

Nicole Reinhardt

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5

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Introduction

In 1824, the French priest Abbé Grégoire (1740–1832), most widely known as a campaigner for abolitionism and religious toleration, published what may count as a first history of royal confessors. The reasons for his interest in the topic were deeply linked to his understanding that royal confessors were simultaneously one of the causes of the degeneration of royal power into absolutism and the expression and epitome thereof. At issue here was the perceived problematic enmeshment of the spiritual and secular with negative consequences both for religion and politics. Royal confessors, he believed, had been handmaidens of ultramontane forces who, more often than not, had abused their power and influence over the conscience of monarchs. Precisely because he was a member of the clergy, he considered it his duty to tear away the veil of mystery surrounding their agency and to denounce a potentially damning and unflattering story without which no court history was complete.¹ Grégoire's views were clearly steeped in the century-old tradition of Gallicanism and its visceral anti-Jesuitism which seamlessly connected with his liberal framing of the question; this mix has cast a shadow long into the twenty-first century.²

The idea that religion was an extraneous, alien and distorting element to political history and opposed to modernity in general, was widely shared amongst nineteenth-century historians and far beyond. It might also explain why Norbert Elias (1897–1990) who, as a

sociologist relied heavily on the historical scholarship of his time, in his paradigm-shifting work on the court society entirely ignored its religious dimension, as did many of the cultural historians of the court who followed in his footsteps until the 1990s. The secularist blindness to the ‘civilising’ and disciplining aspects of religion remains curious, especially given the undeniable transformative force of religion for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European history. The emergence of the paradigm of confessionalisation, itself inseparably linked to the notion of social disciplining, however, has since put religion firmly back into social and political history as well as politics back into religion.³ While this has helped to include religion and the clergy into the historical analyses of early modern courts over the past three decades,⁴ it has not entirely dispelled the liberal bias that underlies the framing of the question as to their role and significance. As a consequence, the outlook of historical scholarship on royal confessors has remained focused on institutional history with a particular emphasis on re-constructing their involvement in the political decision-making process, with some to uncover their alleged influence on politics or court intrigue,⁵ and others to stress the good intentions as well as the impossible tasks these pious men had to confront.⁶ Only rarely is the question raised about what concept of the political actually underpinned the activities of members of early modern courts,⁷ or what overarching theological rationale might have shaped the agency and ideological horizons of royal confessors, court clergy or courtiers.⁸

Indeed, during the early modern period familiar medieval institutions such as the court and the royal confessor underwent a profound transformation: As the court turned into a key location of social and political change, confessors attracted unprecedented attention as they emerged from the court chapel and stepped into the limelight of the court. The concern and anxieties over royal confessors should therefore not be considered as a remnant of medieval times, but rather as an emblem of modernity itself and intrinsically linked to the emergence of early modern court societies. It is evident that the growing prominence of early

modern royal confessors was a response to the new challenges that had arisen for Catholic monarchies in this period, when both the Protestant Reformation and the spectre of Machiavellianism thoroughly undermined what had always been a fragile trust in princely virtue.⁹ Consequently, early modern critics as well as supporters of royal confessors, for opposite reasons, tended to talk up and exaggerate the confessors' role in political decision-making. Yet as much as scholars try, beyond the rumour, robust evidence to prove or disprove the black- or rose-tinted legends is hard to come by. Instead of chasing down the rabbit-hole of nailing down their political 'influence', the question of *why* and how the discursive implication of royal confessors became a meaningful way to think and discuss the court and politics in the first place might be more enlightening.

Who were the confessors?

Even in the present day, and against all evidence available in modern scholarship, the idea that 'Catholic rulers from Poland across to Spain invariably had *Jesuit* [my emphasis] personal confessors, who could play important roles in forming state policy'¹⁰ proves remarkably resilient. This is a common misunderstanding whose roots go back long into early modern anxieties surrounding the role Jesuit confessors, to which we will have to return. The Portuguese king John III (1502–1557) was arguably the first European monarch to request a Jesuit confessor, kicking off a trend towards Jesuits among a majority of Catholic princes from the 1550s onwards.¹¹ But there was one notable exception: The Spanish Habsburgs did not follow suit. While Franciscans tended to be popular with female family members and Augustinians with the *infants*, and Viennese spouses often arrived with Jesuit confessors in tow, the male *Austrias*, apart from some occasional Franciscan intermezzi, hardly ever wavered in their preference for Dominican friars, who had been dominant in this position since the Middle Ages.¹² Only with the Bourbon succession in 1700 was the Dominican hegemony upended. When Philip V (1683–1746) appointed a Jesuit as royal confessor,

following a French custom inaugurated by his ancestor Henri IV (1553–1610),¹³ this was considered a novelty that caused outrage and uproar among the Spanish friars.¹⁴

