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Britain and the Papacy: Diplomacy and Conflict in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*

For the tomb of Alexander VII, Bernini represented the pope in prayer, who, surrounded by three virtues, Charity, Justice and Prudence, and by the allegorical figure of Truth, rises above Time and Death. Not a virtue, the latter, but the object and purpose of the virtues («*finis virtutis*», to use Saint Thomas Aquinas's words). On the right-hand side of the monument, much of which was actually executed by Bernini's pupils between 1672 and 1678, Justice is looking towards Truth, who is partially stripped by a skeleton holding an hourglass that symbolizes both Time and Death (it was Innocent XI, under whose pontificate the monument was completed, who asked for a change in the design in order to limit to a minimum the nakedness of the girl). The meaning is clear: the pope's plans and hopes had been thwarted by death, and only through prayer – the pope, kneeling in an attitude of prayer, crowns the monument – might those plans and hopes come true. Truth, in line with classical iconography, is standing on the world. Significantly, Bernini has distorted the proportions of the globe on which Truth stands to enable the viewer to see both Europe in the foreground and also part of America. The right foot of Truth rests unequivocally on the British Isles. To an observer in front of the monument Rome appears as the centre of the continent dominating the globe. The significance, as evidenced in a 1966 article by Philipp P. Fehl whose interpretation I am following here, is therefore, quite explicitly, that of the triumph of Truth over England and

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an assertion of Rome as the symbolic centre of the world. The monument thus expresses the hope of seeing a unity of faith in Africa, the Americas and, of course, Europe, with an England reconciled with faith. For Bernini, Time will eventually discover the Truth. Its final triumph will be a triumph of Faith, and in fact, in a Baroque game, the allegorical figure of Truth that rules the world is also, at the same time, the plastic representation of the theological virtue of Faith. In a significant contrast, it is perhaps worth recalling that the famous sixteenth-century sieve portrait of Queen Elizabeth in Siena features a globe on which the British Isles appear in light, in the foreground, while the rest of Europe is in shadows and darkness.¹

The events of those years would, in fact, induce people to think that the British Isles were moving toward a Catholic reconciliation. On the throne of England there was a crypto-Catholic King, Charles II, who would convert on his deathbed, while his brother James, duke of York, who by the end of the 1660s everyone knew was Catholic, publicly declared his Catholicism in 1676. And in 1675, the Dominican Philip Howard became a cardinal, the first Englishman to occupy such an office since the death of William Allen.²

No belief was more unfounded. The Truth of the Faith, already dressed by Innocent XI, was soon put on trial in England by the agitation against an alleged Popish Plot and against the succession of James. Admittedly, there was a Catholic restoration in 1685, but just three years later, with the Glorious Revolution, England became a champion of Protestantism. Catholic emancipation did not arrive until 1829, and the English Catholic hierarchy was only restored in 1850, and not, even then, without fierce controversy. But, as Bernini said in a conversation with Louis XIV, if «it is true that time discovers the truth», («è vero che il tempo scopre la verità»)

1. Ph.P. Fehl, Bernini's *Triumph of Truth over England*, in «The Art Bulletin», 48, 3 (1966), pp. 404-405. On the burial monument, see E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, H.N. Abrams, New York 1992; *Bernini in Vaticano: Braccio di Carlo Magno maggio-luglio 1981*, De Luca editore, Roma undated (but 1981), pp. 148-151; J.E. Bernstock, *Bernini's Tomb of Alexander VII*, in «Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte», 16 (1988), pp. 167-190, 363-373; R. Wittkower, *Bernini: the sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, Phaidon Press, London 1997, pp. 295-297. On the white metallic drape imposed in 1678 by Innocent XI, see S. Frascchetti, *Il Bernini: la sua vita, la sua opera, il suo tempo*, Hoepli, Milano 1900, p. 389. For more about the position of Rome as the centre of the world on the globe, see H. Kauffmann, *Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini: die figurlichen Kompositionen*, Mann, Berlin 1970, p. 318.

2. On cardinal Howard, see A. White, *Howard, Philip (1629-1694)*, in ODNB.

it was also true that it does «not always discover it in time» («non sempre la scopre a tempo»)³

1. *The Elizabethan Epoch*

The history of the relations between the court of Rome and England is complex. After the schism of 1534 and England's adherence to the Reformation in the reign of Edward VI there was the Marian Catholic Restoration.⁴ Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1558, and was excommunicated by the pope in 1570. In this essay an attempt will be made to roughly reconstruct the relationship between the court of Rome and England between the end of the 1500s and the Glorious Revolution, focusing especially on the period of Urban VIII's and Alexander VII's papacies. In the 1630s formal relations were resumed between the papal court and London, with the dispatch of three papal representatives to England. The Civil War put an end to this relationship. We will investigate the figure of Gilles Chaissy, a shrewd observer of English events, who acted as an informant for *Propaganda Fide* in London in the 1640s and 50s. A French Recollect, he was in those years chaplain to the Tuscan resident in England, Amerigo Salvetti.

In recent years there has been a significant resurgence of interest in English Catholicism, with some important changes of perspective, in which an important role has been played by figures such as Peter Lake, Michael Questier and Stefania Tutino, to mention just the most prominent examples.⁵ The study of diplomatic relations between the court of Rome and Britain has instead attracted less attention, and it is significant that, for instance, to reconstruct Anglo-Roman diplomatic relations in the

3. Fehl, Bernini's *Triumph of Truth over England*,

4. See A.O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth*, K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & co., London 1967 (translation of *England und die katholische Kirche unter Elisabeth*, Roma 1911).

