Introduction

A. Biographical Note

1. Francisco Suárez (5 January 1548 – 25 September 1617) was a Spanish Jesuit Priest, one of the leading figures of the School of Salamanca movement. He was born at Granada, in southern Spain. He entered the Society of Jesus at Salamanca, and studied philosophy and theology there from 1565 to 1570. He was ordained in 1572, and taught theology at Ávila and Segovia (1575), Valladolid (1576), Rome (1580–85), Alcalá (1585–92), Salamanca (1592–97), and Coimbra (1597–1616). He wrote on a wide variety of subjects, producing works that fill twenty-six volumes in the complete Latin edition. These include treatises on law, the relationship between church and state (or more properly the spiritual and temporal powers), metaphysics, and theology. Because of his learning and writings, Suárez was given the nickname Doctor Eximius et Pius (outstanding and pious doctor). His final teaching position, at the University of Coimbra (technically in Portugal but at the time under the crown of Spain), was given to him by Philip II of Spain in order to confer prestige on the university.

2. After his death (in either Lisbon or Coimbra) his reputation grew still greater, and he had a direct influence on many of the leading philosophers and theologians of the day. His reputation has survived the years remarkably well, and he is still recognized as one of the greatest of the scholastics after St. Thomas Aquinas.

B. Introduction to the Defensio

3. What first attracted me to Suarez’ six book work defending Catholicism against Anglicanism was the title, for I was curious why so learned an author should enter the lists for the Catholic faith specifically against Anglicanism and not, say, against Protestants or Reformed Christians more generally. Being myself of English birth and education, and having, at earlier stages in my religious career, espoused Anglican leanings and predilections before eventually finding my way to Rome, I was intrigued to learn both why Suarez had written such a book and what he had said in it.

4. The first question was easily but most interestingly answered. Suarez was in fact responding to someone else’s defense in the opposite direction, the defense of Anglicanism against Catholicism by his redoubtable Majesty, the Most Serene King James I of England and VI of Scotland. King James is now most remembered, indeed celebrated, in England and other English speaking countries for a piece of literature that, in its influence on the style, cadence, rhythm, word use, and structure of the English language, is without parallel or rival. It ranks even above Shakespeare in this regard. The piece of literature is, of course, the King James Bible, or the Authorized Version, as it is called, because it was done at the command of King James and “appointed to be read in churches.” James could authorize such a thing because of his title as head of the Church in England, a title, of course, that Rome and Catholics denied him. Not a few of James’ nonconformist Protestant subjects made the same denial, but they were few and, besides, were not perceived as a threat to the royal majesty. They had a greater horror of Rome than James and the English establishment had. His son, however, the unhappy Charles I, was to feel, quite literally, the keen edge of nonconformist wrath some decades later. But if James thought the nonconformists could largely be ignored, he certainly did not think the same of Rome. Rome was the enemy. For Rome’s denial of James’ claimed
ecclesiastical authority, and the counter-assertion of Rome’s own universal jurisdiction over the whole Christian Church, were taken by James as a threat to his royal authority and so equivalent to treachery. The bulk and quality of the English nation, the Anglican clergy, the Lords, the Gentry, and the Commons, harbored a like fear. Rome was powerful, with a communion of peoples encircling the whole globe. In defense, therefore, of the Anglican settlement and of his own status as head of the Church in England, James, a king of no little learning, had written an Apology in justification for the oath of allegiance that, for the unity and security of his kingdom, he was requiring of all his subjects, including his Catholic ones.

5. The oath was condemned by Rome, and James, in some irritation, added to his Apology a Preface or Premonition containing an appeal to the Christian Kings and Princes of Europe to join him in opposing the pretensions and, as he deemed, usurpations of the Pope. The royal name and dignity of James as author of these works assured that they would not fail to attract attention, and in order to counter any possible influence they might have, as well as to answer the contentions they contained, the pope of the day, Pope Paul V, requested Suarez, already in high repute for his learning and piety, to compose such an answer. The result was the work we now have before us.

