATHOLICISM THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF SOME 17th CENTURY ANTI-JESUITICAL PAMPHLETS

LETICIA ÁLVAREZ RECIO
University of Seville

The birth and quick spread of the Company of Jesus was one of the most significant religious and cultural events of the 16th and 17th centuries. Their attack against Rome's abuses, interest and influence on education and tolerance regarding minorities, such as women, Jews or Arabs made the Jesuits become a serious threat for the status quo. Despite this subversive attitude, their strength was commonly associated by the Protestant world with Rome and the Spanish Empire. The three together were constructed as a unified "other" where the Anglicans projected their own frustrations and fears. This paper attempts to present some aspects of this discursive construction in 17th-century England through the analysis of four anti-Jesuitical pamphlets. I will explore the different discursive strategies through which they elaborated a specific image of the Company, Spain and Rome and the unique enemy they had to defeat.

The birth and rapid development of the Company of Jesus was one of the most significant religious and cultural events of the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe. Their attack against Rome's abuses, their interest and influence on education and their tolerance regarding minorities, such as women, converts or manual workers made the Jesuits a serious threat to the *status quo*. Despite this subversive attitude, their strength was commonly associated by the Protestant world with Rome and the Spanish Empire. The three together were constructed as a unified "other" where the Anglicans projected their own frustrations and fears. This paper attempts to present some aspects of this discursive construction in 17th-century England through the analysis of four anti-Jesuitical pamphlets. I will explore the different discursive strategies through which they elaborated a specific image of the Company, Spain and Rome as the unique enemy they had to defeat.

The Legend of the Jesuites, written in 1623, is a brief anonymous pamphlet which

presents in a direct and concise way the different accusations against the Jesuits in France. The text describes the serious conflict between the Company and the Sorbonne in Paris, which considered the Jesuits' schools and faculties to be hard competitors. The Jesuits offered free education at high levels, which provoked a true pedagogical revolution in the second half of the 16th century and provided them with considerable power, supported by the Valois and the Pope himself (Lacouture 1991: 300-30).

The pamphlet adopts the form of a historical chronicle as it makes extensive use of authorities and references to contemporary people and events. One of the most cited sources is Saint Bernard (1090-1153), who preached the second crusade in France and defended Innocent II against Anacletus in their respective fights for the papacy. The author of the pamphlet mentions several parts of his discourse against Anacletus in order to attack the Pope's temporal power, that is, to "shew the incompatibilitie that is betweene Spirituall government and Temporall domination, and that these two being separated powers, cannot be confounded together, neither depend one upon the other" (b3).

The other source is the Sorbonne's decrees against the Jesuits' work. They point out the danger the Company represented due to their aggressive policy, based on snares, disputes and charges that provoked schisms and general discontent: "Haec Societas periculosa in negotio fidei, multas in populo querelas, multas lites, amulationes, disidia, contentiones, variaque schismata inducit, ... potest pacis Ecclesia perturbativa, Monastica religionis everfura, & magis destructionem quem in edificationem ordinata" (b2). In any case, and according to Jean Lacouture, it was the Jesuits who complained about the Sorbonne's attempts to humiliate and intimidate them, for example, when the university forbade them to teach Theology (1991:325).

References to contemporary characters are also frequent. Although some individuals censored by the Company are mentioned (b4), the pamphlet mainly alludes to certain Jesuits, such as Belarmino and Mariana. In order to make clear the threat the Company represented to any European monarch who opposed the Church of Rome, the pamphleteer accuses these Jesuits of murdering Henry III of France. The claim of a threat to monarchies is, in fact, one of the most recurrent commonplaces in anti-Jesuitical rhetoric. However, the reality was more complex and the Jesuits' words were often manipulated by Protestant propagandists. Juan Mariana provides a clear example of this. In his book *Del rey y de la institución de la dignidad real*, he explains the dangerous consequences of a tyrant king's attitude, as it can provoke the rebellion of his subjects, who, unhappy with his policies, can go so far as to murder him. The Jesuit is radical, always preferring the welfare of the Republic to the king's. Thus, it is not strange that his words should deeply concern the monarchs of this period:

Y ¿hemos de consentir en que un tirano veje y atormente a su antojo a nuestra patria, a la cual debemos más que a nuestros padres? Lejos de nosotros tanta maldad, lejos de nosotros tanta villanía. Importa poco que hayamos de poner en peligro la riqueza, la salud, la vida; a todo trance hemos de salvar la patria del peligro, a todo trance hemos de salvarla de su ruina. (1930: 109)

Mariana's speech was perhaps too revolutionary for his time, but we should keep in mind that the object of his attack was the Spanish king Philip III, not the English monarch. Moreover, he demanded liberties for Spain and autonomy against Lerma's economic policy; Mariana even criticised his own order's hierarchy, which led him to be persecuted by the Inquisition. Protestant Reformers ignored all this and presented him as a clear ally of the Spanish Empire and a constant threat to Protestantism. The same occurs with Belarmino, accused of parricide and considered the worst enemy of the Reformation. One of the most important teachers and priests of the Company, he defended the English Catholics' right to rebel against their king according to their conscience, something which was inadmissible in an absolute monarchy such as James I's. But funny enough, this was the policy practised by radical Protestants rather than by Catholics. Therefore, the pamphlets project outside a conflict which undermined the strength of the Reformist faction. Belarmino became, in this sense, the focus of the Reformers' attacks and a symbol of the Catholic threat, together with the Pope and Ignatius of Loyola.

The omission, exaggeration and manipulation of data is more evident when the author of the pamphlet identifies Henry IV's murderer as a Jesuit. In fact, Francisco of Ravailiac was not a Jesuit, but an ex-Dominican who confessed the reason for his crime was the protection given by the king to the Protestants. This last idea allows the writer to establish a simple association between the assassin and the Company of Jesus:

Which is but too well acknowledged in that infernal Fury *Ravaillac* who in his answers gave infallible proves of this doctrine: He said that the King was a Tyrant, and that he was Excommunicated *de facto*, (though there was no expresse excommunication out against him) by reason he suffered the Heretiques against the wil of the *Pope*. Could he learn this lesson in any other Schoole but the *Jesuites*?
(c,c2)

The references to papal bulls that favoured them (b4, c3, c4), their confrontations with other orders – mainly, the Dominicans (b3) –, the Gunpowder Plot (c2) and the allegedly uncontrollable spread of the Jesuits' schools and faculties (b4) are also cited. The multiple enumerations, rhetorical questions, hyperboles and imperatives mark the text as a passionate discourse that tries to convince the reader of a quite distorted reality.

The State Mysteries (1623) complements many of the ideas presented in the previous pamphlet. At first, the author, Peter Gosselin, seems to be transcribing the text, which seems to create a rhetorical distance conferring credibility to his words. With this technique, the author introduces a fictitious dialogue between a Jesuit and a novice where he comments on the different points defended by the Company and attacked by the Protestants. The writer succeeds in creating a considerable dialectic dynamism between the male character – old, intelligent and dominant – and the young and innocent woman, who, despite her doubts, finally falls in the Jesuit's snares.

It is significant that Gosselin chooses a woman as the Company's victim, thus conjuring up two commonplaces of the period: the seducer Jesuits and the

female weakness against their power of persuasion. The Company's connection with women could not be denied, but the nature of this relationship was very different from Protestant ideas about it. In Gosselin's pamphlet, the Jesuit mentions Ignatius's work with single mothers (c3), an attitude that was highly criticised not only by the Reformers, but also by Rome itself. On the other hand, the Jesuits were the spiritual advisers of very important ladies in 16th-17th centuries in Spain. They became their benefactresses, which provoked envy among members of other orders and perverse commentaries about the Jesuits. However, despite these ladies' attempts to join the Company, the Jesuits always refused this proposal, since they considered women a constant temptation. As we can see, this attitude completely contradicts the image of the seducer-Jesuit, so widely exploited by Protestants propagandists.