The Jesuits' rising prominence as royal confessors was controversial from the beginning, and the controversy turned exceptionally acrimonious in France throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where the order was accused of a variety of 'crimes' from subversion to outright despotism.¹⁵ It is interesting to note in this context that as late as in 1824 Abbé Grégoire extensively relied on what he must have known to be fake *Monita Secreta* as evidence and explanation for the rise of Jesuit royal confessors.¹⁶ According to these forged Jesuit instructions, 'leaked' by a disgruntled and dismissed father in 1614, the members of the Society of Jesus were engaged in a large-scale conspiracy to acquire world domination by insinuating themselves into the conscience of monarchs. To achieve this, the fake rules suggested, instead of rigorous moral counsel, Jesuit royal confessors provided lax and lenient guidance, thus perverting good monarchs from 'the inside', or encouraging weak and depraved monarchs, who teetered on the brink, to throw moral caution to the wind and enact ruthless and absolutist policies.¹⁷ With royal confessors being the lynchpin of the Jesuit conspiracy theory, when the growing anti-Jesuit *ressentiment* (sentiment) led to the progressive expulsion of the Jesuit order from Portugal (1759) to France (1764) and Spain (1767) and culminated in the full suppression of the order by papal bull in 1773, Jesuit royal confessors were the natural collateral damage.¹⁸ Consequently, in the second half of the eighteenth-century secular priests emerged as royal confessors for the first time. They were far less visible and controversial, confirming an overall eclipse of the royal confessor as a feature of the royal court and contributing more widely to a 'privatisation' of royal conscience and its integration into the territorial structures of national churches.¹⁹ Hence, the 'high period' of royal confessors in the context of early modern courts lies roughly in the

period between 1550 and 1750, during which time, as Abbé Grégoire put it, the Jesuits ‘supplanted’ the Dominicans.²⁰

Although royal confessors have attracted the most attention, they need to be understood as parts of a wider group of confessors active at the court, such as the aforementioned confessors of other royal family members, but also the confessors of individual courtiers, most importantly those who ministered to royal favourites. As the Spanish case, for which we have more studies, indicates, these could be significant players in their own right.²¹ In absence of a comprehensive prosopography of European royal and court confessors, it is difficult to draw wide-ranging conclusions on their intellectual profile and preparation before they acquired their office. A view on the French and Spanish cases for the seventeenth century, however, provides a sense of the distinct profiles of Jesuit and Dominican confessors.²²

The Spanish Dominican friars stood out most starkly for their theological learning: All had accomplished university courses in theology, some holding chairs in the subject and others famous commentators of Thomas Aquinas or distinguished moral theologians in their own right. Yet, intellectual excellence did not always lead to a successful career as royal confessor. This was true for Domingo de Soto (1494–1560), who threw in the towel after a year (1549–1550) in Charles V’s (1500–1558) service, as well as for famous Thomist commentator Juan de Santo Tomás (1589–1644) under Philip IV (1605–1665), who, after hardly a year in his office, conveniently died before he could be pushed out. Nonetheless, the Dominican identity of Spanish confessors guaranteed not only their strong grounding in scholastic theology but also an organic embeddedness in the wider ecclesiastical landscape of the realm as their careers, before or after entering royal service, included stints as bishops or in supervisory and management positions within their order.

The fact that, as Dominicans, Spanish confessors were deeply entangled with the university establishment, the Church, and the Inquisition might explain why their activities never sparked the degree of animosity that surrounded the Jesuit royal confessors. Jesuits, by contrast, were by definition much more 'extra-territorial', both in terms of their education and their links to the respective territorial ecclesiastic institutions. Their education took place in Jesuit colleges which had often been founded in opposition to and in controversy with the established medieval faculties of theology and the historic university systems. Moreover, in accordance with Jesuit regulations, they did not normally engage in clerical careers as bishops. The French Jesuits who served as royal confessors were no exception to this: They were exclusively trained in Jesuit colleges and had spent their careers within the national and international framework of opportunities offered by the Society of Jesus. Typically, they had gained some experience as teachers, preachers and administrators, but none of the confessors provided to the French court stood out in the field of moral theology. Next to all-rounders and biblical scholars, controversialists, which from the middle of the seventeenth century meant anti-Jansenists, were most prominent. The latter was arguably a main attraction for the Bourbon monarchs, before it turned into a liability for the French monarchy, but even more so for the Jesuits.²³

What were royal confessors supposed to do?

