

Sarpi, Micanzio and Bedell: a new source for the Anglo-Venetian encounter at Santa Maria dei Servi, 1607–11

Abstract (1000 characters)

English

Following the Venetian Interdict Crisis of 1606-7, the prominent Venetian theologian Paolo Sarpi and his close associate Fulgenzio Micanzio regularly met William Bedell, chaplain to the English ambassador to Venice, to discuss religious ideas. These meetings took place at the monastery of Santa Maria dei Servi, which was located near to the English ambassador's residence. The fruitful intellectual exchange that ensued has long been a source of great fascination to historians. However, one intriguing document – a short treatise on Christian doctrine, written by Bedell just after he returned from Venice – has not been discussed in any previous scholarship. This essay will explore what this overlooked document tells us about a period in which Cannaregio became a lively centre of Anglo-Venetian relations, revisiting the significance of these relations for the religious debates raging across Europe.

Italian

Dopo la crisi dell'interdetto veneziano del 1606-7, l'eminente teologo veneziano Paolo Sarpi e il suo stretto collaboratore Fulgenzio Micanzio incontrarono regolarmente William Bedell, cappellano dell'ambasciatore inglese a Venezia, per discutere di idee religiose. Questi incontri hanno avuto luogo nel convento di Santa Maria dei Servi, che si trovava vicino alla residenza dell'ambasciatore inglese. Il fruttuoso scambio intellettuale che ne è seguito è stato a lungo fonte di grande fascino per gli storici. Tuttavia, uno documento intrigante – un breve trattato sulla dottrina cristiana, scritto da Bedell subito dopo il suo ritorno da Venezia – non è menzionato in nessuno degli studi precedenti. Questo saggio esplora ciò che questo manoscritto

trascurato ci racconta di un periodo in cui Cannaregio divenne un vivace centro delle relazioni anglo-veneziane, rivisitando il significato di queste relazioni per i dibattiti religiosi che imperversavano in Europa.

Sarpi, Micanzio and Bedell: a new source for the Anglo-Venetian encounter at Santa Maria dei Servi, 1607–11*

From the 1607 to 1611, the monastery of Santa Maria dei Servi was the location of a series of meetings between three men: Paolo Sarpi, Fulgenzio Micanzio and William Bedell. Sarpi and Micanzio were both Servite friars, and the monastery was their home; Bedell was the Chaplain to the English Ambassador in Venice. The official reason for these meetings was that Bedell was teaching the two friars English. In fact, this was a pretext to cover up more controversial activities: the participants exchanged books, discussed theology, and produced a number of controversial works critical of the power of the Pope.

These Anglo-Venetian encounters took place in the immediate aftermath of the Venetian Interdict controversy, a dispute over Venice's right to make laws governing ecclesiastical property without papal approval. The disagreement culminated in the Pope excommunicating the Venetian government and declaring an Interdict, banning religious services across Venetian territory, in April 1606. Sarpi, aided by Micanzio, led Venice's anti-papal propaganda efforts. His pamphlets attacking the excesses of papal power were read and admired across Europe.¹ By April the following year, thanks to a French-brokered compromise, the Pope lifted the Interdict, while Venice's disputed laws stayed in force.

The Interdict controversy had been watched especially closely in England, where anti-papal feeling was also running high, following the discovery of the Catholic Gunpowder Plot against King and Parliament the previous November.² Like the Venetians, the English were deeply concerned about the threat that papal power posed to secular rulers. The English ambassador to Venice, Sir Henry Wotton, hoped that the Interdict controversy might persuade

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¹ COZZI 1974, pp. 235–281; FRAJESE 1994, pp. 249–287; PIN 2001, I.I, pp. 13-100; PIN 2006, pp. 343–394.

² DE VIVO 2010, pp. 163–188.

the Venetians to make a permanent break with Rome, and did all he could to encourage this outcome. Wotton himself could not openly meet Sarpi, as Venetian law banned state officials from meeting socially with foreign diplomats.³ But his chaplain, William Bedell, who arrived in Venice ‘a few days’ after the Interdict was lifted, was a lower-profile member of the household and had more freedom of manoeuvre.⁴ Sarpi and Micanzio’s Servite monastery was conveniently located in Cannaregio, just a short walk from the English ambassador’s house, next to the Church of San Girolamo in the same *sestiere*.⁵ Sarpi chose to continue living in the monastery even when he was offered alternative housing in San Marco following the assassination attempt against him on 5 October 1607; the fact that it was easier to conduct low-profile meetings in peripheral Cannaregio will certainly have been a factor.⁶

Though neither Sarpi and Micanzio, nor Venice, were converted to Protestantism in any straightforward sense, these meetings had important consequences, giving rise to a flourishing of Anglo-Venetian exchange which would continue for over a decade.⁷ This collaboration between Bedell, Sarpi and Micanzio took place within the context of a broader web of international contacts which the Servites had cultivated with Reformed Protestants. These included Cristoph von Dohna, who came to Venice in July 1608 as a representative of Christian I, Prince of Anhalt and leader of the Protestant Union, in order to solicit Venetian cooperation in an anti-Habsburg alliance, and Giovanni Diodati, the Genevan–Italian theologian who visited Venice at Wotton’s request in September 1608, accompanied by the French Huguenot David Liques, a close associate of Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, the so-called

³ DE VIVO 2007, pp. 70–74.