6. What influence this work had when it was published in 1613 would require a historian’s knowledge to determine, but it had no effect on James, or rather it had no effect on changing his mind either about Anglicanism or about Rome. For a copy of the work was ceremonially burned at Paul’s Cross in London on 21 November 1613 and the reading of it was forbidden under the severest penalties. James believed that by “setting up the People above their natural King” the political thinking of Suarez and other Jesuits laid “an excellent ground in Divinitie for all rebels and rebellious people.” The king’s main complaint, then, was directed at Suarez’ denial, principally in Book III of the Defense, of the doctrine of the divine right of kings. The doctrine had never been a Catholic one, even if for many Catholic thinkers monarchy was in principle the best form of government. Suarez, however, was one of those remarkable Spanish divines and theorists who were not only continuing the ancient traditions, but were also at the forefront of developing them further, especially in the direction of democracy and the rights of peoples to form governments and, where necessary, to abolish existing ones and replace them with others. Suarez’ writing, like that of his Jesuit colleague, Mariana, because of its support of revolution, albeit nuanced, was banned in Catholic France as well as in Anglican England. Yet the thought of these and other Spanish Jesuits, with the Catholicism of course removed, flowed richly into the stream of republican political thinking as that began to run stronger in the years of James’ Stuart successors and beyond, swelling right up to the American Revolution. As Lord Acton said: “the greater part of the political ideas of Milton, Locke, and Rousseau, may be found in the ponderous Latin of Jesuits who were subjects of the Spanish Crown, of Lessius, Molina, Mariana, and Suarez.”

7. These elements of democracy and the right of revolution have now long been absorbed and become standard in the accepted political thinking of the day, while James’s divine right of kings has been consigned to the curiosities and follies of a departed age. But the political part of Suarez’ teaching in his Defense is but a minor part of the whole. The bulk is an extended defense of some of the chiefest points of Catholic theology. And there lies today its interest. One of the work’s most striking and attractive
features is the extensive and rich quotations from Scripture and the Church Fathers which Suarez everywhere introduces to state, expound, defend, and justify each of the theological claims he makes about Catholic doctrine and about the deviations from it of Anglicanism and Protestantism. The work is, as a result, an extended introduction to both Scripture studies and Patristics and might well serve, even today, as a vademecum for students venturing into those fields. My own interest in Suarez’ Defense has certainly taken this form, since my training is in philosophy, not theology, and Suarez has served as a sort of quick summa of Catholic theology, and has spared me the long and involved effort of trying to find and digest for myself the widely dispersed and richly varied material he collects.

8. These quotations from Scripture and the Fathers, however, make Suarez’ Latin text sometimes an arduous obstacle course. Suarez’ own Latin is, for the most part, straightforward enough, though he can be at times wordy and ponderous (to adopt Lord Acton’s epithet), piling up connectives, avoiding elliptical phrasing, making explicit all the steps in his syllogistical inferences, and driving his point home relentlessly and repeatedly. The problem is less here than with the quotations. For the Church Fathers who wrote in Latin employed a studied rhetorical style, and they loved balance, antithesis, verbal flourish, elegant analogy. The same holds of the Latin of the quotations from the Eastern Fathers into which their no less studied and rhetorical Greek has been turned. So one finds oneself passing to and fro between the scholastic syllogistic of Suarez and the elaborate rhetoric of the Fathers, the pace quickening with Suarez and slackening with the Fathers, like driving a car on a European motorway where stretches of high speed are regularly interrupted by the stallings of heavy traffic. The Vulgate of the Bible that Suarez quotes for his Scripture passages is much easier, and anyway one can, and in this case should, retreat to the incomparable English translations of King James’ own Authorized Version, and hear at once the music of its words without the effort required to hear the music in the words of the Latin or Greek Fathers.

9. Suarez is, nevertheless, capable of fashioning Ciceronian periods when he wants, and he places fine examples of them, like bookends to his workmanlike scholastic Latin, in the opening prefaces and closing apostrophes, or addresses, to King James. They perhaps do not reach the elaborate elegances of Cicero or Erasmus, but the distinct difference in their style is quickly noticed. An effort, therefore, has been made here to convey the fact by fashioning the English translation to do something of the same. But if Suarez was no rival to Cicero, I am no rival to Newman, and these efforts of mine at English elegance are more for curiosity, or pity, than for imitation.

