

Book culture in the Irish mission: The case of father Juan de Santo Domingo (1636–1644)*

Cristina Bravo Lozano
Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Spain

ABSTRACT

The Irish Mission was created in 1610, under the sponsorship of the Spanish monarchy, to preserve Catholicism in the British Isles. The training of priest and friars was heavily reliant on the use of bibliographic material. Short manuscripts, books and printed writings were supplementary tools for the missionaries' confessional work. Their pastoral duty could not be completed without access to readings and sermons. All these resources had to be smuggled as part of other merchandise to avoid the English control. The supply of doctrinal and theological works, chiefly from the Iberian Peninsula and the Spanish Low Countries and their commercial channels, was, however, beset by constant problems. It was the case of father Juan de Santo Domingo and his shipment of books seized in Bilbao in 1636. This study presents one of the few examples of circulation of texts between the Spanish monarchy and Ireland in the framework of the Irish Mission during the seventeenth century.

KEYWORDS: book dissemination; Irish Mission; Ireland; Spain; Flanders.

La cultura del libro en la Misión de Irlanda: el caso del padre Juan de Santo Domingo (1636–1644)

RESUMEN: La Misión de Irlanda fue creada bajo el patrocinio de la monarquía de España para la conservación del catolicismo en las Islas Británicas. La formación de sacerdotes y religiosos encontró

Cultura Livresca na Missão de Irlanda: O Caso do padre Juan de Santo Domingo (1636–1644)**

RESUMO: A Missão de Irlanda foi criada em 1610, com o patrocínio da monarquia espanhola, de maneira a preservar o catolicismo nas Ilhas Británicas. A instrução de padres e frades dependia forte-

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Abbreviations: AGS=Archivo General de Simancas (Simancas, Valladolid); AHN=Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid); ASPF=Archivo Storico di Propaganda Fide (Rome); TNA: PRO=The National Archives: Public Record Office (Kew).

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en los materiales bibliográficos un soporte fundamental. En ese sentido, pequeños manuscritos, libros y textos impresos actuarían como instrumentos auxiliares en su aplicación confesional en aquellos reinos. Por ello, su obligación pastoral se vio reforzada con el acceso y utilización de las lecturas y los sermones. Estos recursos se introducían de forma disimulada, confundidos con otras mercancías, para sortear el control de las autoridades inglesas. La provisión de obras doctrinales y teológicas, remitidas desde la Península Ibérica y los Países Bajos españoles, principalmente, no estuvo exenta de dificultades. Este fue el caso de fray Juan de Santo Domingo y su cargamento de libros, detenido en Bilbao desde el año 1636. Dada la dificultad de hallar fuentes al respecto, el objeto del presente estudio es presentar uno de los pocos ejemplos acerca de la circulación de textos enviados por la monarquía de España hasta Irlanda en el contexto de la Misión durante el siglo XVII.

PALABRAS CLAVE: circulación del libro; misión irlandesa; Irlanda; España; Flandes.

mente do uso de material bibliográfico. Pequenos manuscritos, livros e textos impressos eram ferramentas complementares para o trabalho confessional dos missionários. Na verdade, o seu dever pastoral não estava completo sem acesso a leituras e sermões. Todos estes recursos tinham de ser contrabandeados no meio de outras mercadorias de modo a evitar o controlo britânico. A provisão de obras doutrinárias e teológicas, vindas sobretudo da Península Ibérica e dos Países Baixos espanhóis assim como dos seus canais comerciais, estava, contudo, assolada por problemas constantes. Foi este o caso do Padre Juan de Santo Domingo e do seu carregamento de livros intercetados em Bilbao desde 1636. Este estudo apresenta um dos poucos exemplos da circulação de textos entre a monarquia espanhola e a Irlanda no contexto da Missão Irlandesa durante o século XVII.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: circulação de livros; missão irlandesa; Irlanda; Espanha; Flandres.

In 1644, the Irish father Juan de Santo Domingo, Procurator General of the Dominican order, asked Philip IV to send 200,000 books, at the expense of the royal finances to disseminate “our holy faith in England, Ireland and Scotland.”¹ They were made ready for shipment in the port of Bilbao, taking advantage of the ascendancy of the Confederation of Kilkenny and the favorable conditions that this offered for the Catholic religion. Once there, however, the custom officers raised a number of issues, and the books were detained in the harbor for three years.²

These texts were earmarked for the mission that the Spanish monarchy had been sponsoring in Ireland since 1610 (Bravo Lozano forthc.). The mission’s goal was to mitigate the problems caused by

¹ For a general perspective on religious texts, see Bouza Álvarez (2006).