⁴ Wotton’s first chaplain was Nathaniel Fletcher, the son of Richard Fletcher, Bishop of London, and the brother of the playwright, John Fletcher. For Fletcher, see Clergy of the Church of England Database, Person ID: 174933; William Bedell to Adam Newton, Venice, 1/11 January 1608, BL, *Lansdowne papers*, 90, fol. 18v; SHUCKBURGH 1902, p. 230.

⁵ SMITH 1907, I, p. 345, n. 1.

⁶ COZZI, COZZI 1969, p. 224. The attack occurred near the monastery in Campo Santa Fosca, where a monument to Sarpi was erected in 1892. See image.

⁷ For the ambiguities of ‘conversion’ in Sarpi’s Venice, see DAVIES 2022.

‘Pope of the Huguenots’.⁸ Bedell’s role within this broader milieu is set out in detail in two letters he sent to Adam Newton, tutor to the heir to the throne of England, Henry, Prince of Wales.⁹ In the years 1607–11, his meetings with Sarpi and Micanzio bore several important fruits. Firstly, Bedell introduced Sarpi and Micanzio to a range of works of Reformed polemic.¹⁰ Secondly, Bedell helped Micanzio write a cycle of controversial Lent sermons, delivered in the Church of San Lorenzo in Spring 1609.¹¹ Thirdly, the meetings led to the production of several important translations, including Italian versions of the Book of Common Prayer and (with added explanatory notes) Edwin Sandys’s *Relation of the State of Religion*.¹²

The classic account of the Anglo-Venetian encounter at Santa Maria dei Servi is that of Gaetano Cozzi, who traced the link between Sarpi and the ‘Calvinist’ wing of the Church of England.¹³ Later work by Gino Benzoni and Germano Rosa substantially enhanced our knowledge of the role of Micanzio, bringing him out of Sarpi’s shadow as a political actor in his own right.¹⁴ More recently, scholars including Chiara Petrolini, Stefano Villani, Diego Pirillo and Simone Maghenzani have explored the reasons behind Sarpi and Micanzio’s fascination with England in greater depth, uncovering the contribution made by Italian Protestant intermediaries such as Giacomo Castelvetro and Gian Francesco Biondi.¹⁵ Another important development is the painstaking and ongoing work of Corrado Pin on his multi-volume printed edition of Sarpi’s *consulti* (statements of advice) to the Venetian government,

⁸ For Von Dohna, see ULIANICH 1976, pp. 429–506; for Diodati see, Giovanni Diodati, ‘Briève relation de mon voyage à Venise en septembre 1608’, fols. 1r–6v; printed as DIODATI 1863; discussed in MAGHENZANI 2014. Sarpi also corresponded with other French Huguenots in the period, notably Jérôme Groslet de L’Isle and Duplessis-Mornay himself. For helpful overviews of Sarpi’s connections in this period, see COZZI, COZZI 1969, pp. 226–28; FRAJESE 1994, pp. 256–272, and VILLANI 2022, pp. 28–36.

⁹ Originals in BL, *Lansdowne papers*, 90, ff. 106r–10v and ff. 133r–38v; printed in SHUCKBURGH 1902, pp. 226–51.

¹⁰ Bedell to Adam Newton, Venice, [Jan. 1609], in BL, *Lansdowne papers*, 90, f. 133r–v; SHUCKBURGH 1902, pp. 244–245.

¹¹ Micanzio’s sermon notes are preserved in BMV, *Manoscritti italiani*, XI, 175 [= 6518], ff. 153r–194r.

¹² VILLANI 2017, pp. 76–85; VILLANI 2022, pp. 30–34; SANDYS 1625.

¹³ COZZI 1956, pp. 559–619; COZZI 1967, pp. 1095–1121. Other important early studies include YATES 1944, pp. 123–143; LIEVSAY 1973; DE MAS 1975.

¹⁴ BENZONI 1982, pp. 733–56; ROSA 1993.

¹⁵ PETROLINI 2007; VILLANI 2017, pp. 63–112; PIRILLO 2018, pp. 142–166; MAGHENZANI 2018, pp. 67–76; VILLANI 2022, pp. 23–59. For a succinct overview of recent work, see PETROLINI, PIRILLO 2019, pp. 434–449.

which has given historians of Sarpi access to a more nuanced picture of how his theoretical writings and political activities interacted in this period.¹⁶ The work of Pin, as well as that of Marie Viallon, who has edited an important critical edition of Sarpi's Italian correspondence, now offer the gold standard for the dating of Sarpi's writings and activities during the crucial post-Interdict period.¹⁷ But despite this wealth of research, the sources for Bedell's side of the exchange, and how he drew on his Venetian experiences once back in England, remain relatively underexplored.¹⁸ In this chapter, I want to highlight one document of particular importance for the encounter which has not been discussed by any previous scholar: a short manuscript treatise on Christian doctrine, written by Bedell just after he returned from Venice in early 1611.¹⁹ Bedell's long-neglected treatise offers rare new evidence of the nature of the discussions held at Santa Maria dei Servi, during a period in which its inhabitants drew the attention of observers across Europe.