5. *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, eds. P. Lake, M. Questier, Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2000; M. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England. Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008; S. Tutino, *Thomas White and the Blackloists. Between Politics and Theology during the English Civil War*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008; Ead., *Empire of Souls Robert Bellarmine and the Christian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

period of Charles I, apart from specific contributions like that of Caroline Hibbard on the role that the fear of the popish plots played on the eve of the Civil War, the standard work is still Gordon Albion's monograph published in 1935.⁶

An objective difficulty in building up a comprehensive framework of these events is undoubtedly represented by the many subjects, often in conflict with each other, involved in the processes to be investigated. In addition to the curia, with all its complex articulations, from the Secretary of State to the congregation of *Propaganda Fide* (since 1622) and of the Holy Office (since 1542), there were, in fact, the religious orders, the secular clergy, the network of European nuncios, the cardinal protector of the nation, and, last but not least, the colleges in Europe where the English, Scottish and Irish secular clergy were educated.⁷ For the historian, this variety of subjects also means, among other things, a wide range of sources scattered in various archives. And as regards the sources, unfortunately the rich and interesting diplomatic correspondence preserved in the Vatican Secret Archives and the Vatican Library, transcribed in the nineteenth century for English scholars whose copies are now held in the British Library and in the National Archives in London, have never been published (and it is significant that these Roman sources are more commonly cited from the nineteenth-century transcripts in London than from the originals, due to the greater accessibility of British archives).⁸

6. C. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1983; G. Albion, *Charles I and the Court of Rome. A study in 17th Century diplomacy*, Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd, London 1935. For the seventeenth-century Catholic cosmopolitan community in Rome see E. Chaney, *The Grand Tour and the Great Rebellion: Richard Lassels and "The Voyage of Italy" in the Seventeenth Century*, Slatkine, Genève 1985.

7. On the English religious orders, see D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, III, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1959.

8. For a bibliography about documents on England held in the Vatican Secret Archives, see: I.B. Cowan, *British Research in the Vatican Archives*, in P. Vian, *L'Archivio Segreto Vaticano e le ricerche storiche. Città del Vaticano 4-5 giugno 1981*, Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia Storia e Storia dell'Arte, Roma 1983, pp. 141-158; I. Macfarlane, *The Vatican Archives. With Special Reference to Sources for British Medieval History*, in «Archives», 4 (1959), pp. 29-44, 84-101. For a bibliography on documents regarding Ireland housed in the Vatican Secret Archives, see: I.E. Mac Finn, *Scribhinní I Gcartlainn an Vatican: Tuarascbháil*, in «Analecta Hibernica», 16 (1946), pp. 1-280. In the 1840s a project was launched to transcribe all the documents relating to Britain held in the Vatican Secret Archives, coordinated by the Prefect Marino Marini. Forty-eight

For over two centuries, two intertwined issues lay at the centre of Rome's attention towards the English Catholics: on one hand, the conflictual relationships between secular and regular clergy – only resolved during the pontificate of Benedict XIV, with the *Apostolicum Ministerium* in 1753, but the polemical aftermath of which would long continue to poison relations within the Catholic community – and, on the other, the issue of the oath of allegiance to the sovereign, which only ended in 1829 when Catholics were exempted from taking the oath.⁹ Until quite recently, English-language Catholic historiography on these two issues has produced conflicting readings, with an often disconcerting degree of bitterness. Over the years other questions have obviously been added as well. The first of these is the Irish question: post-revisionist historiography has recently laid

volumes were prepared, covering the period from 1216 to 1759. This material was then transferred from the State Papers Office to the British Museum. The current location is BL, *Add. mss.* 15,351-15,400 (*Monumenta Britannica ex Autographis Romanorum Pontificum regestis ceterisque documentis deprompta. Marinus Marinius, Tabulariis Vaticanis Praefectus, conlegit, digessit*). For a history of the genesis of this project, see S. Villani, *George Frederick Nott (1768-1841). Un ecclesiastico anglicano tra teologia, letteratura, arte, archeologia, bibliofilia e collezionismo*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma 2012 (*Memorie della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, serie IX, vol. XXVII, fascicolo 3). In 1872, the British government decided to publish, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, all the material relating to the history of Britain preserved in foreign archives (especially in Venice, Madrid, Vienna, Brussels and Rome). To this end, the Master of the Rolls, Lord Romilly, appointed Rev. Joseph Stevenson of St Mary's College, Oscott, to go to Rome to transcribe documents held in the libraries and archives of that city since the reign of Henry VIII. On 24 December 1876, the Rev. Stevenson left his post for health reasons and was replaced by William Henry Bliss, a former Anglican minister who converted to Catholicism and was then an employee of the Bodleian Library, Oxford. He began his researches in January 1877. Bliss died in Rome in 1909. He was succeeded, in September 1909, by J.A. Rigg, editor of the Selden Society and inspector of the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), who remained in office until 1917, when the work was suspended due to the First World War. The transcripts of Stevenson, Bliss and Rigg are now preserved in the National Archives PRO 31/9- PRO 31/10.

9. P. Prodi, *Il sacramento del potere: il giuramento politico nella storia costituzionale dell'Occidente*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1992. On Benedict XIV's bull *Apostolicum ministerium* (30 May 1753), see *Bullarium*, X, pp. 197 ff.

See also *Regulae observandae in Anglicanis missionibus ab Apostolicis Vicariis, nec non a sacerdotibus missionariis saecularibus, ac regularibus*, Romae, Typis Sacrae Congreg. de Propag. Fide, 1753; C. Butler, *Additions to the Historical Memoirs Respecting the English, Irish, and Scottish Catholics: From the Reformation to the Present Time*, London, John Murray, 1821.

increasing emphasis on the “British” dimension of the history of Early Modern England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, painting a far more complex and composite picture than the one we were accustomed to until just a few years ago. Then there is the question of how Rome viewed the Church of England, different, for historical, theological and organizational reasons, from all the other Protestant Churches in Europe. Again, it is a long-standing issue: the *Apostolicae Curae* of Leo XIII, who flatly denied the validity of the Anglican orders, was issued in 1896, and is a subject of discussion even today between the two Churches. Another theme concerns the way in which the English Catholic community was to conceive its relations with Rome: the seventeenth-century Gallican tendencies (at the centre of an innovative study by Stefania Tutino), the Eighteenth-century Cisalpine movement, and the nineteenth-century anti-Catholic Ultramontaniam are moments of a debate that, by focusing on the relationship between Church and State, hold an interest that transcends specific events. Finally, the identification of channels of dialogue and communication – official, unofficial and secret – between Rome and London.¹⁰

