INTRODUCTION

The newsletters which are reproduced in this volume are retained in the Westminster Diocesan Archives (in the A Series, volumes XVI–XIX; the B series, volumes 25–27, 47, and 48; and the OB series, volume I/i).[1] They were penned by English Catholic clergymen and laymen during the first half of the 1620s. At this time, these writers, and indeed many others, expected that sweeping political changes would occur in the wake of the twists and turns of the Stuart court's dynastic marriage negotiations abroad. The present series of letters begins at the point when, in late 1621, with the parliament on the verge of dissolution, the English secular clergy dispatched an agent to Rome in order to persuade the papal curia that this was the right moment to appoint a bishop to exercise direct and local episcopal authority over English Catholics. The secular clergy's efforts to secure episcopal power for one of their number generated a stream of correspondence between them over the next few years. Their letters dealt both with their frenetic lobbying in Rome in order to secure their suit and also with the course of events in England and on the Continent as the Stuart court tried to construct a dynastic alliance which would supply a bride for Prince Charles.[2]

I have no intention in this introduction of using this material to construct a full narrative of the negotiations during 1621–1625 for the failed Anglo-Spanish treaty or for the successful Anglo-French treaty. This can be done much more effectively by exploiting the ministerial and diplomatic correspondence retained in official, and particularly foreign, archives.[3] The point of this volume is to demonstrate, as far as possible, how the English Catholic community's understanding of

[1] AAW, B 25–26, and B 47 have no regular foliation. There are two sets of numbering for the documents in B 26. The first set ceases with B 26, no. 50. In the second set, B 26, no. 50 is also numbered B 26, no. 53. However, rather than regarding B 26, according to the first set of document numbers, as unnumbered after B 26, no. 50 (as does Allison, RS), I have used the second set of numbers in B 26 for documents after no. 50/53.

[2] In the footnotes to the text of these newsletters I have tried to identify individuals where there is any uncertainty about their identity (for example, if they are mentioned via an alias), though this is done only on the first occasion that they are thus mentioned in each letter. I have not, however, for reasons of length, supplied detailed biographical information about such individuals unless it is directly relevant to the newsletter in which they are cited.

[3] See e.g. Adams, PC; Cogswell, *BR*.

these diplomatic manoeuvres can be integrated into our account of mainstream politics during this period. I wish to show how Catholics attempted to negotiate with the Stuart regime and with the papal court in order to achieve some of their own aims for the reform of the English Catholic community and to attain a (perhaps quite broad) measure of tolerance for the Stuarts' Catholic subjects. I also want to indicate how Catholic interventions of this kind became part and parcel of contemporary politics.

Many of these letters do not contain a great deal of information or material which cannot be garnered from other sources.[4] They are important, however, because they reveal a crucial (Catholic) component of 'public-sphere' politics, in other words the range (and means and modes of expression) of opinions and discourses which were deployed in reaction to the Stuart court's highly controversial attempts to secure the future of the dynasty through a marriage for Prince Charles. In the often fraught conditions of the late Jacobean polity, Catholics, like certain Protestants, availed themselves of the opportunity to agitate and lobby for public and official approval and confirmation of their particular glosses on and attitudes to the questions raised by royal foreign policy.[5]

Historians have occasionally noted that King James, while theologically a Calvinist, showed himself 'sympathetic to Catholics';[6] and, indeed, both before and after his accession in England, many English Catholics argued that they were loyal supporters of the Stuart cause and dynasty. But the relationship between the king and his Catholic subjects was far from stable. At various points earlier in his reign James had shown complete ruthlessness in dealing with Catholic dissent, even while he argued publicly that he would tolerate those who were of a 'moderate' disposition, Catholics as well as puritans. After he came to England, James had, to many Catholics' way of thinking, soon reneged on promises which he had made to them while he was still in Scotland. During the years 1610–1614, his regime showed itself determined to punish Catholic disobedience. As was made clear by the marriage which he secured for his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, with the Calvinist Frederick V, elector palatine, James was

[4]Several of these letters were printed, in part or whole, in Mark Tierney's edition of Charles Dodd's *Church History* (TD, IV, V). Antony Allison also used them in his essays published in *RH* on English Catholicism in the early 1620s.