The manuscript in question is a short treatise preserved in a single manuscript copy, held at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin. It does not have a title, but for convenience, I shall call it his 'View of Religion', a reasonably accurate summary of its content. As discussed below, the treatise can confidently be attributed to Bedell and dated to 1611, immediately after his return from Venice to England. The author sets out a summary of religious doctrine which aimed to convince the reader of the truth of Reformed Christianity, and the inadequacy of the Roman Catholic alternative. This is not a manuscript which is deeply revealing of Bedell's inner life, nor that of his Venetian interlocutors.²⁰ But it does provide new evidence of the

¹⁶ PIN 2001.

¹⁷ VIALLON 2017; see also Viallon's recent biography of Sarpi, co-authored with Bernard Dompnier, which sheds particular light on Sarpi's earlier career and his role in the Servite order: DOMPNIER, VIALLON 2019. Pin's important work on the dating of Sarpi's papers also includes PIN 1978, pp. 311–69; PIN 1999, pp. 582–612. The magnitude of scholarship on Sarpi is such that it is not possible to list every relevant study; the most comprehensive bibliography of relevant works is that produced by Marie Viallon for VIALLON 2010, pp. 417–66.

¹⁸ For several new documents related to Bedell, see DAVIES 2021.

¹⁹ NLI, MS 471 (William Bedell, [View of Religion]), 23ff.

²⁰ An obvious contrast is to Sarpi's private and unpublished *Pensieri*. Bedell's is clearly a work written for general circulation, representing a public and polemical stance. For the *Pensieri*, COZZI, SOSIO 1996; see also COZZI 1971; COZZI 1986.

nature of the discussions at Santa Maria dei Servi, underlining Bedell’s understanding of – and support for – Sarpi’s critique of the Papacy.

Bedell’s vision of the true Church was one which recognised that supreme authority in ecclesiastical matters ultimately resided in a divinely appointed temporal sovereign. This jurisdictional English reading of Church–State relations was compatible with, and strengthened by, the polemical arguments he had come into contact with at Santa Maria dei Servi. As we shall see, Sarpi, Bedell and Micanzio’s objections to the papacy were all rooted in a particular distrust of its claims to temporal jurisdiction, which they feared would pave the way for a universal papal monarchy. All three thought that the best defence against this papal *totatus* (the term Sarpi used to describe the papacy’s claims of total universality) was an ecclesiological structure which closely resembled that of the Church of England: one in which the visible, juridical functions of the Church had no independent authority beyond that granted by the temporal sovereign.

It is important not to elide the differences between Bedell and the Servites’ thought. Vittorio Frajese, who has done so much to expand our understanding of Sarpi’s scepticism, has cautioned against ascribing too ‘Calvinist’ a tenor to Sarpi and Micanzio’s thought in the period 1606–9.²¹ Bedell’s ‘View of Religion’ does not require a rethinking of this narrative. But it serves as a reminder that it is Sarpi’s public ecclesiology, rather than his private theology, that is of greatest relevance if we want to understand the contemporary reception of Sarpi’s works in England, and the significance of the events of 1607–11 for English political thought. It is to this story – one of the reception and adaptation of Sarpi’s works in a new context – that Bedell’s ‘View of Religion’ offers a fresh contribution.

²¹ See FRAJESE 2019, pp. 178–87, building on FRAJESE 1994. For a recent summary of the ongoing debate about Sarpi’s religious views and personal philosophy, see BALDIN 2018, pp. 121–161.

I

Bedell's 'View of Religion' begins with a prefatory letter, in which Bedell dedicates the work to Lady Anne Drury (1572–1624), a gentlewoman from Suffolk, the English county in which Bedell lived both before and after his trip to Venice. It is written in a very neat hand (not Bedell's own) with generous spacing and it thus seems likely that this was the very copy presented to its dedicatee. The manuscript was acquired by the National Library of Ireland in 1935, with no earlier provenance recorded. It was probably not taken to Ireland by Bedell. Rather, it was given to Lady Anne in Suffolk and acquired by the National Library of Ireland only later, by virtue of Bedell's Irish associations.²² In the dedication, Bedell describes his treatise as a purposefully short and unadorned work, which he hopes will act as an introduction to broader reading: 'I would that this should serve only in the stead of a table to the more learned & large handling of these questions by others.'²³ He then proceeds to describe what he sees as the distinctive (and superior) merits of 'Reformed' or 'true' Christian religion, through comparisons with Judaism, Islam and Roman Catholicism, with the last treated at greatest length. The majority of the text is taken up with a catalogue of doctrines of the Church of Rome which Bedell decries as anti-Christian novelties, followed by a catalogue of Reformed doctrines which adherents to Rome describe as novel, but which Bedell justifies with reference to the early Church.

