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► **To cite this version:**

Laurence Lux-Sterritt. An Analysis of the Controversy Caused by Mary Ward's Institute in the 1620s. *Recusant History*, 2001, 25 (4), pp. 636-647. hal-01060147

**HAL Id: hal-01060147**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01060147>**

Submitted on 3 Sep 2014

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**An analysis of the controversy caused by Mary Ward's Institute in the 1620s.**  
by Laurence Lux-Sterritt.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, English Catholicism experienced a degree of persecution that was meant to ensure the extirpation of the old faith. However, Elizabethan anti-Catholic laws had an ambiguous effect upon the recusant population of England. Although the Roman faith initially suffered greatly, by the end of the reign it was rising again with force.<sup>1</sup> The unique vocation of Yorkshire woman, Mary Ward (1585-1645), can be seen as an eloquent illustration of this new English Catholic spirit, and as the embodiment of an English missionary determination to further the Catholic cause.

Between 1581 and 1585, two Acts were passed in an attempt to eradicate Catholicism on English soil. Anyone who acknowledged the authority of Rome or had received ordination abroad since the Queen's accession would be considered a traitor. It also became a criminal offence to hear Mass or even to help known Catholics.<sup>2</sup> It was in this troubled context that Mary Ward<sup>3</sup> was born in 1585 at Mulwith near Ripon; the daughter of Ursula and Marmaduke Ward, she belonged to a family renowned for its dedication to the old faith.<sup>4</sup> In a pattern already characteristic of recusant child-rearing, she was brought up and educated in various Yorkshire Catholic households,<sup>5</sup> and spent six years with the Babthorpes of Osgodby.<sup>6</sup> There, she witnessed the daily management of a recusant household and evolved in a world where housewives and women in general played crucial roles in maintaining the faith. These formative years amongst covert Catholic families in Yorkshire played a crucial part in the maturation of her spirituality, and they are intricately linked to her subsequent religious vocation. Indeed, even as she became inwardly convinced of her religious call, Mary Wary was influenced by the recusant background where, from a child, she had seen daily proof of women's aptitude to keep English Catholicism alive.

Between 1606 and 1611, Mary Ward experienced several defining moments that would provide the basis for her unique vocation.<sup>7</sup> The real turning point, however, came in the shape of a vision she experienced in 1611 when she, accompanied by seven fellow Englishwomen, was at work among the expatriate English Catholic population in St Omer.<sup>8</sup> In her letter to the Nuncio Albergati, she described hearing the divine commandment to 'Take the Same of the Society', an epiphany that changed the course of her life forever.<sup>9</sup> She further attempted to describe both her divine revelation and the way in which she had interpreted it:

I heard distinctly, not by sound of voice, but intellectually understood, these words, "Take the Same of the Society", so understood, as that we were to take the same, both in the matter and the manner, that only excepted which God by diversity of sex hath prohibited.<sup>10</sup>

Mary Ward understood the commandment to "Take the Same of the Society" as an exhortation to start a Society of women, formed on the model of the Society of Jesus, and pursuing the same goals.<sup>11</sup> She therefore lost no time in starting an Ignatian Institute that mainly focused upon the relief of adults and the education of girls.<sup>12</sup> By 1611 in St Omer, this handful of Catholic women was casting the foundations of a religious movement whose missionary and apostolic zeal would revolutionise the seventeenth-century conception of religious women.<sup>13</sup>

However, despite its contribution to the advancement of the Catholic faith, Mary Ward's project came to an abrupt end in 1631, when Pope Urban VIII issued a Bull suppressing the Institute and condemning its foundress as a heretic. Although both the Institute and Mary Ward herself have generated much research in recent years, very few works have attempted to unravel the complicated history behind this cruel fate.<sup>14</sup> The suppression of such a valuable Institute seems to contradict the missionary spirit of the post-Tridentine Church, and the reasons for the decree still remain unclear. This essay offers an analysis of the debate that emerged about the English Ladies in the 1620s, in an attempt to uncover the complex factors that led to the suppression. In 1621, Mary Ward had presented the essence and purpose of her Institute to the Curia, in a Plan called *Institutum*. An analysis of this Plan can help us not only to understand the components of her vocation, but also to comprehend the violent controversy that led Pope Urban VIII to pronounce the suppression of the Institute in 1631.

