Merchant Priests: Theologies of Commerce in Jesuit Denunciations

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On May 18th, 1758, Cardinal Saldanha of Portugal expelled the Society of Jesus from all Portuguese reigns and dominions, declaring that the Jesuits were guilty of having exercised "illicit," "public," and "scandalous" commerce.[1] This kind of accusation was nothing new in the history of the Order. Since its formation in the mid 16th century, the Company of Jesus had faced opposition from sugar planters, rival mendicant orders, and protestant observers who decried the Jesuits' alleged wealth, which they argued was a direct result of royal favors and monopolistic commercial practices. Yet, in his study of the Jesuit's finances between 1540 and 1750, historian Dauril Alden came to the conclusion that these tales of fabled wealth were largely "chimerical."[2] When the Jesuits in Japan and Mexico turned to trade in silk and tobacco, they did so as a risk management method. Royal funds could and most often did dry up, and the Jesuits created other sources of income in order to sustain their colleges and other institutions. The warehouses of "fabulous" goods that critics condemned supplied numerous colleges in the surrounding areas with basic goods, and while Jesuits in Portugal and Brazil did eat well, those in Mozambique or China often dined on substantially simpler fare. This discrepancy between perception and reality presents an opportunity to explore early modern anxieties surrounding commerce, wealth, and salvation. For however much profit the Jesuits did or did not make, critics clearly believed that the Jesuits embodied the ways in which great wealth and commerce could corrupt even the holiest of institutions.

Though their net wealth and monopolistic activities might have been chimerical, the Jesuits did present a threat in a number of other, less material ways. Many denounced the real

[1] D. Francisco de Saldanha, "Carta Pastoral de Cardinal Saldaña," in *Causa Jesuitica de Portugal*, (Madrid: Imprenta Real de la Gazeta, 1768), 158-171.

[2] Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond 1540-1750*, (Stanford University Press, 1996), 218. Alden's highly detailed social history is one of only a handful of studies that looks into the Jesuits' economic activity. Originally intended to be the first in a three part volume, the work ends just before the Jesuits' expulsion in the 1750's and, as a social and narrative history, does not dwell often on the motivations, theology, or world views that prompted the Jesuits or their critics to engage one another.

political influence the priests carried as confessors and teachers to the powerful. In Spanish and Portuguese America, the Jesuit position on indigenous labor angered planters, and their theological positions on free will threatened other mendicant orders such as the Dominicans. Some historians even suggest that the well-traveled Jesuits might have experienced a strain of early modern xenophobia, similar to that experienced by the Jewish Portuguese Nation.[3] Still, the Order had managed to weather these complaints through the early modern period, partially because its members enjoyed the support of royal patrons and the papacy. By the mid-18th century, however, though their commercial practices had not changed significantly, the climate in Europe and the American colonies was such that the Jesuits could no longer defend themselves against attacks. Why, in the 1750s, did these denunciations finally take? How had the conversation changed in such a way that the Jesuits could no longer effectively defend themselves and the papacy could no longer support their positions?

Historians have generally explained 18th century denunciations of the Church in the context of immediate conflicts over access to material and political resources.[4] This paper argues that in addition to the immediate political context, early modern denunciations of the Order's commercial activity should also be explored in the context of centuries-long contestations over the morality and the theology of commerce. At least until the late-18th century, early modern people did not make a clear distinction between theology and economy.[5] Accordingly, Jesuit

[3] Alden and Charles Boxer point out that New Christian merchants and Jesuits came together at certain points over their shared "status as unconventional minorities who were convenient scapegoats for the failings of the state and its agents" and "their more rational views regarding the economic development of the empire." Other works on the topic include an edited volume about the way in which the Jesuit expulsion and the Jewish emancipation were born out of the same state-centered discourse that sought to homogenize and centralize the nation. Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 126.; *"The Tragic Couple:" Encounters between Jews and Jesuits*, edited by James Bernauer and Robert A. Maryks, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014).

[4] Maurice Whitehead, "From Expulsion to Restoration: The Jesuits in Crisis, 1759-1814." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly* 103, no. 412 (2015 2014): 447-461.;

[5] While there was no clear distinction between theology and commerce, this paper does touch upon contestations over what early modern people considered to be the proper realms of secular and spiritual authority. Even before

neo-scholastic theologians like Luis de Molina were among the first to theorize new commercial practices, but always within a theological frame. Similarly, merchants and planters concerned with their souls went to priests and read published pamphlets to learn how to conduct their trade in such a way as to secure their eternal salvation.[6] As such, when merchants critiqued the Jesuits, they did so in the key of moral theology, and the Jesuits responded in kind.

Denunciations and Jesuit responses are a window into the anxieties that commercial activity could provoke in relationship to morality. Within the genre, Jesuits and lay commercial actors argued for their own definitions of just commerce. Critics began to denounce the Jesuits' commercial activity as soon as the order formed, and the denunciations continued up until and beyond the order's expulsion in the 1750s. Historians have generally assumed that a similar enough set of concerns and anxieties fueled denunciations throughout this period.[7] This paper, instead, begins from the assumption that the meanings, legalities, and claims embedded within 16th century denunciation were necessarily distinct from those that appear in the 18th century. I suspect that by tracking the changing tropes, meanings, and theological concerns contained in denunciations of the Company's commercial activity, one can also track changing notions of private and corporate property, the common good, and secular and spiritual spheres of authority. As such, this paper compares denunciations from 1587 to those in the mid 18th century. While fully recognizing that each denunciation must be understood in terms of its historical context, it is possible to begin to think of changes and continuities over time, even given a small sample set.

