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# THE APPOINTMENT OF BISHOP WILLIAMS O. P.

*Vicar-Apostolic in England 1725-40*

BY

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER O. P.

## I

The choice in 1725 of a Dominican vicar-apostolic to rule over the Northern District of England was bitterly resisted by some of the secular clergy. This much is known to historians, but the details of the dispute seem nowhere to have been published. The relevant documents<sup>1</sup> are here given in full with such commentary as appears necessary for their interpretation.

After the death of Bp. Richard Smith in 1655 the church in England was left for thirty years without a superior of any sort. There were constant petitions to Rome for the appointment of a bishop but the difficulties proved insuperable. There was opposition of one sort or another from the protestant government, the chapter of the clergy and from some of the religious. There was a great deal of discussion, but it was not until the accession of James II (6 february 1685) that any appointment appeared feasible. Governmental opposition lost its power with the advent of a catholic king, and Rome acted promptly. On 6 august 1685 John Leyburn, secretary to cardinal Howard, was nominated bishop of Adrumentum and V. A. in England. He arrived in

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the documents are in two volumes referred to henceforth as A and B. A = Scritture riferite nelle Congregationi particolari, Ibernia e Anglia, 1715-35 (t. 85), in the archives of S. C. Propaganda. B = Correspondence of the clergy agent in Rome, (B. 41) in the archives of Westminster Cathedral. I am indebted to their Eminences Cardinal A. G. Cicognani, Pro-Prefect of Propaganda, and Cardinal W. Godfrey, Archbishop of Westminster for permission to publish these documents. Other abbreviations used in the notes are: AP: Archives of Propaganda. — Reg.: Registers of the masters-general in the Arch. Gen. O. P., series IV. — SB: Segreteria dei Brevi. — WCA: Westminster Cathedral Archives.

London in october. A second V. A. was consecrated in april 1687 and two more in may 1688. England was now divided into four vicariates, and although James was driven from his throne in december 1688 and catholicism was once more harshly suppressed, the vicariates had come to stay and continued till 1840.

One great and distressing problem had been solved but many problems remained. The jurisdiction of the V. As. was ill-defined, especially vis-à-vis the exempt religious. Even over the secular clergy their powers were uncertain. The secular priests, educated inevitably in seminaries beyond the seas, took an oath to return to England, but there was nothing to oblige them to return to a particular District, even though their expenses had been paid by its V. A. They could offer their services where they wished. The religious received their missionary faculties through their own higher superiors and claimed to exercise them independently of the V. As., who in turn showed them a marked coldness and hostility. As about half the missionaries belonged to religious orders, the religious contended that two of the four V. As. should be chosen from their ranks. They asserted that this had been the wish of James II. In practice only one vicariate (the Western District) was entrusted to the religious and was ruled till 1840 by a Benedictine or a Franciscan.

At the beginning of 1725 the following were V. As.:

London, Bonaventure Giffard (1703-33)

Midland, John Talbot Stonor (1715-56)

Northern, George Witham (1716-25)

Western, Matthew Prichard, O.S.F. (1713-50)

A word may be said of the other names that figure in this controversy. The English king referred to as James III is the 'Chevalier de S. George', son of James II. His claim to the English throne was recognised by the holy see and by most English catholics. He was at this time living in Rome. Among the seculars were John Ingleton, president of the English college of St Gregory at Paris; Robert Witham (brother of Bp Witham), president of the English college at Douai; and Lawrence Mayes, clergy agent in Rome. As it was at this time both difficult and dangerous for catholics in England to correspond direct with Rome it is not surprising that most of the letters to Rome were written by these priests at Paris and Douai. On the side of the religious were Thomas Southcot, president-general of the English Benedictine congregation (1721-41), and Thomas Dominic Williams, the subject of the whole controversy.

Thomas Williams was born in Monmouth in 1668 and was professed at Bornhem in 1686, taking the name of Dominic in religion.

He was ordained in Rome in 1692 and had spent most of the subsequent twentyfive years in teaching in the English Dominican college at Louvain, of which he became regent in 1699<sup>2</sup>. He had served one term (1712-16) as provincial when he resided in Brussels. In may 1724 he had been elected prior of Bornhem, but an event of great importance soon called him from Flanders, though without his relinquishing the office of prior. In this same may 1724 the Dominican cardinal Vincenzo Maria Orsini, who had been a constant friend of the English Dominicans in Rome, was elected pope, taking the name of Benedict XIII. The brethren considered that this was an opportune moment to have an agent in Rome, and Fr Williams was chosen for that post at the end of july. He set out for Rome about the end of 1724. His principal mission was to seek protection from the high-handed actions of the V. As. and in particular of Bp Giffard who had suspended the Dominicans working in his district. He was also to try to persuade the pope to give back to the English province the convent of SS John and Paul; a task in which he was not successful. In june 1725 he sat as diffinitor in the general chapter at Bologna and soon after it (25 july) was nominated provincial<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile, on 16 april 1725, George Witham, V. A. of the Northern District, had died at the ripe age of 95, and at once both sides braced themselves for a struggle. On 7 may Bp Giffard wrote to the inter-nuncio at Brussels recommending three secular priests as worthy of the mitre<sup>4</sup>, while Alban Dawnay, procurator-general of the English Benedictines addressed a memorial to James III in favour of the appointment of a regular, because his father James II had wished for two regulars and two seculars. He recommended Thomas Southcot, O.S.B.<sup>5</sup>

On this same 7 may John Ingleton at Paris wrote to Mayes, but as he speaks of a coadjutor and not of a successor it is evident that he had not yet heard of the death of Bp Witham:

<sup>2</sup> Reg. 192, p. 393.

<sup>3</sup> The fullest account of Bp Williams is that written by Raymund Palmer, O. P. under the title of *A Consecrated Life*, published in *Merry England*, nov.-dec. 1887, and cited as Palmer. It is substantially a free translation of a latin memoir written by Thomas Worthington, O. P. soon after the bishop's death in 1740. For the years when they lived and worked together it is a valuable source, but for the controversy that concerns us here it is inadequate and inaccurate. Some further details are found in the *Requisiti*, A, f. 258; App. I.

<sup>4</sup> A, f. 196. His candidates were Edw. Dicconson, Edw. Perkinson and Lawrence Rigby.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* f. 200.

Some days ago I received this enclosed from Bp Giffard. I doubt not but the Religious are very active in opposing what concerns the Clergy. I am acquainted with F. Williams: both he and his brethren presume more under this Pope than they ought. F. Martin<sup>6</sup>, another English Dominican who lately passed this way to Italy, openly owned that neither he nor any of theirs ever asked any approbation of our Bishops, nor would their superiors permit it. The Monks, though weak and divided, are doubtless no less zealous to maintain their groundless notions of the old Plantata Bull<sup>7</sup>, and hinder anything which may promote the interest of the Clergy. 'Tis much to be lamented that our Bishops never meet to concert their affairs in one common spirit. I am persuaded if they united to write one common letter, 'twould baffle all this clandestine work of the Regulars and both obtain a coadjutor, and a further confirmation of the decree concerning approbation<sup>8</sup>.

This is the earliest mention of Fr Williams in this correspondence and it is not clear to what Ingleton refers. Williams had not yet been mentioned as a possible candidate for a mitre. It therefore seems probable that Ingleton is referring to William's activities in opposing the claim of the bishops to control the faculties of the regulars. There is indeed a long petition on this subject addressed to the pope in the name of the English Dominicans and making no reference whatever to the appointment of a bishop. It is undated and was not considered by Propaganda till 4 august, but it may have been written before Williams left Rome for the chapter at Bologna, and it amply justifies Ingleton's remarks. It accuses the V. As. of striving to drive the regulars out of England; of negligence in renewing the holy oils; of belittling the rosary; of failing to notify the regulars of the days on which to celebrate local feasts or to specify the observances of lent; of trying to induce the gentry not to have regulars as chaplains; of teaching that catholics need not educate their children as catholics; of allowing the sacraments to these children though brought up heretics; of persuading the people to take the oath against James III; of neglecting to confer Confirmation; and in particular they accuse Bp Giffard of suspending the Dominican provincial with all his brethren because he would not renounce the privileges received by the order from the holy see. These 'and a thousand others'

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<sup>6</sup> John Martin, who was on his way to the general chapter at Bologna as socius of Fr. Williams.

<sup>7</sup> The bull *Plantata in agro dominico* (12 july 1637) confirmed the English Benedictine congregation and, it was claimed, accorded it the very wide privileges the Benedictines had enjoyed in England before the reformation.

