

Satirical poetry and religious criticism in Portugal in the late eighteenth century

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Abstract

In the late eighteenth century, the Catholic clergy, together with the dogmas and practices of their religion, were heavily criticized in the Luso-Brazilian world. Such criticisms, usually repressed as libertines, were not restricted to conversations but were also to be found in manuscript poems, most of which were anonymous. This article seeks to analyze two of these poems: *O Hissope* and *Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos*. Within the context of political and doctrinal fervor that existed in the late eighteenth century, both poems were banned, although their messages and political implications were far from being the same. Actually, the poems demonstrate different ways of thinking about religion and about the relationships both between religion and society and between religion and politics.

Keywords

Satirical poetry, Libertinage, Anticlericalism, Religious criticism, Political discourse.

Resumo

Ao final do século XVIII, eclesiásticos, dogmas e práticas da religião católica foram criticados no mundo luso-brasileiro. Reprimidas como libertinas, essas críticas não se limitaram a conversas, mas perpassaram alguns dos poemas manuscritos, em geral anônimos, que circularam no período. Este artigo tem por objetivo analisar dois desses poemas: *O Hissope* e *Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos*. No contexto de efervescência política e doutrinal de finais do Setecentos, ambos foram proibidos de circular, embora suas mensagens e implicações político-teológicas não fossem as mesmas, evidenciando diferentes formas de pensar a religião e a relação religião/sociedade e religião/política.

Palavras-chave

Poesia satírica, Libertinagem, Anticlericalismo, Crítica religiosa, Discurso político.

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Introduction

In the late eighteenth century, many poems circulated in Portugal, mainly in manuscript form: the mock-heroic poems *O Hissope*, *O Reino da Estupidez* and their respective responses; the epistle *A Voz da Razão*, *Epístola a Marília*, *Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos*, *Cartas de Olinda a Alzira*;² satirical sonnets, some of which were attributed to Antônio Lobo de Carvalho, Manoel Maria Barbosa du Bocage, and many other poems existing in Portuguese archives. Usually anonymous, or composed under pseudonyms, these writings exposed the Catholic Church, the clergy and the devotional practices of the faithful to the barbs of satire. By taking as its theme various aspects of the religious reality in Portugal, satirical poetry was full of political and social implications.

It is not easy to evaluate the extent to which these poems circulated. It is, however, known that they did. There are many copies of them to be found in different Portuguese archives. Furthermore, most of them were, at some time or other, persecuted or banned by the authorities, or criticized by contemporary readers. In fact, the authorities were afraid of them for the following reasons: some because they affronted religious dogmas; others because they weakened the legitimacy of the Catholic Church and its ministers. Even those verses which chose just one single person as the target for their satire were not to be allowed, since they represented an attack against the honor of others, which was a central element in the structure of modern societies. Satire was not completely forbidden in Portugal in the eighteenth century, but such texts had to respect one single rule: they could reproach vices in general, but not a single person.

Many of these texts criticizing the Portuguese religious reality were, and still are, characterized by the fact that they belonged to a context of anticlericalism and secularism, giving the false impression that they all shared the same language (Braga, 1901; Cândido, 1969: 153-160; Albuquerque, 1975; Moniz, 2003: 191). Some of these writings were recovered and published during the liberal disputes of the nineteenth century. *O Hissope* was first published in 1802, and reprinted in 1817; *O Reino da Estupidez* had its first edition in 1818; *A Voz da Razão* in 1822; *Epístola a Marília* and *Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos* were printed on different occasions in that same century.

² These poems were not translated into English. Therefore, I have translated them myself: The Hyssop, The Kingdom of Stupidity, The Voice of Reason, Epistle to Marília, Epistle to the Very Reverend Father Friar José de Carmellos, Linda's Letters to Alzira.