² AGS, Estado, leg. 2807. Consult of the Council of State. Madrid, 28 June, 1644.

emigration towards the Iberian Peninsula after the military fiasco of Kinsale (1601). This unsuccessful offensive against Elizabeth I forced Philip III to explore new ways of intervening in Ireland. Among other policies, confessional policies would come to the forefront. In 1610, a new initiative for royal patronage that involved the pension granted by the king to the archbishop of Cashel, David Kearney, began to take shape. The purpose of the 1,000 ducats per year assigned through the bishopric of Cadiz, ducats which were to be managed by the chaplain and almoner major Diego de Guzmán, was to send priests and friars to the British Isles in order to preach and administer the sacraments. The Irish colleges attached to Castilian and Portuguese universities, as well as the convents of the respective regular orders were in charge of ensuring that the missionaries underwent solid and comprehensive training.³ Following their vows and ordination, the missionaries started their voyage after a period of obligatory isolation, and carried with them a royal *viaticum* of 100 ducats to pay for the boat and secular clothes, liturgical ornaments and books (Bravo Lozano 2013). The latter, which were the keystone of the missionaries' education, were a complementary tool to aid them in their apostolic work (Gillespie 2005, 9).

The clandestine circulation of Catholic books in Ireland was common practice, avoiding the rules imposed by the Protestant government on the content and distribution of religious texts. In late medieval and early modern Ireland, in addition to being a vehicle for Irish secular culture, bardic poetry contained Christian interpretations which had been regularly employed as an instrument for religious instruction.⁴ Nevertheless, the importation and contraband of continental works, with updated religious views that adapted to the resolutions adopted in the Council of Trent, increased at the turn of the seventeenth century. Most of these new manuscripts and printed texts came from Flanders and circulated through ecclesiastic and other internal networks (Gillespie 1996; 1997, 155; 2005, 63).

Within this complex framework, father Juan de Santo Domingo's petition is one of the few documented examples of the dispatch of

³ For the Irish colleges in the Iberian Peninsula, see O'Connell (1977, 2001, 2007); García Hernán (2006; 2012); Recio Morales (2004); and Fenning (2009).

⁴ On the use of Gaelic texts in late medieval Ireland see Ryan (2011; 2013; 2015).

books from the Iberian Peninsula to Ireland. This isolated testimony is indicative of the impact of the Catholic works sent from Spain to the island. It highlights the extraordinary relevance of literary culture and the multiple uses of reading in this “peripheral mission,” but it also illustrates the logistical problems that deprived Irish clerics of such written material.⁵ This proselytizing activity aimed to transform social approaches to religion, from education in the domestic environment to general catechesis; from the ecclesiastical control of personal reading habits to guidance in the interpretation of the Bible; from the definition of a common confessional identity, where books acted as a key ideological tool, to the indoctrination of the priests and friars sponsored by the Spanish monarchy. However, it is difficult to assess the local distribution of the books, and indeed their cultural impact, in a society crisscrossed by great internal differences and defined by orality. It is also difficult to trace the missionaries involved, because the information available concerning the scope of their activities in Ireland is sparse, especially for some of the island’s regions.

The urgent need to remove the impediments to Juan de Santo Domingo’s work became obvious in 1636. At this time, the number of Catholic priests increased in England, but they were scattered throughout the kingdom. From 1618 onwards, the number of Episcopal appointments in Ireland also grew, following a series of promotions in Rome (Ó Hannracháin 2015, 39, 52–53). Despite these favorable religious circumstances, the imposition of tax by the Spanish monarchy, *servicio de millones*, which was collected by the custom offices in Bilbao and Vitoria, halted the passage of free books to the British Isles.⁶ These ports were among the main Spanish commercial links with northern Europe. Theoretically, the new religious conditions should have resulted in fewer difficulties and a speedy embarkation, but the fiscal measure came to alter the

⁵ For a recent view of the issues surrounding books in early modern Catholicism, see the monograph edited by Maillard Álvarez (2014). For the bibliographic production of the English colleges in Castile and Flanders, see Bouza Álvarez (2002) and the volume edited by Cano-Echevarría and Sáez-Hidalgo (2009). Book culture was as important in the Irish Mission as it was in the better-known “interior missions.” On the consumption of books by the peninsular “interior missions,” see Palomo del Barrio (2011).