<sup>8</sup> WCA, B. 40, no. 92.

have moved the Dominicans to supplicate the pious bowels of his holiness, that he may find a timely remedy <sup>9</sup>. The very fact that this petition does not go on to postulate for a regular to be appointed to the vacant vicariate suggests that it was written before the death of Bp Witham was known in Rome. In his next letter (21 may) however Ingleton appears to consider these 'clamours' as part of the battle for a regular bishop:

I informed you by the last post of Bp Witham's death and of the letters I had writ to the king and C[ardinal] Gualterio <sup>10</sup> to prevent if possible the choice of a Regular. Amongst other considerations there is one which I hope will have weight. There is in the North a great number of funds left for the maintenance of Clergy priests, at the disposal of the bishop for the time being, but upon condition he be a clergyman. If therefore the choice fall upon any other, the confusion will be unavoidable. Bp Giffard promised letters upon this occasion without delay, but three posts are now passed and I receive nothing either for the King or Protector, yet this business certainly requires the greatest dispatch, and our adversaries upon the place will doubtless be active. Surely F. William's clamours will not make much impression, for there are not ten Dominicans in the whole Mission. I doubt not but you will be as vigilant as they in solliciting with the Cardinals of the Congregation deputed for our concerns. I have desired Mr President <sup>11</sup> to write to the Internuncio of Brussels, and I will do all I can to procure a letter from the chief priests of the Northern district, but this will require much time and the business suffers no delays. In the meantime, if I can get a letter signed by Bp Giffard, B. Stonor and B. Petre <sup>12</sup> in their own and in the name of the clergy, this I hope will suffice. I perceive our Northern Brethren still insist chiefly upon Mr Edward Diconson. They tell me if Mr Thomas Townley or Mr Perkinson be chosen, they will both refuse to accept. Mr Lawrence Rigby is very well qualified and has been a long time Grand Vicar to the deceased bishop.

The argument that all the funds of the vicariate had been so tied up that they could be administered only by a secular, recurs constantly in the correspondence with Rome. Indeed it was the principal argument of the seculars, who, in their official documents do not descend to the sort of invective used by the religious.

<sup>9</sup> A. f. 233; App. I.

<sup>10</sup> Filippo Gualtieri was cardinal-protector of England and a member of the particular congregation for English affairs.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Witham, president of the English college at Douai.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Petre was at this time coadjutor to Bp Giffard.

At a particular congregation for the affairs of England, held on 12 July, the three cardinals who attended considered the letter of Bp Giffard and the petition from Fr Southcot as well as many letters from the principal priests imploring them to prevent the appointment of a regular. Cardinal Gualterio judged it expedient to write (14 July) to the internuncio for further particulars, and suggested that Ingleton himself should be sounded as to his willingness to accept the office<sup>13</sup>. At this time there was still no mention of Williams: the candidates proposed by the regulars were the two Benedictines, Southcot and John Stourton.

On 4 August a long document was sent to the internuncio informing him of the 'motives that appear convincing that it is necessary for the catholic religion in England that the vicars-apostolic should be chosen in equal numbers from the regulars and the seculars'. This is not an expressly Dominican effusion, but it is in the handwriting of Michael Macdonagh, O. P., the procurator at Rome for the Irish Dominicans. This document delves into the troubled history of almost a century in order to find examples of the enormities of the secular clergy. It recounts the reprimand administered to Bp Richard Smith by the brief *Britannia* of 1631, repeats the story of the suspension of the Dominican provincial by Bp Giffard and casts doubts on the 'pretended decree' of 1695, of which no copy could be found in the archives of the internuncio or produced by Giffard. It claims that the regulars are more numerous, more pious and learned and make more converts. Many seculars are shaky about the oath of allegiance and suspect in doctrine. It cites the stock examples of Thomas Blacklow whose works had been censured in Rome in 1657 and John Sergeant who had aided the government in the Titus Oates plot of 1678. It mentions a recent work by a secular against the claims of James III. The seculars scandalise the laity by their efforts to oust the regulars from the houses of the rich<sup>14</sup>.

It does not appear that the internuncio was much impressed by this manifesto. In his long report to Propaganda (24 August) he summarises the arguments adduced by both sides and finds very definitely in favour of the seculars. He recommends six secular priests as *episcopabiles*<sup>15</sup>.

Now comes the first reference to Williams as a possible candidate for the mitre. It is in a letter of 12 September from the secretariate of

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<sup>13</sup> A, ff. 163-73.

<sup>14</sup> The section concerning the suspension of the Dominicans is A. f. 234; App. II.

<sup>15</sup> A, ff. 219-222.

briefs to Bartolomeo Ruspoli, secretary of Propaganda. This letter states that the king of England having recommended Fr Williams to the pope for the northern vicariate, the pope commanded cardinal Olivieri, (cardinal secretary of briefs) to signify as much to Ruspoli in order to learn his opinion. Olivieri informed his holiness that this was the first news he had of the vacancy, but doubtless Ruspoli will be able to supply details<sup>16</sup>. This reference is important, because a later letter from the king implies that the recommendation came from the pope to the king, who merely acquiesced in the pope's desire<sup>17</sup>.

Mention has already been made of Fr John Martin who attended the chapter at Bologna as Williams' *socius*. After the chapter they went to Rome together. Martin must have left Rome early in September for he was in Paris before the 24th. He carried with him the rumour that there was to be a Dominican bishop, but was (or affected to be) ignorant of his identity. This we learn from a letter of George Thompson (*vere* Hanmer), a secular priest who happened to be staying with Ingleton at Paris. He writes to Mayes on 24 september:

Here is arrived here [sic] from Rome one Dr Martin (who was in company with Mr Manock at Rome) a Dominican friar, who says that one of their order is to be made bishop of the North, and that he the said Mr Martin has got an order from Rome that the Dominicans are not to depend upon the bishops for faculties in England, and that amongst them it is excommunication for any of theirs to ask faculties of the bishops, and also that the Decree formerly made at Rome for subjection to the bishops in England is rendered void and made null by another Decree lately made there. He says also he has got leave from his holiness to practise physick and to take fees therefore and boasts much of the success his complaints have had at Rome against bishop Stonor. For my part I am of opinion he would make but an odd kind of prelate, though he gives out that he is one of the four Dominicans named for that dignity. [added by Ingleton]

What is reported here by F. Martin of a Dominican bishop seems very incredible; especially since you have given us no information. The rest of his story is I hope as groundless. There is not one Dominican in all the Northern district; the Father who lived with lord Falconbridge being now dead. The king I perceive leaves this affair to the Congregation and I fear the clamours of the regulars have made him wholly passive. 'Tis very afflicting to meet with so much delay where there is so great necessity of dispatch. Mr Thompson goes tomorrow for England<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> App. III.

<sup>17</sup> App. IV.

<sup>18</sup> WCA, B. 40, no. 114. The chaplain to lord Falconbridge was Fr. Peter Wy-

The news of the likelihood of a Dominican appointment was confirmed by Mayes in a letter of 25 september, but still there was no hint that Williams was the candidate. Dr Witham writes to Mayes on 18 october:

Last post brought me yours of sept. the 25. Certainly the Dominicans will not desire the promotion of their Fr Martin unless it be that he has some money. 'Twill seem strange to everyone to see that gentleman have a mitre. You have been informed by Mr Hanmer that he is very positive a Dominican will be appointed. I still hope, especially if our bishops would join. But the other three of the order seem all more proper than he, viz. Hansby, Worthington or Williams. The Benedictines are as confident 'twill be one of theirs and in particular Fr Southcot<sup>19</sup>.

Even as late as 20 december Dr Witham was still in the dark:

Great inconveniency will certainly follow in the North if a bishop be appointed them and not of our secular clergy. If it be a regular it seems more likely to be a Dominican, but certainly not Fr Martin against whom there are such exceptions<sup>20</sup>.

By this time the die was cast. Williams was nominated bishop of Tiberiopolis and V. A. of the northern district by brief of 22 december 1725<sup>21</sup>, having been formally recommended by James III by his letter of 11 december. He was consecrated by the pope in his private chapel in the Quirinale on the 30th. The news of the appointment reached Ingleton on the day after the consecration:

Just now I receive yours of the 12th with the afflicting news of a Dominican bishop. The pope's resolution, if unalterable, will cause great confusion as well as chagrin in a district which makes the most considerable part of the English Mission. There is but one poor Dominican<sup>22</sup> in the whole district, and in all England only seven. Before I received yours I had ended two letters to the king and card. Gualterio to repeat the sollicitations of our Northern Brethren as they desired me, but this I fear will come too late. F. Williams is a Welshman, and lived with lord Ailsbury in Flanders till he was dismissed<sup>23</sup>.

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vill who died on 8 april 1725. There still remained one Dominican in the northern district, viz. Fr. Thompson at Hexham.

<sup>19</sup> Ib. no. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Ib. no. 120.

<sup>21</sup> SB, 2652, ff. 13 and 16.

<sup>22</sup> See note 18.

<sup>23</sup> Williams served as lord Ailsbury's chaplain in Brussels during his first term as provincial (1712-16). As he was the guest of lord Ailsbury during his stay in Brussels in 1727 (Palmer, p. 426) 'dismissed' is hardly the appropriate word.

'Tis now long since our friends in the North signed a common letter to the Congregation: I never yet could hear that this letter was ever forwarded or received<sup>24</sup>. I shall acquaint our bishops and friends in England as you desire with the disappointment<sup>25</sup>.