[5]For recent analysis of the issue of the public sphere in the context of English history, see P. Lake and S. Pincus, 'Rethinking the public sphere in early modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), pp. 270–292; P. Lake and M. Questier, 'Puritans, papists, and the "public sphere" in early modern England: the Edmund Campion affair in context', *Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000), pp. 587–592.

[6]G. Bernard, 'The Church of England *c.* 1529–*c.* 1642', *History*, 75 (1990), p. 194.

still prepared at this point to pose as a leading light of the pan-European 'Protestant cause' (the long political tradition of alliance between European Protestants, which operated on the principle that a shared religious position on certain central doctrinal issues underwrote a more general common interest among them).

Catholics were pessimistic about their own prospects in the wake of the palatine marriage. Toleration seemed as far away as ever. Nevertheless, the failure of the 1614 parliament allowed the Spanish ambassador, the count of Gondomar, to play upon James's fears and suspicions of 'popularity' and of the unquiet parliamentary spirits which had, it seemed, wrecked the session. Their attitudes were, the Spaniard claimed, very different from the loyalism of James's Catholic subjects.[7] During the 1614 débâcle, critics of royal government pointed to the maladministration of the fiscal measures which were supposed to discipline Catholic separatists. Gondomar argued, however, that if concessions were made to Catholics they might show their gratitude by seeking to ensure that some of the crown's revenue requirements were satisfied.[8] It was impossible, of course, that Catholics' generosity could even begin to relieve the king's financial wants. But Gondomar was deploying a version of the arguments which were being advanced not only by English Catholics themselves but also by officials within the central administration whose duties included the regulation and fiscal exploitation of the legal penalties for Catholic separatism.[9] There was, here, an identifiable link and likeness to Gondomar's other claim, namely that James could seek to augment his sovereign authority through the financial and political implications of an Anglo-Spanish dynastic union. In both cases, the crown's fiscal and other political difficulties could be resolved, or so it was argued, without the king being held to ransom, as it were, by his own subjects. In March 1615, the king's ambassador in Madrid, Sir John Digby, received a treaty proposal for such a union. Digby subsequently became an ardent supporter of the project.[10]

The mid-Jacobean regime suffered from a series of horrendous public-relations disasters, the most notable of which was the Overbury scandal. The resulting censures of the regime were compatible with, if not directly informed by, standard contemporary anti-popish

[7] Redworth, *PI*, p. 15.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] M. Questier, 'Sir Henry Spiller, recusancy and the efficiency of the Jacobean exchequer', *HR*, 66 (1993), pp. 257–258, 261–262.
[10] Redworth, *PI*, pp. 15–16, 148 n. 14. Digby advised the king in early 1618 that, since the Spaniards had made their demands concerning religion explicit and were 'likewise resolved to satisfye' him 'in temporall regards and poynt of portion', he (Digby) was 'of opinion that the calling of a parliament wilbe in no kynde usefull': PRO, SP 94/23, fo. 5v.

discourse.[11] Then, after 1618, the onset of the troubles in Europe, generally referred to as the 'Thirty Years War', confronted the Stuart court with a number of near-insoluble quandaries and problems.

Bohemia had challenged the authority of the emperor Matthias, arguing that promises made as the result of disputes settled in 1609 and 1611 had been broken; and it sought aid from the Dutch and from the German Protestant princes.[12] James's difficulties were made considerably worse by the decision of his son-in-law, the elector palatine, to accept the Bohemian crown from those who had rebelled against imperial authority and had then deposed Archduke Ferdinand of Austria.[13] In October 1619, Henry Erskine observed in Paris that there was 'great gladness', especially among the Huguenots, at the elector's acceptance of the Bohemian crown, and 'no less gladness that our kings Majestie' would 'draw his shourd in his auld dais in the king of Bohemia his defence'.[14] European Protestants looked to James to play the champion of the European Protestant cause, a role which he no longer wanted. These events and the Jacobean regime's reaction to them transformed the political status of Catholics within the Stuart realms, not least because they allowed Catholics of various kinds to engage in a series of public debates about royal policy.