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the Enlightenment, early modern people recognized that the spiritual authority of the Church on earth had its limits. The spiritual authority of God, on the other hand, did not.

[6] Diego Alonso-Lasheras, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, Volume 152: Luis de Molina's De Iustitia et Iure: Justice as Virtue in an Economic Context*, (Leiden, NLD: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011), 21.

[7] See Alden and Luke Clossey as examples. *The Making of an Enterprise*; Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

A close reading of documents shows that, in the late 16th century, critics and Jesuits were speaking a common language based on the understanding that commerce, though potentially dangerous to the soul, could and should serve the common good. Critics argued against the specific ways in which the Jesuits went about their commercial activity, but did not reject their involvement in commerce as a whole. The Jesuits themselves did not undertake their commercial activities without thought to the common good. Luke Clossey writes that because they were predominantly European, historians have sometimes assumed that to understand the Jesuits requires less ethnographic work than to understand the indigenous people whom they worked with. Clossey writes that "it is difficult to understand what propelled them to take unpopular positions and endure criticisms" without first understanding that they saw their mission to be fundamentally eschatological.[8] For the Jesuits, earthly activities like commerce were, in fact, serving a higher purpose: salvation. Their 16th century critics did not question this theological paradigm so much as whether the Jesuits' specific actions were, in fact, serving that higher purpose.

By the 1750s, however, critics in both the Church and lay communities began to rhetorically and then legally define clerical commercial participation *in toto* as immoral, though from different angles. The field of contestation became not so much about the ways in which clerics participated in commerce but about whether clerics should participate at all. Cardinal Saldanha, for instance, reemphasized the damage that involvement in money and commerce could do to the soul, arguing that those with a higher moral calling should not involve themselves in commerce. In doing so, he undid the work of 16th century Jesuit theologians, who were able to offer examples of instances when commercial activity was not anathema to salvation and therefore not anathema to clerical work. Lay observers also decried clerical

[8] Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions*, 10.

commercial activity, but from the angle that clerics had an unfair advantage in the marketplace. Clerics could set rules for morality in commerce that privileged themselves and hurt lay businessmen. The Jesuits' own commercial activity compromised their moral authority, so it was better for all if they remained separate and allowed the state to step into the regulatory role. The morality of commerce would now be the state's to define. Together, the discourses of Enlightenment thinkers and Church officials effectively marginalized and eventually suppressed the alternative theology of economy that the Jesuits articulated and lived.

This paper begins with an overview of Jesuit theological discourse on commerce, labor, and property. In order to understand their positions, it is necessary to understand the Jesuits' specific brand of moral reasoning, one heavily influenced by Luis de Molina. With their theological background in mind, this paper will then turn to specific examples of how Jesuits and laymen worked out a theology of commerce on the ground in the 1587 moment and then again in the 1750s.

Ecclesiastics' relationship to money had been a field of debate since the Church's inception. As recently as the late Middle Ages, the Franciscans had been at the center of their own Christendom-wide debate about ecclesiastical poverty. In 13th century Iberia, Alfonso X of Castile's *Siete Partidas* spoke to the debate by briefly outlining proper ecclesiastical commercial activity. While specifically addressing canon law, in the *Partidas*, civil law and canon law aligned as both codes inhabited "a unitary state" where the goal of law was to realize justice, or "the religious and civic good of its people."[9] While the *Partidas* acknowledged that there were temporal categories and spiritual categories, the codes declared that "when temporal affairs," such as buying and selling, "are united with those that are spiritual they are merged in the latter,

[9] Robert I. Burns, ed., Samuel Parsons Scott, trans., *Las Siete Partidas Vol. 1: The Medieval Church - The Worlds of Clerics and Laymen*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), lii.

as spiritual things are more noble than those that are temporal."[10] Care for the soul and vigilance against sin were the first order of importance. According to the *Partidas*, in regard to the temporal matter of commerce, it was difficult for a man "to engage in trade where some sin is not committed either on the part of the purchaser or on that of the vendor." As such, the *Partidas* cautioned both laymen and ecclesiastics against the "wicked" branches of trade, such as usury, simony, and those trades where merchants bought and sold goods with a desire to make a profit. Ecclesiastics could, however, sell their skill as a writer or make and sell handiworks such as baskets, "provided this was done in a suitable way."[11]

In the 13th century, then, the crucial distinction between moral and immoral trade was the way in which the trade was conducted. Basket weaving ecclesiastics would most likely exchange their handiwork through the barter system in the town market, whereas merchants conducting large scale trade might need to engage in usury, or credit exchange. By the 16th century, however, monetary exchange had become an integral part of all Iberian commerce. The Peninsula's encounter with the New World had pushed a large influx of bullion into the European economy, created new trades in bulk commodities, and monetized the Iberian economy. These developments engendered new commercial practices and, with them, new anxieties over their morality. For example, practically, it did not make sense to ship barrels of gold across Spain or back and forth across the Atlantic, so exchange bills became more common.[12] But exchange bills also provided more chances for fraud and injustice, and the Church continued to frown upon the practice, even as merchants looked for a way to reconcile their necessary practices with Church teaching. As trade began to extend beyond simple barter exchange, money and commerce became an even more central concern of moral theologians like Molina. While bartering

[10] Burns and Parsons Scott, *Las Siete Partidas*, 174.
[11] Ibid., 104.
[12] Diego Alonso-Lasheras, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*, 18.

involved an agreement between two individuals, money exchange practices such as credit and interest became a question that affected all in the community. Thus, the justice of these practices, that is, whether or not they benefited the common good, was a matter for moral theologians to debate.