## II

Little further happened during the early months of 1726. Ingleton and Witham assumed that with William's consecration his appointment as V. A. in the north was as good as settled. Ingleton writes to Mayes on 4 march:

I just now receive yours of Feb. the 13th, and being post-day have only time for a word. 'Tis certain the choice of F. W. will be attended with very ill consequences and not least mortifying to him than to others. A friend of mine lately come from the north and well acquainted with the catholic families assures me that not one gentleman will give him a residence in the district. He's a stranger, a beggar, and has but one man of his order in the whole diocese. We have thirty funds in the country for the maintenance of Clergy priests. There is likewise a large library left by bp Smith and bp Witham to their successor, but all upon condition he be a Clergy man and not else. I have taken the liberty to acquaint the king how much the Northern gentry are offended at this choice, and that they will not believe it made by the pope alone *ex proprio motu*. I long since desired a letter to the pope from our three clergy bishops. Is it still too late? Pray represent things strongly where you think proper<sup>26</sup>.

On 18 march he writes again, showing the new tactics appropriate to what he considered a *fait accompli*:

As to our new bishop, Mr Stonor thinks it most advisable to endeavour to make him a friend, and doubts not but he will be so if he is treated as such. For this reason I writ him a ceremonial letter of compliment<sup>27</sup>.

This ceremonial letter has not survived in English but there is an Italian version which shows that it was as warm as it was disingenuous. It is dated 4 february 1726. He congratulates Williams on an appoint-

<sup>24</sup> This common letter dated from York 13 sep. 1725 and signed by twenty-one priests of the north was forwarded by Bp Giffard and duly presented to Propaganda. The original is in A, f. 225.

<sup>25</sup> WCA, B. 40, no. 123.

<sup>26</sup> B, no. 6.

<sup>27</sup> B, no. 10.

ment that was a credit to the pope's prudence and holy exemplarity and will doubtless be accompanied by singular graces and blessings. His vast district of seven counties and some 200 priests will welcome a man of his talent and ability, and they have every reason to look forward to great progress in the English Mission. Ingleton and his confrères are persuaded that the whole clergy will willingly submit to him in due obedience, and he offers his help for any of his lordship's needs in Paris<sup>28</sup>.

Such a cordial letter from a secular priest in a position of responsibility was not to be ignored. Williams presented the pope with an Italian translation of it together with a petition in which he explains that his appointment as V. A. in the north has been applauded there not only by the clergy, regular and secular, but by all the catholic gentry, as is evident by their letters of felicitation. Now by the malignity of a certain secular priest resident in Rome opposition has been aroused which has delayed his brief of nomination. He therefore asks that orders be given to the secretary of briefs to expedite matters, and that Propaganda be forbidden to receive any further memorials from malcontents in Rome. He adds as further arguments that the spring is the most convenient time for him to take his long journey to his vicariate, and that, his appointment having been made public, his honour is prejudiced by these delays<sup>29</sup>.

The English Dominicans also presented a petition, denying that there was any opposition from the other orders. The Benedictine Thomas Southcot had written five letters applauding his appointment. No Jesuit had written against it, and how could they be otherwise than pleased seeing they had had the early formation of Williams at S. Omers? There had not been a syllable of disapprobation from the Franciscans<sup>30</sup>.

The question of William's appointment was considered in a 'particular congregation' of Propaganda on 1 april 1726. Mons. Ruspoli, the secretary, informed the cardinals that, while waiting the reply of the internuncio at Brussels, cardinal Olivieri had been ordered by the pope to ascertain the views of Propaganda on this appointment which had the recommendation of the English king. Ruspoli had thereupon placed in the hands of Olivieri various papers which went to show that

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<sup>28</sup> App. VII.

<sup>29</sup> App. VIII.

<sup>30</sup> App. IX.

a V. A. chosen from the regulars would not be acceptable in that district 'which is the most vast and more full of catholics and of secular missionaries than the others'. Fr Williams belonged to an order that had no more than two religious missionaries in the whole realm<sup>31</sup>, and therefore the appointment would give little satisfaction to the members of other orders who were far more numerous. The foundations and legacies had been secured for the use of the seculars only. These arguments had appeared so solid that although Williams had been consecrated bishop, his appointment as V. A. had been delayed several months.

However a fortnight ago his holiness had sent for Ruspoli and had given him a copy of Ingleton's letter of compliment (which he summarizes), and in the course of this audience Ruspoli had suggested that it would not be opportune to send Williams to the northern district but, to save his honour, he might be made a coadjutor, or even that one of the others might be translated to the north and he made V. A. in his place. The pope ordered him to talk these things over with Williams and see if he would agree to this solution. This he did. Williams was amenable; he said he had never aspired to be a bishop, and he left the matter in the hands of the secretary.

Rospuli was on the point of summoning a particular congregation to settle these affairs when he received notice that nothing was to be done until he had heard the latest views of his holiness. He was again in audience on 23 march, and the pope stated that *quibuscumque non obstantibus* he had decided that Williams should be appointed to the northern district. The secretary remonstrated and read to his holiness Ingleton's letter of 4 march 1725 (which is given above). Hereupon the pope produced the memorial that Williams had sent with the copy of Ingleton's letter of compliment. With his own hand he wrote on the back of it: *Pro expeditione gratiae*, and brought the audience to an end<sup>32</sup>.

The cardinals were not a little surprised at this recital. They asked the secretary to present the cardinal secretary of briefs with their humble letter expressing to his holiness, with all submission and obedience, that they could not in conscience entirely conform themselves to the will of his holiness, seeing the grave disorders that were bound to follow in that important district. This letter was sent on the following day<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> This was a misunderstanding. The complaint was that there were only one or two in the northern district. There were seven or eight in England at the time.

<sup>32</sup> App. X.

<sup>33</sup> App. XI.

It does no more than reiterate the already familiar arguments in favour of the appointment of a secular<sup>34</sup>. A copy was evidently sent to Williams. Hitherto he had been content to leave the final decision to Propaganda, but when he saw the arguments that were adduced to prevent his appointment he felt constrained to answer them.

To the first objection, that the revenues of the district were so tied up that they could be enjoyed only by a secular, he asks who had accepted foundations under such conditions, and by what authority had they tied the hands of Propaganda and his holiness so that they could never confer this office on a religious.

To the second objection, that the mission was bound to lose this revenue if a regular were appointed, he asks whether this is not a case governed by the rule: *In testamento turpis conditio* (viz. that no religious can be appointed) *habetur pro non adiecta*.

To the third objection, that discords and rebellions will follow, he asks, by whose means? Certainly not by the religious who form the majority of the priests: and surely not by the seculars in open opposition to the will of his holiness.

To the fourth objection, that the whole mission will suffer harm that could be avoided by the appointment of a secular, he asks what valid reason can be vouched for this.

He went on to scout the notion that the northern district had been founded on the express condition that the V. A. should always be a secular. Such a notion had never been heard of till there was question of appointing a religious. As for the loss of revenue, much of it that had been deposited in the bank of Paris had already been lost with the failure of that bank. Finally he points out that before his appointment Propaganda had asked the English king whether he favoured a secular or a regular. How could they do this if the appointment of a regular was precluded by the terms of foundation<sup>35</sup>?

While this dispute was in progress a letter from Witham to Williams reached Rome. It was sent through Mayes, who noted that in the address Williams was given the title of Vicar-Apostolic of the Northern District, a title that had not yet been confirmed by a brief of nomination. Having seen the deplorable effects of Ingleton's letter of compliment and fearing that another such would destroy the last hopes of preventing William's appointment, Mayes decided to use his own

<sup>34</sup> SB, 2662, ff. 58-60.

<sup>35</sup> App. XII.

discretion. He never delivered this letter but wrote to Witham pointing out the pernicious effects it would have and asking his permission to burn it. Dr Witham replied on 25 april:

I am very sorry you did not deliver the enclosed to Bp Williams, which was chiefly about business relating to this university of Louvain and what is of great concern and what I take to heart very much. Pray if he be not gone when this comes to hand, deliver it to him; whether he be Vicar Apostolic in the North or not, that need not hinder his having the letter chiefly about other business and not a congratulation only of his being bishop. Yet you surprise me very much in letting me know the doubt and demur as to his being Vicar A. in my brother's place. Yet you mention not whether the stop be put by himself or others. I hear from Louvain that being informed of a fund left for the Bishop in the North he was for getting it secured to himself, and that you should answer that being left by the Clergy, he could not have it. 'Tis certain he cannot have it, by the last will and testament of the founder, not because it was left by the Clergy (that does not express it sufficiently) but because 'tis expressly declared by the said will of donation that the Bishop in the North shall not have it unless he has been always of the Body of the secular Clergy, and that if he be of any other Body or a Regular, then the said rents shall be applied to such and such different uses therein specified. I had the perusal and testifying this will when Vicar General and remember it very well. This is the manner to provide for the necessities of the Sec. Clergy, upon the account that several durst not be of our Body because it was said they were not provided for like the Religious; that I say our Brethren now these last 40 years at least, and all our friends have endeavoured by particular clauses to secure what they left to the secular Clergy only. This you may depend on for the true matter of fact. I writ as fully as I could to Bp Petre to continue acting, but he seems unwilling to hearken to anyone that gives him such advice <sup>36</sup>.