The most significant parts of the pamphlet are those alluding to the absolute obedience to the Pope (17-20) and to the deposition of princes (21-50). In order to introduce these two topics to the reader, the writer quotes several authors and works of the Company. In any case, this was not necessary, since these doctrinal points had been discussed already in the previous century, and the Protestants' arguments against them were well-known. It is true that in this pamphlet the Jesuitical texts are not distorted, but their reception is contrary to their original message: they appear in an Anglican context, which does not recognise the Pope's authority inherited from the apostles, a principle that, according to Rome, justifies the ecclesiastical immunity and the clergy's independence from royal authority.

The reader is not provided with Catholic arguments which might question these attacks. In this regard, in the fourth book of Francisco Suárez's work *La defensa de la fe* (1613) (often cited in Gosselin's pamphlet), we find a defense of the idea that "el Papa en la tierra no tiene superior que pueda juzgarle ni coaccionarle" (391), which Suárez justifies through numerous authorities on canon law, through historical references and through passages from the Gospel. Suárez finally makes use of a logical argument to defend papal immunity and his independence from civil law and any emperor:

Pues bien, de este dogma tan antiguo y constante, deducimos que este privilegio del Sumo Pontífice, no es humano sino divino. En efecto, él mismo no se hubiese atrevido a arrogárselo de hecho si no hubiese podido arrogárselo de derecho, porque la Iglesia y los príncipes cristianos no lo hubiesen admitido tan fácilmente y tan de común acuerdo, sin ninguna violencia ni coacción, coacción que, por cierto, los mismos Papas no podían ejercer... Ahora bien, si ha recibido de Cristo autoridad para sustraerse a toda jurisdicción humana, sin duda está exento de ella por derecho divino. Tampoco es creíble que ese derecho lo recibiera de los emperadores. Lo primero porque ese dogma se conoció en la Iglesia antes de los emperadores cristianos. Lo segundo, porque este privilegio el emperador no podía concederlo respecto de todos los reyes y pueblos no sujetos a él; y sin embargo, en el dicho Sínodo Romano aquel juicio se dio en general y respecto de todos. Lo tercero y último, porque los concilios y los Papas ese dogma no lo basan en un beneficio del emperador sino en la excelencia de la dignidad de la Sede Romana. Por eso juzgan que tal privilegio es perpetuo y absolutamente

firme e inmutable, cualidad que no podría tener si su origen hubiese estado en el emperador. (Book 4, 392)

This kind of argument is omitted in the pamphlets. The main problem is the lack of a double perspective: everything is polarised and the “other’s” reasons are ignored or highly disapproved, so that any compromise becomes impossible.

The Abuses of the Romish Church Anatomizēd (1623) has the same structure as the previous pamphlet. The author criticises each and every alleged vice of the Roman Church in each of its sections, as he indicates in the prologue: “their abominable Lying, Whoring, Swearing, Blaspheming, Pride, Drunkenesse, Covetuousness, and the like” (a3). The writer’s goal is to show Rome’s permanent corruption. This tendency is presented as inherent to the Roman Church, as justification for Anti-Catholic policies in the English country and, ultimately, as reason to defend England from the Catholics.

The illustrative, almost didactic tone of the pamphlet is clear in the extensive use of words and expressions such as “witness” (a4, a6, a8, b, b3, b4, b6), “amplify” (b), “testimony” (b2) or “prove” (a8), which are reinforced with several references to Roman emperors as Augustus and Claudius, described as defenders of truth and justice (a4). In opposition to them, the writer presents contemporary Rome as the antithesis of such virtues: “If the same order were among the Papall Frye still in force, ‘wee might hope, that either wee should have more Truth-tellers, or fewer Lyers: But that custome is now abolished, and this vice of Lying raignes more among these Mass-monging Priests, than any people under Heaven” (a4).