However, the analysis of these texts should not be limited to seeking elements and features that enable us to identify them with a certain liberal and secular discourse developed during the nineteenth century. The defense of religious tolerance, the rejection of fanaticism, superstition and the Inquisition, the criticism leveled at the abuses of the clergy and the Church's interference in political and social life, all aspects that were recovered in the nineteenth century, were already present at the end of the eighteenth century. But this does not mean that all those forms of discourse were equal to one another. Behind such labels as libertinage and anticlericalism, there were discursive constructions that conflicted with one another in many aspects, including the positions that were adopted in regard to the political and social role of religion. In fact, satirical poems formed part of the many political, religious, and ideological controversies of the eighteenth century. Most of them were recovered, given new significations, and deepened in the following century. These two moments were interlinked, but they followed distinct processes which must be analyzed in relation to their own specificities.

In this sense, the satirical poems were written at a time when there was a profound reorganization of the political relationship between the Empire and the priesthood, manifested in the religious and regalist politics of Dom José I (1750-1777). They arose in a context that was permeated by the emergence of new values and concepts about religion and religiosity, including the philosophical writings of men like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Baron d'Holbach, but also the discourse of Catholic thinkers, such as Antonio Pereira de Figueiredo, Ludovico Antonio Muratori, and the Abbé Fleury. Events such as the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789 must also be considered. Finally, particular elements that were targeted in these seventeenth-century criticisms, such as the behavioral deviations of the clergy, must not be forgotten. However, the resumption, or rather the continued permanence, of these dimensions in the anecdotal and satirical verses of the eighteenth century was no longer limited to the simple desire of conserving or restoring a political and religious status quo which had been corrupted (Hansen, 1989). In some cases, these same elements were recovered by a discourse that aimed at creating a new religious society and even a new political one.

Thus, the different languages expressed by the poems demonstrate the complexity and discursive plurality of the movement calling for a renewal of ideas about religion in the eighteenth century. They also indicate the political and social implications of this same movement. As John Pocock has remarked, the discourse that was created almost never appeared in a pure and isolated form: it tended to appropriate elements from other

discursive constructions, often affording them new meanings (2003). This is also true for the satirical poems. In some cases, the difference was not in the elements that were manipulated, but in the way that this manipulation took place. The corruption of the clergy, for example, was a component of many different writings in that period. However, beyond this apparent uniformity, it is important to realize that not only did the meaning that was afforded to that notion vary, but so did its discursive arrangement. The idea of corruption among the clergy almost never appeared in isolation: there were other elements that accompanied it. Furthermore, the theoretical framework that underlay the criticism often differed from one case to another. It is, therefore, impossible to restrict these writings and their contents to labels such as anticlericalism or secularism, terms often used in the singular (Rémond, 1976; Abreu, 2004). The researcher must consider the specificity of these discourses and their respective arrangements within the political and ideological controversies that marked the proposals for reorganization issuing from the Portuguese religious society in the mid-eighteenth century.

Few studies have been dedicated to analyzing the political and social implications of eighteenth-century poems (Starling, 2003). Historians often investigate their aesthetic and literary aspects, putting to one side their repercussions in the context of the political and doctrinal controversies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. We must therefore not only consider the political discourse of these verses but also insert them among a larger set of texts, thus broadening the field of research to include the intertextual and historical context (Skinner, 1999). In order to do so, this article will focus on two poems in particular: *O Hissope* and *Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos*. In 1803, the General Police Intendancy of Portugal, following orders received from the Minister of State, forbade the circulation of both texts. By then, however, they had already spread clandestinely throughout the kingdom.³

Despite these poems both receiving suspicious glances from the royal authorities, their contents were not identical. As will be seen throughout this article, their messages were not only different, but they also expressed diverging positions about the Catholic Church and the political organization of Portuguese society.

³ Lisbon, National Archives, Intendência Geral de Polícia, Contas para as Secretarias, livro 7, f.144-144v.

Contents and authorship

O Hissope

This is a mock-heroic poem, satirically reporting a quarrel that occurred in Elvas between the bishop, Dom Lourenço de Lancastre, and the dean of the cathedral in the second half of the eighteenth century. The verses were probably written some time after 1770. The first printed versions were divided into eight cantos. However, in the manuscript copies, this number oscillates between six, seven, eight, or even nine cantos.