Of course, according to many historians, by the early 1620s English Catholicism had become politically inert. Protestant fears of popery therefore had little to do with actual Catholics in England. Such people, it is usually assumed, were excluded from public life and distracted by factional disagreements among themselves. Catholics could hope for no more than that perhaps, one day, they might be granted a modicum of tolerance and partial relief from the penal statutes, certainly not a full legal toleration in the sense of a parliamentary repeal of those statutes.[15] When Protestants identified a popish conspiracy to subvert true religion and monarchical authority, they were, it is said, really referring to two things. The first of these was the trials and tribulations of the Protestant cause in Europe and the willingness of the Stuart court to discard much of the Elizabethan tradition of enmity towards Spain. The second was the dislocation caused within the English Church as, or so it seemed to some contemporaries, a strain of doctrinal thought (sometimes referred to as 'Arminianism') started to challenge the supposedly dominant

[11] A. Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2002).
[12] G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London, 1988), p. 262; Pursell, *WK*, ch. 2.
[13] J.V. Polisensky, *The Thirty Years War* (London, 1974), pp. 103–113; Pursell, *WK*, pp. 45, 49–50; Adams, PC, pp. 280–282.
[14] *HMCMK*, p. 93.
[15] I am grateful to Pauline Croft for discussion of this point.

species of Calvinist belief and practice which had been inherited from the Elizabethan era.[16]

Yet the glaring fractures in English and British politics that were created by royal foreign policy in some respects actually revitalized the Catholic issue because, inevitably, that issue both affected and was informed by the conduct of royal negotiations with the court in Madrid. As Simon Adams has made clear, by the early 1620s there were serious arguments both for and against a Spanish alliance. For those who believed that the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs did not aim at global dominance, it seemed reasonable to treat the current European political crisis as a set of territorial disputes and not as part of a massive ideological confrontation between the forces of light and darkness.[17] (This, of course, was a difficult argument to sustain once Spanish troops were used in the invasion of the Palatinate.) Those who feared the burgeoning power of Spain could point instead to the need to maintain Protestant coherence and unity, and in particular the safety and security of the United Provinces, something which was now an immediate and pressing issue because the Truce of Antwerp was set to lapse in April 1621.[18]

James did not veto all military action to secure the return of the elector palatine's territory. But he absolutely would not countenance being dragged into the conflict between Spain and the United Provinces, in part because it would redound to the benefit of the French state. In any case, for James to wage a land war against the Habsburgs was financially impossible. Inevitably, there was an alignment between the financial retrenchers within the Stuart regime and those who had ideological reasons for supporting a Spanish marriage, including some who were or could be classed as papists. (Their critiques of the regime's war effort, once hostilities commenced, turned out to be largely correct.[19])

Here, naturally, was fertile ground for those who wanted to claim, and had always claimed, that English Catholics were part of a wider popish conspiracy. Each proposal, in the course of the negotiations with the Spaniards, to grant a measure of toleration to James's Catholic

[16]See N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* (Oxford, 1987). For the type of Arminianism in the Low Countries which served as a reference point for the English variety, see J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 480–482, 486–525.

[17]For a discussion of the meaning of 'Spanish party' or 'Spanish faction' in mid- and late Jacobean politics, see C.H. Carter, 'Gondomar: ambassador to James I', *HJ*, 7 (1964), pp. 193–194; CRS, 68, pp. xiv–xix.

[18]For the failure of the archdukes' regime to secure an extension of the truce, see P. Arblaster, *Antwerp & the World: Richard Verstegan and the international culture of Catholic reformation* (Louvain, 2004), pp. 138–139.