Together with these pseudohistoric accounts and some other forced comparisons – the Pope, for instance, is associated with the Roman dictator Sulla (c5) –, the pamphleteer defends his ideas by appropriating Sophocles’s (b6), Virgil’s (b7, c) and Homer’s (c4) words. The figure of Marcus Aurelius, a model of pacific and stoic governance, well-known in the Renaissance and Restoration period, often appears in the pamphlet where he attacks Rome in an almost apocalyptic style: “O cursed Rome, cursed thou hast beene, art, and wilt bee: As by thy Tyrannie thou hast made thy selfe Lady of Lordes, so the time will come, when thou with Iustice shalt returne to bee Servant of Servants” (c6).

There are also several allusions to certain people who were very familiar to the contemporary readers, such as Pasquino – a 17th century shoemaker famous for his satires against Rome (c2) – or Edmund (c5) – archbishop of Canterbury in the 13th century, who was described by the Reformation as a fierce polemicist against the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Other popes, most of them from a recent past, are mentioned to relate their cruelty, as well as their alleged blasphemies and lechery. In this sense, Alexander V (b3, b), Alexander III (b4), Paul III (a8), Leo X (b4), Julius III (b4) and Boniface VIII (b4) are introduced by means of a purely inductive method, as examples of the general corruption of the institution. On the other hand, the pamphleteer criticises James I’s tolerant policy, in opposition to other English monarchs. The writer emphasises, for instance, Elizabeth I’s and Richard the Lionhearted’s reigns. The former is treated as a saint and victim of the Catholic Church’s abuses (b8), while the latter provides a legendary figure

who attacks Rome in the following way:

The King apprehensive of his meaning, replied, My pride I bequeath to the haughtie Templers and Hospitallers, who are as proude as Lucifer himselfe: My Covetousness I give to the White Monkes of Cisteaux Order, for they covet the Devill and all. And as for my Lecherie, I can bestowe it no where better, than on the Priestes and Prelates of our times, for therein have they their most felicitie. (c4)

Finally, the pamphlet deals with a wide variety of texts including historic or pseudohistoric accounts, classic works, different peoples' testimonies and even poems, especially epigrams (b3) and epitaphs (b). The text offers a stylistic complexity uncommon in this kind of writing, as it can be observed in the considerable number of quotations in Latin (a6, b, b2, b3, b6, b7, c, c2, c3, c4, c6) and Greek (c3). The detailed documentation, the frequent enumeration, hyperbole and rhetorical questions add a especial emphasis necessary to maintain the reader's attention, who, after such an exhibition of data, could surely do nothing but agree with the author's arguments.

The interest of *An Arrow against Idolatry* (1624) by Henry Ainsworth derives principally from his chapter about idolatry, in which he adopts the literary conventions of the essay to discuss, according to the reformers' perspective, the different reasons why Rome has become, for all intents and purposes, this vice's origin.¹ Idolatry was considered the worst sin as it disobeyed explicitly the second Commandment (and implicitly the first). This explains the frequent references to Old Testament prohibitions of this kind of images, which becomes a main source for the pamphleteer to attack Rome.

Iconoclasm reaches its most radical point when the text attacks not only physical, but also mental representations: "And Numa, the King of the antique Romans forbade them to think that the image of God, has the shape of a man, or form of other living creature" (99). In this regard, the author attempts to invalidate Rome's defence of the veneration of images by opposing Catholic discourse (represented here by Belarmino) to the Bible itself: "Yet Rome that now is alloweth *the image of God the Father, in form of an old man; and the Holy Ghost in form of a dove*. Though the holy Prophet inveighing against this vanity, demandeth, *To whom will ye liken God, or what similitude will you set up unto him?*" (99-100).