In spite of the second order, Mayes felt it his duty not to obey, and instead of delivering the letter returned it to Witham. Now Witham had also written to Fr John Clarkson, the rector of the English Dominican college at Louvain, and Clarkson wrote to inform Williams that an important letter addressed to him had been detained by Mayes. Williams thereupon sent to demand it, only to be informed that the letter in question was not to be delivered except in certain circumstances that had not in fact materialised, and that it had therefore been returned to sender. Mayes' embarrassment is evident in the drafts of two letters to Witham in which he seeks to justify his action <sup>37</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> B, no. 15.

<sup>37</sup> App. XIII.

The delay in issuing William's brief of appointment raised the drooping spirits of his opponents. Ingleton informs Mayes on 27 may:

I have writ to friends in England concerning what you suggested as to the Regulars and choice of a Superior in the North. Since the Brief is not yet granted and the Congregation not to meet for a long time, methinks our three bishops might have time to write a common letter, and still insist on their former request. But they are far less active than those who oppose them<sup>38</sup>.

The three secular bishops — Bp Pritchard the Franciscan took no part in this controversy — at last took joint action. Bp Stonor writes to Mayes from Heythrope on 4 june:

Very shortly you will receive a letter for the Propaganda signed by Bp G[iffard], Bp P[etre] and myself containing some gentle expostulations upon Bp W[illiam]s' being named without any attention being given to the representations from hence, and even without our being so much as consulted about him: to which we have added something about the scheme of the Benedictines<sup>39</sup>.

On 27 june Dr Witham writes:

F. Worthington writes to me lately by which he seems not to question but Bp Williams will be sent to the north of England, but he tells me Bp Williams complains that representations have been made to the Congregation that the gentry in the north and the Sec. priests were resolved not to submit to a regular Bishop. In that I presume things are related otherwise than have been represented by you or our agents. I gave Bp Giffard an account of the Benedictines' memoir to have two Regulars and two Seculars and always one of theirs, and sent a memoir in answer to theirs which I had writ in august last as desired, but I desired that he and the heads of the Clergy would consult together, draw it up as they judged most to the purpose and lodge it in your hands to be used as occasion should fall out. In that memoir I also gave I think good reasons for which we should have as hitherto a bishop of the Sec. Clergy in the North and not any Regular whatsoever. I know a certain person in these parts who in one letter you said writ an excellent letter to the Congregation, was pleased to give those reasons I had offered to him. By this' you may be convinced how far I am from desiring Fr Williams in the North, and though supposed he was then appointed for the North, yet that letter of mine would rather have terrified him from undertaking that burthen, especially where he must meet with so much hardship and poverty. I have let him and his brethren know that he could hope for nothing from any fund left by Bp Smith<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> B, no. 21.

<sup>39</sup> B, no. 23.

<sup>40</sup> B, no. 25.

In spite of the hostile attitude of the clergy, the advice of the inter-nuncio and the very firm opposition of Propaganda, the pope remained inflexible. Perhaps he saw more clearly than Propaganda that by tying up the mission funds so that they could only be used by a secular the clergy were in fact tying the hands of the pope and restricting his freedom of choice. Whatever the arguments that prevailed, Williams' brief of appointment was issued on 7 june<sup>41</sup>. The news reached France early the following month. Ingleton writes on 8 july:

I have a letter by the last post from Bp Williams wherein he tells me that his great comfort is that his promotion was not sought for by himself but resolved on by his Holiness *ex proprio motu*; that his conduct shall be very impartial and that he will take advice of the most experienced of our Body. I wish the latter part of these promises may be more sincere than the first<sup>42</sup>.

The negotiations had by now taken well over a year, and Williams had been detained in Rome and put to considerable expense. In august he sent two petitions to Propaganda, explaining that his stay in Rome had been prolonged, against his will, and that he was now too poor to pay the expenses of the long and perilous journey to his vicariate. He asks for the customary viaticum<sup>43</sup>. On 16 august the cardinals of Propaganda agreed to give him 150<sup>44</sup> scudi and with this the new bishop set out on 1 september.

His opponents could never bring themselves to believe that Williams had not procured his own promotion. Ingleton writes on 9 september:

What Bp Williams told you of having never sought his promotion must be taken *cum grano salis*. The Bp of Rochester<sup>45</sup>, who is deservedly in great esteem with the king, told me some time ago that when Mr Williams came to see him in Paris in his way to Rome he desired him to recommend him to the king, and though he did not plainly name the promotion he has acquired, yet he sufficiently hinted at it. The Bishop therefore, having received civilities from him when at Brussels, writ as effectually as he could in his behalf to Lord Inverness. The Bishop told me at the same time that soon after this, Mr

<sup>41</sup> SB, 2662, f. 56.

<sup>42</sup> B, no. 28.

<sup>43</sup> App. XIV.

<sup>44</sup> A, f. 269.

<sup>45</sup> Francis Atterbury, anglican bishop of Rochester, was deprived for his jacobite loyalties and after imprisonment went into exile, first to Brussels and then to Paris where he died in 1732.

Southcot desired him to recommend one of his to be bishop, but this came too late. He added that Fr Williams was made bishop according to a regulation which he believed was resolved on, that there should be always two regular bishops in England <sup>46</sup>.

The two remaining letters of 1726 are concerned principally with the problem of how Williams was to find enough to live on, seeing that he was to receive nothing from legacies. Witham writes on 26 september:

I hear from Brussels Bp Williams left Rome on the first instant. I believe Bp Stonor may see him in the Low Countries before he go to England... If Bp Williams hopes for a yearly contribution from all the priests, this is what they in the North were never accustomed to, and what they'll not easily agree to <sup>47</sup>.

Ingleton writes on 30 september:

You mention a former letter of mine which you say gave occasion to a report that the Northern gentry and priests would not receive Bp Williams. All I said or meant in that letter was an information I then had that scarce any of the Northern gentry would give this bishop a residence; but for paying him all submission due to his character, this I never doubted, so that if you translated the letter with this mistake, as coming from me, the blame will be imputed to me. The Bishop is soon expected here. One of his confrères tells me he will have a hundred pounds a year during his stay in England. Yet others write from Brussels that he expects a contribution both from priests and laity. This will be the way to do little good, and soon show the difference between him and his predecessors <sup>48</sup>.

Williams reached Paris about the end of september, well furnished with letters of recommendation to the king and his chief ministers. The object of these letters was to obtain for him some benefice in the gift of the king. He was well received by these officials and introduced at court by cardinal Fleury, the king's grand-almoner, who was all-powerful with the king <sup>49</sup>. Ingleton reports on 16 december:

Bp Williams is still here in pursuit of a benefice, which I fear he will never obtain, and consequently enter upon his government in forma pauperis. Mr Southcot pressed him to make two of his monks Grand Vicars, but he refused; and if he may be believed he resolves to continue those who are

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<sup>46</sup> B, no. 32.

<sup>47</sup> B, no. 33.

<sup>48</sup> B, no. 34.

<sup>49</sup> Palmer, p. 425.

in place. He has stayed too long, and in my opinion appeared much too publicly both in town and court <sup>50</sup>.

Ingleton's fears proved only too true. After eight months of fruitless negotiations he remained empty-handed. One of his principal priests in the north writes to Mayes on 12 may 1727:

Bp Williams is yet at Paris. He has confirmed all my cousin Bp Witham's G[rand] Vic. in their stations and I hope we shall be happy in him when he comes. Indeed his old father [the pope] should have given him something to have lived on when he married him, when he knew his Wife had no portion to make him rich by <sup>51</sup>.

From Paris the bishop travelled to Douai where he lodged with the English Benedictines, much to the chagrin of Dr Witham, who writes on 18 july:

Bp Williams passed by, but went and lodged at the Benedictines, which I told him looked odd and unkind to us, since he might know very well that we stood the most need of a bishop, being the Regulars have always their Provincials and proper superiors, and besides, half of the priests in the Northern district are of the Sec. Clergy. He had also taken one with him from Paris, a monk whom the monks here called the Bishop's Secretary, and as such he assisted him at giving Confirmation here at the English Monks. I expostulated a little with him on that account and told him none of our Bishops in England pretended to keep a secretary. He answered me, he did not design to keep him. He left him at Douay and went for Brussels and those parts without him, where he is yet. By the discourse I had with him I perceive the reasons you had, not to deliver him my letter nor any that gave him the title of Vicar Apostolic etc., for he told me the use he made of a letter of compliment from Dr I., and that it turned the Cardinals of the Congregation in his favour. He also told me the Cardinals of the Propaganda offered him a maintenance of 800 crowns a year if he would stay at Rome and not go to the North of England. At the same time the English Dominicans set about that it was you [Mayes] who, in the name of the Clergy of the North, offered him this pension of 800 crowns, but I let them know this was a groundless story and what I was persuaded they neither would nor could do. I guess he has left Father President Southcot, and as they now call him Fr General, to continue the sollicitations he made at the French court for a pension upon some abbey, though he came away, as he says, without getting anything. If he

<sup>50</sup> B, no. 40.

<sup>51</sup> B, no. 50. Bryan Tunstall.

particularly favours the monks it will be very inconvenient, and even he himself will find it so <sup>52</sup>.