On a most basic level, royal confessors were there to take the confession of their royal penitent. Annual auricular confession with their parish priest had become a duty for all Christians since the 4th Lateran Council (1215), and absolution in the tribunal of conscience was a requisite for the participation at Holy Communion. Throughout the Middle Ages, this parish priest had generally been the royal chaplain, but since the thirteenth century more and more European monarchs acquired privileges to choose their confessor freely. In France the link between sacramental confession, absolution and participation in the Eucharist had a

knock-on effect on the royal capacity to perform their alleged thaumaturgic powers, one of the most distinctive attributes of French monarchs that created a highly symbolic weight for the articulation of the bond with their subjects. Therefore, even though confession was secret and was not normally expected more often than once a year before Easter, avoidance of confession for fear of not receiving absolution could result in a publicly remarked exclusion from the sacraments that flagged up an unresolved and potentially grave problem of conscience that was relevant beyond the monarch's private sphere.²⁴

The particular significance of royal confessors in the early modern period, however, resided less in the performance of yearly confession than in their increasing visibility as symbols of royal conscience within the court. By 1600, in a process of differentiation, confessors had become detached from the court chapel and the distribution of alms ceased to be their main task, opening up space for administrative and other unspecified counselling activities.²⁵ At the same time, the political and religious challenges of the sixteenth century sharpened the focus of moral theologians on the 'double nature' – public and private – of the royal conscience. The theological consensus that the scrutiny of royal conscience had to include the monarch's public role as guardian of the commonwealth, naturally heightened the tensions around the confessors and their activities, especially as there did not exist any court or chapel etiquette that applied to them. Three problems emerged in this context: One was the normative theological definition of the royal confessors' remit; the second concerned external regulations of their activities at court; and the third was the impact of such regulations on the use of confessors as royal advisors.

Moral theologians were unanimous that royal confession needed to address questions that touched on comportment in the political realm. The most widely re-printed early modern guidebook for confession published by the Augustinian friar Martín de Azpilcueta (1492–1586) included a list of specific questions to ask a royal penitent which flagged up three areas

of concern: Just war, just taxation, and the just distribution of offices.²⁶ Interestingly, duties towards the Church were not a primary focus, and private sins and vices were not mentioned at all. The three problem areas identified by Azpilcueta remained relevant and ‘live’ discussion points in moral theology until the end of the seventeenth century.²⁷ As the debate shows, theological opinions were varied and often divided, and the rise of probabilism as an increasingly popular tool to solve moral conundrums expanded the debate even further.²⁸ Many feared it might invite ever more lenient treatment in confession, a point that was used with devastating irony by Blaise Pascal in relation to Jesuit confessors, which by extension affected the public perception of royal confessors as the most prominent amongst them in the first instance.²⁹

Although it is difficult to determine with precision to what extent the ongoing theological debates influenced the ways in which individual royal confessors exercised their function in practice, there are a few hints that suggest a feedback loop between moral theological discussions, the practical resolution of political problems, and the wider socio-political debate. For instance, in a case where we have written statements on evaluations regarding the distribution of offices produced by Philip III’s (1578–1621) confessor Luís Aliaga (1560–1626), it is evident that he made good use of sound and established theological opinions. On the other hand, despite the confidence moral theologians expressed in their competence to tackle fiscal questions, in practice royal confessors increasingly lamented their doubts in this area, as they struggled with the growing complexity of state budgets. Finally, another important shift can be detected in relation to ecclesiastical benefices and politics, which had not been important for Azpilcueta, but which seem to have become more central for confessors from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.³⁰

The comprehensive understanding of royal conscience by moral theologians provided good arguments for using confessors as expert advisors to shield the monarch’s conscience

from falling into sin. Integrating the confessors' advice was less about actually following through with it, but about taking into consideration the widest and fullest spectrum of opinions possible in order to avoid 'sinful ignorance' in the political decision-making process. This argument seems to have underpinned the integration of royal confessors as well as other clergymen and theologians in royal councils and in ad hoc *juntas* in Spain throughout the first half of the seventeenth century in particular. The involvement in royal councils in the case of the Dominican confessors was not regulated or limited by interior regulations of their order. The situation was very different for Jesuit confessors. To counter suspicions over the order's political ambitions and to discipline unruly fathers, General Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615) in 1608 issued specific regulations for confessors of princes that barred them from 'meddling with state affairs' and questions of 'reasons of state'.³¹ Although this regulation limited the formal entry Jesuit confessors into *political* councils, the obligation that royal confessors had to examine both the monarch's private and public agency remained untouched, as Jesuit theologians like Cardinal Bellarmine (1542–1621) continued to emphasise.³²

The Jesuit regulations therefore tended to complicate things for Jesuit royal confessors. They relegated confessors to acting in the always fuzzy sphere of informal counsel, which only enhanced anxieties over its extension and nature. At the same time, to fulfil their duty as confessors, they were forced to define the 'meddling with reason of state affairs', which the Jesuit regulations explicitly prohibited, narrowly as 'politicking', or engagement in court intrigue.³³ These conundrums were difficult to resolve and, although in France royal confessors did not join royal councils as in Spain, fostered suspicions over the confessors' agenda at court. The ambiguity of the regulations emerges even more fully when we consider the question of the handling of ecclesiastical affairs and the distribution of benefices. Although such matters were clearly within the boundaries of even the most

restrictive understanding of ‘matters of conscience’, they also belonged to some of the politically most highly charged areas of early modern court politics and intrigue.³⁴ Therefore, even where confessors limited their formal involvement in councils to those labelled as handling affairs of conscience, as for instance in the *conseil de conscience* (council of conscience) that came into being in France after the death of Cardinal Mazarin (1602–1661) for the distribution of benefices,³⁵ this was hardly an apolitical activity – on the contrary. As from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, the concern with ecclesiastical affairs increasingly became an area of the confessors’ core competence, and this fuelled the idea that they were doing so as handmaidens of the papacy. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. Both in France and Spain, it is obvious that confessors, be they Dominicans or Jesuits, acted as guardians of regalist policies and that they lent themselves as effective shields against papal interventions.³⁶