[19]Adams, FP, pp. 148–151.

subjects could be represented as part of an attempt to fragment the political coherence of the realm and to make it ungovernable. The Spanish court tried to insist on a full legal toleration for James's Catholic subjects as a condition of any Anglo-Spanish marriage treaty, and was backed up by Rome's refusal of a papal dispensation for the marriage until evidence of such a toleration was forthcoming.

It is worth asking, therefore, how far English Catholics were part of these political equations. To what extent were they a coherent component of a pan-European 'Catholic cause', diametrically opposed to the Protestant one? How did they perceive the increasingly frenetic manoeuvres of James and his closest, though often mutually hostile, counsellors as they tried to solve the contradictions into which the king's apparent half-heartedness about European religious divisions had plunged them all? Was the Spanish match the summit of Catholics' hopes? Was its failure the end of their aspirations and dreams? Was the marriage treaty with the House of Bourbon, seemingly so much less concerned with matters of religion, for them no more than a damp squib in this regard? Did it signal the end of Catholics' political ambitions? It would not be difficult to fashion an argument that this was yet another occasion when the devious and unscrupulous French let down their English co-religionists as, arguably, they had done during the Anjou marriage negotiations in 1579–1581.[20]

In fact, as the crown searched – sometimes desperately – for support, a number of different Catholic parties and factions were able to pose as the bulwarks of the monarchy, the regime, and the state, of order, security, and authority. They stood against a (supposed) puritan and popular threat, which was expressed through carping criticism of James's prerogative, particularly as it was used to make foreign-policy decisions.

It is impossible, unfortunately, to estimate what fraction or proportion of 'public opinion' Catholics represented (even assuming that we could arrive at a working definition of Catholicism which would satisfy most historians of the period). But we can glean from surviving clutches of Catholics' correspondence, and especially their newsletters, the extent to which they were capable of intervening in contemporary politics, and of spinning and glossing specific events, just as their enemies tried to spin and gloss such events against them.[21]

[20] See J. Bossy, 'English Catholics and the French marriage, 1577–81', *RH*, 5 (1959–1960), pp. 2–16.

[21] See Cogswell, *BR*, pp. 20f. for the mechanisms of contemporary news culture. For the translation and transmission of English newsletters to the curia, via the secular clergy's agent in Rome, see *NAGB*, introduction; *Letter 34*.

Catholic accounts of the intentions of James's regime were a valuable source of information for foreign diplomats in London; and the Stuart court could and did use Catholics, including the writers of some of these newsletters, to push forward its dynastic negotiations abroad. The flow of news generated by Catholics thus became a means by which they could insert themselves and their agenda into the political process and, into the bargain, ingratiate themselves with the regime in London. Some Catholics, for example, searched for and recorded every sign that the Jacobean regime really meant to allow Catholics the freedoms for which they regularly petitioned. In Rome, John Bennett reported, in a letter of May 1622 to William Bishop (the leading secular priest and future bishop of Chalcedon), that he had 'putt certayne clauses' of Bishop's most recent letter and enclosures into Latin and had given them to Cardinal Ottavio Bandini. Bandini 'was very glad of the newes and the next day, being congregacion day for the Holy Office, read [. . .] publickly' the information conveyed to him by Bennett, 'and he tould me after that it gave much content, specially that clause wherin it was sayd that his Majesty had taken order for the quiete of Catholiques'.[22] This was the sort of news which would make the Roman curia favourably inclined towards the Stuart court and more likely to grant a dispensation for the proposed Anglo-Spanish dynastic union.