At Douai Williams had been joined by two of his brethren, Thomas Worthington the Provincial (who was to be his companion for some years and also his biographer) and Andrew Winter, confessor of the English Dominican nuns at Brussels. They travelled together to Belgium, staying a few days at Ghent, Brussels, Louvain and Bornhem. From Louvain on 18 July the bishop addressed another petition to cardinal Petra, the new prefect of Propaganda, telling him of his long and tedious journey and announcing that he was to set out in a few days for his vicariate. He declares that he has not even a single roman ducat of emolument and has no idea how he is to pay his passage. The catholics of his district are burdened with extra taxes and quite unable to help him. He therefore asks Propaganda to come to his aid <sup>53</sup>. This petition was read to the cardinals on 26 August and simply passed on to the cardinal secretary of state <sup>54</sup>. Williams waited in vain for the reply and thus his journey was further delayed. Ingleton duly recorded the fact in a letter of 10 December 1727:

Our Bp Williams is still in Flanders <sup>55</sup>, and I hear he designs to winter there. If due representations were made to the pope or Congregation, surely such unheard-of delays would move them to dispose of this good man some other way and not leave the most important district of England abandoned for such a course of years <sup>56</sup>.

From Bornhem the bishop travelled with Fr Worthington to Rotterdam and there was a further delay owing to the stormy weather. At last they set sail and in six days reached Tynemouth. Thence they went on horseback to Newcastle where they lodged at the 'Bird in the Bush'. Brian Tunstall, whose letters are free from all bitterness, records his arrival in a letter of 26 December:

Mr Williams is at last come to us, and of a Regular I always thought we could not [have] had a properer. He landed at Shields and our Mr Gibson

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<sup>52</sup> B, no. 57.

<sup>53</sup> App. XV.

<sup>54</sup> AP, Acta Cong. Gen. 1727, f. 359.

<sup>55</sup> Williams reached England about 20 November, old style, or 1 December, new style. Ingleton (using the new style) had evidently not heard of his departure from Belgium.

<sup>56</sup> B, no. 61.

at Newcastle conducted him to Durham<sup>57</sup> where he remained about three weeks in an inn. Our Brethren and others eat with him mostly there and took care to make the reckoning easy to him, but he seemed a little bawled not to have a private lodging found him: but I know not anyone there qualified for that purpose. Dr Rigby from Wycliffe went to pay him his respects and made him cousin Tunstall's compliments to him with an invitation to pass the holidays at his house. I have great hopes he will be easy with us, and we with him. He does not seem to be desirous of intermeddling with our private affairs, and in a dispute about some little matters given in to him as his due, referred the matter immediately to Dr Rigby's decision, according as he should find it suitable to the tenour of the donor's will. He upon his arrival, as he had done before from Paris, confirmed all cousin George Witham's G. Vs., and Mr Tuttle, ours in Lancashire, dying about a month ago, desired Dr Rigby to name him 3 or 4 of those he thought most fit, fixed upon Mr Tho. Roydon, and whilst I was at Wycliffe last week, sent him some very friendly handsome lines, to transfer his full authority to him for those parts<sup>58</sup>.

Thus after a vacancy of two and a half years (for which Bp Williams was hardly to blame) the northern vicariate had once more a resident pastor. The fears of Propaganda proved greatly exaggerated. *Trepidaverunt*, says Fr Worthington, *ubi non erat timor*. The clergy at home proved more friendly than their representatives abroad.

It is not the purpose of this article to treat of Williams' apostolate, but for the sake of completeness I append such further relevant documents in the two archives that have provided almost all the foregoing material. The petitions to Rome are eloquent testimony to his evangelical poverty, but there is never a mention of the revenues that he was supposed to have forfeited for being a religious. It is possible that their value had been exaggerated. It is also clear that he was a sick man for years, and the vast distances he had to cover on horseback must have added greatly to his hardships<sup>59</sup>. The following letters were written by Dr Witham at Douai, who continued hostile to the last:

It were much to be wished that Bp Williams were put over his own countrymen the Welsh, and those of the Western District, and that if there be a new bishop he were one of the Clergy that succeeded him in the Northern District. There are great complaints and disappointments of the people

<sup>57</sup> Fr. Peter Thompson at Hexham records in his journal (preserved at Hexham presbytery) that he called on the bishop at Durham on 27 nov. (old style). Tunstall is presumably also using the old style.

<sup>58</sup> B, no. 41.

<sup>59</sup> App. XVI.

on this account that neither Bp Williams himself nor his companion Fr Worthington the Provincial of the English Dominicans have never yet once opened their mouths, so as to preach or give the least instruction, even when he has given Confirmation. They are *Dominicani* or *canes*, but *latrare non possunt*. Such bishops may perhaps do well enough in Italy, where they have others to supply for them the preaching of the word of God, but these bishops will never do half the good they might do, nor be esteemed in England, especially in the North, where his two predecessors in their visits everywhere preached on the Gospel, and besides never confirmed without an Instruction on the Sacrament <sup>60</sup>.

I hear Bp Williams is in a very desperate state of health by 4 or rather 6 great distempers: Rheumatism or Gout, Stone or Gravel, Jaundice and dropsy. I suppose our BB [brethren] are not asleep, but will use their utmost to get one of our clergy to succeed him, now they and Rome too has had more than sufficient experience of making any but of the Sec. Clerg. who unless the Bp be of their Body can have no superior proper to manage and dispose of of their temporals and places where they have funds to assist, whereas the Regulars can never experience such inconveniences, who have always their respective Provincials and Superiors to govern them both in spirituals and temporals. This is a manifest difference between us and them, which ought always to be represented and insisted upon <sup>61</sup>.

B. Williams is a great burden both to catholic Gentlemen and to our brethren in the North of which I have had frequent complaints, and which ought to be no encouragement to Rome to send us regulars and mendicants to which we have not been accustomed. B. Williams was always an expensive man as to his House-keeping and diet, who cannot live of a little, besides that great inconveniences must always happen to the Sec. Clergy in the management of their temporals, their funds and their places where they are accustomed to assist <sup>62</sup>.

Bp Williams died at Huddleston Hall, the seat of sir Edward Gascoigne, 3 april 1740. His monument in Hazlewood church states that he was 'prope octogenarius' <sup>63</sup> but according to the record of his profession he was only 72 or 73.

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<sup>60</sup> B, no. 94; 5 july 1729.

<sup>61</sup> WCA, B. 42, no. 36; 6 may 1733.

<sup>62</sup> Ib. no. 82; 29 july 1734.

<sup>63</sup> Palmer, p. 493.

## APPENDIX

## I

B.mo Padre

Gli Padri Missionarii Inglesi dell'Ordine de' Pred. umilissimi Oratori di V. S. divotamente rappresentano il stato deplorabile de' afflitti cattolici e Regolari d'Inghilterra, quali non solamente sono perseguitati dalli Eretici, ma di più dal clero secolare del detto regno, il quale ricerca tutti gli mezzi per scacciare detti religiosi sì dalle loro residenze come dal regno, con gran detrimento e scandalo di cotesto povero Cattolecismo, quale in pochi anni senza l'aiuto de' regolari andrebbe in rovina, perchè si precipiterebbe in molti errori mantenuti e insegnati dalli missionarii secolari, come anche per causa delle negligenze e altri abusi de' detti Missionarii secolari, e:

Imprimis. Per negligenza de' V. A., benchè più volte richiesti, non è stato mai rinnovato da molti anni l'oglio santo in alcuni distretti del regno.

2. Dicono ch'il SS.mo Rosario della Madonna e l'indulgenze concesseli sino abusi e una strada nuova inventata, mai prima intesa, per andar' al cielo.

3. Non notificano mai alli religiosi come e quando si devino celebrar le feste e osservar la quaresima, onde ne succedono gran diversità, a tal segno ch'uno celebrerà la festa e un altro la vigilia nel medesimo giorno.

4. Impediscono in quanto possono i cattolici di tenere appresso loro i religiosi, e dove hanno già ricovero cercano a discacciarli con gran detrimento della missione o vero intera rovina dell'istessa, e questo per loro guadagno temporale.

5. Insegnano che gli veri cattolici non siano obbligati ad allevare e educare gli loro figli nella fede cattolica, e benchè siano allevati nell'eresia nondimeno l'ammettono alli sacramenti.

6. Persuadono al popolo a pigliar il giuramento contro il Re Giacomo III.

7. Non ostante le continue suppliche fatte dalli cattolici il sagrosanto sacramento della cresima non fu conferito da vent'anni in qua in alcuni distretti con gran pregiudizio della S. fede cattolica.

