



ROBERT BELLARMINE 1542-1621

Twenty years after Peter Canisius, Robert Bellarmine represents the second wave of Jesuits of the Catholic Reformation. Pope Julius III's papal bull of 1550 had defined the Jesuits' purpose as the defense and propagation of the faith. Bellarmine's career amply demonstrated the response to this injunction. Entrusted with directing theological schools as emissary and adviser of popes, he was named a cardinal in 1599. True to the Jesuits' formative mission, he was a particularly effective defender of papal authority, serving as theologian to Popes Clement VIII and Paul V. He took a special interest in the reform of the hierarchy of the Church itself, particularly episcopal appointments, which at the time were often decided on temporal rather than spiritual grounds. He addressed the process of appointment, regulations for residency, and decisions concerning transfer from one see to another.

His writings, especially the *Controversies*, published in 1586, 1588 and 1593, are model codifications of arguments against the positions of Protestant preachers. In contrast to much of the polemical and incendiary literature and broadsides of his time, his approach stresses a reasoned analysis of both the positive and negative positions of the Reformers. These arguments defending the Roman Catholic position on papal authority, the sacraments, and tradition against the Protestant position of justification by faith alone contain most of the ideas on which he would later elaborate. At one time the spiritual director of the Jesuits' Roman College, he developed a catechism for younger readers, *Doctrina christiana breve*, after which followed a more extensive catechism directed to teachers. Clement VIII, who also appointed Bellarmine Archbishop of Capua, gave his papal approval to both manuals. Their translation into more than forty languages testifies to their efficacy for foreign missions as well as for the European Christian community.

In the window, Bellarmine wears a cardinal's robes; to the left of his head is the cardinal's red hat. In his left hand he holds an open book over which his poised right hand holds a quill. The lunette above contains an image of his most important work, the *Controversies*. The borders show a number of symbols relating to Bellarmine's status as scholar and teacher: the quill and inkwell, the red cardinal's hat and bishop's throne, as well as the white circular crest on which is inscribed HIS, the emblem of the Jesuits. Engravings based on the portrait permitted wide distribution among the Jesuit houses and other institutions valuing the role of his leadership.

Bellarmino was involved in a number of controversies including the advent of the heliocentric notion of the solar system put forth by Galileo and the Dominican Giordano Bruno. He presided at Bruno's trial in 1575, after which the Dominican was burnt at the stake. Bellarmine also defended papal authority vigorously. The Church of England under Henry VIII had declared the English monarch as its head, a principle forcefully continued by his daughter Elizabeth I. With her death in 1603, the Tudor dynasty was depleted, and James I of the House of Stuart ascended the throne. At this juncture, the Catholic Reformation again mounted a claim for papal authority in religious matters. Pope Paul V (reign 1605-1621) recalled Bellarmine to Rome in order that he might devote his scholarly and rhetorical skills to the papal cause.

Bellarmino argued against the divine right of kings and the English oath of allegiance to the sovereign as both the ultimate religious and secular authority.



In the window's narrative scene, Bellarmine stands to the left, holding a book and facing a man enthroned. The scene represents the Jesuit addressing King James, seated before him, wearing robes of state, and the Scottish jurist William Barclay, against whose concept of clerical independence Bellarmine wrote a specific treatise. The scene takes place in a palace, as suggested by the tiles, carpet, and sections of architecture visible in the background.