The study of diplomatic relations between the court of Rome and the British Isles has a huge interest in the history of political information. The Papal State, in its capacity as an Italian territorial state – but whose politics had a supranational interest – represents one of the main nodes of the network through which political information spread throughout the other European countries. In the case of a country like England, which in the Early Modern period was culturally and politically very distant from Italy, this function was important. Schematically, we might say that, in a hypothetical history of seventeenth-century relations between Italy and Britain, three phases can be distinguished: the early years of the century were the Anglo-Venetian moment; in the 1630s and 40s, information and interest in the three British kingdoms passed through Rome; while, starting in the 1650s, with the expansion of Livorno as the English port for the Levant, most of the Anglo-Italian relations passed through the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Therefore, the complex figure of Gilles Chaissy, who to some extent relied on Tuscan diplomacy for his residence in London, symbolically represents this shift towards Tuscany as the centre of political information about England in Italy. Tuscany would increasingly become the channel through

10. On the Cisalpine movement, and for the essential bibliography, see G. Scott, *Catholic Committee (act. 1782-1792)*, in ODNB.

which news about Britain arrived in Rome (and it is no coincidence that during the Glorious Revolution a key role in this regard was played by the Tuscan diplomatic representative, Francesco Terriesi).¹¹ But if Rome, as we will see, was particularly significant as a centre of political information on English events during the reign of pope Urban VIII, it to some extent always played this role, and never ceased to do so, also because of the presence of the general headquarters of the religious orders and of the colleges of the English, Irish and Scottish nations (the striking image of Jesuit Rome in Pedro Ribadeneira's *Vita Beati Patris Ignatii Loyolae – Life of the Blessed Father Ignatius Loyola* – published around 1610, offers a plastic representation of the role of Rome as the theatre of the world).

The theme of the channels of communication and information between Rome and London is, of course, of the utmost importance, because the decision-making process is always highly dependent on the ability to build up a detailed picture of what is happening in a physically and culturally distant land (the dimension of time was obviously crucial in Early Modern times: news from London took no less than a month to reach Rome). It is on these issues in particular that we will focus.

2. *The Reign of James I: the Archpriest Controversy and the Question of the Oath of Allegiance*

The accession to the English throne of James I, the son of the Catholic “martyr” Mary Stuart, brought some initial hope of an easing of anti-Catholic persecution: the wife of the new king, Anna of Denmark, had secretly converted to Catholicism; the king, in an attempt to curry favour with the European powers for his succession, had, before coming to the throne, made vague promises of tolerance; and many Catholics held key positions in the government of the counties. A peace treaty with Spain was signed in 1604. In instructions given to Maffeo Barberini – the future pope Urban VIII, who was in Paris as nuncio in 1604 – he was advised to establish friendly relations with the English ambassador in France, as «things of England after the death of the pseudo-queen» had «changed face». The

11. On Terriesi, see S. Villani, *Note su Francesco Terriesi (1635-1715). Mercante, diplomatico e funzionario medico tra Londra e Livorno*, in «Nuovi Studi Livornesi», X (2002-2003), pp. 59-80.

Gunpowder Plot, in November 1605, put an end to all these illusions. On 22 June 1606, James imposed an oath of allegiance explicitly denying the legitimacy of the pope to depose a temporal sovereign. Paul V condemned the oath on 22 September. There was a war of words between James I and the Catholic Church, in which Bellarmine played a leading part. The question of the oath contributed to exacerbate the divisions that had long existed in English Catholicism.¹²

The English Catholic hierarchy had been extinguished in 1585 with the death of Thomas Goldwell, bishop of St. Asaph, who lived in exile in Rome in the Theatine convent of San Silvestro al Quirinale. The charismatic figure of William Allen, cardinal from 1587 (he was appointed in view of the invasion of Spain's «Invincible Armada»), had represented English Catholicism for decades, but upon his death in 1594, the dissent that had been simmering for some time among the secular clergy on the one hand, and the Jesuits on the other, exploded. Allen promoted the foundation, in 1568, of the College of Douai for the education of the English clergy. The priests educated there were sent to England as missionaries, and in 1574, one of them, Cuthbert Mayne, was arrested and sentenced to death. He was the first of a long series of seminary priests to be martyred in the English mission. To those who reproached Allen for sending English priests to the slaughter instead of waiting for better times, he replied that better times would arrive by working and not waiting.¹³ In 1577, a group of English students of Douai came to Rome to become priests. They found hospitality in an old hospice for English pilgrims that had existed in Via Monserrato since the second half of the fourteenth century. On 23 April 1579, Gregory XIII issued a bull establishing a seminary, which was placed under Jesuit control. Over the years, English colleges were also founded in Valladolid (1589) and Seville (1592). Others followed. It was over missionary strategy that dissent developed. The Jesuits believed that the time had come for

12. On the religious positions of James I, see William B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997. For the quotation, see L. von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London Ltd., vol. 23, *Clement VIII (1592-1605)*, p. 516.