Bedell must have written this work very soon after his return to England in early 1611.²⁴ It is this date of composition which makes text so interesting, offering us a snapshot of Bedell's thoughts on religion and Church government in the immediate aftermath of his encounter with Sarpi and Micanzio. The first piece of evidence for this dating is Bedell's hope, expressed in

²² Bedell was appointed Provost of Trinity College Dublin in 1627 and Bishop of Kilmore in 1629. Acquisition details provided by Joanne Carroll, Assistant Keeper, NLI.

²³ NLI, MS 471, f. [1v].

²⁴ Bedell was still in Padua but soon to depart in Feb. 1611. See his letter to Giacomo Castelvetro, Padua, 13 Feb. 1611, in TNA, *State Papers*, 85, III, f. 174r; PIRILLO 2018, p. 161.

the dedicatory epistle, that the work might also serve a second purpose of showing ‘to the world that the rumour of my revolt to popery spread abroad in my absence... was forged and scandalous’, implying a return from recent travels.²⁵ Secondly, the dating is confirmed by Bedell’s disparaging reference to a Catholic book recently dedicated (‘two yeares since’) to the Pope in such flattering terms that its author ‘is since made Bishop of Caorli’.²⁶ From Bedell’s description, the book can be identified as Benedetto Benedetti’s *Antithesis* (1608).²⁷ Benedetti was appointed Bishop of Caorle in August 1610, allowing us to date Bedell’s treatise to the first few months after he returned to England, and most probably the first half of 1611.²⁸

Bedell’s dedicatory epistle explains that Drury had requested that he write the work for the edification of a friend of hers who, ‘having been brought up in the Roman Superstition [was] desirous to receive better information, if she be in error’.²⁹ Drury was the daughter of Sir Nicholas Bacon (1540–1624), Baronet, of Redgrave, Suffolk, and the younger sister of Sir Edmund Bacon, who succeeded his father to the baronetcy in 1624.³⁰ She was a noted godly hostess, who welcomed leading puritans to the Bacon family home at Redgrave or to her husband Sir Robert Drury’s seat in Hawstead, both in Suffolk.³¹ It was to this godly milieu that Bedell returned in 1611, and in this context that he produced his ‘View of Religion’.

²⁵ NLI, MS 471, f. [1r].

²⁶ NLI, MS 471, f. [9r].

²⁷ BENEDETTI 1608. Dedication at sig. A2r.

²⁸ The exact date of Bedell’s return is unknown, but a letter of Wotton’s which was delivered to Sir Edmund Bacon by Bedell on his return to Suffolk is dated 2 Apr. 1611, suggesting it must have been early 1611. See WOTTON 1666, pp. 1–3; SMITH 1907, I, p. 505. Benedetti’s work has 1608 on its title page, but Bedell notes that it only appeared in the last week of December that year, see Bedell to Newton, [Jan. 1609], BL, *Lansdowne papers*, 90, f. 138v; SHUCKBURGH 1902, p. 250, which describes the book as having ‘last week... come forth’. For Venetians, 1609 did not begin until 1 March, while the English counted the year from 25 March. Thus in early 1611, Benedetti’s book was still accurately described as published ‘two years since’.

²⁹ NLI, MS 471, f. [1r].

³⁰ Sir Nicholas Bacon (d. 1579) was the father of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Anne’s uncle. Sir Edmund was a relation of Sir Henry Wotton, and it was he who had originally recommended Bedell to Wotton as his chaplain. Wotton thanks Bacon for the recommendation in WOTTON 1666, pp. 1–3; SMITH 1907, I, p. 505.

³¹ Drury had a particularly strong relationship with Bedell’s friend and correspondent Joseph Hall. Bedell and Hall had been educated together at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, before both taking up ecclesiastical posts in Suffolk: Anne presented Hall to the living of Hawstead in 1601 and Bedell became Lecturer of St Mary’s, Bury St Edmunds, the following year. See BALD 1959, p. 50; MEAKIN, 2013. As a friend of Hall’s, Bedell regularly visited the Drurys. In another manuscript work, Bedell describes a debate with the Catholic convert William Alabaster at Hawstead in 1604, in which he participated alongside Hall and Sir Robert Drury. See LPL, MS 772

Intriguingly, Bedell's treatise bears a strong resemblance to one of the works produced during his Venetian encounter: the Italian translation Edwin Sandys's *Relation of the State of Religion* mentioned above. This work, was first published in English in London in 1605, was based on Sandys's travels in Europe, and set out a comparison of beliefs and practices of Christendom's various churches.³² This Italian translation (*Relatione dello stato della religione*) was published in Geneva in 1625, two years after Sarpi's death, under the auspices of the Italian-Genevan Protestant theologian Giovanni Diodati, who took a copy back with him to Geneva following his journey to Venice in 1608–9.³³ In this Genevan edition, the opening portion of Sandys's work was split into nine chapters (which differed from the section divisions of the 1605 original), with Sarpi's commentaries, described in on the title page as 'notable additions' (*aggiunte notabili*), appended.³⁴ Diodati's later editorial interventions are likely to have been minimal: as Diego Pirillo has noted, the Italian Protestant Giacomo Castelvetro (a member of the Anglo-Venetian network in Venice in 1607–11) possessed a manuscript copy, which must have been produced well before the Geneva edition was printed.³⁵ Castelvetro died in England in 1616, having left Venice in 1612, so his copy would not have included any changes made by Diodati.

