



The implementation of the Counter-Reformation in Catalan-speaking lands (1563-1700): A successful process?

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ABSTRACT

The process of the Counter-Reformation, embarked on after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), was successful in some parts of Europe, whilst in others it did not manage to change the existing religious practices or morals. In the Catalan-speaking lands, we cannot yet reach a definitive answer on the success or failure of the Counter-Reformation. We do know that there was an intense reforming campaign undertaken by the king, the Church authorities and a major swath of the regular clergy, heightened by fear that proximity to France and Occitan immigrants would foster the penetration of Calvinism. Vast resources were poured into the propagation of the Catholic dogmas and the reform of the clergy, as defined during and after the Council of Trent. However, other factors hindered this process, including banditry and the presence of Muslim converts to Christianity. A hypothesis can be put forth that in heavily urban areas, the Counter-Reformation was ultimately imposed in the middle term, but that it encountered more difficulties in the mountainous and more rural and isolated areas despite the efforts of the reformers.

KEYWORDS: Counter-Reformation, Catholic Reformation in Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca

FROM THE COUNTER-REFORMATION TO CONFESSIONALISATION

The Catholic Church was slow to react to the challenges posed by Martin Luther and the Reformation starting in 1517. The constant drain from the Catholic flock to the new churches finally forced the Holy See to call a council. The bishops meeting in Trent (1545-1563) approved a series of decrees that clearly outlined Catholic dogma and pointed to the pathway on which the reformation of Catholicism should embark.¹ Subsequently, the popes in the second half of the 16th century not only implemented the Council's precepts, they also further fleshed out aspects that the Council had not mentioned, giving the Catholicism of the day its own specific physiognomy² which has traditionally been called the Counter-Reformation or the Catholic Reformation.³

The actions of the Council of Trent were not limited to defining the Catholic dogmas in view of the Lutheran attacks. The bishops were aware that they had to satisfy the aspirations for reform held by major swaths of the popula-

tion and to remedy the decline of the clergy, which had been a fundamental reason behind the spread of the Reformation. The Council of Trent clearly made pastoral care of people's souls, *cura animarum*, the Catholic Church's priority objective. For this reason, it designed a very clear structure in which the bishops, now required to live in their dioceses, had to keep watch over the actions of the parish rectors, who were also subjected to the residence requirement. The rectors, in turn, were required to instruct their flock in the truths of the faith as the Council had established them (especially through catechism and preaching) and to ensure their access to the sacraments (including the obligation to receive communion and confess at least once a year). The bishops became the driving force behind the implementation of the reforms in each diocese, and for this reason the Council strongly reinforced their powers, especially the power of jurisdiction.⁴ The desire to dignify the clergy, both secular and regular, that was to help these bishops became clear in many decrees (the obligation to wear the habit, the creation of seminaries, the obligatory enclosure of nuns, etc.). The layperson, the end of the chain, was seen as the passive recipient of the dogmas and the clergy's instructions. The Church designed in Trent was a highly clerically-centred, hierarchical Church.

In the 1980s, the historiography was poised to overcome the apparently exclusive categories of Reformation

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Figure 1. A session of the Council of Trent held at *Santa Maria Maggiore* church (Source: Diocesan Museum of Trent).

and Counter-Reformation through the concept of confessionalisation.⁵ The theoreticians of confessionalisation stressed the similarities in certain behaviours in the Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist faiths more than their differentiating features. They particularly focused on the position of the state, which, immersed as it was in an absolutist dynamic, could not remain on the sidelines of the religious conflict: to preserve their power, all monarchs had to intervene to support one of the faiths and impose it through both persuasive and repressive means, intolerantly banning the others.⁶

Now, in the early 21st century, the concept of confessionalisation does not seem to inspire unanimity. The debate is whether it entails an overly vertical and hierarchical conception of beliefs, whether it blurs the importance of the differences between the faiths and whether it can be applied beyond the conflict of faith in the Germanic empire.⁷ New terms have been coined: Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia prefers “Catholic Renewal” and John W. O’Malley proposed “Early Modern Catholicism”.⁸ As we await a new term that inspires consensus, Counter-Reformation and

Catholic Reformation, with all their historiographic baggage yet no longer with their ideological charge, are still used, often synonymously, by historians of Catholicism after the Council of Trent.⁹

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Beyond discussions on the name of the process, there have also been other debates that have marked the efforts of historians of Catholicism in the 16th and 17th centuries. One of the most interesting is the discussion on the degree to which the new – or revamped – doctrines were propagated among the popular beliefs that had been solidly in place since the Middle Ages. Back in 1975, Gerald Strauss had posed the question in the Lutheran world: according to Strauss, indoctrination efforts had ended in failure and most of the evangelicals had remained ignorant of the fundamental aspects of the reformed theology in the 16th century. The main reason was the persistence of magical cults that predated the new faiths, which seemed

overly abstract and dogmatic to the majority of people.¹⁰ In 1992, Geoffrey Parker contrasted this sense of failure, which is widespread in the reformed world, to the success of the Catholic indoctrination campaigns. Parker attributed this success to Catholicism's acceptance of certain traditional practices and customs (worship of relics, processions, pilgrimages), to the use of all sorts of indoctrination resources (printed media and preaching, obviously, but also theatre, the visual arts, etc.) and to the deliberate simplification of the very theological contents that were presented to the masses.¹¹