13. The expression «Seminary Priests» was coined by the English government in 1585 to designate priests who took orders after 24 June 1559, who were considered traitors. See G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests. A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales 1558-1850*, 4 vols., St. Edmund's College-Ushaw College, Ware-Durham, 1969-1977.

a war of movement, and aspired to a Catholic reconquest, perhaps making use of Spanish weapons, while the secular clergy thought a war of position was necessary, assuming that the Catholic Church was not completely dead, and that England could not be treated as a land of mission like the West Indies or the Americas. Stemming from these different views was the claim of the regulars for complete autonomy, and their opposition to the request made by the secular clergy for a restoration of the English episcopal hierarchy. In an attempt to overcome this opposition, in 1598 Clement VIII entrusted the authority over both the secular and the regular clergy not to a bishop, as the leaders of the secular clergy were requesting, but to an archpriest, George Blackwell, who was known to be close to the Jesuits. The seculars continued to seek the appointment of a bishop and the restoration of the hierarchy by appealing directly to Rome. At the same time, the *appellants* (the term used to describe the seculars that had appealed to Rome to request the appointment of an English bishop) made specific acts of recognition of the queen and produced many texts of anti-Jesuit propaganda. On 5 October 1602 a brief of Clement VIII ordered Blackwell not to consult the Jesuits about the affairs of the secular clergy in England. This was a turning point in the controversy, because Blackwell gradually became increasingly autonomous from the Society of Jesus, and when the oath of allegiance controversy exploded in 1607, he took the oath, thus sparking a fresh series of heated and bitter disputes within the evermore fragile English Catholic community.¹⁴ Blackwell was relieved from his post and replaced in 1608 with George Birkhead, a member of the *appellants*, but who firmly condemned the oath. Neither Birkhead, who died in 1614, nor the third and last archpriest, William Harrison, who died in 1621, were able to put an end to the disputes dividing the secular and regular clergy, and both asked for the appointment of an English bishop. The request for a bishop was finally accepted by pope Gregory XV in February 1623. However, a compromise solution was adopted: the bishop was not an ordinary but an apostolic vicar, and therefore his title did not correspond to an English diocese but to that, *in partibus infidelium*, of Chalcedon. The

14. J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1976; D. Mathew, *Catholicism in England. The Portrait of a Minority: its Culture and Tradition*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London 1955 (1st ed. 1936); R.I. Bradley, *Blacklo and the Counter-Reformation*, in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honour of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. C.H. Carter, Random House, New York 1966, pp. 348-370. See also P. Arblaster, *Blackwell, George (1547-1612)*, in ODNB.

person chosen was William Bishop, one of the more prominent members of the *appellants*. Less than six months after his arrival in England, however, Bishop, already an old man, fell ill and died.¹⁵ He was succeeded in January 1625 by Richard Smith, who was very close to Richelieu.¹⁶ The new bishop of Chalcedon came to England in April, and, in the space of two months, energetically proceeded to completely reorganize the English Church by establishing a chapter, vicars and archdeacons.

Bishop Smith demanded that all priests, regular and secular, in England, were to obtain his license to act as confessors. In the course of the years, the regulars had developed their own autonomous structures, and knew that episcopal control would quickly dismantle the networks of patronage that they had built up. So it is not surprising that many of the most prominent lay Catholics lined up against Smith, worried that the bishop could impose on them and their families priests whom they did not like, through whom (and through episcopal visits) they could be controlled. In addition, by accepting episcopal jurisdiction, they would be liable to charges of treason (*præmunire*), while on the contrary, by refusing it, they would show their loyalty to the crown, demonstrating that it was possible to be at the same time a good Catholic and a good English subject, opposed to any foreign interference.¹⁷ All these measures, as can readily be grasped, contributed to make divisions within the English Catholic community deeper. The faction opposed to Smith appealed to the pope, who, on 16 December 1627, condemned some of Smith's claims.¹⁸ Threatened with arrest in 1628, Smith took refuge in the French Embassy, and in the summer of 1631 he left England and settled in France.¹⁹ After the flight of Bishop Smith, the English Catholics were governed by the chapter of the secular clergy that had been set up by Smith.²⁰

15. M.J. Havran, *The Catholics in Caroline England*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1962, pp. 84-5; Albion, *Charles I and the Court of Rome*, p. 109.

16. See J. Bergin, *Smith, Richard (1567-1655)*, in ODNB; A.F. Allison, *Richard Smith, Richelieu and the French Marriage. The Political Context of Smith's Appointment as Bishop for England in 1624*, in «*Recusant History*», 7 (1964), pp. 148-211.

17. A. Sutto, *Lord Baltimore, the Society of Jesus, and Caroline Absolutism in Maryland, 1630-1645*, in «*Journal of British Studies*», 48, 3 (July 2009), pp. 631-652.

18. Havran, *The Catholics in Caroline England*, pp. 84-5; Albion, *Charles I and the Court of Rome*, p. 109; Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 49-60. See also ACDF, St st. SS 1 d.

19. Pope Urban VIII attacked Smith in his brief *Britannia* of 9 May 1631.

20. *Newsletters from the Caroline Court, 1631-1638. Catholicism and the Politics of the Personal Rule*, ed. M.C. Questier, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005;

3. Charles I, Panzani, Conn, Rossetti

If this was the internal situation of English Catholicism, the relations between English Catholics and the Crown had gradually improved. James, from the time when he was just the king of Scotland, had started a marriage market for his children, playing his hand simultaneously on a number of tables. If the ambitions of James as king of Scotland in these marriage negotiations were limited to the *princely ranks*, after the accession to the throne of England, his strategy became much more ambitious. While his daughter, Elizabeth, married Frederick of the Palatinate in 1613, creating a climate of enthusiasm in the Protestant world, James wanted a Catholic marriage for the heir to the throne, so he looked towards the court of Madrid.²¹ The Spanish request for the conversion of the prince of Wales to Catholicism as a prerequisite to any negotiation scuppered the first contacts between James I and Philip III. Negotiations resumed in 1614. The king had come into conflict with Parliament, and the Spanish ambassador promised a dowry so extensive as to free James from the need to convene Parliament in the future. The proposal was attractive, and the possibility of this Spanish match was discussed in depth. The Spanish theologians now demanded full religious freedom for English Catholics. The king of Spain's problem was obviously not only to convince the king of England, who was not at all inclined to make concessions as extensive as those requested by Spain, but also the pope, who initially stuck with the old position of demanding the conversion of the prince as the preliminary condition for the Spanish marriage. Over the years laborious negotiations went on between Madrid, London and Rome. A myriad of documents were produced, and eventually Gregory XV assured that he would grant a dispensation for the marriage of the *Infanta* of Spain with the heretic prince of Wales if the king made the assurance that no Catholic would be persecuted for his faith in England. It was still too large a concession for James, who had to string along the Puritans, anxious, among other things, about the war in Bohemia that was

T.A. Birrell, *English Catholics without a Bishop, 1655-1672*, in «Recusant History», IV (1958), pp. 142-78.