Confessors and royal favourites

Despite the fuzziness of confessors’ duties outside the ‘confessional’ in normative and practical terms, the writings on royal confessors did agree on one core point: The good royal confessor was the ‘anti-courtier’.³⁷ From Cardinal Bellarmine’s writing on the *Christian Prince* (1619) to Francisco de Quevedo’s (1580–1645) *Gobierno de Dios* (1626) or Nicolas Caussin’s (1583–1651) book on the *Holy Court* (first edition in 1624), which saw a revival in popularity in eighteenth-century Spain, all emphasised the necessity for confessors to oppose in words and deeds the pitfalls of courtliness. As Caussin stated, royal confessors at court resembled fish out of water or birds in strange air, as their mode of speech should not be oriented towards the deceitful flattery of courtiers but had to imitate the parrhesia of prophets.³⁸ The imagined and desired opposition of royal confessors to court society remained an ideal, and it was employed mainly by members of the clergy to denounce the alleged worldliness of royal confessors. A religious zealot like the archbishop of Valencia

Juan de Ribera (1532–1611) was one of the first to demand the clear separation of confessors from worldly business at court in 1608, and as the century went on similar concerns were raised by an increasing number of clergymen of all stripes. Clearly, the hope that confessors might contribute to raising the moral standards of governments and courts had not come to pass, instead, as many feared, the spiritual advisors had been infected by ‘aulicism’.³⁹

A particularly damaging accusation was that confessors were too close to or behaved like royal favourites, the epitomes of courtliness.⁴⁰ This begs the question of what the connection was between these figures, whose bonds with the monarch relied above all on privileged proximity and access, if not confidence or intimacy. From the perspective of royal favourites, control over who became royal confessor was part and parcel of their strategy of power consolidation by populating the royal entourage with their clients, and there is evidence that most favourites paid great attention to this. An extreme example can be found in the duke of Lerma (c. 1553–1625), who succeeded in placing three of his own confessors, Diego Mardones (d. 1624), Jerónimo Xavierre (1546–1608) and Luis de Aliaga successively as confessors to Philip III. Count Duke Olivares (1587–1645) did not quite go to such lengths, but no one doubted that Philip IV’s confessor, Antonio de Sotomayor (confessor, 1616–1643), was close to the royal favourite. The proximity of favourite and confessor was so evident that Olivares’s overthrow was mirrored in that of the confessor, who was replaced by Juan de Santo Tomás. The new confessor was the sign and voice of a policy change operated by a wider court cabal which also targeted the predecessor Sotomayor, whose alleged courtliness was considered a sign of the favourite’s excessive and corrupting power.⁴¹ Paradoxically, the (new) confessor in denouncing factional court politicking and lending his voice and moral authority to a political (and factional) struggle to overthrow the favourite, engaged exactly in what he had set out to criticise: Court politics at its best (or worst). This was not new in Spain, and even the duke of Lerma 20 years before, despite all his efforts to

control who had access to the royal conscience, was ultimately unable to control a similar move from his erstwhile ally royal confessor Luis de Aliaga, who, as a consequence, attracted criticism for his own courtly ambitions.

It would, however, be unjust to reduce such activities to simple political opportunism. In all cases confessors did raise moral arguments that were squarely situated within their sphere of competence from a theological point of view. What was at issue was the royal duty to ensure a just distribution of offices, known under the technical term of avoiding the sin of *acceptio personarum*, i.e. undue preference for individuals that distorted royal justice.⁴² Moreover, royal favourites could be seen to usurp royal power, thus undermining the divinely sanctioned political order. Similar points were made also across the Pyrenees by Louis XIII's (1601–1643) confessor Nicolas Caussin, when he raised concerns regarding specific policies endorsed by Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), who moved the country to a problematic alliance with Protestant powers during the Thirty Years' War. Despite the fact that Caussin had been hand-picked by the cardinal, the confessor now suggested that such policy choices posed a serious threat to the royal conscience, as the war seemed unjust and menaced to burden royal subjects with more unjust taxation. He was also wary of Richelieu monopolising political advice. These were all classical points royal confessors were expected to tackle according to moral theology, but Caussin added an unusual element, when he reminded the French king of the Decalogue and the duty of filial obedience in a consultation outside confession. Although mentioning a 'private sin' seems apolitical at first sight, the contrary was the case. It was a clearly understood, full-blown attack on Richelieu's power grab, which since 1630 had relied on the alienation of the Queen Mother Marie de Medici (1575–1642), who had long opposed the cardinal's (foreign) policy choices. Hence, when Caussin brought up the question of filial duty with his penitent in 1637, Richelieu without hesitation stripped him of his functions and, in alliance with the concerned Jesuit superiors, punished him with

exile and a publication ban. To prevent future fallout of this kind, Richelieu drew up an instruction ordering the new confessor to follow his guidance should he be troubled or perplexed by the moral implications of politics.⁴³