Eighteen years after Parker's article, the scenario sketched by studies on different regions in Western Europe is quite diverse. There are regions where the hierarchical system implemented in Trent worked effectively. They had numerous morally decent, culturally educated clergymen, which ensured that the doctrine was transmitted to the faithful. According to all indicators, the laypeople had a sound knowledge of the underpinnings of post-Trent Catholicism and showed affection for the devotions, beliefs and behaviours that the Church authorities expect of them. In contrast, there are zones that did not easily fit into this pattern: regions where an ineffective hierarchy never managed to impose basic aspects of the Catholic Reformation on the people, such as the distinction between the sacred and profane worlds, priestly celibacy, attendance at Sunday mass and annual confession. In certain places, there was still a broadly prevalent religion which, following William A. Christian's terminology, is usually called "local religion".¹²

In a recent article, we have formulated the working hypothesis that certain factors might have been crucial in the success of the Catholic Reformation: the existence of a flat or rolling plain with good roadways, the predominance of an urban network with a concentration of inhabitants and an economic system with a high level of product commercialisation. As a general rule, these factors would have favoured quick cultural circulation and, as a result, the Catholic Church's ability to indoctrinate the people. In contrast, without falling into geographic determinism, a rugged terrain, a dispersed population and production oriented at self-consumption leads us to posit more isolated human groups that would be more reluctant to accept any new ideologies coming from the outside.¹³

Are these criteria applicable to the Catalan-speaking lands? Was the Catholic Reformation successful here? We already have both monographs, which we shall cite throughout this article, and more sweeping works¹⁴ that present what we know about Catholicism in the 16th and 17th centuries. However, we do not yet have enough knowledge to be able to pinpoint the map and pace of penetration of the Catholic Reformation, if it did indeed take place.

The most thought-provoking contribution from this standpoint comes from Henry Kamen. According to Kamen, once the initial impetus after the Council of Trent,

which was exhausted by about 1580, was over, a religiousness that included neither the administration of the sacraments nor the kind of worship espoused by the Counter-Reformation survived, one that kept up the popular communal rituals and practices inherited from previous generations. In the Catalonia described by Kamen, the Inquisition, the Crown or the clergy did not control the land and were incapable of imposing their reforms on religious practice or their moral guidelines – on issues of sexuality, for example. There, a traditional Catholicism with mediæval, rural and popular roots coexisted comfortably at the expense of the official, institutionalised religion that the civil and Church authorities wanted to propagate. "In Catalonia the campaign of the Church against traditional subcultures and communal practices which had always formed part of traditional religion, seems largely to have failed because no radical change took place in the social framework within which those practices existed; and the Church had to content itself with a slow assertion of external discipline from above, in the areas it could most directly control or where it could count on the collaboration of secular authority", writes Kamen.¹⁵

In the case of the North of Catalonia, Raymond Sala has gone slightly further. Sala believes there is a traditional "Catalan religion" which, despite some modifications, withstood the reforms of the 16th century, the Gallicanism of the 17th century and the Enlightenment of the 18th century and was heavily revived after the French Revolution.¹⁶

Kamen's thesis, however, contrasts with the situation presented in studies on Catalan religion in the 18th century, particularly in the works by Joaquim M. Puigvert. One can deduce from his studies that in the century of the Enlightenment, the Church had firm control over the territory and the forms of local sociability (parishes, brotherhoods, etc.). The bishops were backed by an educated lay clergy that was disciplined and economically solvent and had close ties to the wealthy classes in the country, from whose ranks they came.¹⁷

For this reason, 17 years after Henry Kamen's work, it is now time to re-examine the question of the success or failure of the Counter-Reformation in Catalonia, and more generally all the Catalan-speaking lands. As I understand it, Kamen extrapolates highly specific examples from rural or mountainous zones to Catalonia as a whole, and these examples figure prominently in his studies. Religion could not be experienced in the same way in the Pyrenees valleys or isolated inland regions as in the urban network which was swiftly developing in 16th century Catalonia, according to the most recent studies.¹⁸ In the cities, an overabundance of religion and ideological pressure mechanisms were being exerted on the people, under the sway of which the faithful could hardly be unmoved. For example, in the mid-16th century, Barcelona had seven parishes, thirteen male religious communities, two chapters of canons (at the cathedral and at a collegiate church) and thirteen female religious communities to meet the spiritual needs of around 30,000 inhabitants.¹⁹

The debate is not closed, and new studies are needed with a clearly defined geographic and chronological scope in order to bring us closer to a solution.²⁰ However, we are already in a position to assess the factors that might have borne an influence. These factors might include not only the deployment of the urban network as mentioned above but also the vast effort by Catalan Church authorities to introduce the Counter-Reformation, the proximity of the border with France, the spread of banditry and the presence of major pockets of Muslim converts.

THE INSISTENCE OF THE CHURCH AUTHORITIES

The Catalan-speaking lands were not very well represented in the Council of Trent. The participants in the Council whose origins we know include 12 Valencians, 11 Catalans and three Mallorcans. These figures include not only bishops and religious order superiors but also individuals with no vote, such as theologians, diplomats and bishops' advisors. Regarding bishops, the Bishop of Mallorca, Giovanni Battista Campeggio, who never set foot in his diocese, participated in the first period (1545-1548). Campeggio returned to participate in the second period of the Council (1551-1552) along with the bishops of Elne and Sogorb (Segorbe in Spanish) and three auxiliary bishops. Only in the third period of the Council (1561-1563) did six bishops from Catalan dioceses and the bishop of Sogorb take place.²¹ Some of them figured prominently in the debates, including the Auxiliary Bishop of Barcelona, Joan Jubí, the Bishop of Tortosa, Martín de Córdoba, and the Bishop of Lleida, Antoni Agustí. However, none of them played a determining role.²²