The problem was that news was not always favourable. A certain amount of spinning might have to be done in order to make it palatable to its eventual recipients. 'Nowe', said Bennett, in the same letter, 'the same newes makers saye that our king hath sent souldioures to the Palatinate and his banner is there display[e]d against the emp[e]ror but this we assure ourselves by other lettres to be false, yet this doth serve there turne to putt doubtes and lettes for the present'.[23] A week later, Bennett informed his brother Edward that he had received two of his letters (which brought better tidings) and 'your newes I putt in Latyne' and showed it to 'these greate men' in Rome 'whoe were very glad therwith'.[24] Catholic news reports could, therefore, from time to time, acquire the capacity to influence the regime's foreign-policy agenda. Equally, the regime calculated that Catholics might well be relied upon to tell inquisitive foreign ambassadors and their masters abroad what the regime wanted them to hear, since it would be in the Catholics' interests to see that James's present foreign-policy objectives were realized.

[22] AAW, B 25, no. 55.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] AAW, B 25, no. 57; see also AAW, A XVI, no. 156, p. 605 (cited in *Letter 8*).

Dynastic Matches and Religious Politics

In recent years, a self-consciously 'revisionist' account of the early 1620s has claimed that conflict between crown and parliament during this period did not cause the kind of political instability which Whiggish narratives once described and celebrated. And yet, even while we might want to accept substantial parts of the revisionists' analysis, what is clear is that, as Peter Lake points out, in spite of the theoretical extent of the royal prerogative over the Church and foreign policy, 'James I was [. . .] unable even to arrange the marriage of his son' to a Spanish infanta 'without rousing a storm of protest from his subjects'. The expression of traditional anti-popish tropes and opinions (in response to royal policy-making) came to represent 'a real limitation on the crown's autonomy'.[25]

In the years after the Overbury scandal, there was, as Simon Adams has described in some detail, a revival of the 'puritan' political faction at court (grouped around the earl of Pembroke, Sir Ralph Winwood, and the earl of Southampton), just as the Howard family's star appeared to go into steep decline.[26] That faction's victory, however, was a pyrrhic one. There arose 'two mutually antagonistic factions on the council, one committed to rapprochement with Spain and the other to political puritanism, whose struggles for supremacy were to form the underlying framework of politics for the remainder of the reign'. The 'puritan core wished to institute major changes of policy, summon a parliament, and reform the finances', but those who had been temporarily allied with them were satisfied with the earl of Somerset's disgrace after his implication in Sir Thomas Overbury's murder. In addition, the earl of Arundel had gravitated back to the other Howards by 1619, following the fall of the earl of Suffolk.[27]

As Adams also observes, 'the decision to seek a Spanish marriage [. . .] saw the emergence of a new element in the Spanish faction, together with the Howards and the Catholic sympathisers, a party which in part represented' a throwback to the realpolitik of the earl of Salisbury up to 1612. Lord Chancellor Bacon was in the forefront here, supported by Lord Digby (ennobled in November

[25] P. Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (London, 1989), p. 87. For the different sets of negotiations for dynastic alliances entered into by the Stuart regime during the period up to 1621, see A. Thrush, 'The French marriage and the origins of the 1614 Parliament', in S. Clucas and A. Davies (eds), *The Crisis of 1614 and the Addled Parliament* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 25–35; *idem*, 'The personal rule of James I, 1611–1620', in T. Cogswell, R. Cust, and P. Lake (eds), *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 84–102.

[26] Adams, PC, ch. 7.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 247–249.

1618). Their motivation can be ascribed to their hostile attitudes towards the French and the Dutch, and a belief that a Spanish match would be commercially advantageous. At least as far as Bacon was concerned, it would also underpin some of James's more absolutist claims about the nature of monarchical authority.[28] Many of those who supported the Spanish marriage alliance in fact had no investment in Catholicism as such. As Adams remarks, 'the legends of bribery and secret Catholicism connected with the "Spanish faction" have tended to obscure much of the significance of support for an alliance with Spain'.[29] Some of the match's exponents regarded the Catholic issue as a positive obstacle. Even those who did subsequently turn out to have an ideological investment in it, such as the secretary of state, Sir George Calvert (who converted to the Church of Rome in 1625 and was evidently sympathetic to Catholicism long before that), were quite happy to mislead and hinder resident Spanish diplomats when they agitated for concessions to be made to English Catholics. For Adams, 'the attitude taken to the Roman Church by such important members of the Spanish party' as Calvert, and also by Sir Richard Weston and Sir Francis Cottington, in the early 1620s was 'far from clear'. Arguably, such people were primarily influenced by a belief that the Habsburgs represented 'social order and monarchical legitimacy and stability in a world threatened by Dutch and presbyterian republicanism'.[30]