21. See S. Villani, *Il matrimonio di una principessa. Le trattative per le nozze di Caterina di Ferdinando Medici con il principe Enrico d'Inghilterra*, in *Nobildonne, monache e cavaliere dell'Ordine di Santo Stefano. Modelli e strategie femminili nella vita pubblica della Toscana granducale*, conference proceedings, Pisa, 22-23 May 2009, ed. M. Aglietti, ETS, Pisa 2009, pp. 215-234.

bloodying continental Europe at that time. In order to break the deadlock, in February 1623, Prince Charles made a trip to Spain accompanied by the duke of Buckingham. It was a bold but poorly conceived move, and perhaps partly as a result of this, the negotiations came to a standstill and the Spanish marriage was dropped. Charles, after six months' stay in Spain, returned to England in October, and the following year marriage negotiations began with France. Meanwhile, in Rome, pope Ludovisi had died, and was succeeded by Urban VIII (who, since the time of his Nunciature in Paris, had directly followed English politics). An agreement was reached, and in a secret annex to the marriage contract, far-reaching concessions were made to English Catholics. Thanks in part to the direct intervention of Francesco Barberini, on 1 December 1624 the pope granted the dispensation. On 11 May, Henrietta Maria de Bourbon, daughter of Henry IV and Marie de' Medici, was married by proxy to Charles Stuart, now king of England since his father had died in March 1625.²²

These marriage negotiations thus marked the resumption of an informal dialogue between England and the court of Rome, which, as has already been mentioned, was (as is obvious) directly involved first by the Spanish and then by the French crown. The first years of Henrietta Maria's marriage, however, saw a series of tensions arising from the application of the secret annex to the marriage contract. The persecution of the Catholics did not stop, and in 1626 the king expelled the Oratorians, who had arrived in England in the wake of Henrietta Maria (they were replaced by the Capuchins, with the exception of her confessor, the Scotsman Philip Sanquhar). If that was perhaps the moment of greatest tension between the royal couple, things gradually improved, and after the birth of their son Charles, an exemplary harmony developed between them. It is in this climate of concord that, in the Catholic entourage around Henrietta Maria, the idea took root that to strengthen the concessions granted to Catholics and to heal the divisions between the secular and the regular clergy – which represented an intrinsic weakness of the English Catholic community – it was necessary to have a papal representative in London, who was to be

22. On the Anglo-Spanish negotiations, see S. Rawson Gardiner, *Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage: 1617-1623. A Chapter of English History, Founded Principally Upon Unpublished Documents in This Country, and in the Archives of Simancas, Venice, and Brussels*, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1869; G. Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta. The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2003.

invested with the dignity of cardinal. It was decided to send a representative to Rome, and the choice fell on the Scottish Catholic courtier Robert Douglas, who arrived in Rome in October 1633. This member of the influential Scottish clique around the queen immediately proposed George Conn as the person who should be named cardinal. Douglas said explicitly that his appointment would favour Charles I's conversion to Catholicism. A Scot, born into a noble Catholic family in 1598, Conn had studied at Douai, Paris, Rome and Bologna. In 1623, he joined the family of cardinal Francesco Barberini. Bright, intelligent, ambitious and protected by the Barberini family, it is clear why Conn appeared to the queen, and her confessor Father Philip, to be the perfect candidate. The proposal, however, wrong-footed cardinal Barberini, who wanted the view of an expert on British affairs to evaluate the pros and cons of this scheme. Barberini turned to cardinal Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno. For nine years, first as nuncio in Brussels and then in Paris, he had directly overseen missionary work in England, Scotland and Ireland, and granted assistance to the British Catholics under the impetus of the congregation *de Propaganda Fide* created in 1622, which extended precisely in that direction the duties of the Nunciatures (Guidi di Bagno was in Flanders from 1621 to 1627 and in France from 1627 to 1630). Cardinal Guidi di Bagno lucidly stated that, in his opinion, it was impossible that the promotion to the purple of a British subject could in some way help the conversion of Charles I, even if he admitted that it could help to mend the divisions among the English Catholic community, torn, as we have said, by the conflicts between the regular and the secular clergy and by the question of the oath. It was quite clear that he also had some doubts about Conn himself. As a Scot, he would not have been able to gain the trust of the English, and, with his pro-French stance, he might have been just a pawn in Richelieu's hands, merely to rebalance the College of Cardinals in an anti-Spanish direction. What's more, cardinal di Bagno feared that the proposal of Conn's name had emerged from Scottish and French court members around Queen Henrietta Maria, but that neither she nor Charles I were really convinced of the move. Di Bagno therefore advised Barberini to send a neutral delegate to London to gather information. He also took pains to point out that if it emerged that Conn's name had actually been proposed by the Queen, this in itself would be enough to prevent his appointment, as pope Urban VIII would be unwilling to comply with her request in order to prevent inevitable disquiet among the consorts of other European kings (desirous to

exercise their patronage in the papal court). On the other hand, it would be even worse if it emerged that Conn had nominated himself. Barberini, who evidently trusted Guidi di Bagno's judgement completely, replied vaguely to the increasingly insistent (and irritated) requests made by Douglas. In the following months, Capuchin diplomacy was also at work behind the scenes to promote Conn's candidacy.²³

And so, following the advice he had received, Barberini decided to send to England a figure unconnected with the various parties. His choice fell on the Oratorian Gregorio Panzani, from an Arezzo family, who arrived in England in December 1634 (not without having discussed the English situation at length with Guidi di Bagno). Once in England, Panzani immediately entered into contact with the pro-Catholic party at court, represented by the treasurer Francis Cottington and by the Secretary of State Francis Windebank, from whom he gained the impression that the appointment of a cardinal was a useful move to improve the condition of Catholics in the country. Soon, however, he found himself embroiled in the controversies that had been tearing the English Catholic community apart for decades. Just before him there arrived in England a Welsh Benedictine called Leander a Sancto Martino, a former university companion of the archbishop of