8. L'Ill.mo Giffard, uno de' V. A. di quel regno, sospese il P. Provinciale de' Domenicani e tutti gli missionarii del medesimo ordine, perchè detto P. Provinciale havrà detto che non poteva rinunciare gli suoi privilegi, havendogli ricevuto dalla S. Sede Apostolica e essendo obbligato sotto pena di scomunica a mantenergli <sup>64</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> There is an echo of this dispute in the register of the master-general. Replying to the provincial, Joseph Hansbij, the master-general wrote (8 oct. 1723): ' Ut si V. A. in Anglia habent decretum Cong. de Prop. Fide; quod sibi monstrari petant et tenori eius attendant; quod ab illis approbati exercent munia missionis, oporteat ipsis obedire '. And again on 4 nov. 1724: ' Ne novae causentur expensae mandat

Questi e mille altri travagli danno gli V. A. ed il clero secolare alli regolari d'Inghilterra. Onde gl'Oratori supplicano le pietose viscere di V. S. acciò si degni porre rimedio opportuno a questi disordini, acciò la S. Fede Cattolica possi haver maggior incremento in quello afflitto regno.

II

Motivi che parono convincenti che sia necessario per la religione cattolica nell'Inghilterra che gl'Ill.mi Vicari Apostolici si assumino in numero uguale si dal clero regolare come dal secolare.

[Account of the discords that led to the brief *Britannia* of 9 may 1631]

Già si credeva che l'onde borasose fossero placate dalla bella bonaccia della pace, e ch'ogn'uno goderebbe il suo dovere, quando di bel nuovo con gran scandalo de' cattolici, ecco rinovate tutte le discordie e liti, perchè gli missionarii secolari anzi nello attuale sacramento di confessione suggeriscono alli loro penitenti ch'alli regolari mancava la potestà richiesta alla validità dell'absolutione, quindi uno de' V. A. sospese tutti gli privilegi concessi dalla Sede Apos. al P. Provinciale de' Predicatori e tutti gli missionarii del medesimo ordine, perchè detto P. Provinciale era di sentimento che non potesse rinunciare gli suoi privilegi se non al Vicario di Christo da cui l'havea ottenuto. Questo fece detto vicario in virtù d'un decreto preteso nell'anno 1695<sup>65</sup> non si sa di chi Papa, perchè tal decreto non fu mai veduto ne l'originale mai trovato nell'archivio del nunzio-apost. di Bruxelles dove si sogliono conservare tutti gli affari tra la S. Sede e il regno d'Ingh., nemeno si

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R. mus ne mittat procuratorem huc, non enim habet rationem conquerendi sibi non fuisse responsum, nam si V. A. habent decretum a S. Cong. de Prop. Fide, ut regulares non nisi dependenter ab illis munia exerceant oportet illis omnino obedire, sicut iam responsum et mandatum fuit. Si vero gravamina sentiant missionibus nociva possunt omnes simul motivis appositis memoriale facere, illudque tradere Ill.mo D. Spinelli [the internuncio at Brussels] qui tale dedit consilium, ut illud mittat et recommendet S. Congregationi de Prop. Fide aut cardinali protectori regni; sic enim plus quam per procuratorem efficient. (Reg. 201, pp. 117 and 125). In spite of this prohibition to send an agent, Williams must have set out for Rome soon after, though there is no record of his receiving the necessary permission to come to Rome.

<sup>65</sup> This was the Decretum Cong. Part. super rebus Angliae of 6 oct. 1695. This states: Regulares quoscumque etiam Societatis Iesu et Congregationis Anglicanae [Benedictinae], tam circa approbationem ad confessiones audiendas quam circa concernentia curam animarum et sacramentorum administrationem aliaque munia parochialia, esse subiectos vicariis apostolicis in quorum districtibus eos respective commorari contigerint. (AP. Cong. Part. 1695-1707, Anglia... Etiopia. (t. 32), f. 63).

trovò una copia autenticata in cui potrebbe fondarsi detto Ill.mo Vicario; però il savio e dotto Provinciale, per fuggire molti scandali e calunnie che potrebbero succedere, se ne sottomise a richiedere e ottenere licenza e facoltà dal detto V. A. per se medesimo e gli suoi religiosi, nondimeno con questa clausula, *salvo jure suo*; acciò dunque si schifino simili scandali non v'è più efficace mezzo che d'entrambi gli cleri si costituisca numero uguale nel vicariato apost. di detto regno.

## III

La Santità di N. S., a cui dal Re d'Inghilterra viene raccomandata la persona del P. Guglielmo, Domenicano Inglese, per il Vicariato Settentrionale con titolo vescovile in partibus, ha comandato al card. Oliverio di significarlo a Mons. Ecc. Ill.ma Ruspoli per sentire il di lui parere sopra la presente istanza, acciò la S. S. possa prendere quella risoluzione che stimerà opportuna, se bene dal medesimo cardinale fu replicato a la S. S. che non era a sua notizia che quel vicariato fosse vacante tuttavia ne potrà S. Ecc. Ill.ma haverne più precisa notizia.

Della Seg. de' Brevi li 12 sett. 1725<sup>66</sup>.

## IV

Beatissime Pater

Cum ab aliquo jam tempore R.dus admodum Dom. Georgius Witham Episcopus Marcopolensis e vivis excesserit, et exinde Septentrionalis Angliae Provincia episcopali cura et praesentia summopere indigeat, B.em V.am pro ea qua S. Dominici ordinem benevolentia et affectu merito prosequitur, eo esse animo accepimus ut ad hanc dignitatem Ven. virum T. D. Williams hodiernum ejusdem Ordinis in Anglia praepositum Provincialem promoveat; Nos itaque cum sustinendae fidei catholicae studio semper intenti, tum ad omnia quae B.i V.ae grata et accepta fore novimus, promptissime eundem T.D.W. nostro etiam suffragio ad B. V. commendatum voluimus; eoque lubentius quod magnam habeamus de ipsius viri pietate, doctrina et meritis opinionem. Interim sacris B. V. pedibus advoluti, apostolicam benedictionem enixe rogamus et D.O.M. assidue precamur ut S. V. in ecclesiae suae praesidium et orbis Christiani aedificationem quam diutissime conservet.

Dat. Romae 11 die Dec. A. D. 1725.

B. V. Devotissimus Filius  
Jacobus R.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> A, f. 251.

<sup>67</sup> SB, 2652, f. 14.

V

Requisiti del P. Williams

Il P. Tomaso Domenico Williams Inglese dell'O. P. essendo vacato il vicariato di North per morte di Mons. Witham è stato a quello nominato dall'intera Provincia con supplica speciale alla Santità di N. S. ed ha li seguenti requisiti.

E d'età d'anni sessantuno <sup>68</sup>.

Nobile, e delle primarie famiglie cattoliche della città di Monmouth, come è ben noto al Re d'Inghilterra.

Maestro di Teologia da venti anni in qua.

Ha letto per lo spazio d'anni quattordici theologia nell'università di Lovagno.

E stato tre volte Diffinitore per la sua Provincia nel Capitolo Generale <sup>69</sup>.

Priore del convento di Bornhemo lo spazio d'anni sei <sup>70</sup>.

Rettore del Collegio di Lovagno anni dodici <sup>71</sup>.

Viene il suddetto soggetto acclamato da tutta la Provincia perchè sia in di lui persona provisto il vicariato già vacante come consta dalla supplica autentica di là inviata alla Santità di N. S.

E di vita esemplare ed incorrotti costumi, et in oltre

A tutti i sudetti requisiti s'aggiunge che il sudetto religioso ha essercitato per dodici anni continui le sante missioni non meno in Inghilterra che in Fiandra in tempo appunto che c'era l'armata, ed ha convertito infinità d'eretici, a segno che la regina Anna lo faceva inseguire per questa causa, ed il Generale Pisani a cui era noto tal fatto, per salvarlo con suo vascello lo condusse in Olanda <sup>72</sup>.

E stato per due volte dall'intera Provincia in provinciale eletto che attualmente anche essercita.

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<sup>68</sup> This would mean that he was born in 1664. The record of his profession, which is to be preferred, makes him four years younger: Ego fr. Dominicus Guilelmus, decimo nono aetatis anno nondum completo, illegitimoque nequaquam ortus toro, protestor me ... velle perseverare et professionem emittere. Actum Bornhemii ... hac die 5 dec. 1686. (Archives of the English province, London, Registrum Indutorum ac Professorum 1658-1847).

<sup>69</sup> Williams was diffinitor at the chapters in 1721 and 1725. There is no record of his being at the previous chapter (1706).

<sup>70</sup> He was prior of Bornhem 18 may 1724 till appointed provincial 25 july 1725. There seems to be no earlier period when he was prior.

<sup>71</sup> He was rector oct. 1699-aug. 1707, 1711-12 and again july 1721-may 1724.

<sup>72</sup> This was presumably during Marlborough's advance on Louvain after the victory of Ramillies (23 may 1706). There is no other record of Williams' flight. On 18 may Marlborough had given a safeguard for the convent at Bornhem (Cath. Rec. Soc., XXV, 106).

## VI

## Benedict XIII to T. D. Williams

Provisio ecclesiae Tiberiopolitanae in partibus infidelium consistentis, cum indulto quod ad eandem ecclesiam donec ab infidelibus detinebitur personaliter accedere non teneatur, ac suscipiendi munus consecrationis ab uno episcopo cum assistentia duorum vel trium episcoporum <sup>73</sup>.