Molina's 1588 published work, *De iustitia et iure*, was a product of this rapidly changing commercial and theological moment. Along with his lived experience of the Iberian world, an intellectual tradition steeped in Thomasine theology and the Roman legal concept of justice both framed Molina's moral reasoning. First, historian Diego Alonso-Lasheras writes that the concept of justice stood as the law's desired end in both theological and civil legal thought. According to the *Siete Partidas*, a just society was a peaceful one in which each man could "live well, profit from what belongs to him, and live regularly according to the pleasure of God."[13] Roman and Christian law conceived of society as an organic, ordered, hierarchical, and corporate body, held together by "natural sympathies."[14] A just society was not one in which all men were equal, but rather where each was able to fulfill their *estado*, or role, in society. For example, in addressing poverty, early modern people did not speak of lifting the poor out of their station. They had their place in the corporate body and would be rewarded in the spiritual realm. However, by their station and role, they also had a right to access the common "goods of creation" through alms and labor.[15] For the scholastics, the individual's good and the common good were not at odds, for the achievement of the common good was an achievement for all individuals. If the individual experiences a gain, the common good advanced as well, and vice versa. Conversely, if an

[13] Burns and Parsons Scott, *Las Siete Partidas*, 5.
[14] Antonio M. Hespanha, "Las categorías del político y de lo jurídico en la época moderna," *Ius Fugit: Revista interdisciplinar de estudios históricos-jurídicos* 3-4, (1994): 63-100, 66.
[15] Alonso-Lasheras, *Luis de Molina's De Iustitia et Iure,* 100.

individual was not able to "live well" according to their station, the entire commonwealth suffered.

The goal of moral theologians was to discern how to achieve this just society, which they conceived of as the achievement of not only humanity's natural goal but its supernatural goal as well. In discerning the justice of commercial activities, Molina drew on both Thomasine theology and his experience of the world in order to arrive at his conclusions. In 16th century Iberia, the cultural value of manual labor and first-hand experience was on the rise, and the Jesuits, exhibiting this trend, believed that work was central to the encounter with God. At least as much as contemplatives and monastics, a person who labored in the world as the Jesuits did was "relevant in the economy of salvation."[16] However, unlike contemplatives, as missionaries, confessors, and teachers, the Jesuits lived a spiritual lifestyle in which they constantly experienced the contingencies of the world. As a consequence, they developed a flexible, sometimes deemed by historians as "pragmatic," moral reasoning that reflected their reality. Molina reflected and informed the legal and theological casuistry with which the Jesuits often arrived at conclusions in the field. Members of the Order were known, and often disparaged, for making judgments on a case by case basis rather than reasoning from a set of universal rules. As such, the Jesuits emphasized a close observation and assessment of the facts.

Molina's own conclusions on usury reflected circumstances on the ground. Alonso-Lasheras notes that in deciding the justice of various Portuguese trade practices, Molina often went down to the docks in Lisbon to discuss trade practices with merchants.[17] Through his casuistic method, he was able to reconcile the realities of late 16th century trade with the theological positions of the time. In his reckoning, done rightly, increasingly widespread

[16] Alonso-Lasheras, *Luis de Molina's De Iustitia et Iure*, 86.
[17] Ibid., 72.

commercial practices such as usury could support the common good. Following Aquinas, Molina reasoned that that which is binding and just, or *ius naturale,* stemmed from the essential nature of a thing, which did not change. Natural law arose out of *ius naturale*, as opposed to positive law, which arose out of human or even divine command, though positive law could only be binding if it did not contradict natural law. Molina argued that some things constituted intrinsic evil, *intrinsice sunt mala*, and therefore could not be excused under any circumstances. Other things were only *intrinsice mala*. In these cases, the circumstances around a thing could change the nature of the thing itself, and thus change how natural law was applied. As an example, Molina argued that usury, or receiving profit from a loan, was an *intrinsice mala* as the value of a good does not change simply because it is lent. However, if the circumstances change and prices go up over time, then in order to repay the loan at equal value, the borrower would have to pay out at a higher rate or larger quantity. As such, the *ius naturale* of the act of taking in more than one lent changes and is no longer intrinsically wrong.[18]

Usury represented only one debate among many that surrounded the Jesuits and their commercial activity. Their style of moral reasoning often put them at odds with other parties, both lay and religious, in regard to the trade activities of the Order. Alden writes that "somehow [critics] assumed that the vows of personal poverty that Jesuits and some other ecclesiastics took represented commitments to beggary by their organization."[19] This paper now turns to an analysis of debates between Jesuits and a planter laymen in order to recover the "somehow" that explains why critics and Jesuits had such different perceptions of Jesuits commercial activity.