10. As to the theological content that Suarez expounds, there is little an amateur in theology can say, either by way of commendation or by way of criticism. The doctrine is orthodox, of course, but it is in some ways both curiously behind and curiously in front of the process of development. It also has one seemingly egregious lapse of historical statement. For when speaking of evangelizing un-evangelized peoples, in 1.16, Suarez says that it is only ever done by Catholics and not by heretics. But it would seem, to the contrary, that the Arians were the first to evangelize among the barbarian peoples to the North of the Roman Empire, that the Nestorians were the first to evangelize in China, and that Protestants have been the first to evangelize some of the tribes in the Amazon jungle. Suarez could not have known of the third instance, nor of the second (the discovery of the evidence for the fact, though not the fact itself, dates to after his time), but he could have
known of the first. Why he fails to note it is a curious question. Perhaps the Arians were
the exception that proved the rule. Or perhaps the massive evangelization that had been
and still was going on in the New World, and that was, both North and South, in the
hands of Catholics, and very often of Jesuits, was too much at the forefront of his and
everyone’s mind.

11. An example of Suarez being in front of doctrinal development is his clear and
open statement, in 1.23, of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. Suarez was writing in 1613
and the formal definition of the doctrine, in virtually the same form as Suarez himself
puts it, had to wait until the First Vatican Council of 1870. That formal definition
provoked much controversy, both at the time and since, and both within and without the
Catholic Church, but Suarez states it with a calm confidence as if it had already long been
settled (as indeed it seems to have been for a great many bishops and theologians prior to
1870).

12. An example of Suarez being behind the process of development (or behind as we
look back, though not in his own day) is the predominantly objective presentation of
Catholic teaching, or his stress on the fixed and objective truth of the things stated and his
muting of the subjective reception of this objective truth in the mind and will of the
individual. Striking cases are his discussion of heresy and heretics and what is required
for each, 1.19 – 24, and his discussion of belief or rather non-belief in the invocation of
saints in 2.9. There is clear recognition here that only someone who deliberately chooses
an heretical proposition counts as a heretic; he who believes something heretical from
excusable ignorance does not count as such, though he would if he persisted in believing
the heresy after sufficient warning. By an heretical proposition Suarez means one that is
contrary to the Catholic Faith, and he repeats, in this context and elsewhere, the classic
doctrine that outside the Church there is no salvation. One gets the impression that no one
outside the visible boundaries (as opposed to the more proper formulation, perhaps, of
outside the agency) of the Catholic Church can be saved, even on the grounds of
excusable ignorance, once they have been told of the truth of Catholic doctrine. To be
told such truth and then to reject it seems at once to mean that one is no longer excusable.
There is no thematizing by Suarez here, though there is no strict denying either, of the oft
times convoluted inner workings of the human psyche which make a clear judgment of
when ignorance is excusable or not almost impossible. One can often be clear that some
objective truth holds (as, say, about the existence of God), but one can seldom be clear
that someone’s rejection, or even acceptance, of this truth is subjectively deep and real,
and so counts as a matter of full personal responsibility meriting praise or blame.
Nevertheless, Suarez certainly has the resources available to him to thematize this puzzle
of subjectivity, as is clear from his treatment of Cyprian’s teaching about the need to re-
baptize heretics when they join the Catholic Church 1.19. This doctrine was later
condemned by the Church and Suarez briefly speculates as to Cyprian’s state of mind in
believing it when he did. He suggests that Cyprian’s objective assertion of the doctrine
was countered by his deeper subjective conviction (though Suarez does not use the words
“objective” or “subjective”) to believe the Church rather than his own opinion, or to hold
all his beliefs subject to the ultimate judgment of the Church. For a Catholic could today
perhaps use this same idea (I speak under correction, like Cyprian) to say that someone
objectively outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church could very easily be
saved because subjectively he was within them by holding all his beliefs as under the
judgment, not to be sure of the Church, but of Christ, if he excusably rejects the Church, or of God, if he excusably rejects Christ, or of the ultimate principle of being, if he excusably rejects God. The rejection would, of course, have to be excusable and Suarez, in his appeal to King James at the end of Book II, refuses to allow that ignorance, on the alleged ground that truth can never be decisively made known, always excuses. On the contrary, he says quoting Chrysostom, truth can be decisively made known, even in cases where the evidence for the truth is human testimony. Suarez is no skeptic about truth or about our capacity to know truth and make it known to others. Still he would no doubt admit that our capacity to judge when someone is perversely rejecting a known truth and when excusably still ignorant is limited. What ultimately counts as “excusable” in such cases is hardly for any of us to determine. We can make an objective judgment about the truth of this or that proposition but not of the mind and will of those who accept or reject it.