As these incidents show, the parallel rise of confessors and royal favourites in the early seventeenth century was fraught with tension and could switch from alliance to enmity almost in a heartbeat. Their relationship, then, can best be described as one of co-dependence. The lynchpin was the question of the just distribution of royal grace that defined the *raison d'être* of royal favourites whose rise and fall raised considerable moral anxiety over the correct use and exercise of royal power. Having a confessor onside was therefore a considerable advantage for favourites to allay concerns over their role, while on the other hand the confessors' legitimacy depended on their perceived capacity to contain the abuse of monarchical power and favour. The confessors' scope for agency, however, was contingent: Roughly speaking, while in the Hispanic system royal confessors were instrumental in securing the favourites' influence or their overthrow, in France, royal favourites kept the upper hand. Here, in tune with Jesuit regulations, accusations of 'courtliness' and political interference could be marshalled with effect to contain or eliminate recalcitrant confessors.

Conclusion

The end of the great royal favourites in the middle of the seventeenth century transformed the position of royal confessors in ways that made them more visible and vulnerable at the same time. Again the contrast between France and Spain could not be more striking. In Madrid, the blatant factional struggle under Carlos II (1661–1700) resulted in a revolving door for royal confessors. It reached an unprecedented low point in the lurid episode of the king's exorcism by his confessor Froilán Diaz (1648–1709), which dealt a fatal blow to the Dominicans' reputation as guardians of orthodoxy and furnished arguments for their imminent

replacement.⁴⁴ In France, on the other hand, the absence of a favourite first minister after 1661 introduced an unprecedented ‘apogee of the royal confessor’ as Joe Bergin has remarked.⁴⁵ Never before or after did French royal confessors enjoy such extended terms of office – with a record of 35 years in the case of Père La Chaize (1624–1709, confessor from 1674) – or such high visibility as members of the court.⁴⁶ This situation was eventually replicated in Madrid in 1700 with the advent of Jesuit royal confessors following the Bourbon succession. It was around this time, too, that the equation between the office and Jesuit influence on politics became a widely accepted and negative trope. The reason was not an objective rise in ‘political influence’, but rather their concentration on church patronage, as well as their highly controversial identification with anti-Jansenism, with obvious and wide-ranging implications in terms of ecclesiology, theology *and* politics.

The period stretching from the late seventeenth century, when the phenomenon of royal favourites entered decline, up to the late eighteenth-century suppression of the Jesuit order, has left a lasting mark on how royal confessors were remembered and perceived. It was, as already mentioned, largely a product and amalgam of different stripes of anti-Jesuitism. In the absence of royal favourites as natural scapegoats at which to target attacks on monarchs and courts, confessors now turned into the privileged objects of satire and hostility. With theological rigourism on the rise, increasingly, too, the critics came from within the clergy and demanded a retreat from the court and its vices. Criticism of the involvement of clergymen in the worldly sphere of courts was not a novelty and had pedigree going back to Peter of Blois (1130–1211) at least. Yet in its late seventeenth-century emanation and targeted at the confessors, this criticism acquired a strong political edge, suggesting not only the confessors’ individual corruption but their causal involvement in the moral and political decay of the court and the old regime political system.

¹ Henri Jean-Baptiste Grégoire, *Histoire des confesseurs des empereurs, des rois, et d'autres princes* (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1824), 4, 17; on Grégoire see Norman Ravitch, 'Liberalism, Catholicism, and Abbé Grégoire', *Church History* 36, no. 4 (1967): 419–39, Mayyada Kheir, 'L'abbé Grégoire dans son temps', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 138 (2007): 69–86.

² On nineteenth-century French anti-Jesuitism, see Geoffrey Cubbitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); for a comparative and early modern focus, see Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Catherine Maire, eds. *Les Anti-Jésuites. Discours, figures et lieux de l'anti-jésuitisme à l'époque moderne* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

³ Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Sozialdisziplinierung – Konfessionalisierung – Modernisierung', in *Die Frühe Neuzeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft. Forschungstendenzen und Forschungsergebnisse*, ed. N. Boskovska Leimgruber (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), 39–55; Stefan Breuer, 'Sozialdisziplinierung. Probleme und Problemverlagerungen eines Konzepts bei Max Weber, Gerhard Oestreich und Michel Foucault', in *Soziale Sicherheit und soziale Disziplinierung. Beiträge zu einer historischen Theorie der Sozialpolitik*, ed. Hans Sachße and Florian Tennstedt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 45–69.