After her 1611 revelation to 'Take the Same of the Society', Mary Ward still struggled for a further ten years to discover the right path. In the 1610s she drafted two proposals for her Institute. The first, known as *Schola Beatae Mariae*, was sketched in 1612 and focused primarily upon the nuns' own salvation and their separation from the world.<sup>15</sup> Although it declared that teaching girls was the Institute's vocational occupation, it nevertheless gave primacy to the nun's spiritual life. The Institute described in this first Plan would be named the 'School of Blessed Mary' and function like a cloister, with a traditional regime of enclosure.<sup>16</sup> However, it would be misleading to equate the proposals of the *Schola* with what Mary Ward truly envisaged. Indeed, the Plan had been drafted mostly by her spiritual director, Father Lee, and it proposed but a pale picture of the foundress's vocation: its essence was deeply traditional and in keeping with Tridentine laws on monastic life for women religious. In 1616, however, the revelation to 'Take the Same of the Society' had sufficiently matured for Mary Ward to submit a revised Plan, the *Ratio Instituti*, which proposed an Institute totally detached from the traditional cloister. In quite a novel way, it advocated the mixed life, an educational apostolate and total independence from bishops' authority for the English Ladies: the influence of a Jesuit model was already strongly evident.<sup>17</sup>

However, neither of these two Plans fully captured the radicalism of Mary Ward's fully-fledged vocation. By 1621, though, she was ready to submit her third and most complete Plan, known as the *Institutum* - a Plan that she had drafted carefully, as the exact and mature expression of what she wanted for her congregation.<sup>18</sup> It is an analysis of this third Plan that brings to light both the essence of Mary Ward's missionary project, and the elements which led to its suppression in 1631. Indeed, the *Institutum* revealed its most controversial innovations even in its first opening lines, where the foundress and her followers described themselves as 'soldiers of God' wishing to serve 'beneath the banner of the cross'.<sup>19</sup> After years of hesitation, the Institute exposed both its faithful emulation of the Society of Jesus and its desire to be recognised as a female counterpart of the Society. Unequivocally, the Ladies went so far as to request the right for their Society to be 'designated by the name of Jesus'.<sup>20</sup> In fact, about 85% of Mary Ward's text derived from the Jesuit *Formula Instituti* (1550), and claimed to adopt most of its innovations concerning the nature of religious life.

The Plan mapped out the proposed works of the women in the Institute. Primarily, the Ladies aimed to instruct simple people in the Christian doctrine, to

prepare them for Mass and the sacraments, and to re-Catholicise those whose apostasy put their salvation in peril. They also wished to teach the catechism and focus especially upon the education of Catholic girls. However, their apostolate was not to stop there, for the Ladies (further emulating the Jesuits) envisaged their mission on a world-wide level. In the *Institutum*, they vowed to obey the Pope should he send them ‘among the Turks or any other infidels, even those who live in the region called the Indies, or among any heretics whatever’.<sup>21</sup> This clause, of course, encompassed the English mission itself, in which the Ladies wanted to take part as actively as male missionaries. In addition to sharing the Society’s purposes, the Institute of the English Ladies also proposed to parallel its structural form. The *Institutum* wished to appoint a Mother Superior General, whose central authority would supervise all of the Institute’s houses. Thus, the Englishwomen declined the jurisdiction of any male order or of their local ordinaries: like the Society of Jesus, they requested self-government, and wished to vow direct obedience to the Pope.<sup>22</sup> So far, the aims of the Institute mirrored, almost word for word, those of the Society of Jesus. Its missionary, apostolic and educational vocation shared the same essence; its form and structural organisation were woven in the same pattern.

If the *Institutum* was so similar to the Jesuit *Formula*, then what were the reasons for the bitter opposition mounting against Mary Ward in Rome? Surely, the Society of Jesus itself had created a favourable precedent when it was recognised by Paul III in 1540. At a time when the Church needed every advantage it could summon, a congregation of women working to catechise the female half of the population would represent a formidable asset. However, the Institute’s imitation of the Society of Jesus, far from facilitating its progress, was to throw countless difficulties in its path. It seems clear that the controversy caused by Mary Ward’s scheme was, in large part, generated by the disputatiousness of Jacobean Catholicism, and above all by the deep divide between regulars (especially the Jesuits) and seculars.