⁶ For the tax of *millones* in the 1630s, see Gelabert (2001).

situation.⁷ After the introduction of the tax, all merchandise was to be taxed at a rate of 30 *reales* per arroba⁸ (24 *reales* for custom duties and 6 for the tithe) and the loads of books were stopped and payment demanded of the mule drivers.

Indeed, this is what happened to five bundles and one chest of books, which were left in storage in the convent of the Santa Cruz (Segovia) while they waited to be sent to Ireland from Bilbao in 1636. The new royal tax meant that the price of sending the 1,220 arrobas of books rose by 3,660 *reales*—a price that neither the mule driver who had transported the books, Diego Ortiz de Montoya, nor the Dominicans were able to pay.⁹ These problems halted the shipment, which could not proceed past the port. This placed a heavy burden on the whole operation: “the muleteers cost dear, and the sea is less favorable, and the whole thing becomes more expensive.” The only alternative for these friars was to appeal to Philip IV. The king could exempt them from the payment of the tax in order “that the number [of books sent to the Irish Mission] was not limited, until it could even be considered a little excessive.”¹⁰

The question was examined by the Council of State. Attending to the reasons presented by the Dominican Procurator General, William Fitzgerald, and the aforementioned father Juan, the councilors asked them for the contents of the boxes. They wanted to verify that the shipment was really limited to books, as had been declared and no other products of contraband that could compromise the Anglo-Spanish relations. Without specifying the subject, father William indicated in the inventory that the boxes contained old and new copies “given as charity, for Mass.” He also noted that some of them had been “bought by arrobas in bulk.” After stressing that most of the volumes had been labelled *well used*, he highlighted how beneficial they would be to continue spreading the word in Ireland.

⁷ On the commercial activity of the Basque ports, see García Fernández (2005).

⁸ The *arroba* is an old unit of weight, which corresponded to 11.5 kgs in Castile.

⁹ The *escribano real y del número* of Vitoria, Juan de Ugarte, certified that the mule driver Diego Ortiz de Montoya did not pay the 30 *reales* per arroba for the printed books that he was transporting between Segovia and Bilbao, for which reason the books were left in Vitoria. AGS, Estado, leg. 2799. Certification of Juan de Ugarte. Vitoria, 4 July, 1636.

¹⁰ AGS, Estado, leg. 2799. Father Juan de Santo Domingo to Philip IV. Segovia, 26 August, 1636.

The ultimate purpose of the books was to assist preaching and the religious education of Catholics. Irish missionaries would use them as a complementary tool during their confessional and spiritual work. Their content was often politically charged and thus problematic, but they were only to be disseminated through communal readings and sermons directed by the priests and friars who carried them. In this context, particular note should be taken of the audience for which they were intended, and of how these practices could have a direct effect on the social structure, especially, among the geographically dispersed rural communities. In the seventeenth century, illiteracy was rife, and many learned religious values and prayers through preaching and ecclesiastical exegesis during the liturgy, the teaching of other, more learned, individuals, and imitation by example of local saints that stood as religious models (Gillespie 1997, 20–35; Cunningham 2014, 163). Nevertheless there were some people who could read, and convey different passages of the most widespread text, the Bible, to others. Catholics were compelled to practice their devotions privately and, indeed, use Catholic texts in their pious work of religious intercession (Gillespie 2005, 133–38; 2006, 23; Walsham 2000, 78). For all of these reasons, Philip IV adopted a pragmatic resolution and endorsed the petition, permitting the free embarkation of the books as an act of “charity.”¹¹

Once the tax-related hurdles had been overcome, the next problem was to find ships to take the merchandise to Ireland. The active commercial networks based in the northern Spanish ports were involved in the transportation of missionaries and all kinds of products during the seventeenth century. Although the guards of the Customs Office searched the boats and freights, there were always merchants who were willing to take them secretly. However, after the military disaster suffered by admiral Antonio de Oquendo’s fleet against the Dutch, the commercial flows of traffic were indirectly affected and the free circulation of vessels suffered accordingly.¹² In 1641, in conjunction with the rebellion in Ulster, father Juan de Santo Domingo, now named Procurator General of his order, explained to Philip IV the problems involved in sending a new book shipment

¹¹ AGS, Estado, leg. 2799. Consult of the Council of State. Madrid, 16 September, 1636.