⁴ A first stepping-stone was Flavio Rurale, ed. *I religiosi a corte. Teologia, politica e diplomazia in Antico Regime (atti del seminario di studi, Georgetown University a Villa 'Le Balze', Fiesole, 20 ottobre 1995)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1998); a comprehensive study for France now is Benoist Pierre, *La monarchie ecclésiastique. Le clergé de cour en France à l'époque moderne* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2013); on the Hispanic chapel royal, see Juan José Carreras and Bernardo J. García García, eds. *La Capilla Real de los Austrias: música y ritual de corte en la Europa moderna* (Madrid: Fundación de Carlos Amberes, 2001); on court preachers Fernando Negrodo del Cerro, *Los Predicadores de Felipe IV. Corte, intrigas y*

religión en la España del Siglo de Oro (Madrid: Actas, 2006); José Martínez Millán, Manuel Rivero Rodríguez and Gijs Versteegen, eds. *La Corte en Europa: política y religión (siglos XVI–XVIII)*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Polifemo, 2012); Rafael Valladares, ed. *La Iglesia en Palacio. Los eclesiásticos en las cortes hispánicas (siglos XVI–XVII)* (Rome: Viella, 2019); on European court clergy, including Protestant courts, Matthias Meinhardt, Ulrike Gleixner, Martin H. Jung and Siegrid Westphal, eds. *Religion Macht Politik. Hofgeistlichkeit im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit (1500–1800)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014).

⁵ Heavily influenced by Grégoire, Georges Minois, *Le confesseur du roi: les directeurs de conscience sous la monarchie française* (Paris: Fayard, 1988); a focus on institutional aspects in Leandro Martínez Peñas, *El confesor en el antiguo régimen* (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 2007); Pierre-François Pirlet, *Le confesseur du prince dans les Pays-Bas espagnols (1589–1659). Une fonction, des individus* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018); Isabelle Poutrin, ‘Los Confesores de los reyes de España: carrera y función (siglos XVI y XVII)’, in *Religión y poder en la edad moderna*, ed. Antonio L. Cortés Peña et al. (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2005), 67–81; Isabelle Poutrin, ‘Cas de conscience et affaires d’État: le ministère du confesseur royal en Espagne sous Philippe III’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 53 (2006): 7–28; on involvement in court intrigue see Orietta Filippini, *La coscienza del re. Juan de Santo Tomás, confessore di Filippo IV di Spagna (1643–1644)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2006).

⁶ Robert Bireley, ‘Hofbeichtväter und Politik im 17. Jahrhundert’, in *Ignatianisch: Eigenart und Methode der Gesellschaft Jesu*, ed. Michael Sievernich and Günter Switek (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), 386–403; Robert Bireley, *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts and Confessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Robert Bireley, *Religion and Politics in the Age of Counterreformation: Emperor Ferdinand II, William Lamormaini S.J. and the Formation of Imperial Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

⁷ On the essentially access-driven priorities of early modern courtiers, see Leonhard Horowski, “‘Such a Great Advantage for My Son’: Office-Holding and Career Mechanisms at the Court of France, 1661 to 1789”, *The Court Historian* 8, no. 2 (2003): 136.

⁸ On the intellectual framework, see Nicole Reinhardt, ‘Spin Doctor of Conscience? The Royal Confessor and the Christian Prince’, *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 568–90, Nicole Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67–87.

⁹ Robert Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

¹⁰ James B. Collins, ‘The State’, in *Interpreting Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon and Beat Kümin (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 223–4; this statement is particularly curious as the author refers to *Voices of Conscience* which says nothing of that sort.

¹¹ Winfried Müller, ‘Hofbeichtväter und geistliche Ratgeber zur Zeit der Gegenreformation’, in *Universität und Bildung. Festschrift für Laetitia Böhm zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Winfried Müller, Wolfgang J. Smolka and Helmut Zedelmaier (Munich: PS-Verlag, 1991), 141–55; João Francisco Marques, ‘Confesseurs des princes, les jésuites à la Cour de Portugal’, in *Les jésuites à l’âge baroque, 1540–1640*, ed. Luce Giard and Louis de Vaucelles (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1996), 213–28.