This scant participation in Trent contrasts with the speed with which the Council was accepted and began to be applied in the Catalan-speaking lands. After the Council was confirmed by Pope Pius IV and accepted by Philip II in 1564, the Archbishop of Tarragona, Ferran de Lloaces, called a provincial council to receive the decrees from the Ecumenical Council in his ecclesiastic province. However, a specific order handed down by the king ordered this council suspended. The monarch wanted these first provincial councils after Trent to take place under his stringent control. The provincial council of Tarragona finally took place between 1565 and 1566 with the participation of the bishops of Catalonia, and the provincial council of Valencia was held with the participation of the bishops from the kingdoms of Valencia and Mallorca. Royal agents attended both councils and strictly controlled the course of the debates and the wording of the provincial constitutions.²³ The appeals that the cathedral chapterhouses filed with the Roman Curia out of jealousy of losing their autonomy to the bishops did not invalidate the bulk of the council's decisions.²⁴

As mentioned above, the bishops became a crucial instrument in implementing the Counter-Reformation. The king appointed them through a papal concession

granted in 1523. After the Council of Trent, Philip II fully accepted the model of the ideal bishop of the Counter-Reformation, seeking bishops who were not only personally and morally worthy but were also university graduates and had demonstrated their ability to govern. He sought bishops who were capable of visiting the parishes, supervising the confessors and preachers, monitoring the schoolteachers, filling Church positions with ideal candidates without falling into the trap of favouritism, pursuing the misdemeanours of clergy and laymen through diocesan tribunals, detecting cases of heresy and reporting them to the Inquisition, helping the poor and promoting charitable acts. For this reason, it was anomalous that the island of Ibiza would continue to be part of the archdiocese of Tarragona, far from the archbishop's control. In any event, the cultural and religious level of the episcopacy improved immensely in the second half of the 16th century, when we find such prominent personalities as the Archbishop of Valencia, Saint Juan de Ribera (1568-1611), the Bishop of Urgell, Andreu Capella, and the Bishop of Lleida (1561-1576) and Archbishop of Tarragona (1576-1586), Antoni Agustí.²⁵

During the reign of Philip II, 46 bishops were appointed in Catalonia whose birthplaces we know: 26 were from Catalonia, eight from Aragon, five from Valencia, one from Mallorca and only six from Castile. However, more Castilian bishops would be appointed over the course of the Modern Age. According to studies by Joan Bada, between 1563 and 1640, 41.6% of the bishops in Catalan bishoprics were Catalan. Between 1640 and 1715, this figure rose to 47.8%.²⁶ This process was even more pronounced in the Kingdom of Valencia: only five of the 16 bishops appointed by Philip II were local. The majority were from the Crown of Castile (eight), although there was also one bishop from Navarre and two from Catalonia.²⁷

In the case of Catalonia, an important tradition of councils and synods, which was virtually unique in all of Catholicism, was used by the bishops to implement the Tridentine reforms. Nine provincial councils were held between 1567 and 1598, and another was held every five years until 1757, except in times of war. These councils approved many measures along strict Tridentine lines on the liturgy, the status of the clergy, preaching and promoting new devotions.²⁸ In contrast, there was no other provincial council in Valencia for the remainder of the Modern Age.

Along with the provincial councils, diocesan synods were also held regularly. At the synods, the bishops met with clergymen from their diocese, listened to their opinions and informed them of their guidelines. This is how the parish activities, sacramental practices, life of the clergy and diocesan festivals were regulated. In the dioceses of Alghero, Sardinia, the synods were a crucial institution, and four were held between 1564 and 1586.²⁹

Parallel to the reform of the lay clergy, the regular clergy, who were clearly more in favour of the Counter-Reformation, witnessed unprecedented expansion in both Catalonia³⁰ and in Valencia³¹ and Mallorca.³²



Figure 2. Map of the diocese of the Catalan-speaking lands in around 1600. The two archbishoprics at the head of the Church province were Tarragona and Valencia. The bishopric of Elna was separated from the *Narbonensis* and added to the *Tarraconensis* in 1564. The years that the dioceses established in the 16th century were created appear in parentheses (drawn up by Josep M. Palau i Baduell).

The first members of the Company of Jesus, founded by Saint Ignatius Loyola in 1540, included Catalan-speaking eminences like the Mallorca native Jeroni Nadal and the Valencian Francesc de Borja. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the Jesuits soon founded colleges, beginning with the college in Valencia in 1544. The Jesuits' first European university was the one in Gandia, created in 1547. In contrast, the Pious Schools, founded in Rome by an Aragonese priest from the bishopric of Urgell, Saint Joseph Calasanctius, expanded quickly around Italy and Central Europe, although they never managed to consolidate a stable base in the Crown of Aragon until the college in Moia was founded in 1683.

The male order of the Discalced Carmelites founded a monastery in Barcelona in 1586 and another in Valencia in 1589. The female order of the Discalced Carmelites, created by Saint Teresa of Avila, was also set up in both cities in 1588. The Capuchins, who emerged from Italy in 1528, reached Barcelona in 1578 with the support of the municipality. They proceeded to spread like wildfire: they had 21 monasteries and convents by 1600.³³ Even though they were unable to set up in Valencia until 1597 because of the hurdles that Philip II kept laying down, by 1611 they already had 13 communities scattered about the kingdom.

In effect, the reform of the religious orders was disturbed by the interference of political motives. This was the case of the suppression of the Conventual Franciscans on a petition from the Crown in 1567,³⁴ Philip II's opposition to the expansion of the Capuchins outside Catalonia³⁵ and the king's refusal to accept the creation of a Recollect Franciscan province made up of the Order of Saint Francis' Recollect houses in Catalonia and Valencia.³⁶ It was also the reason why the king promoted the presence of Castilian men of the cloth from the reformed movements in the Crown of Aragon, such as the Augustines,³⁷ and even why he tried to impose their superiority over their Catalan-speaking counterparts, such as the Mercedaries.³⁸ The Crown was interested in not only driving religious reforms but also improving its political control structures over the clergy, especially in the Crown of Aragon. Both factors must be combined in the process of religious reform, although this is not often achieved harmoniously.