The poem is based on the following plot: the dean, José Carlos Lara, had decided to offer the hyssop to the bishop every time he went to the church to exercise his functions. Since this utensil was used to sprinkle holy water on the congregation, the honor that lay behind the dean's action was not insignificant. But their friendship had begun to fade, and José Carlos Lara stopped offering the hyssop to the bishop, who necessarily sensed the change. He considered the dean's act to be a personal affront, so he decided to force him to maintain the old practice. With this aim in mind, the bishop called a meeting of the Cathedral chapter so that they could approve a final decision whereby the dean would be forced to offer the hyssop as he used to do. Lara appealed to the crown, but without success. A short while later, the dean died and was replaced by his nephew, Ignácio Joaquim Alberto de Matos. The new dean also disagreed with the imposed obligation. The bishop similarly tried to threaten him, but Ignácio Joaquim appealed to the crown, this time successfully. The royal court demanded an explanation from the bishop, who was afraid, and denied the existence of the Cathedral chapter's imposition.

This satire was written by Antônio Diniz da Cruz e Silva (1731-1799), a bachelor of law from the University of Coimbra, and one of the founders of Arcadia Lusitana in 1756. A magistrate and a poet, Diniz had held numerous posts in the administration of royal justice.

Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos

This is a letter written in verse and addressed to a clergyman named José de Carmellos. Unfortunately, since we only have his name, it has not been possible to obtain any more information about this man. Unlike *O Hissope*, this poem does not narrate a particular event, nor does it describe a specific person. The whole text is constructed in

defense of the natural freedom of man (action and thought). And, in doing so, the author criticizes the clergy who kept the people in ignorance, and praises the American Independence and the French Revolution as models to be followed.

The *Epístola ao Muito Reverendo Padre Frei José de Carmellos*, or *Epístola* for short, was first published in 1791 in London under the pseudonym of Ignacio de Sequeira Massuelos. Actually, the satire was written by the exiled Francisco Manuel do Nascimento (1734-1819), also known as Filinto Elísio. In 1817, this poem was reprinted in the fifth volume of his poetry, and, on that occasion, without any allusion to pseudonyms. This latter edition was printed in Paris, and the poet himself had participated in the selection of the writings that would be published in the volumes.

The first printing of the verses of Filinto Elísio occurred in 1806. The *Epístola* was also published in this collection. In this case, unlike the 1817 edition, the pseudonym was maintained. In addition to Ignacio de Sequeira Massuelos, the poet had used other false names to sign his satirical works, including Clemente de Oliveira Bastos, Lourenço da Silveira e Mattos, José Pinheiro de Castello Branco, and Agostinho Soares de Vilhena e Silva (Andrade, 1999: 27; Braga, 1901: 268).

The life of Francisco Manuel do Nascimento wasn't easy. In 1778, he was denounced to the Inquisition for having made heretical propositions. He did, however, manage to trick the *familiar* who had been responsible for his arrest, and successfully escaped.⁴ The day of his escape, July 4, was constantly recalled in his poems, since this was the date on which he was forced to endure the hardships of being exiled and began to criticize the political and religious situation of Portugal. Outside the Portuguese kingdom, the poet lived most of his time in Paris. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, he lived in The Hague for a brief period, presumably at the invitation of Antônio Araújo de Azevedo, a Portuguese representative at that court (Sané, 1808: 31).

Satirical poems, religious criticism, and political discourse

The poem *O Hissope*, a poetic representation of a controversy that occurred in the town of Elvas, in the late 1760s, between the bishop and the dean, did more than just recount a local conflict in verse. In his report of events, the poet attacked issues that were considered delicate within the Catholic Church, such as clerical vanity, the wealth of the clergy and the pious legacies that were left to the Church.

⁴ Lisbon, National Archives, Tribunal do Santo Ofício, Inquisição de Lisboa, processo 14048.