¹² For the context and the consequences of the battle of Dunas, see Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano (1975).

that he had personally compiled. The first insurgent movement of the Irish Catholics (the Confederation of Kilkenny), however, opened new opportunities for their community.¹³ Despite the restrictions imposed by the English and the turbulent political context, attempts were made to rapidly resume the sending of Popish books between Spain and Ireland. However, trading ships became harder to come by due to the death of the Irish sailors who had once used their vessels to bring missionaries and forbidden merchandise to the British Isles. Owing to the ongoing political and religious developments, control measures became stricter and each ship and cargo was examined, especially around Dublin. The growing complications and need for confidentiality forced those involved to pay more for the boats to ensure that the vessels were not seized by the English authorities. Father Juan calculated an expenditure of 2,000 ducats—an amount that was, by all accounts, excessive—for this shipment, but the Spanish king had only provided him with 200 ducats.¹⁴

At any rate, the amount requested from Philip IV in 1644 was again 2,000 ducats, in spite of the fact that the new shipment was much larger (it consisted of 200,000 books). The transport cost for this cargo—that is, excluding all other expenditures—was 2,000 ducats, according to the merchants of Bilbao. It is likely that while the issue was being resolved by the Council of State father Juan continued accumulating books for the Mission. He seemed to be persuaded of the importance of written texts for his enterprise. Faced with a more ambitious task, the Dominican procurator thought that he was justified in asking for the extra money to cover shipment costs. The Stuart ambassador at the Spanish court, Arthur Hopton, was aware of this situation, and informed London that the number of books collected by the friar was above 100,000 volumes, mainly consisting of devotional and instructional works. Although the matter was of great consequence to English interests, he was not able

¹³ The Confederation of Kilkenny, within the context of the English Civil War, was an insurgent movement set up in 1641, when the Catholic elite and the ecclesiastic hierarchy of Ireland tried to take advantage of the circumstances and expel the English army on the island. It was terminated by Oliver Cromwell in 1649. There is plenty of literature about these events. Especially useful is Jennings (1959); Ohlmeyer (1995); Lenihan (1999, 2001); Canny (2001); Ó Siochrú (2005); Pérez Tostado (2008); and the volume edited by Ó Siochrú and Ohlmeyer (2013).

¹⁴ AGS, Estado, leg. 2804. Consult of the Council of State. Madrid, 19 November, 1641.

to say whether royal funds were compromised, and he did nothing to complain to Philip IV about book circulation.¹⁵ Despite the diplomat's lack of information, the Spanish king had indeed conceded to father Santo Domingo 2,000 ducats, given the "pious" nature of the project.¹⁶ In addition, he crossed out any other costs by associating the shipment with the *media anata* of the "tithe of the sea" in Bilbao and other nearby ports in 1645.¹⁷ This new concession provided the Dominican with the means with which to pay the exportation expenses. These printed works were used to improve the Catholic position in Ireland, especially in the political context of the English Civil War and the progressive inclination of the Irish Catholics towards the royalist side.

In line with their stated missionary purpose, it was assumed that the bundles could contain doctrinal, theological and devotional works, breviaries, manuals for confessors, hagiographies and any text that helped to spread Catholicism. However, the record raises certain doubts concerning the content of the boxes: the books were purchased in bulk, and also there was a vast number of volumes. This suggests that the content of the books being carried to the Irish Mission was not restricted to religious topics; printed texts could, of course, be used to disseminate all kind of ideas. Concerning political issues, for instance, some texts appealed to religious tolerance, while others conveyed with controversial arguments and made apologies for the Holy See or espoused the role of the Spanish monarchy as the champion of Catholicism. At any rate, it is not possible to identify exact titles, the topics covered or the language in which these works were written; whether there were books in English, if catechisms in Gaelic, published in Flanders, were included, or whether there were volumes in Latin or in an European vernacular other than English. It is clear that the ultimate purpose of the project was to instruct Catholics through sermons, visual means and individual or

¹⁵ TNA: PRO, State Papers, 94/42, ff. 164rv. Arthur Hopton to Henry Vane. Madrid, 24 April, 1641 (Pérez Tostado 2008, 29–30).