It was natural that the opposition to the proposed Anglo-Spanish treaty would seek to appeal to a wider public when it found itself forced onto the defensive in court and council.[31] One means of gathering support was through parliament. Inevitably, a parliamentary solution to the crown's foreign-policy and financial difficulties would have Hispanophobe characteristics. Divines such as George Abbot assumed that parliament would always function as a bulwark against popery:[32] parliament had traditionally served as a forum for voicing demands that rigour should be used against English papists. It was obvious to all that a visible harshness towards Catholics, so visible that not even the most myopic foreign ambassador could miss it, would serve as a means to hinder a Catholic dynastic marriage for the Stuart heir. James's belief in the free exercise of his prerogative inevitably led him to raise parliamentary hackles in both 1621 and 1624 when he showed

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.
[29] Adams, FP, p. 140.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 140–141.
[31] For an excellent account of how the criticism of the regime's foreign policy was voiced in the pulpits, see J. Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge, 2003), ch. 2.
[32] Lake, 'Anti-popery', p. 91.

himself unwilling to allow the rigorous enforcement of the law against Catholics.

As we shall see, both Spanish and French negotiators used the issue of toleration to test and determine how enthusiastic the Stuart regime was about the proposed treaties, and whether those, including Catholics, who might be regarded as having most interest in the success of the negotiations – and the defence of whatever polity emerged from them – would be given access and influence. Would, for instance, known Catholics be allowed onto the privy council? This would serve as a sure indication of how committed the Stuarts would be to the non-domestic clauses of whatever alliance was concluded, for example the military guarantees made to their new ally, who was, supposedly, making an equal commitment to them (which, in the early 1620s, meant assistance with the resolution of the question of the Palatinate).

Sir Basil Brooke, a prominent Catholic, drew up a position paper on this subject, apparently for the eyes of a Spanish diplomat. He claimed that 'the Spanishe party and the Catholike party [in England] are one and the same thing', so that the advancement of 'Spanish designes dependant on the amity with England will consist principally in advancing the Catholicke party'. It was vital, then, that the oaths of supremacy and allegiance should, for them, be set aside. Brooke added that 'it is not desired (for the present) that offices of importance should be conferred upon Catholikes, but only [that] the disabilities and incapacities of Catholickes to serve in offices be taken away, leaving the disposicion of offices wholly in his Majesties pleasure'. Brooke envisaged the entry of Catholics to parliament as a means of overthrowing the penal legislation. He thought Protestants' 'tender consciences', opposed to the royal supremacy, might be enlisted for this project.[33] William Bishop speculated in early 1623 about which English Catholic noblemen might be admitted to the privy council.[34]

To many observers, both Protestant and Catholic, it seemed certain that, if the negotiations were to proceed successfully, the ideological composition of the regime itself would be fundamentally altered, as would the character of the English Church. Another Catholic advice paper, written when it seemed that the marriage negotiations were about to succeed, anticipated not just that the marriage would be a means to protect Catholics but also that moderate Protestants would support the marriage proposals. The less moderate ones,

[33]BL, Additional MS 21203, fo. 12r; cf. Redworth, *PI*, pp. 41–42. Brooke's commercial interests predisposed him to be hostile to the Dutch, who had complained in early July 1619 about a patent, held by him from the crown, 'for the makeing of steele [. . .] and prohibiting the importacion of forraine steele': *APC, 1619–1621*, pp. 2–3, 77–78.

[34]AAW, B 25, no. 82 (cited in *Letter 7*).