Abstract and Keywords

This chapter concentrates on the English Jesuit Mission following its inception in 1580. It opens by examining Jesuit navigation of the issues surrounding religion and politics, arguing that it was impossible for the Jesuits’ activities not to have been considered political due to the entwining of the temporal and the spiritual in England. The second part of the chapter explores the Jesuits’ effect on the character of English Catholicism, both in how it was viewed by outsiders and in how it influenced the community’s self-understanding in relation to the Catholic Reformation. The final section considers the wider contexts of the English Jesuit mission through its links to mainland Europe, arguing that events on the periphery of Catholic Europe helped shape its centers. The English Jesuits were part of an international movement active in a specific national story.

Keywords: Jesuits, England, Catholic Reformation, Edmund Campion, Robert Persons, conformity, Europe, identity, martyrdom, writing

To those of a more historiographically Whiggish disposition, the words of Robert Persons (1546–1610) to the Jesuit general Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615) on May 12, 1594, probably represent the special pleading of one who has been caught behaving as he should not. Explaining the situation in England, Persons argued that the interests of Catholicism were

so bound up and intermingled with those of the State that one cannot deal with the one without dealing with the other, since there is no government in England except that of the heretics, and everything that we attempt to do for the service of religion is in opposition to their government; and even if we wished to keep matters of religion separate from those of state in theory, in practice it is not possible to deal with the one without bringing in the other.¹
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For those suspicious of the whole Jesuit enterprise, then as now, Persons embodied all that was suspect about the Society: a plotter and schemer who was actively political, an extremist intent on undermining legitimate government. Yet anti-Jesuit sentiment like this existed in England even before any member of the Society had stepped foot in the country. Indeed, during the brief Catholic restoration under Mary I (r. 1553–1558), Cardinal Reginald Pole (1500–1558) had resisted any Jesuit involvement in his effort to re-Catholicize England after Henry VIII’s (r. 1509–1547) break with Rome and the more evangelical reformation of Edward VI’s (r. 1547–1553) reign. Admittedly, during the Elizabethan period, Persons could and sometimes did overstep the mark, but this was more a symptom of the peculiar situation in which members of the Society—and English Catholics in general—were operating, rather than any inherent, Jesuit-inspired malevolence. England was not the only confessional state in early modern Europe, but it was distinctive in that the Elizabethan settlement had made the monarch head of the church, thus entwining the temporal and the spiritual to such a degree that those, like Persons, attempting to alter the nation’s religion also had to acknowledge that they were dabbling in its politics. As such, Persons’s words to Acquaviva act as a gateway to considering the English Jesuit mission in three parts. This chapter opens by examining Jesuit navigation of the issues surrounding religion and politics, as alluded to so plainly by Persons. The next section explores the Jesuits’ effect on the character of English Catholicism, while the final part of this chapter considers the wider contexts of the English mission through its links to mainland Europe.

Politics and Religion Entwined

In April 1580, a small party of clergy and laymen departed Rome for England. Among the party were two Jesuit priests, Edmund Campion (1540–1581) and Robert Persons, and one Jesuit lay brother, Ralph Emerson (1553–1604). Far from the swarming Jesuit invasion of legend, these three represented the start of the Society’s mission to England, an endeavor that would define post-Reformation English Catholicism, influence the path of Catholic reform in mainland Europe, and help shape the identity of the still-young Society of Jesus.

Initially resistant to the idea of an English mission, historians have proffered several explanations for Jesuit Superior General Everard Mercurian’s (1514–1580) change of mind. That the decision to launch the mission was tied to an ostensibly political matter is current consensus. The proposed “Anjou Match” was the planned marriage of England’s Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) to Francis, Duke of Anjou (1555–1584), with negotiations taking place in 1579–1581. Where historians digress is Mercurian’s motivation for permitting such an explosive Jesuit entrée into England at a crisis point in Elizabeth’s reign, when many of her closest advisers were warning that the match could be manipulated by the nation’s Catholics, the ensuing furor being debated in the public sphere. John Bossy judged that the Jesuits and their supporters wished to exploit the
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moment, acting as agents of Spanish interest with an opportunity to wreck any possible French alliance. In contrast, Thomas McCoog has argued that the mission’s launch was rooted in the unrealistic hopes of a particular group of England’s Catholics. In their overambition, crypto-Catholics insisted to Rome that the time was right for a Jesuit mission to secure Catholic toleration as part of French demands during the marriage negotiations. However, French insistence on religious toleration evaporated in the aftermath of the mission’s launch, McCoog judging that the gamble backfired disastrously, particularly for the soon-to-be-executed Campion. Though the two historiographical opinions may appear to be diametrically opposed—in support of the marriage versus opposition to the match; acting in unison with France versus a Spanish vision—there is no reason that all these considerations could not have been behind Mercurian’s volte-face on the possibility of an English mission. Perhaps in Mercurian’s judgment he simply could not lose: toleration for English Catholics heralded by Jesuit involvement or, if not, the wrecking of the Anjou Match to the pleasure of Spain—from whence the Society had been born—and its most Catholic king.