23. See A. Foa, *Conn (Conaeus, Conneo, Caune), Giorgio*, in DBI, XXVIII, 1983, pp. 17-20; R. Malcolm Smuts, *Conn, George (d. 1640)*, in ODNB; F. Solinas, *Portare Roma a Parigi*, in *Documentary Culture: Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII*, Nuova Alfa Editoriale, Bologna 1992, p. 228. The Galileian Conn was part of the humanist circle gathered around Giovan Battista Ciampoli; see F. Favino, *A proposito dell'atomismo di Galileo: da una lettera di Tommaso Campanella ad uno scritto di Giovanni Ciampoli*, in «Bruniana & Campanelliana», 3, 2 (1997), pp. 265-81; Ead., «*Quel petardo di mia fortuna*»: *riconsiderando la "caduta" di Giovan Battista Ciampoli*», in J. Montesinos, C. Solis, *Largo campo di filosofare: Eurosymposium Galileo 2001*, Fundación Canaria Orotava de Historia de la Ciencia, Orotava 2001, pp. 863-882, in part. p. 876. For two letters by Ciampoli to Conn of 7 March 1636 and 9 December 1639, see *Lettere di Monsignor Giovanni Ciampoli*, Venice, Per Gio. Giacomo Hertz, 1661, pp. 11-14, 72-74. Giovanni Battista Ciampoli dedicated to him a *Poesia in lode dell'inchostro dedicata al Signior Giorgio Coneo*, published in Rome («Poem in Praise of the Ink Dedicated to Mr. George Conn»), «Appresso Giacomo Mascardi» in 1626; see F. Meninni, *Il ritratto del sonetto e della canzone*, ed. by C. Carminati, Argo, Lecce 2002, vol. II, pp. 414-426.

Transcripts of some letters by Conn are in L. von Ranke, *Englische Geschichte, vornehmlich im sechszehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, Berlin, Duncker and Humblot, 1860 (*A History of England: Principally in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. V). On Guidi di Bagno see G. Lutz, *Kardinal Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno; Politik und Religion im Zeitalter Richelieus und Urbans VIII*, M. Niemeyer, Tübingen 1971, in part. pp. 404-408.

Canterbury, William Laud, with whom he had also shared quarters. Father Leander was convinced that the court of Rome would have to reconsider its condemnation of the oath of allegiance, arguing that the situation had changed in the last few decades and that it was time to withdraw the decrees condemning it. The Benedictines represented the party of compromise (another member of this order, Thomas Preston, under the pseudonym of Roger Widdrington, had published numerous writings in which he denied that the papal possibility to depose princes was a doctrine of faith).²⁴ At the same time, the Franciscan Franciscus a Sancta Clara (Christopher Davenport) had written a book in which he claimed that most of the articles of faith of the Church of England could be read with a Catholic meaning. Panzani actually became convinced of the validity of these positions, and openly supported them, albeit cautiously, against Jesuit intransigence. In his heart he entertained the idea that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Laud, then engaged in the Arminian project of reform of the Church of England, was very close to the Catholic Church and that, with a position of openness on the part of Rome, there was a very concrete possibility of putting an end to the Anglican schism. His view was confirmed by meetings he had with prelates like the bishop of Chichester, Richard Montague, and the bishop of Gloucester, Godfrey Goodman, who had both moved very close to Catholicism (in particular, when Goodman died in 1656, he was confessed by Franciscus a Sancta Clara, and wrote in his will that he died as a Catholic). Panzani negotiated with the king for the sending of an envoy of the queen to Rome and of an envoy of the pope to London, again with an unofficial role, but more formal than that of Douglas and his own.²⁵

24. S. Hermann De Franceschi, *Jésuites et bénédictins anglais: une conflictualité larvée au temps de l'absolutisme jacobéen. Concurrence missionnaire et affrontement doctrinal autour de l'affaire Thomas Preston (1611-1616)*, in «Cheiron», 43-44, 22 (2005), pp. 107-127.

25. See the thesis by F. Sguilla, *Missione di Gregorio Panzani in Inghilterra (1634-1636)*, supervised by Marchesi Alfredo (Ilarino da Milano), Magistero 1970-1971 (now the Department of Human Sciences and Education, University of Perugia). For a negative view of Panzani's mission, see T.A. Birrell's Introduction to the anastatic reprint of the *Memoirs of Gregorio Panzani*, published by Joseph Berington in 1793: J. Berington, *The Memoirs of Gregorio Panzani Birmingham 1793*, with an introduction by T.A. Birrell, Gregg, International Publishers, Farnborough (Hants) 1970. On Panzani, see H. Reynaud Turner Brandreth, *Grégoire Panzani et l'idéal de la réunion sous le règne de Charles Ier d'Angleterre*, in «Irénikon», 21, 2 (1948), pp. 32-47, 179-92. On his return, Panzani wrote a report that had a wide manuscript circulation, shown by the several copies held in various

On the British side it was eventually decided to send William Hamilton, from a noble Scottish family and a relative of Charles I himself, and from Rome, after much hesitation, it was decided to send George Conn. The two left together, in the summer of 1636 (they met in Nice). Panzani exchanged instructions with his successor, convinced that very soon the latter would be appointed cardinal. He was sorely deluded. In Rome, Guidi di Bagno's scepticism about the appropriateness of the appointment was evidently shared by Urban VIII, and perhaps even by cardinal Barberini. Conn, who arrived in London on 25 July 1636, remained in England for three years, and if at the beginning of his mission, the tone of his letters reveals his confidence that the purple was imminent – though he mentioned this issue in his letters to Barberini only implicitly – as the months went by the Scotsman realized that problems had arisen in Rome, and his nudging for promotion became increasingly explicit, bringing out his bitterness and disappointment (and perhaps also his embarrassment for having exposed himself too much both in Rome and London).²⁶ In the three years of his stay, the country's political situation deteriorated, and it gradually became clear that, at best, his appointment as cardinal would not produce any results for English Catholics. Then the outbreak of war between Scotland and England made the plan totally unrealistic. Conn's health deteriorated, and when he left England on 9 September 1639 he was seriously ill (apparently suffering from a bronchial disease). Shortly after his return to Rome, Conn died on 10 January 1640. He was buried in the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso, and the long Latin epigraph on his monument, built by Barberini, states that death «prevented him from being assigned to a higher position, and so to shine more light».²⁷