The bishop was portrayed as a fat figure who used to spend a great deal of time in holy idleness, enjoying food, games and resting. Actually, both the Dean and the Bishop spent their time flitting between idleness and laziness.

A sweet peace reigned in the Holy Church;
The bishop and the dean, both consenting
To give and receive the blessed hyssop,
Life in holy idleness they consumed.
A good wine from Malaga, ham
From the famous Montanchez, woodcocks,
Partridges, the dove, the tender pigeon,
The tea leaves from Beijing, and from Mecca
The fragrant coffee served at sumptuous tables,
Occupied most of their time;
And the rest they spent, playing in exemplary fashion,
Or sleeping, without feeling it. (Silva, 2006: 25-26)⁵

The clerical vanity was represented in an episode in which some monks wanted new clothes that would differentiate them from the common people. Ecclesiastic greed was also recalled at different points in the narrative. In one of those passages, the poet had written about the hope that some monks had of a possible increase in wheat prices, an act that they astutely intended to justify as being an example of the divine will.

Throughout the narrative, other aspects were also criticized. Antônio Diniz, highlighting the lack of intelligibility of the sermons, declared about them: “hunger only increases, causes sleepiness” (Ibid: 97). That was not all. The pious legacies and testamentary laws of Dom José I were not forgotten. The passage refers to the occasion when the dean went to the Franciscan convent to speak to the guardian about his conflicts with the bishop.

The conversation took place in the convent garden, a rich and opulent space, adorned with statues representing ancient figures. Despite praising the perfection of that place, abounding in flowers and statues, the dean did, however, notice that there was no waterfall. The guardian promptly replied:

⁵ All the verses quoted throughout this article were translated into English by me, since there is no known English version of the poetic works presented here.

This work will cost a lot of money
 (Answers the guardian) – and today the alms
 To feed the belly of so many friars,
 Who are ravenous, are just enough.
 Once, this convent was rich,
 But these new testamentary laws,
 Caused a huge reduction in their rents
 It is true that the holy exorcisms
 The blessing of the sorcerers and earthworms,
 The great and extraordinary privilege
 Of the brother or mother of friars, and other pious
 And holy institutes invented,
 Devoutly and subtly, by our forefathers,
 And which we, the people, have propagated
 With zeal and dexterity, mainly
 Among the devout female sex,
 Still sleeping from time to time.
 But all this is nothing, it's a trifle
 Compared with Purgatory!
 Lord, the purgatory and the holy souls
 Were the Potosi of the Franciscans! (Ibid: 103)

In order to understand these verses, it is also necessary to understand just how important the pious legacies were to the Catholic Church and to its congregation throughout the modern era. The doctrine of purgatory, which spread through the Church between the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, established the existence of a place where some dead people would be subjected to a probationary period for the expiation of their sins. The prayers and indulgences of the living could shorten the length of their stay. After leaving purgatory, the dead would pray for those who had helped them enter into paradise (Le Goff, 1993).

During the modern era, the desire for the salvation of the soul and the fear of condemnation led to the development of a genuine market in salvation, from which the Catholic Church was the main beneficiary in material terms. In some cases, the heirs found

themselves in financial difficulties due to the pious legacies that were inserted in people's wills (Rodrigues, 2008).

All this, however, began to change with the testamentary laws of June 1766 and September 1769, which formed part of the regalist policy implemented during the reign of Dom José I. These laws were intended to regulate the making of wills, limiting the number of legacies in favor of the soul that could be left to religious institutions (Araújo, 1997; Abreu, 2007; Rodrigues, 2008).

Antonio Diniz da Cruz e Silva ridiculed the situation of religious orders in the context that they faced after the implementation of the testamentary laws, exposing the damage that such measures could cause to the finances of these institutions. In fact, the loss of revenue would not exactly endanger the existence of a religious order, but it would certainly affect its wealth and hence its luxury and ostentation. The image of the rich and beautiful garden, full of statues, vases and flowers seems to be used to emphasize this dimension.