The drawing of the *Institutum* quickly prompted the English clergy to present a Memorial against it, in 1622.<sup>23</sup> It was predictable that those who opposed the Society of Jesus would also oppose an Institute that faithfully claimed to emulate it. Indeed, such vituperation was expressed vividly in the memorial, where the members of the Institute were termed ‘Jesuitesses’. Although the secular clergy accurately understood some elements of the Institute’s relationship with the Society of Jesus, it was also, either deliberately or unintentionally, grossly mistaken on other points. In particular, the seculars were correct in their claim that the Institute’s members lived ‘according to the rule and institute of the Jesuit Fathers’. However, it was a mistake to assume, as they did, that the English Ladies were directly ‘under their government and discipline’.<sup>24</sup> The latter statement arose, clearly, from a point-blank assumption that the self-rule of autonomous female congregations under no male government was inconceivable. Furthermore, it ran contrary to the Society’s rules on the matter: neither Mary Ward’s followers nor the Jesuit Fathers wished to trespass against St Ignatius’s prohibition of a female branch.

As if opposition from the anti-Jesuits was not enough to contend with, Mary Ward also faced antipathy from within the Society: some Jesuits proved sensitive to their enemies’ accusations that they violated their Rule and sheltered an illicit feminine phalanx. Despite the foundress’s clarity on this point in the *Institutum*, the boundaries between Jesuits and members of the Institute had become blurred, and her followers were increasingly called ‘Jesuitesses’. As a consequence, many Jesuit Fathers decided to detach themselves officially from the female congregation.

Although there remained members of the Society who supported the Ladies, the official line was conveyed in 1623 by the Jesuit General's order 'not [to] meddle with any thing belonging to the temporals of Mrs Mary Ward, or any of her company'.<sup>25</sup> Above all, the Fathers should make it quite clear that their Society, in keeping with the rulings of St Ignatius, did not harbour any female branch; the English Ladies had no more particular link with them as any other penitent. Calumny had thus already left a deep scar in the relationship between the Institute of English Ladies and the Society they so admired. The Jesuits were anxious to dissociate their Society from that of the so-called 'Gallopers'.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, despite being attributed such spiteful nicknames, the Institute was not to be dismissed simply as a laughing stock for the sport of the clergy. Had that been the case, they would not have felt moved to press so hard for its suppression. The secular clergy was not merely amused by the Englishwomen's endeavours: they were profoundly disturbed by them. In fact, the English Ladies proposed a new form of female religious life that threatened male supremacy.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, these were women who were being unwomanly, who lacked proper feminine humility and reserve, and who showed no sense of their intrinsic limitations. The *Institutum*, the clergy complained, lacked the meekness and modesty befitting religious women. Indeed, a brief review of the lexical field used in the 1621 Plan shows that, by that date, Mary Ward had a firm and definite idea about the nature of her Institute. This final version of her Plan displayed none of the timidity or reserve which characterised its two earlier formulations, the 1612 *Schola Beatae Mariae*, and the 1616 *Ratio Instituti*. For example, both the early Plans had resorted to a deferential style of prose, emphasising the Ladies' humility in recurring phrases as 'we humbly beg' or 'according to our littleness'.<sup>28</sup> However, the 1621 *Institutum* did not resort to such vocabulary: it was clear and to the point, and unveiled its missionary ambitions with unusual directness. Either Mary Ward expected no difficulties in seeing the Plan approved, or she was not prepared to compromise what she now saw clearly as her divine mission.

The radicalism of the *Institutum* partly lay in its bold transference of the styles of the male clerks regular to a new religious association of women. The Plan's proposed missionary vocation and the Institute's structure both defied the patterns of pre-defined gender roles within the Catholic Church. Indeed, the Church had been heading a prominently male campaign in England: though it sent priests over and trained boys in colleges on the Continent, yet it did not address women in the same determined way. English women's Catholic faith was by now confined to the sphere of their homes. Recusant female circles revolved around a few centres in influential Catholic houses, and women could only take part in the English mission in their roles as recusant housewives, or as religious exiles on the continent. The Church's missionary impulse seemed directed at male orders only, since the Council of Trent closed its last session in 1563 with a decree endorsing Boniface VIII's Bull *Periculoso* (1299) and enforced enclosure on all convents.<sup>29</sup> When Trent re-actualised this medieval perception of religious women and denied them the chance of an apostolic mission outside the cloister, the actual walls surrounding the cloisters came once more to embody the metaphorical walls separating the spiritual from the secular. One of the main obstacles hindering women's participation in the active works of the Catholic offensive was the traditional belief that women were, by nature, flawed, and therefore unsuitable for such a missionary venture. This was an eloquent expression of the common gender prejudice of the age, according to which women were

physiologically and temperamentally unfit for a strenuous apostolate in the world. It was this combination of religious tradition and vivacious distrust of female constancy that made the idea of women missionaries unacceptable to Church authorities.