"For the Good of the Land and its Inhabitants," Bahia de Todos os Santos, 1587

[18] Alonso-Lasheras, *Luis de Molina's De Iustitia et Iure*, 67-84.
[19] Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 606

In 1587, Gabriel Soares de Sousa traveled from Bahia to Madrid to petition the King for the support he needed in order to search the Brazilian hinterland for silver mines and, though not explicitly stated, indigenous slave labor. The planter's two careers, planter and backwoods explorer, both demanded indigenous labor, and historian John Monteiro notes that his struggle to gain access to that labor took him often into the Bahian backlands.[20] Labor demands also brought Soures de Sousa into contact with the indigenous people in the Jesuit missions who sometimes worked his plantation or served him on expeditions. Today, Soures de Sousa is known best not as an adventurer but as the author of one of the earliest and most detailed descriptions of the Bahian coast and the Tupinambá, *Memorial e declaracao das grandezas da Bahia de Todos os Santos*. Less well known, he also presented 44 charges against the Jesuits of Bahia, a text which provides insight into the conflict between planters and the Jesuits over access to Indigenous labor, enslaved or free. The text in circulation today is accompanied by a point-by-point defense, written in 1592 by "the same Jesuits" whom Soures de Sousa criticized. These included Marçal Beliarte, the Jesuit provincial at the time, Rodrigo de Freitas, the provincial procurator, and Luiz da Fonseca, the College Rector.[21] The heart of the conflict centered on the future of Indigenous labor in Bahia, but within the text, Soures de Sousa and the Jesuit fathers also engaged in a number of theologically rooted debates surrounding ecclesiastical access to commercial trade, wealth, and property.

At first, Soures de Sousa wrote, the Bahian community welcomed the Jesuits in because they were "exemplary" in their values and "suited the good of the land and the inhabitants

[20] John M. Monteiro, "The Heathen Castes of Sixteenth-Century Portuguese America: Unity, Diversity, and the Invention of the Brazilian Indigenous," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80.4 (Nov 2000): 697-719.
[21] Gabriel Soares de Sousa, "Capítulos de Gabriel Soares de Sousa contra os padres da Companhia de Jesus que residem no Brasil," ed. Serafim Leite, S.J., Anais daBiblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro 62 (1940): 336-381.

thereof."[22] The King granted them unoccupied lands and the inhabitants of the area gave alms to the Jesuits and donated tracts of land in order to support them. Soures de Sousa looked back upon this period as a time of "love and harmony" when "all was quiet and loving." But by their subsequent actions, the Jesuits "destroyed" that peace.[23] The Jesuits, he wrote, held "many properties that pay them much income" and an estate from which "they acquired their necessary provisions." In addition, however, they had mills, corrals of cattle, and access to "five villages of *forros* [mission] Indians" and their services. This was further in addition to "houses of pleasure for their recreation" and 4,500 cruzados per annum from the King. Soures de Sousa rounded out the list by emphasizing that "they do not have necessity of any of it."[24] In his juxtaposition between that which was necessary and that which was not, Soures de Sousa made the implicit legal and moral argument that, were the circumstances different and the Jesuits were to have true need, their holdings would be tolerated.[25] The planter's nostalgic description of the Order's history in the area also contained the legal claim that the Jesuits had disturbed the harmony and disrupted the common good. As such, in order to restore justice, authorities would need to take action to rectify the situation.[26]

The Jesuits, Freitas, Beliarte, and Fonseca, responded by arguing that the circumstances that Soures de Sousa described were not, in fact, the reality. The fathers lived "in poor houses of stucco and earth," without "any other comfort, nor money that suffices to buy all that they

[22] Soares de Sousa, "Contra os padres da Companhia de Jesus," 348.
[23] Ibid., 349.
[24] Ibid., 350.
[25] The concept of need figured into numerous debates over wealth in the viceregal period. Cases were often decided upon the presence of need, which though seldom quantified in cases, seems to have had a clear enough symbolic meaning to factor in as evidence for or against a plaintiff. See Ruth McKay, "*Lazy Improvident People": Myth and Reality in the Writing of Spanish History*, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York, 2006), 123, 127.
[26] Brian Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indigenous Justice in Colonial Mexico*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 169.

need."[27] What's more, the college was always overdrawn and in debt, a statement corroborated by Alden's statistical research into the financial state of most Jesuit colleges. The mills they needed because "not everything could be bought with specie," suggesting that the Jesuits traded in the local bartering economy by offering sugar planters the use of their mill.[28] The circumstances and perception of need, once again, determined whether the commercial activity of the Jesuits was, in fact, licit.

For all his lamenting over the Jesuits' wealth, Soures de Sousa did not question the priests' right to own property, per se. What he objected to was the way in which they used their influence to acquire land at the expense of locals. As evidence, he related one tale in which a local inhabitant, Garcia de Avila, agreed to donate a parcel of land a few leagues from Bahia to the Jesuits. In return, the Jesuits would pray 200 masses for the souls of Avila and his wife. Soures de Sousa did not question the acquisition of the land itself. The exchange of spiritual services for material donations was an integral part of Catholic spiritual economy in Spanish and Portuguese America, as Kathryn Burns has demonstrated.[29] He did, however, severely question the way in which the Jesuits had attempted to carry out the contract. Avila believed the Jesuits had deceived him, going out onto the land to take possession of it before receiving his final consent. They had then tied him up in court proceedings. The Jesuits responded to this accusation by pointing out that the couple had already signed the contact, and it was only at the suggestion of locals who were ill-disposed towards the Jesuits that the Avilas attempted to back out of the contract. The land was "necessary," so the Jesuits engaged legal aid to enforce the agreement. This anecdote offers a window into local contestations over land, which naturally