¹⁶ AGS, Estado, leg. 2807. Consult of the Council of State Estado. Madrid, 28 June, 1644.

¹⁷ AGS, Consejo y Juntas de Hacienda, leg. 884 [BD Misión de Irlanda, 1223]. Consult of the Council of Finances. Madrid, 8 February, 1645. Two days later, the monarch reiterated the order in favor of father Juan de Santo Domingo. AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos. Ministerio de Hacienda, L. 7890, f. 50r. Decree of Philip IV to the president of the Council of Finance. Madrid, 10 February, 1645.

communal readings. Everyone involved was acutely aware of the potential of these works and the impact of bringing the written word to places where the voice of missionaries could not be heard (Walsham 2000, 76–77).

The books which were waiting for dispatch in Bilbao must be distinguished from those which were carried by the missionaries on their persons—books which were acquired in Spain with the *viaticum* of 100 ducats, because they were difficult to find in Ireland, where there were no printing houses. For smuggling purposes, these works were often small (sometimes nothing more than printed sheets) and easy to conceal from the English authorities.¹⁸ In other cases, they were short tracts, manuscripts or pamphlets published under other titles, but all of them contained the main doctrinal principles. Catechisms, such as those written by Bonaventure O’Hussey, Florence Conry or Theobald Stapleton, created a doctrinal framework and made the oral transmission of Catholic values easier (Gillespie 2005, 132). They approached religion in simple and clear language, and explained political ideas originating from the Continent, such as Irish loyalty to Rome and the defense of the Irish interests by the Spanish monarchy (Cunningham 2014, 155, 157, 159). Despite the power of this oral method of dissemination, messages thus conveyed were briefer than the Spanish Monarchy thought desirable for the purpose of consolidating Catholicism in the British Isles.

The documental traces left by these writings are limited, and their content was rarely discussed in the different consultations and memoranda. The only references allude to “apostolic and scholastic” volumes paid for with the royal prebend. Also, concerning these writings, the Spanish king played no role in favoring some authors over others. Except for the texts that the Irish Albert O’Farail translated and tried to print unsuccessfully between 1671 and 1693, the specific titles used by the Mission are not known (Bravo Lozano 2016). This is one of the most substantial differences between the Irish Mission and the work carried out by the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in Ireland. The papal missionaries requested the recently printed *Irish Grammar*, the catechism *Lucernam fedelium* by Francis Molloy (Rome, 1676), the English *Catechismus* by Cardinal

¹⁸ For the circulation of religious papers, see Watt (1991) and Gillespie (1995–1997).

Howard and the *Rituale Romanum* published in 1614, amongst other doctrinal works.¹⁹

The circulation of these works was hampered by English laws (Bouza Álvarez 1995). The importation and sale of Catholic works were prohibited in England, and could only be printed clandestinely in local presses. Nevertheless, smuggling books from the Continent was cheaper than printing them surreptitiously on the island. The books were distributed by underground networks, where ecclesiastics sometimes acted as brokers of continental books (Allison and Rogers 1989). For father Juan and his enormous cargo, the legal framework posed a far bigger problem than the obstacles raised by the custom officers in Bilbao. Although the Dominican may have exaggerated the number of books, he did not mention the plan to divide the books into smaller and more discreet boxes. A consignment of 200,000 books transported in one shipment would hardly have gone unnoticed by the British authorities, who would have seized and burned them, frustrating the whole project (Walsham 2000, 87).²⁰

Sometime later, in 1681, two Irish priests arriving from Flanders, one of the main sources of Catholic books, were intercepted by the Plymouth port authorities. The inventory of goods carried out for the inquiry listed a series of books written in Spanish and Latin, manuscripts, letters to different addressees in Ireland and communion services. Thomist philosophical works, Patristic texts, commentaries on the Holy Scriptures by the Portuguese Carmelite João da Silveira, writings of logic, father Suarez's *Metaphysics*, the works of Saint John of the Cross and the Gaelic catechism of Theobald Stapleton were also part of this cargo. Alongside these volumes there were some books of sermons and prayers for different feasts, such as the panegyrics of Diego de Malo de Andueza, *Asuntos*