The *aggiunte* were printed without attribution, but they can confidently be identified as the fruit of the collaborative effort between Bedell, Sarpi and Micanzio in the wake of the Interdict.³⁶ As the Cozzis suggest (affirming Bedell's statements in his letters), the translation

(William Bedell, 'A Defence of the Answer to Mr. Alabaster's Four Demands'), pp. 135, 252, 288, '246' [446], and HALL 1608, p. 76.

³² SANDYS 1605; COZZI 1967, pp. 1095–1121. For the 1605 publication, see RABB 1963, pp. 323–336; ELLISON 1980, pp. 208–211; RABB 1998.

³³ SANDYS 1625 [trans. William Bedell, with additions by Paolo Sarpi]. Bedell reported that Diodati had a copy at Geneva in a letter to Samuel Ward, Bury St Edmunds, 30 Nov. 1613, Bodl, *Tanner manuscripts*, 74, f. 31r; SHUCKBURGH 1902, p. 254.

³⁴ SANDYS 1625.

³⁵ TCC, MS R.4.36 (Giacomo Castelvetro, 'Relatione delle essere della Religione'), ff. 43r–48r; PIRILLO 2018, pp. 157–158.

³⁶ This is not to exclude the possible contributions of Giovanni Diodati, Christoph von Dohna, Giacomo Castelvetro and other members of the Venetian Reformed network to the formation of the work's arguments; however, Bedell's letters to Adam Newton (and now the evidence of the similarities between the *aggiunte* and

is surely a corrected version of Bedell's work, while Sarpi is most probably the primary author of the attached notes: the additions are characterised by the flashes of irony which are typical of Sarpi's prose.³⁷ Yet there is also a strong similarity of approach between the *aggiunte* to the Sandys translation and Bedell's 'View of Religion'. It is to these similarities that I will now turn.

II

Both Sarpi's *aggiunte* and Bedell's 'View of religion' provide a historical account of the development of papal power, cataloguing how the Papacy slowly seized powers which had originally belonged to secular rulers. The Pope of the Italian annotations to Sandys has introduced corruption to the Church of Rome by degrees during the period 700–1300, during which he 'assumed to himself temporal power over kingdoms and principalities'; Bedell in his treatise starts the decline a little earlier, citing disputes over the Pope's titles and jurisdiction in the years 420 and 606 AD.³⁸ Both accounts give a prominent place to the medieval battles between Church and State, with Sarpi emphasising the Gregory VII's campaign against the Holy Roman Emperor in 1076, and Bedell emphasising a continuous history of anti-papal resistance dating back to roughly the same period: 'The deformity of the Christian Church & the disorders that were crept into itt, for these 4 or 5 hundred years past, have bin continuall complaints of good men.'³⁹ They both go on to praise the Kings of France for their efforts to

Bedell's 'View of Religion') suggest that the most substantial work of translation and annotation took place during the regular meetings between the three men at Santi Maria dei Servi. See William Bedell to Adam Newton, Venice, [January 1609], BL, MS Lansdowne 90, fol. 136v; SHUCKBURGH 1902, p. 247.

³⁷ The Cozzis note similarities between the *aggiunte* and Sarpi's correspondence, e.g. SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 299–300, n. 2.

³⁸ 's'assunsero potenza temporale sopra i regni e i prencipati', SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 297; NLI, MS 471, ff. [8v–9r].

³⁹ 'in quel tempo apunto ch'egli aveva eccitato all'arme gran parte della Germania, per levare l'Impero ad Enrico IV', SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 321; NLI, MS 471, ff. [10r].

fight back against papal abuses since the thirteenth century.⁴⁰ It is also notable that for both Sarpi and Bedell, the sixteenth-century Reformation marked an important turning point. They describe this new development in similar terms, stating that it had ‘pleased God’ to bring forth criticisms of Roman practices and noting the Reformers’ emphasis on a return to the purity of the Scriptures.⁴¹

Both works also give a particular role to canon law in the process of papal usurpation, noting that Canon Law had been developed by the Papacy to mimic Civil Law which underpinned imperial power. Both accounts suggest that the Canon Law glossators deliberately worked to undermine the correct structure of Church-State relations. Sarpi claims that Canon Law was developed in the schools with the express purpose of expanding papal authority:

a body of papal law was made in imitation of the imperial laws, which was amplified with glosses, until they had been reduced to terms[...and] settled on the Roman Pope absolute power over all people.⁴²

Comparable comments can also be found in Bedell’s ‘View of religion’, which describes how

By certain degrees the popes of Rome spoiled the emperors of the East of their rights[...] & will now needs bee Lords & Monarckes of the world. In their Decretalls & the Blasphemous Glosses on them, they take fullnes of power to doe what they list.⁴³

These direct attacks on the legal sources of the Pope’s authority constitute an important part of the broader effort to undermine claims to coercive authority by any but the secular ruler, echoing the arguments of Sarpi’s Interdict pamphlets.