[27] Soares de Sousa, "Contra os padres da Companhia de Jesus," 350.
[28] Ibid., 364.
[29] Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

included the Jesuits. Their heavy-heavy handed influence made these exchanges particularly galling to Soures de Sousa, but he did not question their right to engage in the acquisition of land.[30]

As part of their self-defense, the Jesuits anticipated the critique that they might own their property privately, taking great pains to point out that they owned the five villages, or aldeias, only as a community. "The aldeias" they wrote, "are of the king and of the people, and the Indians serve us for their stipends," as well as in return for spiritual services, such as confessions, religious education, and salvation.[31] According to Freitas, Beliarte, and Fonseca, the land was held communally and for the good of all who lived in the aldeias, though it appears that Soures de Sousa was not convinced that the Jesuits were not lords of the aldeias.

In making their defense, the Jesuits drew upon metaphysical understandings of private and common property. For the scholastics, common property was the original state of things as God had created it. Common property meant that all members of the community had full rights to all the things in Creation. Private property, on the other hand, was a postlapsarian necessity. Molina identified the natural right to property, or *dominium proprietatis*, as man's free will and moral faculty that "allowed him to use Creation for his own good."[32] *Dominium proprietatis* was then divided into *dominium particulare*, private property, and *dominium universitatis*, common fields that anyone could use, though this did not extend to the property of public entities that were used as if they were private. Because common property was natural and prelapsarian, what had to be judged as valid and moral were the exclusions and accumulations of private goods. Molina allowed that private property was licit in that private property was a postlapsarian means to a salvific end and a product of human law. It was practical, but also moral, because private

[30] Soares de Sousa, "Contra os padres da Companhia de Jesus," 355.
[31] Ibid., 366.
[32] Ibid., 103.

property encouraged people to work to produce goods that could be enjoyed by all Creation, especially the weakest of Creation. However, when the division of goods did not lead to this end, then private property was certainly a problem of justice.[33] Because God granted people free will to sin, moral people engaged in commerce had to constantly guard themselves against practices that might cause them to sin and upset the common good.

By tying property to creation and free will as opposed to redemption and grace, Molina could argue that even unredeemed gentiles and heathens with no knowledge of God held dominion over their territory. Indians were rational creatures subject to God's natural law, under which property ownership also fell. Lasheras writes that Molina understood that the indigenous held property commonly and as willing vassals of the King. Therefore, he would have agreed that they maintained dominion over their own property. Freitas, Beliarte, and Fonseca's argument falls in line with Molina's understanding. The native people had retained dominion of the aldeias as natural law dictated. Within the villages and the *respublica christiana*, the Jesuits argued that they simply promoted the common good by ensuring the temporal and spiritual needs of the African slaves and natives within their communities. The hunting was very poor in the area, for example, and "the poor Indians' hunger is not satisfied with it."[34] The priests could barely sustain those who "resided" with them. The corrals of cattle and other livestock helped to support the 80 religious men and the many more charges within their community. In this sense, the Jesuits' private holdings were a division of goods and property that promoted the common good, making their private holdings licit under Molina's reasoning.

Given the overwhelmingly defensive tone of the Jesuit response to Soures de Sousa, it is important to note that despite their staunch positions, Jesuits did worry internally over their

[33] Alonso-Lasheras, *Luis de Molina's De Iustitia et Iure* , 109-126.
[34] Soares de Sousa, "Contra os padres da Companhia de Jesus," 363.

relationship to worldly goods. Wealth and commerce were never morally neutral or settled activities, but something that one had to constantly guard against lest one fall into sin. As such critiques of commercial or financial activities came from within the Order's ranks as well as without, suggesting that the Jesuits were not always comfortable with the comportment of their fellow, individual members. Compliance with the vow of poverty was important, but the vow was meant to be a private one. Gifts were only acceptable if they were made to the order and not to an individual, and individuals were not to collect private items.[35] Alden notes that the Jesuits worked to bring their accumulation of goods and property in line with moral theology, in part because of their spiritual commitments, but also because they feared external critique. The Jesuits were keenly aware of their critics and understood the dangers of perception and misunderstanding. In 1552, a Jesuit provincial wrote that the person who collected the rents should be a secular person, not necessarily because a Jesuit could not or should not, but because "it would be a source of scandal" otherwise. The secular rent taker should be "rich and prosperous," presumably so that they would not be tempted towards corruption, but "above all, good."[36]

Most often, however, a Jesuit priest did fill the temporal positions within the order. Founder Ignatius de Loyola himself wrote to a director of a Jesuit plantation, allowing that the Order's more temporal affairs could be "distracting." However, Ignatius assured the director that he had "no doubt that by your good and upright intention you turn everything you do to something spiritual for God's glory....We rightly hold any operation whatever in which charity is exercised to God's glory to be very hold and suitable for us."[37] Their end was to secure salvation for as much of humanity as possible, and their commercial and temporal work, if attuned to that

[35] Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 284.
[36] Ibid. 309.
[37] Ibid., 312.

goal, was of not only a temporal, practical importance but of spiritual importance as well. Though deeply suspicious of the Jesuits' claim to be providing for the common good— that is, producing only what they needed to provide for their extended community and continue their evangelizing—Soures de Sousa was speaking the same language as the Jesuits. He did not question the priests' right to own property, as they had done so in the "harmonious" times, but he did question the extent to which they truly promoted the common good.