Undoubtedly, one of the most acute aspects of the controversy about Mary Ward's project was centred on the relationship between religious life and gender. Without engaging in a feminist analysis of the Institute, it is clear that Mary Ward's opponents constructed their attacks along the lines of gender definitions within the Catholic Church.<sup>30</sup> With hindsight, it is possible to untangle the elements of the controversy and uncover the clergy's main argument as twofold. On the one hand, the Institute's detractors condemned the Institute as insignificant, and ridiculed what they saw as the feeble attempts of weak women. On the other hand, they also denounced the Institute's vocation as unfeminine, and condemned the lack of propriety of its members, who did not fit into pre-defined female categories. The English Ladies, they claimed, were usurping roles that were rightfully male. In short, even as they scorned the Ladies for their pre-supposed intrinsic weakness, yet they felt threatened by their ambitious endeavours.

Many of the Institute's detractors argued that it was worthless and ludicrous, simply because it was composed of women. In 1617, at a meeting in Rome, a Jesuit Father had expressed the general point of view when he doubted the English Ladies' positive input in the Catholic mission in these cutting terms: 'fervour will decay, and when all is done, they are but women.'<sup>31</sup> Women, it was universally admitted, did have a place in the Church, but their communities should submit to male jurisdiction and focus upon activities within their limited scope. Their intellects, as well as their bodies, were deemed less fit than those of men trained for missionary or evangelising purposes. Traditionally, initiatives and authority both rested with male Orders, secular priests, the episcopate, and ultimately the Curia and the Holy See. The Memorial's authors decried the 'vain designs of weak women' and predicted that the Englishwomen's project would 'come to nought'.<sup>32</sup> They voiced the opinion that women's lesser capability would only lead them to failure. This frame of mind was also reflected in the whole lexical field of the Memorial: the authors remarked that the Institute was 'incongruous' and 'ridiculous', and incurred much 'mockery'.<sup>33</sup> According to them, most of the innovations suggested in the *Institutum*, such as the government of the whole congregation by a Mother Superior General, would necessarily occasion further ridicule. The clergy believed, quite simply, that a woman was not capable of governing in such posts.

The Memorial's opening sentence illustrates our point, protesting that 'the Catholic faith had been propagated hitherto in no other way than by apostolic men of approved virtue and constancy'.<sup>34</sup> The women of the Institute, the Memorial complained, were full of 'vain designs, supported by no ecclesiastical authority', and did not 'fear to meddle with the conversion of England', a mission which the seculars saw as a male preserve. The clergy did, it is true, describe the Ladies' work in their schools as worthy of praise: in essence, religious instruction and girls' education were fully in keeping with the spirit of the Catholic Reformation. Nevertheless, the seculars insisted that the Ladies could not be considered religious if they must continue travelling at will, living an ordinary manner of life and dressing in secular fashion. This, they concluded, was 'not only a scorn but a great scandal to many pious people' and 'unbecoming to their sex'.<sup>35</sup>

Thus faced with bitter opposition from the English secular clergy and with, at best, cool suspicion on the part of their Jesuit exemplars, the English Ladies endured a mounting volume of censure. The *coup-de-grace* came when, in 1631, Pope Urban

VIII decided in favour of her opponents and issued a Bull of Suppression against the Institute.<sup>36</sup> The Bull was written in severe terms and declared the Institute ‘null, invalid, and of no value or importance’, condemning it to ‘perpetual abolition’. In it, Pope Urban VIII endorsed all the attacks that we have already reviewed. He called the women ‘Jesuitesses’ and described the Institute as a ‘sect’. The women had transgressed the boundaries of gender-defined roles, and the Pontiff condemned their ‘arrogant contumacy’ and ‘great temerity’. He also chastised the nature of their work which, he complained, were ‘by no means suiting the weakness of their sex, intellect, womanly modesty and above all virginal purity’. Lastly, the Institute’s houses were likened to ‘dangerous branches’, ‘plants hurtful to the Church’ and to be ‘pulled up by the roots and extirpated’.<sup>37</sup> The decree was pronounced as final, and it was disastrous for the Institute.