13. The Second Vatican Council has as one of its glories, in my view, the recognition of the subjectivity of the human psyche (acknowledged, though marginally and without thematic treatment, by Suarez) in its relation to religious belief and practice. One finds the thematization of such subjectivity far more fully recognized, and far more explicitly handled, in the thinking of that remarkable Pope, Blessed John Paul II, and in writings of his both before and after he ascended to the papacy. Such subjectivity and its explicit insertion into current formalizations of Church teaching strike me as being a notable instance of the authentic development of doctrine, as famously analyzed by Blessed Cardinal Newman (a thinker much admired in this respect by Pope Benedict XVI). Indeed the idea that doctrine develops is quite explicit in Suarez in this present work, and he claims to find it in much earlier writers. He also uses it extensively to defend the Roman Catholic Church from King James’s charge that it had corrupted primitive Christianity by the introduction of “novelties” forged in Rome’s own “workshop.”

14. So Suarez, despite writing in 1613, explicitly recognizes subjectivity, development, and papal infallibility. These topics are not specifically his theme and he leaves them inchoate, especially if one compares his treatment of them with those of Vatican I, Cardinal Newman, and John Paul II. The comparison is, of course, unfair, since Suarez’s aim and context were far different. But they are striking instances of the continuity between his thinking and that of more recent Catholic writers. When we combine these instances of continuity with his careful but real defense of democracy and a people’s right to overthrow tyrants (Book III), we find in Suarez a thinker as topical and as up to date now, in both doctrine and much more in resources of doctrine, as at the time of King James. By contrast, the king himself is outmoded in both regards and lives today, not in the substance of his thought, but in the external beauty of the Bible translation he authorized. Suarez seems to have had the last laugh, even if the music of James’ Bible still sings in English ears.

15. Worth noting, however, about Suarez’ defense of democracy is that it goes along with a sophisticated elaboration of what we now call the separation of church and state (a separation that James and Anglicanism repudiated by making the head of state, the monarch, also head of the church). For Suarez, as for Catholicism simply, the head of the Church is the Pope as Bishop of Rome and he is altogether distinct from and independent of any state government (his current status as head of state of the Vatican serves but to guarantee that separation, and is anyway strictly separable from his status as Bishop of
Rome). Suarez goes further, of course, and declares that the Pope and the Church are superior to the state when temporal matters conflict with spiritual, for the spiritual is superior to the temporal and has a higher end to which the temporal is ultimately subordinate. This teaching, which lay in part behind the rejection of Rome by James and the Anglican establishment, is indeed Catholic orthodoxy, though it has to be stated with care, as Suarez does himself try so to state it, both in Book III and in Book IV. It has its roots, however, in the political thought of the Ancient World, as can readily be seen from Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws* and from Aristotle’s lapidary expression in the *Ethics*, when he says (6.13 at the end, 1145a9-11) that prudence does not give commands to wisdom but for wisdom. Otherwise, he continues, one would have to say that politics gives commands to the gods because it gives commands about everything in the city. Politics, in other words, or the state as we might say, is for God and the church, not over them. When or if they conflict, then, the church or religion takes precedence. <deletion>

