CHAPTER FOUR

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION: ANTI-ISLAMIC INVECTIVE

The Catholic Apologists include in their works what they claim to be a history of Islam yet is, instead, a review of many of the arguments of the mediaeval polemecists. As Roger Boase pointed out in his seminal article, the Apologists base their arguments on episodes from the Old Testament. Their God is not the loving and forgiving Christ but a vengeful Dios justiciero (righteous God).¹ Their total lack of tolerance and the personal distaste they obviously felt for the Moriscos would have made any evangelical mission impossible from the outset.

Francisco Márquez Villanueva has analysed the attitudes of Don Juan de Ribera, Archbishop of Valencia, not an Apologist but in his latter years a proponent of the expulsion, who influenced the Apologists. He was motivated by a sense of duty and quite lacked the emotional contact with the Moriscos experienced by Hernando de Talavera. As his early biographers noted, Ribera never stayed overnight when he was visiting the Moriscos.² In Gaspar Aguilar’s hagiographic play on the Patriarch he is represented thus.³ Authoritarian and humourless, he will bleed unfortunate Spain of evildoers (p. 249). He claims that, even though the Moriscos are evil, they must be treated with love (p. 276). Yet, following the expulsion, he organises major festivities in Valencia (p. 283). Benjamin Ehlers’ recent study of Ribera shows him to have been a complex person whose final promotion of the expulsion came from a belief that he would have to let the Moriscos go for the welfare of the Old Christian congregation.

Some of the Apologists, in particular Bleda and Aznar Cardona, attempt to vilify the Moriscos by considering them all to be moros

rather than *moriscos*. To do this they use the weapons of the propagandist; Bleda asserts that the expulsion of the Moriscos marked the end of the ‘Reconquest’; this implicitly denies their conversion. He writes, extensively, on the history of Islam, relying on the sixteenth-century, anti-Islamic *antialcoranes* and the mediaeval polemicists. Aznar Cardona also indulges in anti-Islamic invective but only selects certain topics. Both men are attempting to bring the Moriscos into disrepute by associating them with the most scurrilous and slanderous of the anti-Islamic polemics.

*Riccoldo da Monte di Croce and the Improbatio Alchorani (Reprobation of the Qur’ân)*

The work of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, the *Improbatio alchorani*, was very popular in the sixteenth century and was published in various languages.\(^4\) I have chosen it as representative of a mediaeval anti-Islamic polemical work, relatively well informed about Islam, in order to compare it with the works of the Catholic Apologists and thus to set them in an historical context. I will also be looking at the work of another sixteenth-century *antialcorán*, that of Juan Andrés, the *alfaqüí* (qur’ânic scholar) from Játiva, who converted to Christianity in 1487 and was invited by the Catholic Monarchs to participate in the conversion of the Moriscos of Granada. First printed in Valencia in 1515, it was published eight times in the sixteenth century and twice in the seventeenth.\(^5\) To-day merely two copies of the first edition remain, as its manner of treating the subject matter brought it under the dis-

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\(^5\) The later editions were: Seville (1537), Seville (1540), Venice (1541), Venice (1543), Venice (1545), Granada (1560), Hamburg (1568), Paris (1574), Venice (1597), Hamburg (1598), London (1652), Utrecht (1656).