"Merchant Priests," Portugal, 1758

Almost two hundred years later, the Jesuits still faced strong opposition, but the conditions had changed as observers and critics began to rearticulate the incompatibility of spirituality and commerce that Molina had rejected. Enlightenment ideals permeated the borders of Portugal through many avenues, but historians tend to point to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, marquis of Pombal, prime minister of Portugal from 1750 to 1777 and a declared enemy of the Jesuits, as the architect of Enlightenment reform in Portugal. A former ambassador to Britain, Pombal enacted several economic reforms to rationalize and centralize the Portuguese state, taking Britain for his model. Among his reforms, Pombal sought to wrest control of education from the Jesuits who he blamed for Portugal's political and economic weakness.[38] Cardinal D. Francisco Saldanha was a close friend of the Marquis, and it was at the request of Pombal that Pope Clementi named Saldanha *visitador* and reformer of the Company.

On May 15th, 1758, Saldanha disseminated the result of his investigation, which stated that the Jesuits were acting in flagrant disregard of their holy orders. The edict stripped the Jesuits of their commercial and land holdings and prohibited them from engaging in further commercial business, even through the rights of inheritance. The Jesuits and other "Merchant

[38] José Luís Cardoso; Alexandre Mendes Cunha, "Enlightened Reforms and Economic Discourse in the Portuguese-Brazilian Empire (1750-1808)," History of Political Economy 44.4 (Winter, 2012): 619-641, 621.

Ecclesiastics," Saldanha wrote, brought "much harm to their souls" and presented "terrible examples and general scandal to the faithful."[39] By highlighting the "scandalous" nature of the trade, Saldanha located the commercial activity of the Jesuits squarely within in the public sphere and asserted his jurisdiction. This was a matter that affected the common good and public morality, and thus it was a matter of justice to be decided by authorities.

By referencing the harm the Jesuits brought to their souls, Saldanha also reasserted the corrupting nature of commerce. Unlike Molina, who generally referenced scripture only as tertiary evidence after presenting evidence based in natural law, Saldanha relied heavily on biblical evidence and the pronouncements of former Church councils to decry the Jesuits' commercial activity. He cited Paul, the "Apostle of the People," who declared that "no man who serves as a soldier for God may entangle themselves in secular commerce."[40] The Church had further decreed the separation between spiritual things and commerce in order to protect "those that are dedicated to God from the sordid greed of merchants."[41] Jesus had thrown the money changers from the temple, a clear indication that the secular and spiritual should not mix.

Unlike Molina, whose theological work placed commerce in line with moral theology rather than fundamentally outside of it, to Saldanha, commerce was an irredeemably corrupting influence on not only priests but greedy merchants as well. As such, the edict prohibited any ecclesiastic from engaging in commerce "under whatever pretext, title, interpretation, cause, occasion and mode, neither through an agent, or any other person that helps them: and that directly or indirectly, no mixing in the abovementioned activities should be done in their name."[42] In Saldanha's reading of scripture, the line between spiritual work and secular work was

[39] Saldanha, "Carta Pastoral de Cardinal Saldaña," 163.
[40] 2 Timothy, 2:4, in Saldanha, "Carta Pastoral de Cardinal Saldaña," 159.
[41] Ibid., 159.
[42] Saldanha, "Carta Pastoral de Cardinal Saldaña," 163.

clearly defined. No priest could make "excuses" or justify their commercial activity with a casuistic interpretation of theological texts. Though not explicit, Saldanha's general rejection of the way in which circumstances might justify ecclesiastical involvement in commerce reflected a larger rejection of the way in which the Jesuits practiced moral reasoning.[43]

While other Enlightenment voices elevated state-directed trade as a way to secure the common good, Saldanha drew on a different tradition to highlight the irrefutable danger that commerce presented to one's soul, especially to the soul of an ecclesiastic. Yet, despite their different approaches, both the Church and secular voices agreed on the point that the Jesuits, and the Church itself, had to be removed from the commercial sphere.[44] Scholars now note that secularization discourses, that is, rhetoric that promoted the separation of the spiritual and secular spheres, often grew out of the Church or included Church voices. In protesting the Jesuits involvement in secular spheres, Saldanha unintentionally put forward arguments that aligned with, of all things, Protestant observers in Britain.

In 1760, a successful British review periodical, *The Monthly Review* (est. 1749), published a translation of a Portuguese commentary of the Jesuit's response to Cardinal Saldanha's indictment of the Jesuits, originally published in Lisbon.[45] The Portuguese had already expelled the Order from their territory in 1759, but more than 2,000 priests and missionaries were later affected by the Spanish edict of 1767, so in 1760, the fate of the Jesuits

[43] As an exception, he did acknowledge that the prohibition did not extend to the purchase of necessary things, but he did extend it to the sale of ecclesiastical handmade goods, a step further than even the *Siete Partidas* had gone. Saldanha, "Carta Pastoral de Cardinal Saldaña," 169.