16. One way of putting this point would be to say that for Suarez the state is the creature of society and not society of the state (the doctrine in effect of the opening chapters of Book III). Hence the state should take its orientation and functions from what is naturally the goal of society, which is human happiness or perfection, both in this world and the next. It cannot take its function, therefore, from some neutral stance on happiness, and from some supposed need to mediate the conflicts over happiness in society and to prevent any one view dominating the others (as most modern political thought does). Such a stance subordinates society, and so also happiness, to the self-aggrandizement of the state. For the state cannot mediate all conflicts in society if it cannot claim, at least in principle, all power over society and especially over views on happiness in society. The state, therefore, cannot be subordinate to the church in this respect (though it can tolerate churches as representatives of private views on happiness). Suarez altogether rejects this understanding of political power, because it is based on a false understanding of society or of the natural condition of men in life together. On the other hand, he does not agree with King James that therefore the state, or the political power, should be the only agency of command and control in the service of men. The state is a human creation and can only properly concern itself with things that fall under human competence. Religion does not so fall but, as men have always discerned, however dimly, falls rather under the power of God (or the gods). Hence religion cannot be subordinate to or identical with the state and the power of the state. It is necessarily independent and superior, and necessarily has its own rulers and officers whose appointment and authority depends on God and not on society or the state. Religion is therefore also itself necessarily endowed with command and control over men. Accordingly if or when the state and religion find their spheres of command and control coming into confrontation, the state, or the human political power, should yield to religion, or to the divine and spiritual power. This point, with all its involved ramifications, forms for Suarez the theme and matter of Book IV. It is a decisive and powerful rejection of King James’ solution of the divine right of kings, which identifies church and state in the monarch who heads the state.

17. Most modern political thought, in contrast to both James and Suarez, is fearful of giving religion any say in political matters (as notably in the work of John Rawls), and hopes to find a way to ensure that conflict between state and church can never arise. Whether it can succeed in this hope is a large and disputed question. Nevertheless it is
closer in idea to Suarez than to James, for it agrees with Suarez that the two spheres of church and state are separate and distinct. In practice, however, it is closer to James, for it gives final command and control in society to the state. Modern political thought in the end thus has, despite itself, to follow the solution of James: the church is absorbed under the state. Suarez never absorbs one under the other but keeps both always distinct. The spiritual power can only command the temporal in matters spiritual, and in matters temporal only to the extent that the latter work to the detriment of the spiritual and therefore to the detriment of men and society. His discussion of this issue in Book IV is a fascinating and highly elaborate presentation of a wholly different approach that mediates between the other two, following neither the extreme in theory and practice of King James nor the extreme in practice of modern politics.

18. One might, nevertheless, object that Suarez, for all his Catholic orthodoxy, is unfair to Anglican doctrine, political and theological, and himself ignorant of its subtleties and sophisticated elaboration. In particular he says nothing of the famed Anglican Media Via, nor indeed does he say anything about the Eastern Orthodox Churches who share with Canterbury a rejection of the claims of the See of Rome. Suarez’ failure to say anything about the Eastern Churches is readily explained by the fact that they and their doctrine were not his object, and throughout this text Suarez shows an acute awareness of what things are relevant to his topic and what things are not. If asked the question, no doubt he would have answered the way the Church in his day answered, that the Eastern Churches were schismatic in rejecting Rome even if their doctrine was otherwise orthodox. About the Anglican Church, however, Suarez’ charge is that, after Henry VIII at least, it was both heretical as well as schismatic, and it is the heresies that particularly occupy his attention – about the status of the Church of Rome in Book I, about transubstantiation and images and saints and purgatory in Book II, about the authority of the Pope in Book III, about the liberty and exemption of clerics from the civil power in Book IV, about the Antichrist in Book V, and about the Oath of Fidelity required by James of his subjects in Book VI.