Similar attempts to straddle or exploit the hazy line between the temporal and the spiritual defined the early English mission. Having rolled across Europe like a gathering dust cloud, with the fledgling Jesuit mission even stopping off in Geneva for a quick disputation with Theodore Beza (1519–1605), it was unsurprisingly greeted by growing panic within the Elizabethan government. The arrival of Campion and Persons in England was a sensation that gripped the nation’s imagination, for good and bad reasons. In the context of the Anjou Match, as well as a crackdown by the established Church on Protestant sects, the arrival of the Jesuits played on national unease and provided a diverting focus for hostility in a time of political instability. Simultaneously, the Jesuits and their Catholic supporters accentuated the tumult caused by the Jesuit arrival to prove to Rome and the international community both the mission’s worth and the reality of life under a heretic queen. International events only heightened the tense atmosphere. Simultaneous to the arrival of the Jesuit mission was the start of an Irish rebellion, papally financed and Spanish backed, that also involved a small invasion force carrying James Fitzmaurice (d. 1579) and the Catholic polemicist Nicholas Sander (c. 1530–1581). One of the masterminds behind this action was William Allen (1532–1594), founder of the English College at Douai and the man who had started the English missionary enterprise, namely, the sending back of newly ordained clergy to England. Both Campion and the Jesuit General, Mercurian, were unaware of these planned military interventions to coincide with the Jesuits’ arrival. Gerard Kilroy has ventured that the utter panic caused by Sander’s actions in Ireland was ultimately what set the Jesuit mission on a political collision with the state.

Equally, Persons and Campion struck upon a core message that was interpreted by the authorities from a purely political viewpoint. With the heat of governmental crackdown growing too fierce in London, the pair split up and left the capital. The north of England responded positively to the preaching of Campion. Indeed, the two Jesuits were in great demand, frequently preaching two to three times a day. Yet it was the content of their preaching that drew the ire of the authorities. Allen and his opening salvo of missionary
clergy had recommended to the English laity a policy of nonattendance at Church of England services, but it was the Jesuits who made it the central demarcating factor of English Catholic separatism. Recusancy was the refusal of English Catholics to attend the state church, as required by law. It was an attempt to force a universal behavior of separatism upon English Catholics, thus negating the danger of outward conformity or church papistry (or occasional conformity), whereby individuals would physically attend the services, so fulfilling their legal obligation, even though they maintained Catholic beliefs in private. As much as church papists were viewed with suspicion by an edgy state—who judged them as potential fifth columnists—they were also viewed dimly by the Tridentine-enthused Jesuits. Outward conformity could be the first step toward Protestantism; just hearing the allegedly poisonous preaching was viewed as sufficient to start the rot in a Catholic’s conscience. Nevertheless, Peter Lake and Michael Questier have argued that the Jesuits’ insistence on a hardline policy of recusancy was interpreted by the state as a direct challenge to its authority. In the eyes of the Elizabethan government, the queen was the head of the Church of England and the law of the land was that every individual of the necessary age should attend that church on a set minimum of occasions per year. Refusal to do so was thus a rejection of the law, undermining the foundations of the Elizabethan settlement plus, ultimately, the queen’s authority in her own land. Against this, Campion and Persons attempted to move the issue of conformity from the temporal to the spiritual: an English Catholic could be totally loyal to the monarch in temporal affairs, but spiritual practice was a matter of conscience. In modern terms, we may see this as an argument for freedom of conscience, and ostensibly, it was, even if the Jesuits did not necessarily believe that the same held for Protestants in Catholic countries. Thus, as Persons indicated in the quotation at the start of this chapter, the spiritual and the temporal, or the religious and the secular, were so entwined in England that it was impossible to split them. Campion and Persons maintained that they were preaching a spiritual message rather than political revolution, but the state, constructed as it was, could not possibly accept that: the two were indissoluble. While it can certainly be argued that the two Jesuits were most likely aware that this would be the case, it is a far cry from Michael Carrafiello’s claims that the English Jesuit mission was deliberately political from its outset. The mission simply could be nothing but involved with politics. Equally, this does not mean that the Jesuits shied away from debating these matters in public, whether through oration or print. Nor does it mean that political factors, such as the Irish rebellion, were immaterial. Rather, it is to argue as Thomas McCoog has done, that the distinction, “never as clear as the evangelical injunction ‘render to Caesar’ suggested, was particularly ambiguous in early modern Europe.”