⁴⁰ ‘E se bene da trecento anni in qua il Regno di Francia cominciò ad aprir gli occhi, et in qualche parte scoprire la falsità delle sudette massime’, SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 321; ‘Sundry Kings of France purposed reformation & the Councells if Constance and Basill were gathered to that end’, NLI, MS 471, ff. [10r].

⁴¹ ‘Ha piaciuto a Dio in questo ultimo secolo d’illuminare il mondo, e di far chiaro che queste massime non sono se non usurpazioni violente e tirranesche contra l’autorità leggitima data da Dio a’prencipi et alle republiche: e come sieno contrarie alla Scrittura Divina’, SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 321; ‘When ordinary courses succeeded not itt pleased God to stir up the Spirits of some private men in diverse parts of the Christian world to examine the state of things according to the Scriptures & purer antiquity whence hath followed the Reformation that now wee see’, NLI, MS 471, f. [10r].

⁴² ‘fu fatto un corpo di legge pontificie ad emulazione delle imperiali, le quali anco fecero amplificare con glose, sin che le han ridotte a’termini [...e] costituisce nel pontifice romano un imperio assoluto sopra tutti’, SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 298.

⁴³ NLI, MS 471, f. [7r-v].

Bedell's 'View' and Sarpi's *aggiunte* also highlight many of the same examples of Rome's doctrinal corruptions. For instance, both take particular issue with Rome's insistence that religious services be conducted in Latin. Both make the point that Latin was originally chosen because it was the vernacular language of the Roman Empire, but note that as this is no longer the case, modern Europeans should be able to conduct services in a language they understand. Addressing the question of how Latin services first came into being, Sarpi writes:

Reading the divine offices in language that was foreign and not understood was not a studied invention: rather, this Latin language, not now understood, was used in the early age of the Latin Church because it was then the vernacular, and understood and spoken by all in Italy, and in the colonies of France, Germany, Spain and Africa. And likewise the Greeks, in that same period, celebrated the divine offices in the Greek language, now literary, which at the time was common to the whole population.⁴⁴

Meanwhile in Bedell's view, we find same point made in very similar terms:

Itt may not bee wondered at how it [Latin services] should enter in at first. Wee must remember that in all these regions of the west as Spaine, France, Brittain e yea Affricke too, by reason of the Roman Government the Latin tongue was vulgerly spoken & understood in good townes as well as in Italy, noe otherwise than English is at this day spoken in Ireland.⁴⁵

The only substantive difference here is of geographical emphasis.

The two works also highlight the papal justification for indulgences as particularly unsatisfactory. Sarpi and Bedell both express scepticism about the possibility of the Pope possessing a 'treasure' built up by the superabundant virtue of Christ and the Saints' outweighing their sins. Sarpi mocks disagreement amongst theologians about the exact source of this treasure:

Some are saying that these [indulgences] are merits of Christ, others that they superabundant satisfactions of the saints, and others say that they are the one and the

⁴⁴ 'Non fu studiosamente inventato il recitare gli uffici divini in lingua forestiera e non intesa: anzi questa lingua latina, non intesa adesso, era usata ne' primi tempi della Chiesa latina: perché era allora vulgare, et intesa e parlata da tutti in Italia, e nelle colonie, di Francia, di Germania, di Spagna e d'Affrica: e medesimamente i Greci, in quelli stessi tempi, celebravano i divini uffici nella lingua greca, adesso litterale [i.e. letteraria], la quale allora era vulgare a tutto il popolo', SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 301.

⁴⁵ NLI, MS 471, f. [13v]. It is interesting to see Bedell thinking about the importance of the Irish language long before his later involvement in the first Irish translation of the Old Testament.

other together, that are placed in a treasury, of which the Roman Pope holds the keys and would be its dispenser.⁴⁶

Bedell also takes a sarcastic tone, saying that this so-called treasure was only very recently discovered by the Church of Rome:

The overmeasure of the Saints sufferings which endured more than ther sinnes came joined with the sufferings of Christ make that treasure wherof the Pope hath the Key to grant indulgences & pardons to those who will purchase them. This treasure was but very latly found in the Church of Rome.⁴⁷

Bedell adds that that since its discovery, the Pope had given away so many indulgences that any treasure the Pope had had must already be exhausted. Sarcasm aside, both Sarpi and Bedell see the same root problem underpinning the concept of indulgences: the fact they detract from Christ's unique status as saviour of mankind, blasphemously inserting the saints and the papacy into the process.