¹⁹ ASPF, Acta, vol. 57, ff. 62v–63r, 19. Petition of Nicholas Bodkin, OFM. Rome, 21 April, 1687; and ASPF, Scritture Originali riferiti nelle Congregazioni Generali, vol. 497, ff. 272r and 264r. Resolutions of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide addressed to Nicholas Bodkin and father Benedetto Sall. Rome, 21 April, 1687. Benignus Millett has identified petitions to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide concerning books published by different Irish members of the Franciscan Order. Among these, the three works cited in the text were the most popular (2002–2003, 63–75).

²⁰ Despite many of the continental books being destroyed or lost during the successive wars, many are kept in the library of Trinity College Dublin (Pérez Tostado 2008, 30).

predicables of the Benedict Diego Niseno, manuals for confessors like the one by the Franciscan Enrique de Villalobos, and some Anglo-Latin dictionaries.²¹

It is clear that the purpose of these priests was confessional. They had tried to smuggle the latest Catholic literary novelties from the Continent and the re-editions of certain works with which to assist their sermons and other pastoral tasks. The confiscation prevented these books from reaching their destination, but the political and religious thinking behind them continued unabated. The presence of second editions and later works on theology, morals and dialectics (published between 1660 and 1681), which had been written by the most up-to-date authorities from different religious orders, demonstrates that the missionary work in the British Isles was understood to be a global task. In fact, the cargo included texts that had been already disseminated in Madrid; these texts, imported from Flanders, attempted to reproduce the religious discourse of the royal court, taking some works from the “interior missions” as reference.²² These writings also conveyed a political message, by stressing the beneficial effects of Spanish sponsorship of the Irish.

The traffic of Catholic books and liturgical ornaments via the North Sea was constant at the end of the seventeenth century. It involved not only works printed by presses at St. Omer and other European locations, but also all kinds of devotional objects which were loaded onto ships on the Continent and destined for Ireland, England and Scotland.²³ Mixed among other merchandise, just as the

²¹ TNA: PRO, State Papers 29/417, ff. 394rv. List of books of two Irish priests. Plymouth, s. d., 1681.

²² For instance *Instrucciones predicables y morales no comunes, que deben saber los padres predicadores y confesores principiantes en especial los misioneros apostólicos* (Seville, 1673) by the Franciscan José Gavarrí and *Casos raros de la confesión con reglas y modo fácil para hacer una buena confesión general o particular* (Valencia, 1656) by Jerónimo López, were of great importance to the global missionary, although it must be noted that the praxies developed in the British Isles were different to Iberian practices (Palomo del Barrio 2007, 254–55).

²³ The press of St Omer’s college was established and sponsored by Philip III in 1617 at the request of the Jesuit Joseph Creswell, superintendent of the seminaries and residences of the Englishmen in Castile and Portugal. The press secretly provided the English Mission with a great number of books, the significance of which has been analyzed in Bouza Álvarez (2002, 106–107). For the circulation of confessional works in Ireland, see Canny (1982). On the cultural influence of books in the relations between both crowns, see Creen (1985).

missionaries were mixed among the sailors, these objects were smuggled into the dominions of the Stuarts for doctrinal purposes. This was nothing new: a few decades earlier, in 1621, Philip III had ordered his ambassador in Brussels, the Marquis of Bedmar, to hand six holy chalices and six chasubles of damask to father Nicolás de San Patricio, the Irish provincial of Saint Agustin, to celebrate Mass in his fatherland. However, owing to the personal circumstances of the priest and the difficulties involved in the transaction, the items were eventually handed over by the royal jeweler in Madrid.²⁴ The ornaments were distributed among the Irish communities and served their purpose over the following 22 years. When they were worn out, and “there were no replacements, nor the possibility to make them,” another Augustine father, Maurice Conald, asked Philip IV to:

renew these notable blazons of piety and devotion, giving six more in their place, decorating them with his name and coat of arms, like in the previous batch, so that everyone who said Mass in the kingdom of Ireland with them on, and those who heard them prayed to God for the prosperous success of Your Majesty and his dominions.²⁵