The final mechanism by which the author denies the Church of Rome's authority is to deprive it of the Catholic tradition that defined it as unique and true as opposed to the new Protestant faiths. Thus, Rome is not authentic, but only – in the words of the pamphleteer – a "pseudocatholike Church, or false Ecclesiasticall Monarchy" (88-90); here the reformers have appropriated, by extension, the authority their enemies had enjoyed for centuries. In the same way, the multiple quotations from the Bible show how Rome has detached itself from the primitive Church's divine project, which can only be continued now by the Protestants. This argument serves to defend the Anglicans' Episcopal organisation, in contrast

1. Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622) was a moderate Puritan who founded the Brownists' Church in 1596. His extensive work specially includes commentaries on the Bible as well as other writings related to the religious polemic of the period (Smith 191-4).

with the Pope's centralised power: "Of which Catholike society so combined, we finde no record in the holy Apostles Writ, where every Congregation of the Saints, is shewed in every Citie to be compleat in itself [...] every one under the guidance of many Bishops; and not all under the government of one" (89-90).

Once more, the hyperbolic and enumerative tendency creates an accumulative, almost hypnotic effect that aims to eliminate any possible doubts the reader might harbour:

Out of this smoky furnace, have come the many heresies and whoorish doctrines of Free will, merit of works, limbus, purgatory, pardons, indulgences, vowes, prayer to and for the dead, penance, pilgrimages, auricular confession, and extreme unction, with sundry other like; which by this Churches supreme authority, have been concluded Catholike, Orthodox and Authentically. (93-4).

After the analysis of these pamphlets, we might wonder about their role in the elaboration of an anti-Catholic discourse in England during these years (1620s). I have found that there prevails a certain rhetoric against Popes (and Papal supporters) and the Company of Jesus, who, although in reality represented very different groups and followed very different interests, often appear conflated in many of these writings. Uniting these two factions of Catholicism (together with the Spanish) to construct a common enemy constitutes a mechanism that functions according to the Rhetoric of Opposites, or what Peter Lake calls "a process of binary opposition" (1989: 73). This explains the obsessive emphasis on the enemy's alleged cruelty, corruption and falsity (usually forgetting about their own praise). Through the construction of this unified and powerful "other", the Anglican Church projects its own weakness in attempting to define itself. Anglican propagandists needed the Catholic-Spanish enemy to establish their own conflictive identity and, to do so, they elaborated an antagonist that represented a negative portrait of themselves: James I had already written about the possibilities of this kind of rhetoric in 1597:

Doubtleslie who denyeth the power of the Devill, would likewise denie the power of God, if they could for shame. For since the Devill is the verie contrarie opposite to God, there is no better way to know God, then by the contrarie; as by the ones power (though a creature) to admire the power of the great Creator: by the falshood of the one to consider the trueth of the other, and by the injustice of the one, to consider the mercifulnesse of the other: And so forth in all the rest of the essence of God, and qualities of the Devill. (38)

The pamphleteers insisted, then, in describing in detail those "qualities of the devil" in an attempt to assume "the essence of God". The problem is that this sort of reflective mechanism was not totally symmetrical and the positive image they intended to achieve also laid bare their rhetorical artifice and self-interested intention, as well as their own weakness and fears.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, H. 1624: *An Arrow Against Idolatry*. London.
- Anon 1623: *The Abuses of the Romish Church Anatomized*. London.
- Anon 1623: *The Legend of the Iesuites*. London.
- Cust, R. and A. Hugues ed. 1989: *Conflict in Early stuart England. Studies in Religion and Politics 1603 - 1642*. London an New York, Longman.
- Gosselin, P. 1623: *The State-Mysteries of the Iesuites*. London.
- James I 1597: *Daemonologie*. London.
- Lacouture, J. 1991: *Jesuitas. Los conquistadores*. 1. Barcelona, Paidós.
- Lake, Peter 1989: Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice. > *Conflict in Early Stuart England. Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642*. Eds. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes. ed.
- Mariana, J. 1930: *Del rey y de la institución de la dignidad real*. 1599. Eds y Trads. E. Barriobero y Herrán. Madrid, Mundo Latino.
- Suárez, F. 1623: *La defensa de la fe*. Madrid.