Such ambiguity was tested to the limit by some English Jesuits, particularly Robert Persons. As Elizabeth’s reign progressed after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587) in 1587 and the failure of the Spanish Armada in 1588, Persons turned from the conversion of England—forcibly if necessary—to the issue of who would succeed the unmarried queen. With some justification, he could claim this was a religious matter: entangled as the temporal and spiritual were in England, who ruled the country affected
the nation’s Catholics and any chance of their winning toleration. Moreover, based abroad after his escape from England, he and his fellow Catholics had free reign to publish on the subject of the succession, unlike writers in England, where discussion of the subject was forbidden. For Victor Houliston, Persons’s *A Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of England* (1595) was a first step toward a Catholic policy on the issue of the succession rather than the crafty political maneuvering of a scheming Jesuit. Careful to avoid any accusation of treason, Persons sought to promote judicious consideration of what good kingship entailed, with true faith at the core rather than arbitrary divine hereditary right.18 Redefining the idea of monarchy, Persons analyzed the claims of three possible candidates for the crown, with the Spanish Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566–1633) his top choice for a Catholic monarch. Inevitably, the book caused a storm of controversy, at least partly because of its pro-Spanish leanings. Against this position, the Scottish Jesuit William Crichton (c. 1535–1617) pushed the candidacy of James VI of Scotland (1566–1625), floating the idea that he could be won for Catholicism, the faith of his executed mother, Mary, Queen of Scots. James openly courted Catholic support for his candidacy and Persons became hopeful of the Scottish monarch’s conversion. However, once James had produced an heir, Persons recognized that Catholic toleration, rather than winning the kingdom for the church, had become the only remaining option.19

As is well known, the Stuart monarch’s succession as James I of England (r. 1603–1625) was not the harbinger of Catholic toleration but instead continued exclusion, resulting in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the renewed persecution of Catholics. Indeed, the conjoining of the political and the religious led to the execution of the English Jesuit superior Henry Garnet (1555–1606) in 1606. He had learned of the Gunpowder Plot’s possibility under the seal of the confessional and had done all in his power to dissuade the plan. However, Garnet’s refusal to break the sacred seal of confession, and the authorities’ obsession with the Jesuits’ practice of equivocation, led to his death, condemned as he was for being an accessory to the plot.20 Another result of the Gunpowder Plot was the introduction of the far-reaching Oath of Allegiance in 1606. Its purpose has been much debated by historians. For Michael Questier, the oath was designed not simply to root out Catholic extremists by straightforwardly rejecting papal deposing power but deliberately included a theological denunciation of it as heresy, which could be ultimately interpreted as “a rejection of the papal primacy.” In other words, the oath further blurred the division between politics and religion, granting theological powers to James’s oath of political loyalty.21 Against this, Johann Sommerville has argued that the oath was designed to seek guarantees against Catholic political violence, thus sorting the extremists from the moderates, just as James intended.22 Yet Stefania Tutino has gone so far as to judge the oath a “politico-theological weapon” granting James spiritual and temporal power.23 Domestically, the Jesuits stood firmly opposed to the oath’s perceived abrogation of papal authority and simultaneous granting of theological authority to the monarch. Moreover, the matter soon became of Europe-wide import, with Robert Persons and his fellow Jesuit, Robert Bellarmine, pressed into service by the church to counter James’s oath and his defense of it, *A Premonition to All Christian*
Princes ..., which appealed to other monarchs already twitching to bolster a sacralized view of their national sovereignty against a supranational church.24

Such issues and controversies surrounding conformity and loyalty dominated the first decades of the Jesuit mission to England, not to mention the nation’s Catholic community. They illustrate the difficult circumstances facing the early English Jesuits as they sought to accommodate the life of their order and the church’s teachings with the politico-theological reality of early modern England.25 This is not to say that further discussion and shifting of ideas did not take place—see, for example, the attempts of the vice provincial, Henry More (c. 1587–1661), to rework an Oath of Allegiance suitable for the mid-seventeenth-century Interregnum years.26 Nevertheless, the real hammering out and identification of the central issues at stake in England took place before the civil war, which coincided with the period of, if not leadership, arguable Jesuit pre-eminence within the context of the English Catholic mission. Following the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, other orders began to match the Society in terms of prominence if not numbers. For example, the English Benedictines were often the order of choice for the later Stuarts: John Denis Huddleston, O.S.B. (1608–1698), acted as chaplain to the queen mother, Henrietta Maria (1609–1669), and Charles II’s wife, Catherine of Braganza (1638–1705); the monks William Bernard Gregson (1650–1711) and Thomas Augustine Constable (d. 1712) were appointed chaplains to James II (r. 1685–1688). Moreover, James II allowed for the re-creation of a hierarchy of sorts, splitting England into four provinces under the care of individual vicars apostolic. Tellingly, the Jesuits were excluded from these positions and it is marked that no Jesuit has ever been appointed to the English hierarchy pre- or post-Catholic emancipation in 1829. This is not to suggest that the Jesuits disappeared from the scene: they were still significantly prominent for the provincial, Thomas Whitbread (c. 1618–1679), and his socius, Edward Mico (1628/1630–1678), to be victims of the fictitious anti-Catholic Popish Plot in the 1670s. Rather, it is to argue that it was in the early days of the English Catholic mission that the Jesuits were at the forefront of finding a way through the entanglement of religion and politics that was the result of the English Reformation.