In England Conn inserted himself immediately into the court circles. But his attitude was completely different from Panzani's. Unlike the latter, he had no sympathy for Laud, whom he did not trust at all, while he

archives around the world: BAV, *Barb. Lat.* 2450; Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, MSS. D 28, ff. 1-72; London, Westminster Archives, 129; Syracuse University, Manuscript 299; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC, V.b.348. A more recent manuscript copy of this report is in BL, *Add. ms.* 15389, ff. 99r-126v.

26. Once his friend Ferragalli, the secretary of Antonio Barberini, in deciphering one of Conn's letters, even decided to eliminate a too explicit reference to his appointment as cardinal with a more ambiguous and vague phrase, evidently thinking it was best to avoid irritating his protector. Cf. Albion, *Charles I and the Court of Rome*, p. 241.

27. *Ibidem*, p. 118.

considered Charles I very close to conversion and had many talks with him about theology. Unlike the Oratorian Panzani, he was clearly irritated by the positions of the Benedictines Leander and Preston and by the Franciscan Santa Clara, and inclined to an agreement with the Jesuits. Despite this, on the question of the oath, he tried to work out with the king a new formula that would be sufficiently ambiguous not to rankle the Puritans, but that could be acceptable for the Catholics. When a draft was finally prepared that seemed to him to be acceptable, his bitterness in seeing it rejected in Rome was enormous.²⁸

In short, then, his mission was a complete failure, and the only concrete result that both he and his predecessor had achieved was to ensure the English Catholics a period of peace without persecution (at least in London). Obviously, the failure of Conn's mission also had implications for the Roman residence of the queen's representative, William Hamilton, who, since December 1636, had been asking to leave Rome (having failed even to secure the release of an old English Protestant who had been detained for decades in the prisons of the Inquisition in Rome, which, if accomplished, could certainly have been used for propaganda purposes by the English Catholics).²⁹ When it became clear that Conn's health was worsening, Barberini decided to appoint a successor. The choice fell on Count Carlo Rossetti, from Ferrara, who came to England shortly before the departure of his predecessor in September 1639. The hopes that had prompted the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1634 between Rome and London were a thing of the past. England was at war with Scotland, and would soon slide into a civil war ending finally with Charles I's death in 1649.³⁰ Archbishop Laud was executed in 1645. Despite this, the queen and her courtiers, apparently unaware of the gravity of the situation, engaged Rossetti in exhausting negotiations to find a person who might merit the appointment as cardinal now that Conn was dead. The negotiations, needless to say, did not lead anywhere. Instead, Rossetti's presence in London excited Puritan propaganda, which explicitly accused Charles I and

28. For Rossetti's correspondence, see ASV, *Segr. Stato, Inghilterra*, 4 and BAV, *Barb. Lat.*, 8646-8655.

29. R.W. Lightbown, *The Protestant Confessor, or the Tragic History of Mr. Mollé, in England and Continental Renaissance Essays in honour of J. B. Trapp*, eds. E. Chaney, P. Mack, Suffolk, Boydell Press, Woodbridge 1990, pp. 239-256.

30. G. Garavaglia, *Società e religione in Inghilterra. I Cattolici durante la Rivoluzione*, Franco Angeli Editore, Milano 1983.

Laud of having welcomed and protected him, and in June 1641 Rossetti was forced to make a hurried departure from England.³¹

In London Rossetti left his secretary, Vincenzo Armanni, who remained in England for a few months before joining him in Cologne. Even there Armanni continued to receive regular detailed information on the civil war in England and on the course of the war in Ireland.³² The Vatican Secret Archives hold a series of documents relating to the England of those years, that, as evidenced by a handwritten note affixed to the cover of the substantial bundle, had belonged to Vincenzo Armanni (*Miscellanea Arm.* I, 16). Among the documents forming part of this composite miscellany is a manuscript copy of the *Ragionamento in cui si dimostra con ragioni politiche e morali quanto sia necessario al re d'Inghilterra d'abbracciare la religione cattolica* («Reasoning in which it is demonstrated with moral and political reasons how it is necessary for the king of England to embrace the Catholic religion»), a short work written by Armanni himself in November 1640. There are also a few letters addressed to pope Innocent X in 1647 by Sir Kenelm Digby, the English intellectual dispatched to the court of Rome that year by Henrietta Maria to replace Hamilton. The bulk of this miscellaneous volume, however, is made up of a hundred letters written in Italian and sent from London every week between the summer of 1647 and the autumn of 1650, which contain information on developments in England. The dispatches are almost complete for the two-year period from July 1647 to July 1649. Then there a break of about seven and a half months, followed by a sequence of letters (with some gaps) sent between January and September 1650. In another miscellaneous volume of documents relating to England, which probably also belonged to Armanni, there are a few other letters written by the same person. The author of these dispatches, who appears to have been one of the most

31. G. Vancini, *Carlo Rossetti: cardinale ferrarese, nunzio apostolico e legato a latere nell'Europa del seicento: 1615-1681*, Artstudio C, Ferrara 2005. Cf. also G. Ferraro, *Relazione del nunzio pontificio Carlo Rossetti intorno agli affari di Germania nel 1642-44*, in «Deputazione di storia patria per l'Emilia e la Romagna», 4 (1886), pp. 177-218; G. Lucchesi, *Lettere indirizzate al card. Carlo Rossetti nella Biblioteca card. Cicognani del Seminario di Faenza*, in *Scritti in onore di sua eccellenza mons. Giuseppe Battaglia*, Stab. grafico F.lli Lega, Faenza 1957, pp. 190-219.