[44] Historian Jeremy Morris, for example, notes that discourses of secularization in 19th century Britain were often supported and shaped by Christian voices seeking to define and protect their own role in a changing dominant culture by rejecting the secular world. Jeremy Morris, "Secularization and Religious Experience: Arguments in the Historiography of Modern British Religion," *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 1 (2012).

[45] "Reflections of a Portuguese on the Memorial of the Jesuits," *The Monthly Review* 23, 45-57.; Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, *Grammars, Grammarians, and Grammar-writing In Eighteenth-century England, (*Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 127.

was still a hotly contested topic. Alongside the translation, the *Review*'s editors published their own opinions on the matter. That such a text found an audience in England speaks to the notion of a common European legal repertoire and the interconnectedness of the Atlantic world. Everywhere in the Atlantic, historical actors sought to justify and describe emerging patterns of trade and commerce. The *Review's* editors saw the Jesuits as evidence of "Romanish" decadence, but the Portuguese writer measured the Jesuits' actions against those of other Catholic orders. Some of what the author wrote reflected older arguments about usury and idolatry, but new arguments associated with the state also appeared in the text.

In keeping with past denunciations, the Portuguese author questioned the Jesuits' specific commercial practices. The Jesuits practiced immoral credit and price setting by using used their capital to prey on impoverished people, buying the produce of a grape harvest before hand, in the winter, "when people are forced to sell for whatever they can get." The author also accused the Jesuits of not only setting prices but setting moral standards that they themselves did not keep to. For example, the Jesuits in Lisbon gained a monopoly by baking bread and sell it on days of great solemnity "when bakers are not allowed to do so."[46] The Jesuits also gained an unfair advantage in trade because they could set higher prices than secular merchants could because of certain tax exemptions and a reputation for superior wares. They also set high interest rates in light of their reputation for financially secure banks. In an era when monetary exchanges were risky, a reputation for trustworthiness was crucial.[47] The Portuguese author suggested that the Jesuits took advantage of ecclesiastical trustworthiness to advance their own trade, whereas lay merchants had to invest much time and effort before they could reap the benefits of a good reputation. Priests' ability to claim protection, difference, and moral superiority under the Church

[46] "Reflections of a Portuguese," 48.
[47] Jeremy Baskes, *Staying Afloat: Risk and Uncertainty in Spanish Atlantic World Trade, 1760-1820, (*Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013).

was the problem, not the specific practices of usury or exchange. This was not entirely new. Soures de Sousa had also complained of the Jesuits' unfair advantages. However, the Portuguese author made a much more defined distinction between the place of traders and priests, stating that the King and his council, in order to treat the Jesuits as they "deserved," must treat them as traders, "subject to the judgment of the secular magistrates."[48] The Jesuits could not be both traders and priests. They could not judge the morality of trade and also take their cut. The jurisdictions could not overlap.

Had the Jesuits been as righteous as they claimed themselves to be, the editors stated, they might be forgiven for their unique commercial advantages. The Jesuits pointed to the services they rendered to the *respublica chistiana* in propagating the faith as justification for their "esteemed" position. As such, the Portuguese author "rightly" turned to consider "the validity of [the Jesuits] pretensions by what they [had] really done for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, either of infidels, Heretics, or Catholics."[49] After briefly acknowledging that circumstances would allow the Jesuits' activities if those activities were truly promoting the salvation of souls, the Portuguese author resuscitates longstanding accusations that the Jesuits "have encouraged Idolatry, mixed with the holy Gospel."[50] The charge of idolatry evoked two long-standing conflicts over the Jesuits' role in saving indigenous souls. First, the charge of idolatry most directly recalled debates between the Jesuit and Dominican orders about the proper way to convert indigenous peoples. Historians have noted the Jesuits' flexibility and pragmatism in using indigenous cultural and cosmological forms to create bridges of understanding in their missions, a pragmatism which stemmed in part from Molina's casuistic moral reasoning. They had weathered many charges from Dominicans and others that in incorporating indigenous

[48]"Reflections of a Portuguese," 49.
[49] Ibid., 50.
[50] Ibid., 63

forms, they corrupted Catholicism. But by the mid-18th century, ecclesiastics expressed a general pessimism about the ability of indigenous peoples to adopt a "pure" Catholicism free of idolatry. The zeal of the first missionaries withered in the face of enduring indigenous forms of worship in places like Mexico and Paraguay, and the Jesuits faced added blame for their role in promoting idolatry.[51]

Secondly, the charge of idolatry and mismanagement of native populations recalled Soures de Sousa's 16th century complaint that the Jesuits monopolized European access to indigenous people. The author wrote that idolatry, disorder, and scandal arose wherever the Jesuits set up missions, whether in Paraguay or Japan. Importantly, in those places, the Jesuits treated bishops and other mendicant orders with contempt, denying them access to the local populations. That European and criollo writers indirectly brought up access to indigenous people in debates over wealth and trade is telling. Indigenous laborers, land, and knowledge generated commercial wealth in the Jesuit missions in Paraguay and Mexico.[52] While indigenous people might appear as little more than pawns in these debates, it is clear that their role in viceregal economies was central.