How can we explain Mary Ward’s failure at ensuring recognition for her Institute? It may be worth considering that she was influenced by the prominence of women in the household recusancy<sup>38</sup> that had shaped her faith as a child. As a Yorkshire recusant, she may have been predisposed, almost instinctively, to assume that female religious initiative and leadership were part of the accepted order.<sup>39</sup> Mary Ward often expressed her zeal for her vocation with her own particular brand of assertiveness: her documents provide a vivid insight into her frame of mind. To those who accused the members of the Institute of immodesty, or even of usurping roles that were rightfully male, Mary Ward answered in plain terms. During the controversy that had followed the *Institutum*, she had drawn up her own Memorial to Pope Gregory XV in 1622, in an attempt to clarify her argument even further. In the first place, she claimed she had not wilfully designed her idea of the Institute: quite the contrary, she had received it ‘by divine appointment’.<sup>40</sup> She saw herself as the vessel of divine will, and God’s human instrument on earth, a claim that made her position non-negotiable.<sup>41</sup> She rejected charges of pride or ambition, arguing that she had not chosen her vocation of her own free will, but rather she had been chosen by God. Her pursuit of the Institute, even after the suppression, was proof of her complete dedication and obedience to the divine will. After Pope Urban VIII suppressed her Institute in 1631 and declared her a heretic, Mary Ward wrote a declaration from her prison in Munich:

I have never undermined the authority of the Holy Church; on the contrary, for 26 years, with great respect to both His Holiness and the Holy Church, and in the most honourable way possible, I have put my frail efforts and my industry to their service, and this, I hope, by the mercy of God and His benignity, will be accounted for at the right time and place.<sup>42</sup>

She described herself as ‘a true and obedient servant of the Holy Church’, and hoped the charges against her Christian character would be annulled, particularly the accusations of heresy and schism.

As far as the relationship between the Institute and the Society of Jesus was concerned, Mary Ward seemingly failed to see that her diligence towards the Society could be, in itself, a damning characteristic. From her letters and papers, one can deduce that she believed the precedent embodied by the Society of Jesus would make the approbation of her own Institute a simple matter of course. In her 1622 Memorial to Gregory XV, she reminded the Pontiff that her project was simply ‘to take upon us

the same Holy Institute and order of life already approved by divers Popes of happy memory [...] to the Religious Fathers of the Society of Jesus'.<sup>43</sup> She seemed to see no reasons why her venture should be thought presumptuous, when it merely followed rules that had already been approved for the Jesuits.

The foundress also defended her Institute by vindicating women's worth in the Church. The Jesuit Father Minister who, in 1617, had looked down upon the English ladies for being 'but women', whose initial fervour would decay, procured the occasion of Mary Ward's three speeches to her congregation in St Omer later that year. Thus she responded to those Jesuit taunts:

It is true, that fervour does many times grow cold. But what is the cause? Is it because we are women? No; but because we are imperfect women. There is no such difference between men and women ... and I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much.<sup>44</sup>

Mary Ward's defence of women thus showed that she did not share the patriarchal view generally endorsed by the early modern Church. Her understanding of female potency might have emerged from her familiarity with English recusancy, in which women were so prominent in the daily running of the endangered Church. The next passage demonstrates this even further:

What think you of this word, "but women"? If we were in all things inferior to some other creature, which I suppose to be men, which I care be bold to say is a lie then, with respect to the good Father, I may say: it is an error. [...] I would to God that all men would understand this verity: that women, if they will, may be perfect, and if they would not make us believe we can do nothing, and that we are but women, we might do great matters.<sup>45</sup>

These words speak for themselves: Mary Ward did not share her contemporaries' traditional conception of women. This was, perhaps, the most insurmountable obstacle of all, and it certainly played a crucial role in the suppression of 1631. The Institute did not recognise that gender definitions in seventeenth-century Catholicism made a mission which was praiseworthy for men, quite unacceptable for women - regardless of how beneficial it could have been for the Church. When female leaders such as Mary Ward failed to think inside the feminine frame of the early modern Church, communication became impossible, as if both parties spoke different languages.

Her answer in the face of adversity was in keeping with her character. After the suppression of her life's work, and for as long as she lived, she strove to accomplish the goals she had exposed in the *Institutum*, whilst still refusing to compromise her vocation in any way. For her, there was no half-way house; her vision would materialise exactly as it was meant, or it would not be at all. When advised to compromise on some points of principle, and perhaps adopt a modified form of enclosure, she replied somewhat dismissively: 'If God give health, we shall find another way to serve him than of becoming Ursulines'.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the Ursulines had started as simple congregations of women undertaking pastoral work and educating girls without the restrictions of enclosure. However, faced with the popular

and ecclesiastical suspicion that accompanied unenclosed female religious endeavours, the Ursulines had agreed to become nuns in cloisters. Although their rule of enclosure was relaxed in order to allow day pupils to come in and receive their lessons, Ward was not wrong in thinking that the original Ursuline spirit had been forced into the mould of recognised and approved female religious roles.<sup>47</sup> This was what Mary Ward was not prepared to do. She believed, even after the suppression, that the Pope might come to change his verdict, and she never stopped trying to rectify her position in Rome.