Despite the acidity of the verses, the attacks made on the religious institutions did not encourage a break with the religion itself. The poet did not target religious tolerance or the laws of nature. Nor did he question the papal power, the validity of the scriptures, paradise, the miracles, nor even the need for secular and/or regular monks. Neither the royal figure nor the political order of Portuguese society were criticized in his verses. Antonio Diniz painted a picture of the monks in which they appear mundane, lazy, greedy and vain, features that did not match the religious state that they aspired to. He similarly demonstrated his disagreement with certain pious practices that some monks attempted to inculcate into the lives of the faithful, such as exorcisms, and the act of blessing people apparently affected by spells, or even worms. In essence, the satire was manifested as part of a critical discourse developed during the eighteenth century, which sought to eliminate corruption among the clergy and certain religious practices that were classified as superstitious and suitably discredited.

If we considered only the criticism that was made of the corrupt behavior of monks, the verses of Antonio Diniz would not seem to be moving very far away from those criticisms that had already been made, in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, by Baroque poets, such as Frei Lucas de Santa Catarina (1660-1740) (Graça, 1983). In the satire *Sonho tam charro que se fez dormindo. Anatomia religiosa, sem mais cousa nenhuma* (A dream so clear that was made sleeping. Religious anatomy with nothing else), Frei Lucas highlighted the deviations of Portuguese religious orders from what they

should follow as the norm. The dismay was so great that the protagonist of the poetic narrative regretted: “I said to myself, is it possible that, among so many orders, there are none that pursue the purpose of religion? And of divine worship?”⁶ For him, all religious orders were more concerned with worldly affairs.

This does not mean that the poem was greatly removed from the discussions that had been spreading across the Portuguese world in the mid-eighteenth century. In this context, the criticism was directed at exorcisms, the blessing of worms, and the multiplication of indulgences on behalf of souls in purgatory, suffered either alone or together, a feature that was also to be found in other discourses interested in eliminating a number of aspects from Catholic religion that were regarded as superstitious. The passages in which the poet showed his sympathy with Pombal’s policies were also commonly found in other writings from that period (Teixeira, 1999). The mock-heroic poem *O Reino da Estupidez* (1784-1785), for example, joined both of these two dimensions together (Monteiro, 1982). Throughout the eighteenth century, a discourse was developed in Portugal that blended together criticism of the deviations practiced by the monks, the defense of the reforms introduced during the reign of Dom José I and an apology for a religion that was free from practices such as exorcism and witchcraft. *O Hissope*, and also the poem *O Reino da Estupidez*, belonged to a regalist conception of the State, which had been strengthened in the reign of Dom José I, but also to the emergence of a new religious sensitivity based on the parameters of early Christianity and on the principles of simplicity and evangelical austerity. But this was not the only discourse available in that context. The verses of the exiled Francisco Manuel do Nascimento belonged to another discursive arrangement.

In his poetic compositions, Filinto Elísio also denounced both the corrupt ecclesiastic conduct that he observed and a piety that he thought was fanatical and superstitious. In one of his poems, he described a monastery in which friars and nuns were dancing. A brief note warned the readers: “one must forgive the original author, who perhaps only saw Friars and Nuns as bad. He would have spoken differently if he had known both of these religious groups, who are examples of virtue” (1817, v. 2: 42). In another poem, he wrote about the hypocritical character of a priest who used to live in luxury and was greatly pampered, despite telling his congregation that they should have only one dress if they wanted to be saved (Nascimento, 1999: 205-207). Not even the bishops escaped his satirical pen (Nascimento, 1817, v.1: 239).

⁶ Lisbon, National Archives, Manuscritos da livraria, n° 1054, f.86.