32. On Armanni, see D. Viventi, *La carriera diplomatica di Vincenzo Armanni. Vita, formazione e mestiere di un segretario nel Seicento (1608-1647)*, PhD thesis, University of Perugia, Dottorato di ricerca in «Scienze Storiche dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea», XXI ciclo, anno accademico 2008-2009. See also G. Vancini, *Vincenzo Armanni da Gubbio. Letterato del Seicento (1680-1684)*, Cortocircuito, Broni 2012.

acute and informed foreign observers present in England, provided timely reports on the events of this crucial period in English history. For some of the letters there is also a version in French. With the exception of one of these “French” letters in which it seems possible to glimpse a signature (which, however, is illegible), the others are without a heading or greetings. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, the most authoritative nineteenth-century historian of the English Revolution, who was the first to take full advantage of the extraordinary documentary value of this collection, claims that from internal evidence it is clear that the author of these dispatches was a Tuscan priest resident in England. In fact, the author of these interesting documents was certainly the Avignonese Franciscan Gilles Chaissy, a figure of considerable intellectual depth, who lived in London with the Tuscan resident Amerigo Salvetti (the origin of Gardiner’s misunderstanding).

Chaissy had arrived in England with the retinue of Henrietta Maria. Born in 1585, he studied at Avignon, taught theology in Florence and Urbino and published a number of theological and anti-Huguenot propaganda works. His role in England is ambiguous and elusive. Presented from time to time as a friend of the Jesuits or of Santa Clara, and perhaps on the payroll of Mazarin, Panzani’s comments on Chaissy were heated, but he enjoyed the confidence of Rossetti. He played a leading part in the attempt to convert the Protestant archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, to Roman Catholicism, pursued between the summer of 1641 and 1643. But aside from this, Chaissy’s role was important as an informant. It was mainly through him that, after Armani’s departure, news from London continued to reach Rome for years (Chaissy, who died in September 1658, was appointed missionary «in partibus infidelium» by *Propaganda Fide* in 1647, and re-elected several times). Indeed, his dispatches are among the most precise existing accounts of what happened in England in those years, and also reported on the philo-jansenist group of Seculars that gathered around Thomas White (aka Blackloe), which called for the creation of a national Catholic Church inspired by the Gallican model.³³

33. For more about Chaissy, see S. Villani, *Per la progettata edizione della corrispondenza dei rappresentanti toscani a Londra: Amerigo Salvetti e Giovanni Salvetti Antelminelli durante il Commonwealth e il Protettorato (1649-1660)*, in «Archivio storico italiano», CLXII (2004), pp. 109-125. See Birrell, *English Catholics without a Bishop*, p. 142. See also B. Southgate, *White, Thomas 1593-1676*, in ODNB and, also, P. Jansen, *Jansénisme et Grande-Bretagne de la Chute de Charles I^{er} à celle de Jacques II*, in *France et Grande-Bretagne de la Chute de Charles I^{er} à celle de Jacques II (1649-1688)*. *Actes d’Oxford*, édités par Ch. Smith et E. Dubois, Society for Seventeenth-Century French Studies, Norwich 1999, pp. 91-101.

After the Restoration of the Stuarts the missionary element returned to being represented by the Capuchins, who were officiating at the chapel of Charles II's palace. In 1662, Charles II married the Catholic Catherine of Braganza from Portugal, the Englishman Philip Howard was appointed cardinal in 1675 (and, from 1679, protector of the English nation), there was the storm of the Popish Plot, the conversion of Charles II on his deathbed and the accession to the throne of the Catholic James II. The dependence of the latter on Louis XIV in fact alienated the support of Innocent XI, who found himself in the complex situation of having a Catholic King in the British Isles but not agreeing with his policy. From 16 November 1685 until 1689, Count Ferdinand d'Adda, the first nuncio since the time of Queen Mary Tudor, resided in London. In 1685, John Leyburn was appointed apostolic vicar; his name had already been mentioned in 1657 to succeed Bishop Smith, and he was the secretary of Howard. In 1688, he was flanked by three other apostolic vicars, and this was the organization of the English Catholic Church until the mid 1800s.³⁴

Aside from the central theme of political information, the stories of the three agents (Panzani, Conn and Rossetti) and the role played after 1641 by Gilles Chassigny and Ferdinand D'Adda, are, I believe, emblematic of how the activities of papal diplomats should be studied, taking into account the increasingly complex and multifaceted articulation of Roman politics. In dialectical terms, this articulation gave rise to a dynamic equilibrium that often, in a pragmatic way, kept options open. There was a prevailing scepticism in Rome about the ecclesiastical policy of Laud and Charles I, but, in my view, it is highly significant that the key figure that shaped Rome's stance on issues arising in the 1630s were neither the papal envoys in London nor the representatives of the religious orders or the British secular clergy, but Guidi di Bagno, to whom Barberini, his junior by twenty years, constantly turned for advice on English affairs. His point of view, developed against the backdrop of extensive international experience, set English vicissitudes in a European context. From the very beginning, as we have seen, there were doubts in Rome about the wisdom of making Conn a cardinal, but the idea was kept open in order to verify its feasibility. The missions of Panzani, Conn and Rossetti provide clear evidence of a certain pragmatism and unscrupulousness at the court of Rome that programmatically kept several options on the table at the same time. In this many-layered game, Conn was no more than a pawn, used with a cynicism that is inevitable when any leadership faces the need to make complex choices.

34. On the diplomatic links between the court of Rome and England after the Restoration, see P. Messina, *Girolamo De Vecchi*, in DBI, XXXIX, 1991, pp. 542-545. See also National Archives, London, PRO 31/9/98, *Relazione del clero (28 Agosto 1660)*.



Fig. 1. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Tomb of Alexander VII* (1672-1678).



Fig. 2. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Tomb of Alexander VII*, detail.