Despite Mary Ward's personal conviction that her contribution would benefit the Church, her Institute was doomed by its essence, even from its inception. Unwittingly, the foundress's ardent desire to take part in the Catholic mission in England was caught in the cross-fire between regulars and seculars, and was consequently immolated by both opposing parties. On the other hand, patriarchal Church authorities frowned upon the ambitious vocations of the English Ladies, and they deemed Mary Ward's zeal for an apostolic mission to be unfeminine and ludicrous. The Institute's suppression was pronounced, at least partly, to censure a group of women who behaved in an unwomanly way. Nevertheless, the foundations had been cast for an Institute that is still extant around the world under the name of the IBVM. Although Mary Ward's vocation was ahead of her times, it had highlighted the importance of women's involvement in the Catholic Reformation, and it provides us today with an edifying example of female initiative in early modern Catholicism.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Chambers          | M.C.E. Chambers, <u>The Life of Mary Ward, (1585-1645)</u> . (London: Burns and Oates, 2 vols., 1882-1885).                      |
| Peters            | Henriette Peters, <u>Mary Ward. A World in Contemplation</u> . (trans. by Helen Butterworth. Leominster: Gracewing Books, 1994). |
| BCA               | Bar Convent (York) Archives  |
| <i>Schola</i>     | First Plan of the Institute, 1612. BCA, B18 / 1.   |
| <i>Ratio</i>      | Second Plan of the Institute, 1616. BCA, B18 / 2.  |
| <i>Institutum</i> | Third Plan of the Institute, 1621. BCA, B18 / 3.   |
| Bull              | Bull of Suppression of the Institute by Urban VIII, 1631, BCA, C1, the Cramlington Papers.                                       |

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<sup>1</sup> General surveys of Catholicism in England can be found in works such as: J.C.H Aveling, The Handle and the Axe. (London: Blond & Briggs, 1976); John Bossy, The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976); Alan Dures, English Catholicism, 1558-1644. (London: Longman, Seminar Studies in History, 1983); Peter Guilday, The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent, 1558-1795. (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1914); M.J. Havran, The Catholics in Caroline England. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); M. Leys, Catholics in England, 1559-1829: A Social History. (London: Longman, 1961); B. Magee, The English Recusants. A Study of the Post-Reformation Catholic Survival and the Operation of the Recusancy Laws. (London: Burns & Oates, 1938); David Mathew, Catholicism in England, the Portrait of a Minority: its Culture and Tradition. (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1938); A.O Meyer, England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); A. Morey, The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I. (London: Allen and Unwinn, 1978) and W.J.R Trimble, The Elizabethan Catholic Laity. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1964). See also articles such as John Bossy, 'Rome and the English Catholics; a Question of Geography', Historical Journal 7 (1964); 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', in T. Aston (ed.), Crisis in Europe 1560-1660. (London, 1965); A.G Dickens, 'The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy, 1560-1590', Yorkshire Archaeological Journal, 35 (1943); Christopher Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', Past and Present, 93 (1981) and 'From monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, fifth series, 31 (1981).

<sup>2</sup> The Act to Retain the Queen's Majesty's Subjects in their Due Obedience (1581, 23: Eliz. 1, c. 1) and the Act against Jesuits, Seminary priests and such other like Disobedient Persons (1585, 27: Eliz. 1, c.2). In G.R. Elton, The Tudor Constitution. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965). pp.422-427.

<sup>3</sup> In this article, I have mainly used the major recognised biography of Mary Ward, by M.C.E. Chambers, The Life of Mary Ward, 1585-1645. (London: Burns and Oates, 2 vols., 1882-1885), in parallel with the more recent work of Henriette Peters, Mary Ward. A World in Contemplation. (trans. by Helen Butterworth. Gracewing Books, 1994). A number of biographical works have been published that cover Mary Ward's life and her vocation for the Institute: see Right Rev. Abbot Gasquet, The Life of Mary Ward, Foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (London: Burns and Oates, 1909); Leo Hicks, 'Mary Ward's Great Enterprise.' The Month 151

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(1928); M. Littlehales, Mary Ward (1585-1645). A woman for all seasons: Foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1974); Mother Margarita O'Connor, That Incomparable Woman. (Montreal: Palm, 1962); Mother M. Salome, Mary Ward: A Foundress of the Seventeenth century. (London: Burns and Oates, 1901).