Shaping the English Catholic Character

Jesuit involvement in these religio-political discussions helped shape the character of English Catholicism after the Reformation. However, on a more fundamental level, the immediate impact of the Jesuit intervention was increased persecution. The Jesuits’ insistence on nonconformity was the final wrecking ball to the Elizabethan authorities’ hope that a Catholicism starved of clergy would wither and die with the last of those ordained under the Catholic Mary I. The state’s response to the Jesuit mission’s launch was, therefore, increased recusancy fines and attempts to create a more efficient means of chasing recalcitrant papists.27 More notoriously, the Jesuit mission catapulted English Catholics into the sphere of martyrdom. The clergy executed in the wake of the Jesuits’
arrival were not the first to be martyred during Elizabeth’s reign—Cuthbert Mayne (1544–1577), a secular cleric of the English College at Douai, had been executed in Cornwall in 1577, again because of England’s entwining of religious and secular matters—but it was after the events of 1580 that executions of Catholic clergy and some laypeople became more commonplace. In 1581, during the fallout of the Campion and Persons recusancy campaign, an “Act to retain the Queen’s Majesty’s subjects in due obedience” was passed, making it high treason to reconcile, or be reconciled, to the Catholic Church. One priest and six laypeople suffered under this act, but the vast majority of those executed—certainly numbering in the hundreds though the exact figure is debated—were instead condemned under the 1585 “Act against Jesuits, seminary priests and such other like disobedient persons.” This made it high treason for a Catholic priest ordained abroad to enter the country and a felony for anyone to harbor or assist him. As all English Catholic clergy had to be trained abroad due to it being illegal in the country, this meant that, *ipso facto*, all Catholic clergy were traitors. A pattern was soon established, the number of martyrdoms spiking at moments of perceived national crisis.

As well as the Jesuit mission pushing the state toward the creation of these laws, individual Jesuits themselves suffered as a result of them. Their fates were quickly publicized throughout Catholic Europe; indeed, Jesuits played a role in circulating stories of English Catholic martyrs regardless of their affiliation to the Society. The English martyrs captured the imagination of Catholic Europe, the then-recent discovery of the catacombs in Rome in 1578 emphasizing the links between the martyrs of old and the anti-Catholic persecutions going on in England, not to mention the more overarching universal claims of the Catholic Reformation Church. As such, relics of the martyrs became prized objects of veneration. Gathered at the site of execution, these material reminders were either circulated domestically or prepared for transport to mainland Europe. For example, the Spanish noblewoman Luisa de Carvajal (1566–1614) diligently collected relics, including those of the Jesuit Thomas Garnet, and circulated stories of miracles associated with the martyrdoms, such as the wondrous image of Henry Garnet, which appeared on the straw that had soaked up his spilled blood. Robert Persons and Mary, Queen of Scots, both possessed relics of Edmund Campion. Relics of the famed Jesuit were also sent to Rome, while accounts of his martyrdom (also featured in collections on the English persecution in general) appeared in French, English, Italian, Spanish, and German translations, even being circulated in the Indies. The room Campion once resided in during his teaching days in Bohemia became a shrine. Domestically, the theater of martyrdom was an opportunity exploited by several Jesuits as they sought to convey their evangelical message. It represented a final chance to present Catholic doctrine and win converts. For example, the future Jesuit martyr Henry Walpole (1558–1595) dated his conversion to when, as a spectator at Campion’s execution, he was splashed by the condemned’s blood during the orchestrated butchery. Therefore, not only did martyrdom become a defining reality for England’s Catholics, but also the plight of the persecuted English church entered the imagination of Catholic Europe.
More prosaically, the impact of Jesuit writings on the English Catholic character should not be underestimated. However, what were professedly spiritual writings became polemical in the English context. For example, the pastoral and the political were the twin concerns of Persons, a man often castigated for his worldly dabbling. As Victor Houliston has argued, Persons’s works often straddled both worlds. His *Treatise of Three Conversions* sought to show that Catholicism was the historical embodiment of Christianity in England, while at the same time establishing its link to Rome, thus proving the polemically charged issue of simultaneous English Catholic loyalty to the nation and the pope. Houliston argues similarly for Persons’s most popular work, *A Christian Directory*. For Houliston, Persons’s missionary aim was to strengthen the English Catholic community and set recusancy as the gold-standard response to the Elizabethan settlement. His apostolate of writing thus saw him seek complete spiritual renewal in the Catholic community as inspired by the Tridentine reforms. Once again, it is evident how the English context meant spiritual writings were themselves inherently polemical. By appreciating this, it is not difficult to understand Persons’s mortification when the text was later adapted for Protestant sensibilities. While Persons was also involved in more unquestionably polemical texts, the government’s general construal of Catholic spiritual works as political was a matter of concern for the domestic and international Society. For example, according to McCoog, Jasper Heywood (1535–1598), the Jesuit mission’s superior from 1581 to 1584, judged Persons’s publishing activities as harmful to English Catholics; what was supposed to serve and comfort them only further provoked the ire of the authorities. Equally, Claudio Acquaviva, the Society’s general, also seemingly held reservations about the publication of martyrological texts that emphasized the butchery of the English government over the missionary zeal of the executed Jesuits. Nevertheless, in the English context, Catholic spiritual writing could not help but be polemical. A prime example is the Jesuit Robert Southwell’s (1561–1595) *A Short Rule of Good Life*. Designed for use by a busy Elizabethan householder striving to secretly live according to the tenets of Tridentine Catholicism, the very fact that this spiritual work had to be small enough to hide easily and was published on a secret press in 1596–1597 underlines how the authorities judged such spiritual works as a threat.