## VII

Monsignore,

Benchè non habbia havuto l'honore d'essere da V. S. Ill.ma se non poco cognito, con tutto ciò prendo la libertà di fare li miei doveri con congratularmi cordialmente della sua intesa promotione. Questa elettione fatta dal supremo Pastore la prudenza del quale e santa esemplarità noi giustamente veneriamo, senza dubbio sarrà accompagnata con singoli gratie e beneditioni. V. S. Ill.ma ha un vasto distretto da governare consistente in sette provincie e quasi 200 sacerdoti; questo ricercava un huomo del suo talento ed habilità, e noi habbiamo motivo di sperare che questa elettione nella sua persona sarrà di gran giovamento a' progressi della Missione Inglese, e spero anche sarrà di sua sodisfatione. Io sono persuaso che li miei Confratelli ed il clero tutto volentieri si sottoporranno nella devuta obbedienza; e se nel luogo ove mi ritrovo impiegato conoscqua V. S. Ill.ma in me qualche habilità riputerò mio sommo honore il potermi impiegare ne suoi comandi.

Con che resto con ogni sincera estimatione e rispetto a V. S. Ill.ma.

Di V. S. Ill.ma, Parigi 4 Feb. 1726 [etc.].

S. Ingleton, Dottor Sorbonico  
e Presidente del Collegio Inglese di S. Gregorio <sup>74</sup>

## VIII

Il P. Domenico Williams Inglese dell'Ordine de Predicatori, oratore, rappresenta che dopo esser venuto in Italia al Capitolo Gen. in qualità di Provinciale d'Ingh.<sup>75</sup> fu ultimamente provisto dalla paterna munificenza di V. B. del Vicariato del North con nomina anche di S. M. Brittanica ed applaudita questa assunzione dell'oratore a detto Vicariato Apos. non meno

<sup>73</sup> SB, 2652, f. 13.

<sup>74</sup> A, f. 252.

<sup>75</sup> This a strange lapse of memory. He sat as diffinitior and was not appointed provincial till after the chapter.

dal Ceto regolare e secolare di quella provincia ma anche da tutti i Nobili Cattolici, i quali hanno passato per lettere gl'uffizi di congratulazione col l'Oratore in Roma. Ora per malignità di qualche prete secolare dimorante in questa Corte gli vengono fatte delle opposizioni, per cui gli si ritarda la spedizione del Breve del suddetto Vicariato Apos. col falso pretesto di doversi dare detto Vicariato ad un prete sec. e non ad un Regolare, come che si volesse dar legge in simili proviste alla S. Sede. Supplica perciò umilmente la S. V. degnarsi dar ordine al S. Card. Seg. de' Brevi che onninamente spedisca all'Oratore il Breve della Provista sudetta; ed insieme dar ordine che non si ricevano in Cong. di Prop. simili memoriali di alcuni Preti malcontenti dimoranti in Roma, come spera la grazia non meno perchè avvicinandosi il tempo di primavera, possa l'Oratore con suo minor incomodo partire per la sua Residenza dove viene aspettato ed acclamato da tutti, anche a fine non resti in minimo pregiudicato l'onore dell'Oratore dopo essersi pubblicata la provista del suddetto Vicariato in di lui persona che non si deve permettere dal gran zelo della S. V. <sup>76</sup>.

## IX

B.mo Padre

Correndo una falsa voce per Roma che i missionarii di varii ordini religiosi dimoranti nell'Inghilterra non approvano ne gradiscono la destinazione in qualità di Vicario Apostolico de P. Maestro T. D. Williams, provinciale del sagra ordine de Predicatori, il quale a questo riguardo la S. V. la ha consegnato vescovo Tiberiopolitano, i religiosi predetti si stimano obbligati in coscienza coll'autentiche testimonianze de loro fratelli dimoranti presentemente in Roma di rigettare una tal calunnia, non meno ad essi che al predetto prelatato ingiuriosa. Ed in vero del gradimento de PP. Benedettini ne abbiamo una irrefragabile testimonianza in cinque lettere del P. Tommaso Southcott, Preside Generale della Congregazione Anglo-Benedettina, scritte al procuratore-generale della detta Congregazione dimorante in Roma, nelle quali, ricevuta la nuova di tale disposizione fatta dalla S. V., parla così: Una tale disposizione è graditissima si a me come a gl'altri missionarii Benedettini dimoranti in Inghilterra; ella si congratuli da nome mio con Mons. Sig. Vescovo Tib. destinato da S. S. Vic. Ap., e gli aggiunge che unitamente con gl'altri missionarii Benedettini prometto di somministrargli la nostra quota, acciò sostenga decorosamente nell'Inghilterra la dignità conferitagli di Vic. Ap. Il sentimento di questi religiosi, che sino da tempi di S. Gregorio Magno fondarono tutte le chiese dell'Inghilterra e fondate quasi tutte le tennero fin che fiori in quel regno la religione, esser deve di somma autorità in materie appartenenti alla cattolica religione.

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<sup>76</sup> A, f. 253.

La Compagnia di Gesù venuta più tarde alla luce, benchè tardi destinasse i suoi missionarii alla cultura di quella vigna evangelica, nulladimeno bagnata co sudori e col sangue de suoi figliuoli, riportonne frutti non meno copiosi. Il di lei giudizio in una tal materia deve vedersi totalmente disinteressato e sincero, mentre non può credersi regolato da alcun suo privato vantaggio, essendole chiuso l'adito a tutte le dignità ecclesiastiche. Or nessuno de Padri della Compagnia in Inghilterra ha scritto parola ad alcuno de suoi fratelli in Roma da cui ritrar si possa non piacergli una tale elezione, fatta specialmente di un uomo da loro, sia da giovane ben conosciuto e nel loro seno quasi educato, il quale con altri molti del suo sacro ordine terminò il corso delle lettere umane nel loro Seminario di Sant'Omer <sup>77</sup>.

Parimente tra figlioli del Serafico S. Francesco che travagliano in Inghilterra, non c'è una sillaba in disapprovazione del nuovo impiego assegnato dalla S. V. a Mons. Tiberiopolitano. Or queste tre sagre famiglie sono quelle appunto che in maggior numero ed egual frutto coltivano la religione nell'Inghilterra.

Che poi sia di sommo vantaggio alla conservazione e progressi della nostra S. Fede nell'Inghilterra ed alla pace e quiete tra Missionarii che la metà de Vicarii Apostolici sia estragga del clero regolare, non fu solamente opinione di Giacomo Secondo, Re di gloriosa memoria, che ne tratò replicatamente colla S. Memoria di Clemente XI, ma è sentimento ancora commune fondato sopra motivi gravissimi di tutti gl'ordini religiosi dimoranti in quel regno, e di tutti i cattolici che si servono dell'opera de regolari nell'esercizii della nostra religione, i quali e per il numero e per l'autorità e per lo splendor de natali costituiscono senza fallo nell'Inghilterra la parte più riguardevole nella cattolica religione <sup>78</sup>.

## X

Ristretto per la Cong. Part. d'Anglia da tenersi il primo di Aprile 1726

... Nel mentre che si attendevano le risposte di Mons. S. Nunzio, il S. Card. Olivieri per ordine di N. S. mi significò con suo biglietto come essendo

<sup>77</sup> This is the only reference to Williams' having been educated at S. Omers. According to Palmer (p. 411) his youngest brother Henry became a Jesuit, but no such name is to be found in the records of the Society. Had the Dominicans only known it, there was more positive evidence of the good will of the Jesuits. Their provincial, Fr. John Turbeville, wrote on 25 april 1726 to Fr. Louis de Sabran, S. J., who was spiritual father at the English college in Rome: 'Glad that Dominick Williams is made Bishop, being informed that he is a person of sound doctrine; and, by what I hear, will have occasion for it in North. Thus the Ballance is composed, so often desired, of having 2 Regular as well as 2 Clergy Bishops'. (Stonyhurst. Fr Thorpe's Extracts of correspondence formerly preserved in the Eng. College, Rome, 1707-1773. Kindly communicated by Fr H. Chadwick, S. J. the archivist).

<sup>78</sup> A, f. 264.

stata raccomandata a S. S. dal Re d'Ingh. la persona del P. Tomaso Domenico Williams Domenicano Inglese per il Vicariato Sett. con Titolo Vescovile in partibus, S. B. voleva udire su tal istanza il mio parere, acciò potesse prendere quella determinazione che stimerebbe opportuna.

Non mancai di porre subito nelle mani del predetto S. Card. descritte in vari fogli le gravi considerazioni per le quali pareva dimostrarsi assai chiaramente che un V. A. desunto dal clero regolare non riuscirebbe gradito in quel Distretto che è il più vasto e il più copioso di Cattolici e di Missionari secolari d'ogn'altro, non avendo ommesso in oltre di suggerire che essendo il P. Williams di un Ordine che non ha più di due soli Religiosi Missionari in tutto il Regno, sarebbe ancora poco ben visto dagl'altri Regolari che vi sono in molto maggior numero, onde ne egli vi potrebbe dimorare con quiete ne operare con frutto il servizio di Dio.

[Summary of the letter of the internuncio, against the appointment of a regular].