<sup>4</sup> Contemporary biographies comprise the Italian Vita, the English Life and a series of 50 paintings (now kept in Augsburg) acting as vignettes of the milestones in Mary Ward's life, called The Painted Life. The biography known as the English Life was originally entitled A Briefe Relation of the Holy Life and Happy Death of our Dearest Mother; it is a posthumous *vita*, written jointly by Mary Poyntz and Winefred Wigmore, Mary Ward's closest two followers, c. 1650.

<sup>5</sup> For illicit Catholic schooling, see A.C.F. Beales, Education Under Penalty: English Catholic Education from the Reformation to the Fall of James II, 1547-1689. (London: Athlone Press, 1963); P. Armitage, 'Catholicism and Educational Control in North-East Lancashire in the Reign of Elizabeth I', North West Catholic History, vol. 13 (1986); J. A. Hilton, Catholic Lancashire. From Reformation to Renewal, 1559-1991. (Chichester: Phillimore, 1994) and S. Mews and Michael Mullett, 'Catholicism and the Church of England in a Northern Library: Henry Halsted and the Burnley Grammar School Library', in Studies in Church History, Subsidia, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> For Mary Ward's stay at the Babthorpes, see Chambers, vol. 1, pp.40-42; M. Oliver, That Incomparable Woman. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p.56; E. Orchard, Till God Will (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), pp. xiv and 9 and Peters, pp. 44-48.

<sup>7</sup> For analyses of these revelations, see Anthony Clarke (ed.), The Heart and Mind of Mary Ward. (IBVM, 1985); Emmanuel Orchard (ed.), Till God Will. Mary Ward through her writings. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985); M.P. Parker, The Spirit of Mary Ward. (London: Thomas More Books, 1963); and Immolata Wetter, 'Mary Ward's Apostolic Vocation', The Way, supplement 17 (1972).

<sup>8</sup> Peters, p.110. Ward's companions were her sister, Barbara Ward, Mary Poyntz, Winefred Wigmore, Johanna Browne, Susan Rookwood, Catherine Smith and Barbara Babthorpe.

<sup>9</sup> Peters, pp.114-119 and Chambers, vol.1, pp.283-285.

<sup>10</sup> BCA, B5, letter 4 to Mgr Albergati, 1620.

<sup>11</sup> For literature on the Jesuits, see William V. Bangert, A History of the Society of Jesus, (Saint Louis, Mo: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986); James Brodrick, Origins of the Jesuits. (London: Longmans, 1949), and Saint Ignatius Loyola. The pilgrim years. (London: Burns and Oates, 1956); George E. Ganss, Saint Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University: a study in the History of Catholic Education, (Marquette University Press, 1956); and A. Lynn Martin, The Jesuit Mind: the Mentality of an Elite in Early Modern France, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Caritas McCarthy, 'Ignatian Charism in Women's Congregations.' The Way, supplement 20 (1973): 10-19; N. McMullen, 'The education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640', in History of Education 6 (1977) 2; René Pillorget, 'Mary Ward ou la Ténacité (1585-1645)' in Les Religieuses enseignantes, Actes de la Quatrième Rencontre d'Histoire Religieuse de Fontevraud. (Angers: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> On the tensions between the cloister and the apostolate for religious women, see Marie Chalendar, La Promotion de la femme à l'apostolat, 1540-1650. (Paris: Editions Alsatia, 1950); Louis Chatelier, L'Europe des dévots. (Paris: Flammarion,

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1987); Elizabeth Rapley, The Dévotes. Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France. (Kinston, Ont.: McGill, Queen's University Press, 1987); James Cain, 'Cloister and the Apostolate of Religious Women', Review for the Religious 27 (1968); Ruth Liebowitz, 'Virgins in the Service of Christ: The Dispute over an Active Apostolate for Women during the Counter-Reformation', in Women of Spirit, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Linda Lierheimer, 'Redefining Convent Space: Ideals of Female Community among Seventeenth Century Ursuline Nuns', Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History 24 (1997) and James Cain, 'The Influence of the Cloister on the Apostolate of Congregations of Religious Women', PhD dissertation at Pontifical Lateran University, Rome, 1965.

<sup>14</sup> I am grateful to the convent's archivist Sister M. Gregory Kirkus, for her insightful discussions and invaluable help during my research stays in the Bar Convent. She has clarified my understanding of the IBVM and helped me untangle the many strands which make the rich and complicated history of the Institute.

<sup>15</sup> *Schola*, point 5: 'Therefore, the aim of this Institute is as follows: Firstly, that reflecting on the shortness of life and on the eternity that is then to follow, we may make timely provision for our own salvation by a complete renunciation of the world. Then, in accordance with the capacity of our own sex, we may devote ourselves to the Christian education of maidens and girls whether outside or inside England' (emphasis mine). The plan is analysed in depth in Peters, pp.124-132.