¹² Martínez Peñas, *El Confesor del Rey*, 36 calculates for the medieval kings of Castile and Aragon: 51 per cent Dominicans, 43 per cent Franciscans, the remaining cases are a Hieronymite, Carthusian and a number of unknown confessors; for the early modern Dominican dominance, see Luis Gonzaga Alonso-Getino, ‘Dominicos españoles confesores de reyes’, *Ciencia Tomista* 14 (1916): 373–431; María Amparo López Arandia, ‘Dominicos

en la corte de los Austrias: el confessor del rey’, *Tiempos modernos* 20 (2010): 1–30; María Amparo López Arandía, ‘El confesionario regio en la monarquía hispánica del siglo XVII’, *Obradoiro de Historia Moderna* 19 (2010): 249–78; on Philip II’s Franciscan confessor friar Bernardo de Fresneda (1495–1577), see Henar Pizarro Llorente, ‘El control de la conciencia regia: El confesor real Fray Bernardo de Fresneda’, in *La corte de Felipe II*, ed. José Martínez Millán (Madrid: Alianza, 1994), 149–88; on Jesuit confessors for princesses, Julián J. Lozano Navarro, ‘Confesionario e influencia política: La Compañía de Jesús y la dirección espiritual de princesas y soberanas durante el barroco’, in *Los jesuitas: Religión, política y educación (siglos xvi–xviii)*, vol 2, ed. José Martínez Millán, Henar Pizarro Llorente, and Esther Jiménez Pablo (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2012), 183–205; famous examples of Jesuit confessors of Austrian spouses were Richard Haller (c. 1551–1612) and Johann Eberhard Nithard (1607–1681), see Magdalena Sánchez, ‘Confession and Complicity: Margarita de Austria, Richard Haller, S.J., and the Court of Philip III’, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 14 (1993): 133–49; on Nithard, see Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 338–42 and Miguel Córdoba Salmerón, ‘A Failed Politician, a Disputed Jesuit: Cardinal Johann Eberhard Nithard (1607–1681)’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7, no. 4 (2020): 545–69.

¹³ On the transition to Jesuit confessors under Henri IV, see Gigliola Fragnito, ‘Tra parroci confessori e gesuiti: il governo della coscienza di Enrico IV di Borbone’, in *La Corte in Europa: política y religion (siglos XVI–XVIII)*, vol. 1, ed. José Martínez Millán et al. (Madrid: Polifemo, 2012), 333–57.

¹⁴ José F. Alcaraz Gómez, ‘Documentos. Felipe V y sus confesores jesuitas. El “cursus” episcopal de algunos personajes ilustres del reinado’, *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante* 15 (1996): 13–46; on the Jesuit transition under Philip V, Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 354–61; Catherine Désos, ‘Les confesseurs jésuites de

Philippe V au début du XVIIIe siècle: agents français ou ministres du roi d'Espagne?', *Mágina. Revista Universitaria* 13 (2009): 159–74.

¹⁵ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 323–35; Nicole Reinhardt, 'Das königliche Gewissen im Prisma jansenistischer Kritik', in *Der Jansenismus – eine 'katholische Häresie'? Das Ringen um Gnade, Rechtfertigung und die Autorität Augustins in der Neuzeit*, ed. Dominik Burkard and Tanja Thanner (Münster: Aschendorff, 2014), 349–73.

¹⁶ Grégoire, *Histoire des confesseurs*, 39–40; on the history of the *Monita*, see Sabina Pavone, 'Between History and Myth: The *Monita secreta Societatis Iesu*', in *The Jesuits, vol. II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John O'Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Stephen J. Harris and T. Frank Kennedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 50–65.

¹⁷ An edition and translation in Sabina Pavone, *The Wily Jesuits and the Monita Secreta: The Forged Secret Instructions of the Jesuits: A History and a Translation of the Monita*, trans. John P. Murphy, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute for Jesuit Sources, 2005), 217–19 (*directive 2*) and 220–21 (*directive 4*) are of particular interest here; on Jesuits as tools of moral corruption, see Jean-Pascal Gay, 'Le jésuite improbable: remarques sur la mise en place du mythe du Jésuite corrupteur de la morale en France moderne', in *Les Anti-Jésuites. Discours, figures et lieux de l'anti-jésuitisme à l'époque moderne*, ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Catherine Maire (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 305–27.

¹⁸ Sabine Vogel, *Der Untergang der Gesellschaft Jesu als europäisches Medienereignis, 1758–1773. Publizistische Debatten im Spannungsfeld von Aufklärung und Gegenklärung* (Mainz: Zabern, 2006).

¹⁹ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 346–70.

²⁰ Grégoire, *Histoire des confesseurs*, 38.

²¹ On confessors of royal favourites, see Fernando Negredo del Cerro, ‘La hacienda y la conciencia. Las propuestas del Conde Duque para el saneamiento de la finanzas reales (1625)’, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 27 (2002): 171–96; Rafael Valladares, ‘La piedad del valido. Los confesores de Don Luis de Haro’, in *La Iglesia en Palacio. Los eclesiásticos en las cortes hispánicas (siglos XVI–XVII)*, ed. Rafael Valladares (Rome: Viella, 2019), 151–70.

²² For the following Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 157–8.

²³ Nicole Reinhardt, ‘The King’s Confessor: Changing Images’, in *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth Century Europe*, ed. Michael Schaich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 168–9.