Despite some tensions and problems, the new or reformed orders drove the Counter-Reformation through their churches, colleges and publications. Their efforts as confessors and preachers cannot be underestimated, especially at the time of the missions, which we shall discuss below.

THE MEANS OF INDOCTRINATION

It is difficult to ascertain the success of this vast attempt at acculturation. Historians have no tools that enable them to peer inside mind and discern the degree of sincerity

and conviction of a person who adheres to certain postulates. Furthermore, in Catalonia we have none of the documentation that has been very useful in other lands, such as the Inquisition interrogatories used by Sara Nalle and Jean-Pierre Dedieu to ascertain the degree to which the individuals accused by the Holy Office were aware of the rudiments of the faith.³⁹ Therefore, determining the success of the Counter-Reformation in Catalonia is tantamount to asking what we know about the instruments that the clergy had at their disposal to indoctrinate the population as a whole.

The Council of Trent ordered the bishops to particularly focus on preaching in all their parishes and to ensure their adherence to the orthodoxy. In the Catalan-speaking lands, this meant deciding in what language to preach. There is a great deal of testimony showing that the influence of Baroque rhetoric led some preachers, either natives or from abroad, to preach in Spanish in the quest for greater ostentation or elegance. This might have seriously harmed the Catholic Church's ability to communicate. It should be borne in mind that the entire Catholic liturgy was in Latin and that publishing the Holy Scriptures in vernacular languages was prohibited. The sermon became the crucial means of transmitting the Bible's contents and the truths of the faith to the adult masses. Thus, preaching became the mass media of the day.

In Catalonia, the 1591 provincial council ordered that catechism and preaching be performed in Catalan in Catalonia, in "the mother tongue and native language of that Kingdom" in the Aragonese lands falling within the bishopric of Lleida and "in the Valencian language" in the Valencian territories lying inside the bishopric of Tortosa. The survival of preaching in Spanish led the 1636 provincial council to repeat these orders.⁴⁰ However, preaching in Spanish must have subsisted to a greater or lesser extent because the 1687 diocesan synod in Tortosa still felt the need to stress the exclusive use of Catalan for preaching. On Mallorca, there is no information on the bishops preaching in Spanish until the 18th century.⁴¹

In the Kingdom of Valencia, however, the evolution was apparently otherwise. According to Vicent Pitarch, there was a situation of diglossia. The aristocracy, upper-level clergy and wealthy sectors of the urban bourgeoisie requested sermons in Spanish. Since the diocesan synods did not ban it, a "duality" evolved: the "prestigious" sermons, basically the ones in the large cities, were delivered in Spanish, while the "routine" sermons, mainly in the rural areas, were delivered in Catalan.⁴²

Compliance with the guidelines issued by the provincial councils and diocesan synods, either on language or other issues, was verified by pastoral visits. These visits were a crucial tool for monitoring the parish clergy's actions. The bishop in person, or a visitor sent by him, inspected the places of worship as well as the moral and religious standing of the clergy and laypeople in each parish within his diocese.⁴³ The objection has often been voiced that these visits were overly brief and irregular to be effec-



Figure 3. Courtyard of the College of the Patriarch, Valencia. The Royal College of the Patriarch of Corpus Christi, built by order of the archbishop of Valencia Juan de Ribera in 1583. Its purpose was to train priests in the Counter-Reformation rules issued by the Council of Trent.

tive. But recent studies show that even the rural and mountainous zones were visited constantly, and particularly that the success of the visits did not hinge upon conducting a more or less minute inspection but on the insistent repetition of these visits over the course of a century. According to information from Xavier Solà, the bishops of Girona ordered approximately one visit every four years between 1588 and 1699, while the bishops of Vic conducted visits an average of every two years and eight months between 1589 and 1647.⁴⁴ On the island of Mallorca, eleven pastoral visits were conducted between 1561 and 1604.⁴⁵

The popular missions are a movement that has aroused a great deal of attention from historians in recent years, yet we still know little about them in the Catalan-speaking lands. The missions were intensive indoctrination campaigns that were conducted in a parish over the course of several days. Regular clergymen from elsewhere thus complemented the efforts of the parish clergy by temporarily submerging the people in an inflamed atmosphere full of sermons, masses, confessions, prayers and explanations of Christian doctrine. In the case of Catalonia, Martí

Gelabertó has shown that the missions were a prime tool in the attempt to reform heterodox behaviours among the lower classes. His highly provocative thesis states that there was no imposition of an official ecclesiastic culture over popular religion, rather a “process of substitution”⁴⁶ of the traditional beliefs and practices by Catholic ceremonies that were acceptable from the standpoint of the reformers. Gradually, certain popular notions on witchcraft, magic, festivities or the care of the ill were banished or modified to reconcile them with the orthodoxy of the Counter-Reformation. Thus, the missionaries became a kind of cultural mediator between the spiritual yearnings of the Catalan peasantry and the reforming aspirations of the Catholic hierarchy.