<sup>16</sup> *Schola*, point 14: 'far from having the house open to all, we desire rather to have cloister so strictly observed that no access is to be allowed to any extern whatsoever'

<sup>17</sup> *Ratio*; the text is analysed in Peters, pp. 199-203.

<sup>18</sup> This plan has been presented and its importance explained to the entire congregation of the IBVM by Mother Immolata Wetter in the Fourth Letter of Instruction in November 1970.

<sup>19</sup> *Institutum*, f.19.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, f. 22.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, f.22.

<sup>23</sup> Text transcribed in Chambers, vol.2, pp.183-186, and analysed pp.44-46; also Peters, pp.338-346.

<sup>24</sup> Chambers, vol.2, pp.183.

<sup>25</sup> PRO. SP 16 ff. 40 v; Mutius Vitelleschi's letter, dated 19 July 1623: directions for the colleges of Louvain and St Omer.

<sup>26</sup> Chambers, vol.2, pp.186. Ward's followers were also mockingly called 'wandering nuns' because of their refusal to accept traditional enclosure. In her article 'Wandering Nuns": The Return of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the South of England, 1862-1945', Recusant History 24:3 (1999), 384-96, Sr. M. Gregory Kirkus, IBVM explores what she calls 'the purposeful mobility' of the members of the Institute in more recent years.

<sup>27</sup> Although Mary Ward herself never wished to challenge Church authorities, her vocation was, unwittingly, rocking the foundations of a patriarchal hierarchical system.

<sup>28</sup> *Ratio*, f.3. and *Schola*, point 2

<sup>29</sup> H.J. Schroeder, Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. (Rockford, Ill: Tan Books, 1978). pp.220-21.

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<sup>30</sup> In this respect, we adopt a methodological process similar to that described by Barbara Newman in From Virile Woman to WomanChrist. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995), p. 2: ‘All the essays [in this collection] take misogyny more or less for granted, noting its repercussions in women’s lives without attempting to trace either its historical origins or its psychological roots. The complex beliefs and practices surrounding female subordination [...] seems to constitute one of the few melancholy universals to be observed across to immense range of human cultures.’

<sup>31</sup> Chambers, vol. 1, p.408.

<sup>32</sup> Chambers, vol.2, p.183

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Chambers, vol.2, pp.183

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Bull; also discussed in Chambers, vol.2, pp.386-87 and analysed in depth in Peters, pp.565-67.

<sup>37</sup> Bull, ff.1-4.

<sup>38</sup> Northern Catholics have been the subjects of pioneering works in the field regional studies: J.C.H. Aveling, Northern Catholics: the Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790, and The Handle and the Axe. (Blond & Briggs, 1976), and ‘Some aspects of Yorkshire Catholic Recusant History: 1558-1791’ in Studies in Church History IV, 1967. Also J.A. Hilton, Catholic Lancashire, From Reformation to Renewal, 1559-1991. (Chichester: Philimore. 1994); A.G. Dickens ‘The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy, 1560-1590’ in Yorkshire Archeological Journal 35 (1943); or J.S. Leatherbarrow ‘Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants’, in Chetham Society 110 (1947).

<sup>39</sup> See J. Bossy’s theory of a Northern Catholic matriarchy in The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976).

<sup>40</sup> BCA, B5 / 6, f.17. Memorial dated January 1622.

<sup>41</sup> Jeanne Cover. Love, the Driving Force. Mary Ward’s Spirituality: It’s Significance for Moral Theology. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> BCA, B5 / 82, f.93a. A Declaration of Mary Ward from the Anger Prison, Munich, to the Roman Congregation, Holy Office. Dated 27 March 1631.

<sup>43</sup> BCA, B5 / 6, f.17.

<sup>44</sup> BCA, B17, certified copy of ‘Three speeches of our Reverend Mother Chief Superior made at St Omer having been long absent’; originals kept in the Archives of IBVM, München-Nymphenburg.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> BCA/ B5/ f.90. Letter to her congregation, 17 February 1631, when in prison in Angers.

<sup>47</sup> In the Archives Départementales de la Haute-Garonne, there is evidence amongst the Ursuline papers that the early congregation of Toulouse accepted enclosure as a means to an end. In 221H-37, we are told that despite the congregation’s great popular success, its safety was jeopardised by its informal status. Marguerite de Vigier, then acting as Superior, therefore resolved to ask for enclosure in order to ensure the future of her community.