Moreover, he condemned a piety that was based on external actions like processions, pilgrimages, and rosaries. The Inquisition, the court that had forced him into exile and taken away the goods that his father had left to him, was harshly criticized. He considered everything to have been an invention of the friars. For him, the institution was an "infamous court" that had placed "a gag / over the mouth of enlightened wisdom" (Nascimento, 1999: 178). His verses also included a defense of religious tolerance, a proposition that was part of the denouncement made against him to the Holy Office in June 1778. At that time, he would have said that the three prophets were correct.⁷

However, unlike other verses of the period, such as *A Voz da Razão*, Filinto Elísio's poems did not question the validity of the Scriptures. This does not mean that his speech was considered to be less radical by his contemporaries. His criticism of the Church, for example, did not save the king. *Epístola*, a poem that was banned by the royal authorities because of its seditious nature, reveals this aspect of Filinto Elísio's discourse.

The first edition of *Epístola* appeared in 1791, at a time of political and ideological crisis brought about by the French Revolution. The later editions, from 1806 and 1817, did not change in their contents. In both editions, the prevalent tone was the defense of human freedom: the freedom to act, to think, and to express your ideas. For the poet, the word was an attribute that was innate to man. It was part of his rational nature. That is why, for him, Reason would punish the despots that "intended / to deprive the man who was born to be free / of the more complete of his rights, / free in his actions, in his concepts / and free to spread them wide / whenever social happiness did not impede him" (Nascimento, 1999: 380). Just as in the poems of Manuel Maria Barbosa du Bocage (1765-1805), the despots were the clergy.

Fakirs, Monks, Bonzes, Dervishes,
Fear the worthless signs of Despotism.
[...] Fear, oh superstitious Quacks,
The piercing arrows of science
Reason is nigh:
Don't you hear the shrill and reinforced
Trumpet of Reason, which sounds so close? (Ibid: 380)

⁷ Lisbon, National Archives, Tribunal do Santo Ofício, Inquisição de Lisboa, processo 14048.

The priests, he claimed, put blindfolds on men, for they did not see the crimes and mistakes that these same priests had committed against those who believed in freedom. The ordinary men could do nothing: superstition prevented them from seeing the crimes perpetrated against their liberties. But the philosopher could see further: he knew the truth, and because of that he was persecuted.

For him, all men were born with the light of reason in their souls. But this light was hidden behind beliefs and fancies. Simple and pure morality had been overlaid with devotions, prayers and pilgrimages. The Gospel, he argued, mentioned nothing about rosaries, scapulars, brotherhoods, or papal bulls, all this “work of friars, as it is known in the world” (*Ibid*: 385).

Although the main focus of his criticism was the abuse committed by the clergy against man’s natural freedom, or rather against a freedom that came from God, for the poet, the kings were not entirely blameless. The kings were the ones who persecuted their loyal vassals at the behest of the clergy. The message was a strong one: “You supposed that you were kings; and slaves you were / to bonzes, through whom, foolishly, you persecuted / the purest, the most loyal vassals” (*Ibid*: 380). They were also guilty, he pointed out in another poem, of not withdrawing the friars from their kingdom, allowing them to enjoy the wealth of their population and to subject the people, and even the rulers, to the designs of Rome (*Ibid*: 386-387). In Filinto Elísio’s verses, the monarchs were represented as puppets in the hands of ecclesiastic hypocrites, interested only in achieving wealth and power. In this context, those who defended the truth and tried to open the eyes of the sovereign were pursued as heretics.

Those who tell the kings that the bonzes dull
 People to in order to have their goods
 To acquire powers and treats
 Are wicked and blaspheme the Scriptures:
 Those who defend the people’s rights,
 Or want to soften the steel scepter,
 The protector of Ignorance and Tyranny,
 Are more than Barabbas, they are ruddy Judas (*Ibid*: 381).

But Filinto Elísio did more than criticize the clergy or underline the culpability of the kings. On several occasions, he praised American Independence and the French

Revolution in its early years. In his satirical verses, the France of 1791 was recalled as the place where Reason had already reached the throne and the post-independence United States was represented as the place where Freedom had defeated Tyranny.