We know more about the literacy rates in Catalonia in the 18th century than in the preceding centuries.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, we also know that religious publications were the most numerous kind in the post-mortem inventories of residents of Barcelona in the 16th century, among not only the clergy but all the social and professional groups who owned books, which included nobles, lawyers, doctors, notaries, merchants and even artisans. In addition to

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Figure 4. Juan de Juanes (Joan Vicent Massip, 1523-1579): *L'últim sopar* (*The Last Supper*) (1560). The Eucharist was one of the leading subjects in the art of the Counter-Reformation. This painting follows Italian-influenced Renaissance patterns (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid).

the specific publishing output by the clergy (collections of sermons, missals, breviaries), there were books and leaflets that reached all the social classes, such as books of hours, catechism, the *Ars Moriendi* and lives of Christ or the saints. According to Manuel Peña, a significant number of publications in Barcelona were printed in Catalan. They were in the majority until 1570, while in Valencia Spanish editions were more common. Books in Latin remained important and were in the majority in Barcelona between 1561 and 1570.⁴⁸

The founding of seminaries, which the Council of Trent had deemed essential in order to boost the level of the clergy, was not effective. Wherever the bishops did manage to create them, the seminaries often languished and had few students.⁴⁹ The clergy were still trained in the traditional way (family, cathedral schools, etc.) or through the Jesuit colleges. The failure of the attempts to create seminaries hints at the existence of clerical sectors that stood against the Catholic Reformation whose positions must be studied, especially around the cathedral chapter-houses⁵⁰ or within the religious orders.⁵¹

Preaching and missions were a decisive factor in implementing the new devotions that captured the Counter-Reformation's religious spirit and the glorification of the saints, which had been questioned by the Protestants. For example, the Dominicans stood out in disseminating the practice of saying the rosary, which was institutionalised thanks to the brotherhoods of Mare de Déu del Roser

(Our Lady of the Rosary) and the worship of the Eucharist through the brotherhoods of Minerva. Chapels consecrated to Mare de Déu dels Dolors (Our Lady of Sorrows) and the souls in purgatory sprang up everywhere, and the processions on Corpus Christi became quite important. At such a late date as 1771, according to the census of religious brotherhoods ordered by the Count of Aranda, 97.27% of the places in the district of Girona and 98% of the parishes in the district of Vic that depended on the bishopric of Vic had a brotherhood of the rosary.⁵²

The worship of the saints promoted the most by the Counter-Reformation extended around the churches and chapels⁵³ as part of the architectural growth of Catalan churches, which lasted until at least 1640.⁵⁴ However, we must still to ascertain whether this dissemination ran counter to earlier devotions. For example, it is well known that in Roussillon the worship of Saint Gaudérique, the traditional patron saint of the peasants, was replaced by the devotion to Saint Isidore the Farmer, whose canonisation had been promoted by the King in 1622.⁵⁵

A study of the pastoral visits⁵⁶ and the prolific iconography left by the worship of the saints in the guise of altarpieces,⁵⁷ engravings and prints should allow us to pinpoint the map and timeline of the dissemination of these devotions in a realm shared by historians and art historians.⁵⁸ For example, a study of *goigs* (religious couplets devoted to the Virgin Mary, God or Jesus Christ) would open up the terrain to interdisciplinary research in the



Figure 5. Main altarpiece at the church of Santa Maria of Arenys de Mar (1636) by Antoni-Joan Riera. This altarpiece is one of the most notable and significant from the Baroque period in Catalonia.

fields of history, theology, anthropology, philology and art history.⁵⁹

The devotions fostered a showy, solemn liturgy that encompassed processions with dances, theatrical performances and ephemeral architecture. Pilgrimages and *romeries* (pilgrimages followed by festivals at local shrines), which the authorities tried to regulate, were quite popular, along with sanctuaries that attracted pilgrims from neighbouring towns, there were internationally renowned sanctuaries such as Montserrat.⁶⁰

However, faith in the power of the saints and the Virgin as benefactors and mediators had a flip side, namely the belief in witches, especially women who could cast evil spells because of a pact they had made with the devil. Both Church and civil authorities repressed witchcraft, this time particularly harshly. Agustí Alcoberro calculates that between 1616 and 1622, at the peak of the witch hunts, around 400 victims were executed in Catalonia.⁶¹

However, the repression was not limited to witches. All forms of religion that did not fit within the narrow strictures of the Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation were heavily persecuted. The Inquisition and the Church tribunals imposed a formal form of religion and passive consent and punished any leanings towards mysticism, a prominent role for laypeople in religious life or beliefs regarded as heterodox.⁶²

Unfortunately, we must admit that there are still enormous gaps all of these areas of knowledge. Not only do subjects like preaching, religious iconography and missions leave room for a wide range of future studies, there are also issues that hold a prominent place in the historiographic debate on the Counter-Reformation in many countries which still remain to be studied in the Crown of Aragon, including the use of confession⁶³ or catechism to convey the doctrine,⁶⁴ the Church's control of primary and secondary education and the pilgrims' submission to Counter-Reformation patterns.

THE NEIGHBOURING PROTESTANTISM AND BANDITRY

The Protestant Reformation did not take root in the Catalan-speaking lands. Situations like those of the Aragon native from the area adjacent to Catalonia Miquel Servet and the Catalan Pere Galès are individual, isolated cases.⁶⁵ The kings had a well-oiled repressive machinery in operation: in the 16th century, the modern Inquisition, which had been founded in 1478 to persecute Jewish converts, changed course to detect and judge others, including Protestants. The first Inquisitorial trial for Lutheranism took place in Valencia in 1524, on Mallorca in 1531 and in Barcelona in 1539. The apogee of persecution was between 1560 and 1565 in the midst of a feverish atmosphere unleashed by the discovery of Protestant coteries in Valladolid and Seville: 36% of the defendants accused by the Tri-

bunal of the Inquisition in Barcelona were accused of Protestantism.⁶⁶

In Catalonia, there was a determining factor: the border with France, blurred during the second half of the 16th century by the wars between Catholics and Calvinists, was viewed as an objective danger. Huguenot preachers could enter Catalonia via the Pyrenees and spread their ideas.