English Jesuit writings also played a role in shaping the English Catholic community through intra-Catholic debates. These highly charged divisions flared up over particular issues, but all centered on the three themes of how English Catholics should relate to an officially hostile state, who should be the spokesman for that community, and what the program of Catholic reform should look like in England. These divisions started in the latter years of Elizabeth’s reign, when some English Catholics began to see the positions espoused by Rome and its staunchest defenders—notably the Jesuits—as a cause of their oppression. As a result, some clergy and laypeople sought to disown or, at the very least, minimize the importance of papal deposing power in an attempt to underline their peaceful loyalty. The result, according to Thomas Clancy, was that “the Jesuits and their sympathizers seem not only to have been left as the principal defenders of the traditional teaching on papal power, but also to have extended themselves to prevent the expression of the contrary opinion by English Catholics.” The Archpriest Controversy (1598–
was a major manifestation of these divisions. By the 1590s, some English Catholics were expressing discontent with the papalist line held by the likes of Persons, pointing out that while such writers were safe on the continent, Catholics in England had to bear the brunt of government reaction to their discourse. For example, Sir Thomas Cornwallis (1518/1519–1604) complained: “I am very sorry and so (I am sure) be all good Catholics of these lewd libels. It will but exacerbate matters. In nos cudetur faba. They be out of the way themselves and therefore do not regard what we endure.” From 1580, Wisbech Castle, near Ely in Cambridgeshire, had been used to incarcerate important Catholics. By the end of the sixteenth century, it was holding some major Jesuit figures, including the superior, William Weston (1549/1550–1615), as well as anti-Jesuit appellants such as Christopher Bagshaw (1552–1625). Held in a confined space, the resulting Wisbech stirs were inevitable. The disputes even focused on such matters as seating arrangements at meals, the Jesuits sitting where they liked as opposed to recognizing some form of hierarchy, thus prompting Bagshaw to fulminate in 1595 that it was “a thing not practised in any ordered place in the world; a disgrace to all degree and learning and fit for Anabaptists; a seditious mutiny and against the several orders of the Church; a contempt of reverend age.”

At the same time, splits were raging through the English College in Rome, then under the government of the Society. Student malcontents claimed that the Jesuits were attempting to take over the whole English mission, controlling education and siphoning off money for their own purposes. Their hatred for the Jesuits was outlined by the rector of the English College, Alfonso Agazzari (1549–1602), in a letter addressed to Persons in Madrid, dated August 27, 1596: “They have such hatred against the Society that I fear they would be ready to join hands with the heretics in order to be delivered from them.” Thus, Persons returned to Rome in 1597 and became the rector of the college in an attempt to resolve the situation. Yet the idea that the Jesuits were the stumbling block to any sort of government toleration soon took hold. Subsequently, the appellants started to petition hard for Rome to appoint a bishop to represent Catholics to the monarch and to bring the Jesuits and their brand of Catholic puritanism under control. Rome sought to defuse the situation by appointing George Blackwell (1547–1612) as archpriest in April 1598. However, the appellants viewed him as too close to the Jesuits, the result being that in 1602 Pope Clement VIII ruled that the archpriest would not be allowed to consult or cooperate with the Jesuits. Moreover, he would have twelve assistants who would have to be picked from the appellants’ ranks. As Michael Questier has noted, ultimately both parties were suing to Rome over what Catholicism in England was and where it was going because if toleration ever came, they wished to be the spokesperson for and shaper of that community.