For similar reasons, Sarpi and Bedell also strongly object to the use of images in worship and to the idea of praying to the Saints. Both works note that Papal theologians do not openly endorse idolatry, and instead argue that the prayers are not directed to the Saints themselves, but to God himself, with the Saints simply acting as intercessors. Nonetheless, both Sarpi and Bedell add that this subtle distinction was not maintained in practice. As Sarpi puts it, 'In the schools, recourse to the saints is not allowed as givers of grace, but only as intercessors with God: in practice, however, graces are asked of them'.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, for Bedell:

The present faction of Rome committeth most horrible Idolatry to them, placeth faith in them, demandeth of them both grace and glory. And yett dares not determine that wee are bound to pray to them, but only that it is expedient, good and profitable.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ 'Dicendo alcuni che queste [indulgenze] sieno i meriti di Christo, altri che sieno sodisfazzioni de santi soprabondanti, et altri dicono esser l'uno e l'altro insieme, che son poste in un tesoro, del quale il pontifice romano tenga le chiavi e ne sia dispensore', SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, pp. 312–313.

⁴⁷ NLI, MS 471, f. [18r–v].

⁴⁸ 'Nelle scuole non si concede il ricorso a' santi, come a datori della grazia, ma solo come ad intercessori appresso Dio: nella practica però le grazie si domandano a loro', SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 299.

⁴⁹ NLI, MS 471, f. [10r].

As with the doctrine of indulgences, both men object to prayers to the saints because they encourage believers to put their trust in something other than God alone and exalt humans to the status of the supernatural. These points appear to echo the logic that underpinned both Bedell and Sarpi's preferences for a Calvinist or Dominican interpretation of free will, over Arminian or Jesuit alternatives.⁵⁰

Fundamentally, both works make the case that all problems in the Church of Rome stem from the misuse of papal power. Both Sarpi and Bedell highlight claims of papal infallibility as a particularly egregious doctrinal distortion. They particularly emphasise the threat that excesses of papal power posed to secular rulers, claiming that the Pope uses his power to ferment rebellion and overthrow Kings. Both works save up discussion of papal infallibility for the final section of their texts, ending on their most powerful point and setting out the dangers of papal overreach in stark terms. Sarpi, blaming the spread of Papalist doctrine for the events of the French Wars of Religion, writes

we have seen at the expense of our neighbors how easy it is by this means to raise an entire kingdom against its natural prince,[...] forming a league sufficient to take them not only the state, but also the [prince's] life.⁵¹

Meanwhile, Bedell describes how the Pope

may interdict countries, excommunicate princes, lose ther subjects from their obedience, give ther Countryes in spoile and prey to whom hee list, either because hee is direct Lord of the whole world, or because hee is soe indirectly being to order all temporall matters to the exigence of the spirituall end.⁵²

Here Bedell paraphrases the arguments made by papal polemicists during the Interdict controversy, including the claims of 'indirect' papal jurisdiction made by Cardinal Roberto

⁵⁰ For Sarpi's reasoning on this point, see COZZI 1956, pp. 179-186; COZZI 1959, pp. 559-619; ULIANICH 1956, pp. 425-456; PIN 2001, pp. 840-844.

⁵¹ 'abbiamo veduto alle spese de' nostri vicini quanto per questo mezo sia facile a sollevare un regno intiero contro al suo naturale prencipe,... formando una lega bastante a leverli non solo lo stato, ma ancor la vita', SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 307.

⁵² NLI, MS 471, f. [21r-v].

Bellarmino and directly rebutted by Sarpi.⁵³ This is further confirmation of existing evidence that countering Bellarmino's arguments was a central concern of all involved in the post-Interdict meetings at Santa Maria dei Servi.⁵⁴ The extent to which the arguments of the *aggiunte* can be mapped on to Bedell's slightly later 'View' is surely proof of close collaboration in the development of this strong, jurisdictional polemic. The work makes clear just how easily these arguments could be adapted to an English context, in which the broader anti-Spanish and anti-papal goals that had had primacy in Venice took on a lesser role, and hopes for effecting personal conversions came to the fore.

Of course, there are also notable differences between the two works. For a start, there are numerous topics to which Bedell dedicates chapters in his 'View' which go unmentioned by Sarpi.⁵⁵ This is to be expected, firstly because the Sandys notes are shorter than Bedell's treatise, and secondly because while Bedell wrote to persuade an individual Catholic living in a Protestant country, Sarpi was writing for the broader population of Venice, and beyond. In this context, it was best to focus on fundamentals, rather than bring up inessential controversies unnecessarily. The most fundamental matter on which Sarpi and Bedell differ in on the question of whether the Pope could be identified as the Antichrist, an issue on which Sarpi did not think it useful to speculate, but was a common theme in the writings of the Reformed wing of the Church of England.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the similarities between the two works are

⁵³ See in particular SARPI 1606a and SARPI 1606b. Both works were sent back to England and translated by members of the English embassy in Venice, DE VIVO 2010, p. 184.

⁵⁴ Micanzio's notes (c. 1611) on BELLARMINO 1610 are preserved in BMV, *Manoscritti italiani*, XI, 175 [= 6518], ff. 4-53; printed (abridged) in BENZONI 1982, pp. 757-863. This was also the period in which Sarpi wrote the unpublished draft known as 'Della potestà de' principi' which also responds to Bellarmino's *Tractatus*, see CANNIZZARO 2006. Bedell too rebuts Bellarmino at length in a pre-Venice manuscript work composed in 1604, see LPL, MS 772 (William Bedell, 'A Defence of the Answer to Mr. Alabaster's Four Demands').