Happy America! Courageous nation
That broke free from the shackles of bondage!
[...] Oh blissful! Oh good Americans!
Because of your so fortunate example,
Protective unfolding wings
Do not visit and, committed, do not console
With your flight disastrous empires,
The poor oppressed people
Reliant on the tyrant and foolish friars! (*Ibid.* 381-382).

Oh illustrious France, Queen of Nations,
You tossed away the shameful mandate
That to the press muffled the clear cry:
You have redeemed it, now it sets you free (*Ibid.* 382).
Happy people, who redeemed the forums
Of freedom, to many divested!
Only you are men (*Ibid.* 384).

In the discourse developed by the exiled poet, the criticism that was made of the worldly interests of the Portuguese clergy proceeded to defend a new political order which had, as its model, the United States after 1776 and France in the years 1790-91. The poet's endeavors to reorganize the Portuguese religious reality seemed inseparable from a change in the political structures. It was necessary to eliminate not only the despotic clergy, but also the tyrannical king. And, for him, the monarchy became tyrannical whenever it ruled against the natural laws, depriving the vassals of their property, their freedom and their life. The Inquisition, the court that had persecuted people with royal consent, was also considered by the poet to be one of the dimensions of royal tyranny. His political aim, however, did not seem to be exactly the model of the Jacobin Republic, but a government whose throne was built upon Reason, which took the philosophers as its guide and was able to guarantee man's natural freedom.

The poetic compositions of Francisco Manuel do Nascimento bear the mark of his passage through the hands of the Inquisition and his subsequent flight from Portugal. The poet died in exile, singing about his homesickness, denouncing the violence of the Inquisition and regretting the Portuguese religious situation. In Portugal, the *Epístola* circulated as if it were a letter to the Inquisitor General. Filinto Elísio rejected this identity. In the 1817 edition, a note warned the reader that, against his wishes, it had been published in Portugal and that the ignorant minister that he spoke of in his poem was not the Inquisitor General. The *Epístola's* verses, he argued, did not portray any minister in particular, but simply all those who lacked knowledge (Ibid: 377).

The criticism developed by Filinto Elísio in his poems was unusual among the Portuguese satirical verses that circulated at the end of the eighteenth century. The poems that described the lust of the clergy or that denounced their worldly interests were far more numerous and significant. In general, the criticisms were restricted to the realm of the Church, focusing on ministers, beliefs, and practices. Few poets defended a change in the political and social structures of the kingdom according to the models of revolutionary France and the United States after independence, as he did.

Conclusion

Both *O Hissope* and *Epístola* had, through the use of satirical language, criticized the political and religious situation of Portugal at the end of the eighteenth century. Both satires were banned in 1803, by the royal authorities. However, neither their messages nor their political implications were the same.

Politically, the discourse developed by *O Hissope* shared a regalist conception of the state that was strengthened in the reign of Dom José I. For Antonio Diniz, both the clergy and the religious institutions should follow the early Christian Church's parameters and search for evangelical simplicity and austerity. He used a discourse that: censured the clergy's deviations, but without decrying its social and spiritual importance; condemned as hypocrisy a religiosity that was based solely on the manifestation of external actions, as shown by the false mystics and the false saints, people who had frequently acquired the reputation of great sanctity only because they had instilled this impression in others through their false appearance of piety; criticized the superstition expressed in the form of specific practices and beliefs, such as exorcisms, witchcraft and the act of blessing diseases; and defended an ecclesiastic community based on principles such as poverty, humility and

simplicity, according to the models and teachings left by Jesus Christ and the first apostles. The revelation, the Bible, and the saints, all remained untouched.

However, it is important to realize that even when the poems criticized specific episodes or searched for a reform of the clergy's conduct, they nonetheless destroyed ecclesiastic reputations, contributing, either deliberately or not, to the process of delegitimizing the clergy's image among the population. Which, ultimately, could reflect on the Catholic religion and the credibility of its teaching, since the clergy acted as the intermediary between the divine and the lay population. In 1777, the Lisbon merchant José Francisco Chaves, after having mentioned some inappropriate behavior on the part of the clergy, remarked, in a dissatisfied tone: "and they want us to be subordinated to one of these."⁸ Within this framework, exposing the clergy's deviations represented a threat to the legitimacy of the Catholic Church's teachings; hence the problems behind *O Hissope*.