Never fully settled, the issue of governance was also at the center of the Approbation Affair (1627–1631). Having taken advantage of the opportunities presented by the proposed Spanish Match of the 1620s, the anti-Jesuit wing of the mission had successfully lobbied for the creation of William Bishop (c. 1554–1624) as the titular bishop of Chalcedon in 1623. However, after little more than a year, Bishop died and Richard Smith (1567–1655), at the behest of Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643) and Smith’s patron, Cardinal
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Richelieu (1585–1642), was consecrated as his replacement in January 1625. Once in England, Smith, as Questier observes, “began a co-ordinated and aggressive campaign to enforce his authority over the entire English Catholic community, and particularly over the religious orders (notably the Jesuits and the Benedictines) and their patrons.” However, there was confusion surrounding the bishop’s exact authority, Smith believing that he had full episcopal power, his opponents claiming that he had only that of an archpriest. One of Smith’s first attempts to assert his position was to decree that no priest could hear confession and reconcile accordingly without the approval (approbation) of the relevant bishop. As he was the said bishop, this meant the Jesuits had to seek his permission to administer the sacrament. As a result, division broke out within not only the clergy ranks but also the lay community, those with Jesuit (or other religious) confessors viewing the new bishop’s act as undue interference, a matter only exacerbated by Smith’s other plans, including his goal to control the finances of the whole English mission. All this ultimately was intended to enhance his own authority and bring the regulars, particularly the Jesuits, to heel. As with the archpriest controversy, the approbation affair was a drawn-out, complex saga that generated reams of correspondence and texts. Ironically, Smith’s presence in England was ended in 1628 by an accusation of treason, the very charge that he and his supporters had leveled against the Jesuits. The dispute continued into the 1630s even after Smith had fled to France and the pope had decided in favor of the regulars over the right of approbation.

Superficially, these two controversies, which were major public outbreaks of disagreements that rumbled on without cessation, can look merely like clerical squabbles with limited significance. However, as Questier has asserted, these arguments constituted “one of the central processes by which Catholicism in England was identified, defined and refined, and through which its meanings and significance were hammered out, during this period.” This was ultimately about what the Catholic Reformation should look like in England and there were two contrasting views, with the Jesuits squarely on one side. Moreover, it was about the identity of English Catholicism. For the appellants, Smith and his supporters, the English church had never been fully vanquished and Catholicism remained a continuous presence from before the Reformation. For the Jesuits, imbued with their global missionary zeal, England was, even if extremely important, one among several worldwide missionary fields, whether as virgin territory awaiting the light of the gospel or as an area lost to the faith in need of re-Catholicization. Moreover, these competing visions for English Catholicism were not confined to ordained men but involved the laity, even affecting marriage strategies, those supporting the Jesuits looking to marry not only fellow Catholics but also ones that shared their religio-political views. Equally, if one follows the Bossy line of growing lay power—that although many of the gentry had originally been sympathetic to the seculars’ cause, they “had by now become friendly to the regulars, conscious of a community of interest, determined to intervene if they saw those interests threatened, and aware that nothing could really prevent them getting what they want”—then it is not hard to see the effect of these debates on the character of English Catholicism. On a wider level, these disputes also took on international dimensions and were mirrored across Catholic Europe. In other words,
these intra-Catholic conflicts, in which the Jesuits were fully engaged, were part of wider debates across Catholic Europe. On the peripheries, these arguments became particularly vital, as in England the Catholic Reformation came up against an officially Protestant state that indulged in periodic outbursts of violence against the Jesuits and their coreligionists.