Given the devout character of the petition and that these items could bring to the Mission, the king decided to send ten chalices, ten missals and other ornaments from the Low Countries. The Dutch route was the cheapest and the items could be delivered “more securely and promptly.”²⁶ This is not an unimportant detail, as sometimes these deliveries were intercepted. In 1683, the London harbor authorities confiscated a suspicious cargo “loaded on a vessel from Flanders.” Amongst other goods, the shipment contained three (non-inventoried) boxes of Catholic books; the customs report, however, specifies that the boxes contained “several crucifixes, breads and pictures.”²⁷ There are no more references to this

²⁴ AGS, Estado, leg. 2751. Consult of the Council of State. Madrid, 21 January, 1621.

²⁵ AGS, Estado, leg. 2803. Consult of the Council of State. Madrid, 23 January, 1640.

²⁶ As the councilors emphasized in their consultation, it was better to send the chalices from Spain or Flanders “for the risk that exists to make them there and the secret that it is necessary for it, not being so this as the ornaments because they are able to make them without more noise than the *puntadas*.” AGS, Estado, leg. 2803. Consult of the Council of State. Madrid, 25 August, 1640.

²⁷ TNA: PRO, State Papers 29/423, f. 198. Information on the confiscation. Whitehall, 16 April, 1683. In 1617, other shipmen that came from Spain were seized in Cork.

consignment, except that it was seized, and thus it could well have been used to decorate a private chapel. Beyond their practical function, all of these resources and visual aids were aimed to cause a sensation among the recipients. Images were used to indoctrinate Catholic principles by triggering synesthetic reactions. Missionaries were encouraged to support their sermons with all kind of religious representations, including literary and non-literary filigree work (Gillespie 2005, 151).

Three years later, the English Secretary of State, the Count of Sunderland, received a list of books and other items from the Mayor of Lincoln, which was one of the main Catholic cities in the kingdom. During a routine search of the property of John Tarleton, officials found different manuals and the work *Key of Paradise*, bound in fillet and vellum, the catechism of Henry Turberville and that of the Cardinal Roberto Belarmino, books of prayers to the Virgin Mary and Saint Bridget, missals and other theological works such as *Entertainments for Lent*, *Remonstrances*, *Abstracts*, *Following of Christ* or *Why are you a Catholic?* Consisting of 158 volumes in total, this shipment had entered Lincoln without a problem. The accession of the Catholic James II to the throne removed the obstacles that had hitherto barred the entrance of Catholic books. In fact, "His Majesty's pleasure is that the Mayor of Lincoln do forthwith give order for restoring the above-mentioned books and papers to Mr John Tarleton."²⁸

The evidence, both from Ireland and England, indicates that a considerable number of books reached the British Isles from the Continent during the 1680s. Despite the fact that orality continued being the predominant means of indoctrination in the largely illiterate Ireland, these books provided effective support for the sermons delivered by the missionaries sent from Spain. As such, the books gave the Irish Mission an extra or auxiliary tool with which to disseminate the latest theological ideas and thus have a real impact. By means of these writings, objects and images, and the dissemination work carried out by the faithful, a widely scattered

According to the customer office's account, it had several religious images together with printed books, described in detail (Grosart 1887, 116–17).

²⁸ List of books and other things for John Tarleton. Whitehall, 13 April, 1686 (Timings 1964, 100).

public could be reached, the religious message propagated and the definition of a spiritual model with which to shape the public conscience achieved (Gillespie 2005, 146–47).

The cargos compiled by father Juan de Santo Domingo in Bilbao (the safe delivery of which is unconfirmed), the purchase of books with the *viaticum*, as well as the lists of volumes in the customs record, highlight the active circulation of books towards the archipelago. This movement acted as a beacon for people to regularly send Catholic writings between Spain and Flanders in support of the missionary exercise. Writing and preaching were united behind a form of apostolic action that was particularly effective in that region. Jerónimo López's definition of "deaf missions" in his *Casos raros de confesión*, is applicable here, where the books turn into silent and discreet agents of the Spanish monarchy (Bouza Álvarez 2008).

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Author's contact: cbraloz@upo.es

Postal address: Universidad Pablo de Olavide - Ctra. Utrera, km. 1 – 41013 Seville, Spain

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