Filinto Elísio did not limit himself to criticizing the behavior of the clergy or the practices that they engaged in, such as exorcisms. In his discourse, superstition (despite the fact that it incorporated these exorcisms) was related to a religiousness based on false doctrines that restricted man's natural freedoms. His proposal for renewing and reforming this situation had, as its main models, the United States after its political independence, and the French Revolution in its early years. The conquest of freedom required both eliminating the influence of the Church in Portuguese political life and restructuring the monarchical power, which would have as its guide the philosophers of reason. In this sense, the criticism that he made of clerical despotism was inseparable from his rejection of the tyrannical monarchy, which was only concerned with satisfying the interests of Rome in detriment to human rights. Throughout his verses, the poet had revealed the perception that the Catholic Church's discourse was a historical construction that obeyed certain purposes – to coerce and to intimidate the rural population – and promoted certain interests – greed and the maintenance in power of certain groups. Unlike Antonio Diniz in *O Hissope*, he delved more deeply into the proposals being made for the political and religious reorganization of the Portuguese kingdom at the end of the eighteenth century.

If the two poems were so different in their messages about religion and its political consequences, why were they both banned by the royal authorities? It is hard to answer this question with any certainty. Nonetheless, it is possible to put forward some hypotheses. Even if they do not provide a conclusive answer, these hypotheses still help us to better understand what was at stake in that particular context.

⁸ Lisbon, National Archives, Tribunal do Santo Ofício, Inquisição de Lisboa, liv. 318/129º Cadernos do Promotor (1740-1761), f. 368.

The first thing to be considered is the fact that modern societies were structured in accordance with a uniformity of opinions: merely speaking about something was as dangerous as speaking against it. Pina Manique, the General Intendant of the Police, was categorical in passing orders to his commissioners: he had always asked for discretion and secrecy in the execution of orders and the investigation of crimes. Whenever possible, public rumors should be avoided. Rumors, in any field, were considered to destabilize social harmony, since they could cause dissension and discord.

The second dimension of the problem is related to the previous one: the perception that public opinion was based on a common voice. All that was commonly voiced should necessarily be true: the inquisitorial processes and their investigations had always repeated the formula that “it was common knowledge that...”, and the complaints and denunciations against those involved followed on from this (Ramos, 1995). In this sense, if it were commonly said that the clergy were vain, idle, greedy and useless to the republic, then this must be true. Controlling the common voice was not easy, because it implied restraining these rumors transmitted in conversations between students or between people walking along the Lisbon public promenades, or propagated in poems written to be read in taverns or even at literary gatherings, but which were soon copied and spread beyond the surroundings for which they were originally intended.

Pina Manique was aware of this dimension of the problem, which he had considered even more serious in view of the troubled times that Europe was living through in the period after the French Revolution. For him, the French political chaos after 1789 was rooted in the lack of religiousness that had permeated the whole of the eighteenth century. Therefore, the fact that the rumors were about the Catholic religion, the very political and moral foundation of monarchical society, made them even more dangerous in the eyes of the Intendant. All of this led him to persecute not only the oral and/or written rumors, but also the practices of the clergy themselves, who ran away from their institutions, who were seen wearing secular clothes in taverns and gaming houses, or who walked along the public promenades accompanied by women, all of which created a general scandal. In the troubled times of the French Revolution, it was necessary to curb both those rumors that could undermine the legitimacy of the Catholic Church and its ministers and the abuses committed by these men, who, with their unruly practices, contributed to the emergence of yet more rumors, and, according to the Intendant, thereby strengthened the arguments of the philosophers who were opposed to religion; the same philosophers who, in his view, had plunged France into its revolutionary political chaos.

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