**An International Mission**

As has been apparent throughout this chapter, it is impossible to separate the English Jesuit mission and, more broadly, the English Catholic community, from activities in mainland Europe. Though separated by the geographical barrier of the English Channel and the theological blockade of the Reformation, the English Catholic character was affected by initiatives in mainland Europe, particularly the Catholic Reformation, English Jesuits playing a vital role in transporting these ideas to Catholic Europe’s peripheries. It could hardly be otherwise when the institutional expressions of the English Catholic diaspora had a strongly Jesuit hue. Members of the Society had been responsible for the founding of the English colleges at Valladolid and Seville, not to mention the transformation of the English hospice in Rome into the Venerable English College, and Jesuits continued to play a leading role in their management and the training of missionary clergy. The English College at Douai had at its start enjoyed close contact with the Jesuits, but following the death of its founder, William Allen, the secular clergy lived in constant fear that they would lose this jewel in the crown of the college network to the Society. In fact, the only English college never to have any Jesuit input and deliberately designed never to do so was the English College or *Convento dos Inglesinhos* at Lisbon. Other orders, like the Benedictines, ran highly significant schools for English Catholic boys, but they were equaled by the Jesuit school of St. Omers. To this can be added the English Jesuits’ own establishments for training those who wished to enter the order, spreading across Louvain, Ghent, Watten, and Liège. Moreover, English members of the Society were involved with the lives of several of the English convents in exile, including the Benedictine convent at Brussels, the Augustinian one in Bruges, and the Sepulchrine house at Liège. Apart from underlining the crucial role of the Jesuits in this aspect of the English mission, the fact that these institutions were founded in mainland Europe for the training of clergy, educating of Catholic children, and spiritual devotion of English women meant that they operated in accordance to the prevailing climate, namely, the Catholic Reformation. In other words, any “product” of these institutions transferred Tridentine practice from Catholic Europe to its peripheries if and when they returned to their homeland. Moreover, these institutions were often in Spain or areas governed by the wider Habsburg network, a link that was evident throughout the opening decades of the English Jesuit mission.
It was not just human expressions of the Catholic Reformation that the Jesuits sent back to England. Apart from their own written work—itself influenced by the latest European theological trends—members of the Society also helped to ensure that work by the continent’s leading Catholic authors made it into England, whether in direct copies or translations. For example, writings by the likes of the Jesuits Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine were circulated in England, while the Jesuits played a significant role in preparing the work of other major Catholic Reformation figures like Luis de Granada, O.P., for an English audience.59 Equally, as Hannah Thomas has discovered, there was a seventeenth-century attempt to create a Jesuit mission library on the border between England and Wales, which contained the latest Catholic Reformation texts.60 Combined with individual English Jesuits’ own scribal activities, these initiatives encapsulate what Nancy Pollard Brown termed “the mission of the written word,” acting as “dome preachers” even when the laity did not actually have access to a Jesuit priest.61

Nor was the Jesuit influence from mainland Europe limited to their geographical locality and written apostolate. Whereas Eamon Duffy has identified post-Reformation England as cut off and parochial, thus resulting in the emergence of few world-class musicians barring the Catholics William Byrd (1539/1543–1623) and Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585), Peter Leech and Maurice Whitehead have argued that St. Omers College was an institution of significance in the musical history of northwest Europe during the seventeenth century.62 Moreover, Andrew Cichy has demonstrated the influence of continental Jesuit musical approaches on English Catholic composers and musicians.63 Equally important was the work of the Jesuit houses, particularly St. Omers, in preserving the material world of English Catholicism; like Jesuit colleges across mainland Europe, it built up important collections of books and artifacts to aid education, both spiritual and secular, plus it preserved sacred objects to help shape an English Catholic identity in danger of being nonexistent due to its diasporic nature.64 English Jesuits were also active in reorienting English devotional practices in line with Tridentine Catholicism, as well as bringing new spiritual approaches to their homeland, including their own Spiritual Exercises.65

As a global order and part of a self-described universal church, it should not be surprising that the English Jesuit mission was shaped by outside influences. Less recognized is the impact of the English Jesuit mission on the wider Catholic and Jesuit world, the trajectory of influence not only one-way. The impression of relics and martyrdoms, plus the politico-theological issues with which the mission was wrestling, have already been mentioned, but other aspects of the English mission impacted around mainland Europe. For example, Edmund Campion’s Rationes Decem was published in ninety different editions across Europe in the century after its first appearance on a secret press in England in 1581; it was still being used to teach theology and rhetoric in Krakow 250 years later.66 The Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1526–1611) was inspired to write a history of the English persecution, giving the Elizabethan Jesuit martyrs pre-eminence in a book designed to influence the policy of the Spanish crown toward England.67 The English Jesuit approach to college drama also chimed with that of the wider Society, not just being influenced by it but also adding to the order’s tradition. For example, in the
seventeenth century Joseph Simons wrote several plays to be performed at St. Omers that were subsequently circulated throughout mainland Europe. Additionally, English Catholic and Jesuit topics caught the imagination of Jesuit dramatists in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. Indeed, in the sixteenth century, English Jesuits had been among the founders of several Jesuit colleges in mainland Europe, and Campion himself had been an important figure in the religious landscape of Catholic Reformation Prague.