According to the *Monthly Review*, however, indigenous people were simply some of the many victims of Jesuit machinations, along with other vulnerable people. The author cited a 1649 letter written by Juan de Palafox, the Bishop of Puebla in New Spain, in which the Bishop lamented that the "widows of Andalusia, orphans, minors," had all suffered greatly when the Jesuits' crediting system failed.[53] In arguing that the Jesuits had threatened the most vulnerable—

[51] Kenneth Mills, *Idolatry and Its Enemies: Colonial Andean Religion and Extirpation, 1640-1750*, (Princeton University Press, 1997); William Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico,* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[52] Barbara Ganson, *The Guarani under Spanish Rule in the Rio de la Plata*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 92.
[53] "Reflections of a Portuguese," 49.

those with the legal category of *personas miserables* who by their *estado* were protected people within the social body—Palafox and the 18th century author made an argument about the common good, still a persuasive concept. The Jesuits had not committed a private offense, but a public one that offended those most in need of protection. By offending the lowest in the social body, they had also put the common good of all in jeopardy.

While the use of the common good as a litmus test for commercial ethics seems in continuity with 16th and 17th century uses, the meanings attached were not static. For example, the author also cited Baron Nesteguranoi, a Muscovite in Amsterdam, who wrote in 1725 that the Jesuits "are capable of causing the greatest disorder in any State. And therefore ought to be abhorred by every pious and prudent man." Within this citation, the state becomes a synecdoche for what would have previously been understood as the social body. Whatever brought disorder to the state threatened the common good. Historians José Luís Cardoso and Alexandre Mendes Cunha note that in the 18th century, notions of the common good changed in their content and became inundated with notions of the state. In Spain and its colonies, European Enlightenment ideas urging the centralization of the state fused with the Spanish tradition of the *real patronato*, or the crown's responsibility for public welfare.[54] Centralization undermined the Spanish tradition of composite empire and fuero, threatening other sources of authority such as the Church. Reformers expanded the notion of public welfare to include national prosperity, evaluated by such markers as the wealth of the state treasury and population growth. Historian Gabriel Paquette notes that reformers believed that the state's wealth should affect the people with "equal, proportionate growth," triggering population growth. What was good for the state

[54] This fusion produced what historian Gabriel Paquette terms 'regalism." Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire 1759-1808,* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

was considered to be good for the people. As such, the state was justified in establishing a new, internal order, one "based on the production of the common good."[55]

In this new context, "the use of the notions of public happiness, the common good, and economic betterment...spoken by colonial reformers in the second half of the eighteenth century, turned out to be instruments of opposition to the old colonial regime."[56] In order to legitimize the state's growing moral authority over the promotion of commercial prosperity, Bourbon reformers found it necessary to de-legitimize other corporate bodies that also claimed the moral authority to define the common good in commercial terms.[57] As such, reformers began to question the Church's positions on commerce, especially within the Jesuit tradition. Not only did the Jesuits usurp the authority of the centralized State, but the Jesuits' economic activity threatened the people's prosperity and had to be dealt with accordingly.

Conclusion

Scholars have long noted that the 18th century Jesuit suppression was, in part, a proxy for debates over the roles of Church and State. However, most have underemphasized the commercial aspect of those debates, and very few have examined how 18th century denunciations drew from and diverged from previous critical discourses. More work needs to be done to understand the incremental changes over time, but comparing denunciations from the 16th and 18th centuries brings to light a number of shifts. Over the course of the early modern period, denunciations of the Jesuits' commercial activity shifted from debates over specific practices to debates over whether religious people should involve themselves in commerce at all.

[55] José Luís Cardoso; Alexandre Mendes Cunha, "Enlightened Reforms and Economic Discourse in the Portuguese-Brazilian Empire, 1750-1808," History of Political Economy 44.4 (Winter, 2012): 619-641, 630.
[56] Cardoso and Mendes Cunha, "Enlightened Reforms and Economic Discourse," 368.
[57] Guilds also claimed the authority to decide which commercial practices supported the common good, and Spanish imperial officials also fought to limit their power to do so. See McKay, "*Lazy Improvident People,"* 151.

Critics asked the Jesuits to justify their commercial activity, period, rather than to justify specific practices.

Crucially, rather than asking if the Jesuits promoted the common good of the corporate social body, lay critics also asked whether the Jesuits promoted the interests of the state which stood in for the social body. In doing so, they drew on Enlightenment discourses that championed the centrality of the state and marginalized the role of corporate bodies within society, such as the Church. Drawing on past discourses, religious observers also helped to circumscribe the role of the Church in commercial matters. Critics such as Cardinal Saldanha in Portugal reemphasized the irredeemable immorality of commerce as a way to weaken the Jesuits in the short term. However, in the act of denying any morality to commercial activity, Church leaders like Saldanha may have also unwittingly weakened the Church's claim to have any moral voice in debates over commerce. More work is needed in order to chart the voice of the Church in commercial matters over the course 19th century, especially as historians have warned against viewing liberal reforms as the "final blow to church control of various segments of state and society," but the Church seems to have effectively ceded to the state a measure of its moral authority to regulate and debate commerce.[58] In the process of suppressing the commercial theology of the Jesuits, commerce itself no longer existed as a field for theology but would become a field for "objective" and "empirical" economists.[59]

[58] Ed. Martin Austin Nesvig, *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, (University of New Mexico Press, 2006), xviii.
[59] Alonso-Lasheras, *Luis de Molina's De Iustitia et Iure,* 4.