The Church authorities were constantly sending messages of concern to the Crown. For example, the Bishop of Barcelona, Guillem Caçador, wrote to Philip II in 1561 after having crossed France to reach Trent: "I only ask Your Majesty [...] to recall the neighborship with Catalonia in that horrible fire, for which we should fear for all the kingdoms of Spain."⁶⁷ And despite his distance from the border, the Bishop of Cordoba, Cristóbal de Rojas y de Sandoval, felt obliged to warn the monarch: "The greatest strength of these kingdoms are the Pyrenees Mountains, and if they are damaged by heresy [...], please consider, Your Majesty, how harmful this would be."⁶⁸ The king himself had been convinced, and in 1588 he described the diocese of Urgell this way to the Pope: "so vast and so rugged and a frontier of heresies".⁶⁹

A constant stream of immigrants from Occitania between 1490 and 1630 only compounded the authorities' concerns.⁷⁰ However, it seems that these new residents were warmly received in general. One of the basic mechanisms of integration was their insertion into the parish network and Catalan brotherhoods, which was fostered by the presence of numerous French chaplains in Catalonia.⁷¹

In the authorities' eyes, the entrance of Huguenots might have been aided by the presence of gangs of bandits. This is not the place to engage in a discussion on the origins of the banditry that was endemic in Catalonia in the 16th and 17th centuries, which is more accurately known as Valencian or Balearic banditry. However, we can attest that the authorities' lack of control over the land was viewed as a factor that encouraged the spread of heresies. One Dominican friar wrote to his provincial from Puigcerdà in 1565: "What worries me the most is that we are neighbours to the Lutherans and we fear that they should enter this summer under the banner of the bandits [...]. We fear that they will bring Lutheran preachers to entirely pervert the land, which is ridden with ignorance."⁷²

Identifying Catalan bandits as Occitan immigrants was a common denominator in the documents from the period: "Of the bandits that disturb the public peace in this Principality, three-quarters are Gascons and people from the French border", wrote Carmelite Josep Serrano in the early 17th century. Modern historians have demonstrated that these claims were inaccurate, but we must note how they affected the collective mindset of the Catalan people – and authorities – of the day.⁷³

However, the social instability generated by banditry might have seriously affected the clergy's pastoral endea-

vours on behalf of the Counter-Reformation. "It would be impossible to take a step in this bishopric that is not taken at the hands of the bandits" wrote the Bishop of Urgell, Andreu Capella, to Philip II in 1589.⁷⁴ The case of Father Pere Font is not isolated: in 1591 he was appointed rector of the parish in Tàrrega, which just prior to his arrival received visits from gangs of bandits who pressured him to declare whether he wanted to be a "nyerro" or "cadell", that is, to take sides with one of the two gangs that was dividing Catalan society at the time.⁷⁵

There is quite a bit of testimony by clergy who had to flee from their homes out of coercion from the bandits. The cathedral chapterhouse of Urgell said in 1558: "Things in the county and border with France are so dire that ruffians and Gascons with sheer brazenness and no fear of contradiction kidnap the chaplains, oppressing them greatly to get the largest ransom for them and forcing the rectors in the villages to escape, leaving their residences. We are afraid that this may be the beginning of some error in the faith".⁷⁶ In 1615, the Bishop of Vic, Andrés de San Jerónimo, bemoaned the fact that the rectors did not dare come when summoned out of fear of the bandits, and that many had left their parishes because they had been threatened with death.⁷⁷

Even further, we are aware of quite a few cases of clergy who themselves were enmeshed in struggles with bandits. In Catalonia, there even existed a special jurisdiction, the Tribunal del Breu Apostòlic (Tribunal of the Apostolic Brief), to judge these cases.⁷⁸ The most extreme case involved Francesc Robuster, the Bishop of Elna (1591-1598) and Vic (1598-1607), who was known for his ties to the "cadells"; he used the bandits in his struggles with the canons at the cathedral so boldly that his detractors accused him of instigating a murder.⁷⁹ The Catalan monks on Montserrat also used the bandits to expel the Castilian monks from the abbey in 1585 at the climax of the ongoing rivalry between the two groups.⁸⁰

The sense of instability was particularly acute in the Pyrenees. Just like in most European mountain ranges, the mountainous zones were viewed as territories that were difficult for the religious reformers to reach. The descriptions of the settlers of these lands as superstitious or ignorant conceal the reality of their reluctance to accept the new doctrines. In 1581, Doctor Pedro Hervás reported to the Crown that between the Sobrarb and the Cerdagne, the people lived without "anyone to preach to them and instruct them in the tenets of our faith".⁸¹ In 1590, the Discalced Carmelite Joan de Jesús complained to Philip II "about the vast ignorance that they have and the lack of doctrine" in the bishopric of Urgell.⁸² Problems arose in introducing the Counter-Reformation's guidelines on beliefs and behaviour in areas like Andorra, which fell within the bishopric of Urgell, and the Vall d'Aran, which was under the bishopric of Comenge, partly due to the existence of specific clerical institutions linked to the local families that hindered the spread of the hierarchical structure defined in Trent.⁸³

The Crown did not ignore the warning signals that reached it from the Catalan Church authorities. In response, first it reinforced its repressive mechanisms. All historians of the Inquisition stress that the tribunals in Barcelona and Zaragoza, which covered the diocese of Lleida, stood out from other districts because of their virtually obsessive concern with the French, who were subjected to severe vigilance.⁸⁴ Of the trials conducted by the Tribunal of the Holy Office in Barcelona, 13.86% were for "Lutheranism", a word that the Inquisition used to cover all branches of Protestantism. In contrast, in the Tribunal of Toledo only 7.3% of the trials between 1561 and 1620 were brought against "Lutherans". However, the Inquisitorial trials show that Protestantism never took root in Catalonia: in the vast majority of cases, the accused parties were foreign soldiers or merchants passing through Catalonia.