However, the very nature of life on the mission caused significant differences between English Jesuits and their European confreres. Apart from difficulties in correspondence with superiors situated in mainland Europe, requiring decisions to be made before official assent could be given, the English Jesuits also had to behave differently, raising the question of what the wider Society may have made of these actions. As noted earlier, there could be tensions with the Society’s leaders about the conduct of the mission, such as in the written work of Persons. Campion and Persons fully recognized that they were members of the universal church, seeking and gaining dispensation from the Tridentine decrees by Pope Gregory XIII (1502–1585) to publish books without including details of the author, place, and publisher. This allowed for the establishment of the secret printing presses in England, which, according to McCoog, altered the written apostolate from being a minor concern of the Society since its foundation to being a central plank of the English mission by the 1580s, hence Acquaviva’s instruction to Henry Garnet and Robert Southwell to print pamphlets “for the defence of the faith and the edification of Catholics.” McCoog has also noted that some Jesuits in mainland Europe barely recognized English Jesuits as being of the same order, such as in issues of residence and attire, the English missioner by necessity dressing in secular clothes rather than those of a cleric. Moreover, one can only imagine what some of the Society would have made of the support offered by several English Jesuits to Mary Ward’s (1585–1645) unenclosed female religious order—a movement operating in direct contradiction to teachings outlined in the Council of Trent.

Conclusion

Despite these differences, the first sixty years of the English Jesuit mission, as well as the plight of England’s Catholics more generally, gripped the imagination of mainland Europe. In the second half of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, the power and the glory of the initial persecutory phase became more muted as the politico-religious movement of Jacobitism, at least as it was viewed by some English Jesuits, declined by the mid-eighteenth century. If not the total inertia of John Bossy’s famous epitaph to the English Catholic community, the mission did slip into the quieter life, with an official blind eye turned to its activities. Nevertheless, the nature of the English Jesuit mission had been set from 1580 to 1640, and the foundations of that period were still operating when the Society of Jesus was suppressed in 1773. Members of the order,
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particularly John Thorpe (1726–1792), remained links between mainland Europe and their compatriots. The battle for the soul of English Catholicism was still an open wound and source of conflict. The English Jesuits’ perception that they were the victims of anti-Jesuit prejudice rather than the genuine concerns of other English Catholics (as first expressed in the archpriest controversy at the start of the seventeenth century) was still alive during the years of suppression and threatened to undermine any persistence of an English Jesuit presence. Yet for all John Bossy’s apparent later disdain for Persons and the papalist vision of the English Jesuit mission, one may take the description earlier in his career of “the history of Elizabethan Catholicism” as a progression “from inertia to inertia in three generations” and extend it to argue that, perhaps, it was the Jesuits’ fading from pre-eminence in the English missionary field that resulted in this phenomenon as the seventeenth century progressed. The English Jesuits had been at the forefront of shifting the Catholic community out of their inertia; when they were challenged as the community’s dominant voice by other Catholic factions from the end of the sixteenth century onward, no one else filled the void with quite such dynamism.

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Notes:

(1) Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu in Rome, Hisp. 136, fols 318r–319v, at fol. 319v.


(7) Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., “The English Jesuit Mission and the French Match, 1579–1581,” Catholic Historical Review 87 (2001): 185–213. This was partly due to the activities of Nicholas Sander: see n. 9 below.

(8) Walsham, “‘This New Army of Satan,’” 41–62.


(10) For the mission’s, and particularly Campion’s, preaching, see Gerard Kilroy, “‘To Wyn Yow to Heaven’: Edmund Campion’s Winning Words,” in Jesuit Intellectual and Physical


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(29) As the English Catholic community became increasingly fractured, the reputation of individual martyrs became more contested depending on which side they had supported: Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., “Construing Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1582–1602,” in Shagan, ed., Catholics and the “Protestant Nation,” 95–127.


(40) This is also known as the appellant controversy, the appellants being the name given to the anti-Jesuit faction of the secular clergy who started appealing to Rome against the Society, demanding the re-establishment of an English ecclesiastical hierarchy.

(41) Quoted in Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London: Blandford Press, 1967), 268. The Latin translation is a variation on the phrase “we will be hit by the bean,” meaning “we will suffer for this.”


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(50) Questier, Newsletters, 7.


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College, 1593–1721,” Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis 61 (2011): 57–82. See also the chapter on music in the missions by David R. M. Irving in this volume.


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(75) Geoffrey Holt, S.J., *The English Jesuits in the Age of Reason* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1993), 60–80. Jacobitism was a movement to restore the Catholic Stuart family as the rightful monarchs following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when James II was deposed and replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange.


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