⁵⁵ Topics to which Bedell dedicates chapters which are not addressed in Sarpi's *aggiunte* included: communion in both kinds, rosaries, clerical marriage, vows of a solo life, apocryphal scriptures, inaccuracy of the Vulgate Bible, freewill, justification by faith, merit of works, purgatory and holy water, prayers for the dead, significance of the mass, number of sacraments. Topics addressed by both Bedell and Sarpi: vernacular services, sufficiency of the Scriptures, interpretation of the Scriptures, Pope as judge of religious controversies, satisfaction, indulgences and pardons, Saints, images, infallibility of the Pope. There are also some points raised by Sarpi that are not repeated by Bedell: Lent, confession and excessive creation of saints.

⁵⁶ For Sarpi's comments on this point, see Sarpi to Groslet d'Isle, Venice, 17 Feb. 1609, VIALON 2017, p. 335; ULIANICH 1958, pp. 417-20; ULIANICH 1986, pp. 84-5; PATTERSON 2000, p. 97.

pronounced, and surely reflect the content of shared and detailed doctrinal discussions. In some places, Sarpi and Bedell cite the same passages of scripture to make the same point, such as their use of Paul’s criticisms of Peter in Galatians to demonstrate that the doctrine of papal infallibility did not exist in the early church, and of John 5, cited on the final page of both works to emphasise that the truth of Christianity will be found by close examination of the Scriptures.⁵⁷ In the *aggiunte* to Sandys, Sarpi was willing to promote an ecclesiology (though not necessarily a soteriology) consistent with English Reformed conformist views, in which power was vested (by God) in secular princes, but these princes were also responsible (in the eyes of God) for reforming the Church in such a way as to support true religion. In his ‘View of Religion’, Bedell was willing to adopt this framework wholesale, deploying points sharpened through trans-European confessional debate in a localised English context.

IV

So what has the comparison of these two works added to our understanding of post-Interdict Anglo-Venetian exchange? The first thing to note is that the two texts compared here bear greater resemblance to each other than any other works by Sarpi and Bedell. This is firm evidence that the *aggiunte* to Sandys were the product of genuine and close collaboration between Bedell, the English clergyman, and Sarpi and Micanzio, the Venetian theologians. Points made in the *aggiunte* appear again in Bedell’s ‘View’, often phrased in similar language or deploying the same scriptural references. It is clear that Bedell was involved closely enough in the process of composition to remember these points when he returned to England, and to put them to use in a new work of his own. The ‘View of Religion’ is evidence of Bedell, Micanzio and Sarpi’s shared priorities.

⁵⁷ Galatians 2:11: SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 323; NLI, MS 471, f. [21v]. John 5:39: SARPI (1625), ed. 1969, p. 330; NLI, MS 471, f. [24r].

In terms of fitting Bedell's 'View' into the broader historiographical picture, two points appear particularly worthy of attention. Firstly, it encourages us not overstate the naivety of the English in their hopes to convert Venice. Bedell's 'View of Religion' is not a work which suggests that Bedell had a naive conviction that Sarpi and Micanzio would soon be espousing a dogmatic doctrinal Calvinism. Instead, it provides evidence that Bedell had understood the subtleties of Sarpi's jurisdictional critique of the Papacy well, and reproduced many of them in his own work in another context. The work is, therefore, testament to the depth of conversation and meaningful intellectual exchange which occurred at the Servite monastery in the early years of the seventeenth century.

Secondly, Sarpi's private religious views notwithstanding, Bedell's 'View of Religion' is a reminder that to at least some interlocutors, Sarpi defended an ecclesiology consistent with Bedell's Reformed views, as expressed in the structures of the Church of England. Sarpi could – in the right political circumstances – support a Church based on the principles of Christ and the Scriptures, without the damaging innovations and usurpations introduced by the Pope. This was a vision which could fulfil Bedell's domestic English needs as effectively (and perhaps more effectively) than it could appeal to an international anti-papal coalition. This redeployment of Sarpian polemic in a new context helped pave the way for the particular English interpretation of Sarpi, in which the Servite became a central member of the Church of England's anti-papal canon. Through Bedell's 'View of Religion', we can catch a glimpse of the 'Anglican Sarpi' in its earliest gestation.

Character Count: 39,486

Images (which could go anywhere in the text)

Emilio Marsili, *Monument to Paolo Sarpi*, Campo Santa Fosca, Venice [my photo]

William Bedell's 'View of Religion' composed in 1611, first page of the dedicatory epistle to Lady Anne Dury (NLI, MS 471, f. [1r]) [Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland]

William Bedell's 'View of Religion' composed in 1611, second page of the dedication, with Bedell's name at the end (NLI, MS 471, f. [2r]) [Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland]

William Bedell's 'View of Religion', first page of the main text (NLI, MS 471, f. [2r]) [Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland]

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Archive abbreviations

BL – British Library, London

BMV – Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice

Bodl – Bodleian Library, Oxford

LPL – Lambeth Palace Library

NLI – National Library of Ireland, Dublin

TCC – Trinity College, Cambridge

TNA – The National Archives, London

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