Yet political action was not limited to Inquisitorial repression. The pastoral endeavour we described in the section above also reflect this same concern. The diligent efforts of the bishops, religious orders and lay clergy never lost sight of the proximity of France. The desire to set up smaller dioceses on the border regions that could easily be controlled by the bishops, placed right where heresy was being detected, led to the creation of the diocese of Barbastro and Jaca in 1571, which split off from the diocese of Huesca, and the founding of the bishopric of Solsona in 1593 in order to cut back the districts of the dioceses of Vic and Urgell.⁸⁵

It is worth noting that Catalonia remained the only land under the royal patronage of Philip II where jurist bishops prevailed over theologians. The Council of Trent had ordered that all bishops be university graduates. In the 16th century, theology graduates were deemed to be the best suited to ensure that the sacraments were administered and the doctrine preached properly; however, graduates in canon law were better for detecting or investigating heresy and maintaining the social peace and order in their dioceses. Among the bishops chosen by Philip II in the Kingdom of Valencia, including the diocese of Tortosa, 14 were theologians and seven were jurists; among those appointed in Catalan dioceses, not counting Tortosa, five were theologians and nine were jurists. While in Valencia the efforts to indoctrinate the Muslim converts, whom we shall discuss below, required theologians to be appointed, the social, political and institutional peculiarities of Catalonia led to the choice of jurist-bishops. In the bishopric of Mallorca, too, where there were fears of having to grapple with the people's purported religious ignorance, the two bishops appointed by Philip II were theologians.⁸⁶

Partly for the same reason, there were more former Inquisitors among the bishops in the Crown of Aragon than in the Crown of Castile. The inquisitors were much more familiar with the problems posed by both the bandits and the "Lutherans" and Muslim converts.⁸⁷

Simultaneously, the Church resources in the Pyrenees and Pre-Pyrenees were reorganised using the assets of

the Benedictines and the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine. Upon the behest of Philip II, in 1592 Pope Clement VIII approved the suppression of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, who had 43 churches in Catalonia, and the regrouping of the 60 Benedictine communities of the *Congregació Claustral Tarraconense i Cesaraugustana* (the grouping of Benedictines from Tarragona and Zaragoza), around 20 of which went on to disappear. In a political and religious operation with profound consequences, the monastery network of Old Catalonia, which had been slowly but surely forged during the Middle Ages, was totally overhauled. In this way, not only could the dispersion of monks around many monasteries in rural areas, which were more difficult to control, be avoided, but a series of Church revenues were also freed up to be earmarked to drive the Counter-Reformation. The assets from the defunct monasteries were used to create the diocese of Solsona, the seminary in La Seu d'Urgell to train educated clergymen for the mountainous zones, and the new college of the Order of Saint Benedict in Lleida, which was supposed to make it possible to provide university training for the monks who would later guide the inhabitants of the villages near the monastery. Revenues were also earmarked to finance the Augustine monastery in La Seu d'Urgell and the Dominican monastery in Tremp, from which preachers were sent to the neighbouring areas, as well as to shore up the revenues at the University of Lleida.⁸⁸

THE MORISCOS

The presence of major contingents of people with Muslim roots was another factor that distorted the efforts to propagate the Counter-Reformation. The Moriscos, as the Muslim converts were called, were Christians descended from the Muslims who had remained on the Iberian Peninsula under Christian domination, called Mudejars. After the participants in the Revolt of *Germanies* forced many of these Mudejars to be baptised, in 1525 Charles V decided that all the Muslims in the Crown of Aragon had to be christened. Officially and by force, the Mudejars disappeared and they all came to be called Christians and then Moriscos.

This issue affected the Catalan-speaking lands in different ways. On Mallorca, all the Muslims had been ousted during the Christian conquest. The islanders' relationship with Islam was only through Ottoman and Berber raids and the return of the Renegados, the Christians who had converted to Islam during their sojourns in Muslim lands.⁸⁹ On Mallorca, religious discrimination affected the descendants of the Jews, called *Xuetes*, the most harshly.⁹⁰

In Catalonia, a very small core of Moriscos remained, barely 5,000 at the dawn of the 17th century. This is quite few if we consider that they did not even account for two

percent of the population of Catalonia, yet locally they were quite important because they congregated in a few towns in the counties of Ribera d'Ebre and Segrià. There are still many aspects in the history of the Catalan Moriscos of which we are unaware, but it is possible that a higher percentage of those living near the Ebro River were undergoing a deeper assimilation process than the Moriscos in Valencia or Aragon.⁹¹

In the Kingdom of Valencia, there were approximately 125,000 Moriscos in the early 16th century, a figure that equalled one-third of the population. Even though they were scattered about the kingdom, they mainly congregated in the inland valleys and inhabited manor towns, where virtually the entire population was Morisco.⁹² Logically, in Valencia the issue of their conversion to Christianity was dealt with quite forcefully.