²⁴ Georges Guitton, *Le Père de La Chaize, confesseur de Louis XIV*, vol. I (Paris: Beauchesne, 1959), 71–87.

²⁵ On the process of differentiation in France in Xavier de La Selle, *Le service des âmes à la cour: confesseurs et Aumôniers des Rois de France du XIIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris: École des Chartes, 1995), 37–42.

²⁶ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, chapter 4.

²⁷ See Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 107–21 (on just war), 122–35 (on taxation), 136–55 (office distribution); see also Daniel Schwartz, *The Political Morality of the Late Scholastics: Civic Life, War and Conscience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

²⁸ See Stefania Tutino, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation Catholicism: A History of Probabilism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²⁹ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 329–35.

³⁰ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 162–6 (Aliaga), 133–4 and 307 (on state budgets).

³¹ Bireley, 'Hofbeichtväter und Politik', 386–89; Nicole Reinhardt, 'Hernando Mendoza (1562–1617), General Acquaviva, and the Controversy over Confession, Counsel, and Obedience', *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4 (2017): 209–29.

³² Sylvio Hermann De Franceschi, 'Le modèle jésuite du prince chrétien. À propos du *De officio principis Christiani* de Bellarmin', *Dix-septième siècle* 237, no. 4 (2007): 713–28.

³³ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 235–40.

³⁴ As has been masterfully shown by Joseph Bergin for France in *The Making of the French Episcopate, 1589–1661* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1996), and *Crown, Church, and Episcopate under Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

³⁵ Joseph Bergin, 'The Royal Confessor and His Rivals in Seventeenth Century France', *French History* 21, no. 2 (2007): 187–204.

³⁶ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 168–83; Jean-Pascal Gay, 'Voués à quel royaume ? Les jésuites entre vœux de religion et fidélité monarchique: À propos d'un mémoire inédit du P. de La Chaize', *Dix-septième siècle* 227, no. 2 (2005): 285–314; for early eighteenth-century Spain, José F. Alcaraz Gómez, *Jesuitas y reformismo: El Padre Francisco de Rávago, 1747–1755* (Valencia: Facultad de Teología San Vicente Ferrer, 1995).

³⁷ Reinhardt, 'Spin Doctor', 571.

³⁸ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 246–52; on courtiers and flattery, see Ronald G. Asch, 'Der Höfling als Heuchler? Unaufrichtigkeit, Konversationsgemeinschaft und Freundschaft am frühneuzeitlichen Hof', in *Krumme Touren: Anthropologie kommunikativer Umwege*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 183–204.

³⁹ On Ribera, see Isabelle Poutrin, 'L'œil du souverain: Luis de Aliaga et le métier de confesseur royal sous Philippe III', in *Observation and Communication: The Construction of Realities in the Hispanic World*, ed. Johannes-Michael Scholz and Tamar Herzog (Frankfurt

am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 253–70; on fears about ‘aulicism’, Markus Friedrich, ‘Politikberatung durch Intellektuelle? Das Verhältnis des Jesuitenordens zu den frühneuzeitlichen Fürstenhöfen im Spiegel von Giulio Negrinis Traktat “Aulicismus, sive de fuga aulae dissertation”’, in *Intellektuelle in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Luise Schorn-Schütte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 175–209.

⁴⁰ Antonio Feros, ‘Images of Evil, Images of Kings: The Contrasting Faces of the Royal Favourite and the Prime Minister in Early Modern Political Literature, c. 1580–c. 1650’, in *The World of the Favourite*, ed. John H. Elliott and L.W.B. Brockliss (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 204–22.

⁴¹ See Filippini, *La coscienza del re*; Fernando Negredo del Cerro, ‘Confesores’, in *La Corte de Felipe IV (1621–1665): Reconfiguración de la Monarquía católica*, vol. 1, ed. José Martínez Millán and José Eloy Hortal Muñoz (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo: 2015), 613–59, here 640–50; on Sotomayor’s own nepotism, see María Amparo López Arandia, ‘Un *Paterfamilias* en la corte de Felipe IV: Fray Antonio de Sotomayor’, *Historia y Genealogía* 4 (2014): 59–74.

⁴² Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 136–60.

⁴³ Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience*, 235–41; see also Nicole Reinhardt, ‘Just War, Royal Conscience, and the Crisis of Theological Counsel in the Early Seventeenth Century’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 18 (2014): 495–521.

⁴⁴ Ronald Cueto Ruiz, *Los hechizos de Carlos II y el proceso de Fr. Froilán Díaz confesor real* (Madrid: La Balesta, 1966).

⁴⁵ Bergin, ‘The Royal Confessor’, 188.

⁴⁶ For Spain, see María Amparo López Arandia, ‘Un criado muy antiguo de la real casa. La orden Dominica en el confesionario de Carlos II’, *Mágica. Revista Universitaria* 13 (2009): 113–58; for the historiographic revisions regarding the reign of Carlos II, see Luis Ribot,

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