19. If it be said that in his discussion of these matters Suarez is too ignorant of, or too unsympathetic to, the subtleties of developed Anglican teaching, one must note, first, that Suarez was replying only and specifically to certain definite writings of King James, and so he could rightly confine himself to James’ statements and expositions. Had Suarez chosen, or been asked by Pius V, to respond to other Anglican writers, as say the “judicious” Hooker, he would no doubt have written a longer work with more complex argument. But he would also no doubt have come to the same general conclusions, adding only the necessary qualifications. Second, it is unlikely that Suarez could anyway have responded to Hooker even had he been asked, since Hooker wrote his major theological work in English and not in Latin, thus clearly directly himself to an English and not an international audience. Anglican Divines generally, both before and after Suarez’ time, seem to have preferred English to Latin as their mode of communication, and it is doubtful that Suarez knew English or that, had he chosen to learn vernacular languages (beyond his native Spanish), he would have chosen English over French, say, or Italian. Third, the developed Anglican doctrine of the Via Media, while it is already discernible in people like Hooker, is in its fully self-conscious form a product of writers who lived after Suarez’ time. The term is after all a coinage of the nineteenth century, and
many of the most noted proponents of what it was coined to refer to postdate the year 1613, the year that Suarez’ defense was published.viii

20. The text of the Defense is available online in the original 1613 edition and in the later Vivès edition of the complete works, 1856, and the Naples edition of the Defense, 1872.viii The Naples edition has the advantage of printing each chapter with titles and summaries of the sections at the beginning thus giving the reader immediate knowledge of what is to come. The other two editions print the summaries in the body of the chapter at each section as it arrives, whether in the margin, 1613, or as a subtitle, 1856. In my translation I have followed the lay-out of the Naples edition. However, the text of that edition sometimes has mistakes in the Latin which have to be corrected by reference to the original 1613 edition, but otherwise it is an easier read. The 1613 edition is also printed in Defensa de la Fe Catolica y Apostolica contra los Errores del Anglicanismo, Instituto de Estudios Politicos, Madrid 1971, with a Spanish translation by Jose Ramon Eguillor Muniozguren, SJ. I have consulted that Spanish translation with much profit. Sydney Penner of Merton College, Oxford, maintains a website with online resources for Suarez and his writings here. [http://www.sydneypenner.ca/suarez.shtml]

21. As for the quotations with which Suarez adorns his text, those from the Fathers, Latin and Greek, have been translated directly from the Latin versions or translations he had available to him and which he uses in his text. I have not checked the accuracy of Suarez’ references or quotations, except in a very few cases when I had the original immediately to hand; the reward would hardly repay the effort for present purposes. The quotations from Scripture are given by Suarez no doubt from the Latin Vulgate. I have not translated these but given instead the incomparable English of King James’ own version. For it seems appropriate, in a work addressed to James, to use the Bible of James. There are occasional verbal differences between James’ English and Suarez’ Vulgate but these are for the most part insignificant. Where something more may hang on them I have indicated the variation in square brackets.

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i An English translation of both the Apology and the Premonition can be downloaded from Google Books in The Political Works of James I, reprinted from the 1616 edition with an introduction by C.H. Macllwain, Harvard, 1918

http://books.google.com/books?id=eGoLAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PR52&dq=King+James+his+Apology+for+the+oath&hl=en&ei=Z4UcTsLMHorq0gHQib3cBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CFUQ6AEwCTg#v=onepage&q=King%20James%20his%20Apology%20for%20the%20oath&f=false

ii For the details and a fine discussion of the democratic and revolutionary character of Jesuit thinking in contrast with the absolutist thinking of James and his supporters, see J.P. Somerville, ‘From Suarez to Filmer: A Reappraisal,’ The Historical Journal, 25, 3 (1982): 525-40.

iii In his De Rege et Regis Institutione, Toledo, 1598. There is an English translation of it entitled The King and the Education of the King, by George Albert Moore, the Country Dollar Press, Chevy Chase, MD, 1948.

Vatican II and subsequent Papal and Curial pronouncements now speak quite explicitly of the Church of Christ ‘subsisting’ in the Catholic Church, which leaves open, and is meant to leave open, plenty of room for the Church of Christ, and therefore salvation, to exist in other, though lesser, ways outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. Or, to quote a recent document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, dated June 29, 2007, *Responses to some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*: “the Church of Christ is present and operative in the churches and ecclesial Communities not yet fully in communion with the Catholic Church, on account of the elements of sanctification and truth that are present in them… The Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using [these churches and communities] as instruments of salvation, whose value derives from that fullness of grace and of truth which has been entrusted to the Catholic Church.” This document is available on the Vatican website: [http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responses_quaestiones_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responses_quaestiones_en.html)