The forced baptism of the Moriscos posed many problems. How could Moriscos be turned into good Christians overnight? And in fact, was that even possible? Was it plausible for them to abandon traditional practices and beliefs in which religion was mixed in with identity, cultural and social traits? Would they not continue to practise the rites of Islam, which had secular roots, more or less furtively? After all, the Moriscos were not only being asked to attend mass, receive the sacraments and learn Christian doctrine; they were also being asked to change their clothing and language, to consume food that had been forbidden until then and to avoid baths – to put an end to ablutions. In short, they were being asked to abandon the worldview they had held for centuries.⁹³

Over the course of the almost 100 years that elapsed between the Revolt of *Germanies* and the expulsion of the Moriscos, the civil and religious authorities vacillated between two policies in response to these questions: first, indoctrination and acculturation campaigns, and secondly, when the former were considered condemned to failure, projects to disperse the Moriscos in order to shatter their social and cultural cohesion, and even plans for their expulsion. What prevailed in the latter perspective was not only pessimism with regard to the Church's persuasive capacity but also fear that the Moriscos would ally with the Ottomans and Berbers, bringing the war into the heart of the Spanish monarchy.⁹⁴

Pressure on the Morisco population was a basic consideration justifying the overhaul of the diocesan boundaries. This included the creation of the bishopric of Oriola (1564), which allowed the political and ecclesiastic boundaries of the Kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia to be flush with each other, and the division of the bishoprics of Sogorb and Albarrasí (1577).⁹⁵ Despite this, we have little information on the indoctrination campaigns of the bishops in the Kingdom of Valencia, although we do know that they were founded upon two cornerstones: Morisco rectories and missions.

The rectories in the Morisco villages, deployed since 1534-1535, were very meagrely supplied. The efforts of some of the bishops who were more cognizant of the

problem were debated not only because of the Morisco resistance but also because of the dearth of means to execute the missions. This is the case, for example, of the instructions for preaching to the Moriscos and the bilingual Arabic-Spanish catechism published in 1566 by the Archbishop of Valencia, Martín Pérez de Ayala.⁹⁶ A single, poorly paid chaplain, often in charge of a makeshift church in the midst of a wholly – or almost entirely – Morisco community could accomplish little. These rectors' reinforcement through brief missions, usually entrusted to the regular clergy, was largely ineffective, despite the use of the missionaries' habitual tactics.⁹⁷ However, usually neither the rectors nor missionaries spoke Algaravia, the version of Arabic spoken by the Valencian Moriscos, many of whom – especially the women – knew neither Spanish nor Catalan. Nor were the efforts of the special schools for Morisco children, such as the one run by the Dominicans in Tortosa,⁹⁸ very effective.

Persuasion was complemented by repression. In each town, the *agutzil* (minor town official) worked alongside the rector to ensure compliance with the Christian precepts. In the most serious cases, the Tribunal of the Inquisition in Valencia, on which the diocese of Tortosa also depended, vigorously pursued the Moriscos suspected of furtively practising Islam. Their main targets were the *alfaquís*, that is, the leaders of the Morisco communities who had more or less precise knowledge of Islamic law. However, the Valencian nobility did not look fondly upon Christian pressure, particularly on insistence from the Inquisition. The nobility received a large swath of its income from the levies paid by the Moriscos. For this reason, the Inquisitorial actions in Valencia were sporadic: the persecution of Moriscos was constrained in 1543, but starting in 1567, as part of the Spanish monarchy's policy of confessionalisation, it was resumed with particular fury. According to Raphaël Carrasco, between 1566 and 1620, 73.5% of the trials in the Valencian Inquisition were against Moriscos.⁹⁹

At the start of his mandate, Archbishop Saint Juan de Ribera instigated a number of measures to improve the situation, including a pay rise for the rectors. However, the meagreness of the results meant that starting in the 1580s he would become one of the main proponents of the expulsion of the Moriscos, placing himself at odds with the nobles who defended them. In contrast, the Bishop of Sogorb (1599-1609), Feliciano de Figueroa, put evangelisation measures into practice until the very end.¹⁰⁰ The Moriscos – and their feudal lords – endlessly repeated that they needed more time and resources to be properly instructed in Christianity.

On orders from Philip III, the Moriscos were expelled from Valencia in 1609 and from Catalonia and Aragon in 1610. The decision to send them into exile sanctioned the failure of a pastoral policy and revealed the Morisco communities' capacity for resistance and faithfulness to their identity.

CONCLUSION

The failure of the policy towards the Moriscos cannot be extrapolated to the indoctrination campaigns of long-standing Christians. Underlying the status of the issue we have tried to elucidate, it is clear that we are still far from being able to draw a clear map and precise timeline of the penetration of the Counter-Reformation in the Catalan-speaking lands. However, we can state that the situation was not the same in the more urban areas, like much of Catalonia and the archdiocese of Valencia, and in the more rural and mountainous areas. In the case of the Balearic Islands, for example, we know about the situation in Palma but very little about the rest of the island, and even less about Menorca and Ibiza.

In the cities and their surroundings, the religiosity of the Counter-Reformation was abundant thanks to both the network of parishes and the presence of numerous new religious orders and the vigilance of the Inquisition. The administration of the sacraments, preaching and catechism sessions, the production of literary and religious works with religious themes, the actions of the brotherhoods, processions and other liturgical activities took place normally and, in the middle term, most certainly successfully.

However, in rural areas there were factors that objectively hindered the spread of the religious reforms, including displacement issues, the lower ratio of clergy to laypeople, the banditry that hindered the development of pastoral actions and the massive presence of Moriscos in the Kingdom of Valencia. The civil and Church authorities were aware of this situation, which in their minds was aggravated by the proximity of the Huguenots, who were able to take advantage of the stream of French immigrants to make inroads into Catalonia. For this reason, the king, the local authorities, the bishops and many sectors within the clergy redoubled their indoctrination efforts in order to impose a real process of acculturation on the population as a whole. The reinforcement of the actions of the Inquisition, the creation of smaller and more controllable dioceses, repeated pastoral visits by bishops or their agents, the overhaul of the monastic network, the impetus of the religious missions and other measures along the same lines were specifically targeted at remedying these problems. However, further studies are needed to determine whether this process of acculturation was fully successful.

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