Subito dunque ricevuta questa lettera piena di tali e di altre ben sode ragioni, la passai alle mani del predetto S. Card. Olivieri per farne l'uso opportuno presso S. S.; ed in fatti, benchè S. B. avesse già consecrato in vescovo titolare di Tiberiopoli il detto P. Williams, la sua destinazione in V. A. del mentovato distretto fu posta in silenzio per più mesi.

Due settimane sono però avendomi fatto chiamare a se N. S. si compiacque darmi la copia di una lettera officiosa scritta al detto Vesc. di Tiberiopoli dal S. Ingleton, Presidente del Collegio Inglese di Parigi.

[Summary of Ingleton's letter of 4 february 1726].

Sul motivo di questa lettera si parlò distesamente su la materia, ed io mi credetti in obbligo di rappresentare nuovamente in voce le ragioni già di sopra esposte, insinuando che per contentare il Vesc. di Tib. e per salvare con proprietà il suo decoro giacchè non pareva opportuno di farlo V. A. nel distretto Sett., si potrebbe far Coadiutore in un altro cum futura successione, o anche istituirlo V. A. in altro distretto con far passar quello al distretto vacante, giacchè altrove non si sarebbero incontrate le difficoltà che militano per il sudetto.

Si compiacque a tal proposizione S. B. di comandarmi che io dovessi abbozzarmi col detto Prelato per quietarlo e persuaderlo. Mi portai pertanto a visitarlo e postogli il tutto in considerazione, mi dimostrò ben contento delle mie rimostranze, significandomi che mentre si trovava già promosso al grado vescovale e posto da altri in uno stato a cui di propria volontà non aveva mai aspirato, poneva nelle mie mani la sua estimazione, acciò la cosa seguisse con suo onore insieme e conforme sarebbe creduto poter essere di maggior servizio di Dio.

Ciò udito pensai d'incomodare l'EE. VV. per una Cong. Part., e ne feci l'intimazione per ragguaglierle di quanto occorreva. Ma per mezzo di Mons. Clementi mi sopraggiunse ordine di N. S. di soprassedere da qualunque

passo sopra tal materia finchè non avrei prima udito i nuovi sentimenti di S. B.

Chiamato dunque di nuovo all'Udienza il giorno 23 del corrente, S. S. mi spiegò positivamente esser mente sua che quibuscumque non obstantibus il detto Vesc. di Tiberiopoli fosse V. A. del mentovato distretto Sett. Mi feci lecito di replicare quanto io doveva per debito del mio ufficio, ed insieme lessi a S. S. una lettera dello stesso Presidente del Collegio di Parigi scritta sotto li 4 Marzo a P. Lorenzo Mayes Agente in Curia del Clero d'Ingh. e da esso l'antecedente sera comunicatami.

[Summary of this letter].

Ciò non ostante piacque a S. B. di rescriverè di proprio pugno, Pro expeditione gratiae' sopra un nuovo memoriale del detto P. Williams, quale da me poi letto l'ho trovato del seguente tenore.

[Same as Appendix VIII] <sup>79</sup>.

## XI

Sono rimasti i S. Cardinali non poco sorpresi da tal notizia, sapendo bene quante difficoltà si opponevano alla deputazione di un regolare di qualsivoglia istituto si fosse per V. A. in quel distretto. Hanno perciò comandato allo stesso Mons. Segretario d'incomodare V. E. col presente umilissimo viglietto per pregarla compiacersi di attestare alla S. S. che l'EE. loro non possono non conformarsi interamente e con tutta la sommissione del loro ossequio alla S. suprema volontà, ma che nello stesso tempo si stimano in debito di scaricare la loro coscienza per tutti quei gravi disordini che certamente per tal elezione insorgeranno nel mentovato distretto con pregiudizio della quiete di quei numerosi Cattolici e del servizio di Dio, ben preveduti sul fondamento di forti motivi da Mons. Nunzio Apos. in Fiandra e da esso già da più mesi lungamente descritti nella sua lettera informativa umiliata ed esposta a S. B. dall'E. V. e da Mons. Segret. medesimo <sup>80</sup>.

## XII

Il Vescovo Tiberiopolitano, già Provinciale de PP. Predicatori Inglesi, fu da quattro mesi in circa destinato da N. S., V. A. per le provincie Eboracenze, Lancastriense, ne avendo potuto fin qui ottenere l'esecuzione di detto officio per alcune difficoltà proposte in questa S. Cong. contro di lui come regolare, ardisce di proporre all'E. V. con tutto l'ossequio le risposte alle medesime obiezioni.

La prima obiezione è che a tal vicariato apostolico fu assegnata una rendita annua, con condizione che si desse il posto a un del clero secolare.

<sup>79</sup> A, f. 205.

<sup>80</sup> A, f. 217.

Si cerca: Chi abbia accettata tal fondazione sotto questa condizione, e con quale autorità abbia potuto legare le mani alla S. Cong. di Prop. Fede e di S. S., sinchè non potessero conferire tal posto ad un regolare.

La seconda obiezione è, che dandosi tall'Ufficio ad un regolare dovrà la Missione perdere quella rendita annua.

Si chiede. Se in questo caso tenga quella regola de legge che ottiene il suo vigore anche in Testamento: *Turpis conditio* (che non possa promoversi un regolare) *habetur pro non adiecta*.

La terza opposizione è, che nasceranno in quelle parti molti sconcerti e sollevazioni lasciandosi quel vicariato ad un regolare.

Si cerca, da quali persone possa ciò temersi. Non certamente da Regolari, quali in tal vicariato sono in maggior numero degli Chierici Secolari. come apparisce dal loro Memoriale. Ne par credibile sia per far ciò il clero secolare con opporsi apertamente alla deliberazione di N. S.

La quarta opposizione è, per qual motivo debba la missione soggiacere tal danno, quando potria sfuggirsi con far vicario un chierco secolare.

Si chiede: Con qual giusto titolo possa portarsi tal danno alla missione.

Per altro sembra chimerico il fondamento degl'oppositori, che tal vicariato sia stato eretto con condizione che si conferisca coll'annua rendita ad uno del clero secolare: mentre mai da medesimi è stata proposta tall'opposizione, e solo la produssero quando seppero essere stato conferito tal vicariato ad un regolare, aggiungendo di più che la di lui rendita annua stabilita nella casa di Parigi fosse già perita assieme coll'ultima perdita dell'Erario.

Di più, avanti che fosse promosso l'Oratore, la S. Cong. chiedette al Re Britannico che si spiegasse verso quel soggetto del clero secolare o regolare dovesse cadere l'elezione a quel posto. Dunque è segno evidente che conferirlo ad un regolare non è contro la fondazione.

Supplica per tanto l'Oratore con tutto l'ossequio l'E. V. a degnarsi mantenere la deliberazione presa da N. S. in suo favore con assumerlo a tal posto per provvedere con ciò et al decoro di S. S. et all'onore dell'Oratore provveduto e già consagrato vescovo <sup>81</sup>.

### XIII

*Undated drafts of two letters written by Mayes to Witham, c. may 1726* <sup>82</sup>

[i]

Though it may be that what I write will be of no great credit, yet nothing shall be wanting on my side to justify a proceeding which I apprehend will

<sup>81</sup> A, f. 555.

<sup>82</sup> These two drafts are written in parallel columns on the same sheet. The one given first is in the right-hand column and is probably the earlier. It is not clear

have offended you. It signifies nothing to the present purpose to enquire into the ways and means whereby Fr Williams came to be made a bishop, of which I am not able to give a very good account, and might be guilty of setting down my own suspicions for truths. It is very certain he was made contrary to the usual custom of bishops designed for missions: i. e. without the consultation of Propaganda <sup>83</sup>. The next step was to assign to him the Northern District <sup>84</sup>. There the Congregation entered and made such a remonstrance to his holiness of the ill consequences, that the pope ordered the secretary of Propaganda to speak to him to desist from that pretention. Bp Williams acquiesced and several projects were set on foot to provide for him otherwise than by the Northern District. In the mean time came congratulations, which I did not wonder at, as from Regulars. For though some of these might be mortified to see an inferior body, with respect to their number in England, preferred before them, yet I conceive it was an universal jubilee of all to see the Northern District wrested out of the clergy's hands. At last came a letter of congratulation and compliment from a certain clergyman. Bp Williams gave a copy of this letter to his holiness who was made to believe, as I have been informed, that what had been represented of the displeasure and inconveniencies on the clergy side was a false supposition. 'Tis matter of fact the pope sent this very letter to the congregation with orders *pro expeditione Brevis* in his own handwriting <sup>85</sup>. The congregation was surprised, and I plainly understood that we ourselves had ruined our own cause. Here I lost all hopes a second time, for whereas things were in such a fair way before, that I could not wish better, I saw now a most sudden change as appeared to me without redress. I excused the letter as well as I could by saying it was meant only for a compliment and written at a time when it was supposed that Bp Williams was at the same time destined for the North that he was consecrated bishop, and that I had no hand in the said letter, whereas it had been written, sent and delivered without my knowledge. Here then I supposed all was at an end, and set myself down with all that melancholy you may imagine. I enquire from time to time if the Brief had been given to the bishop, and after I had observed an unusual delay I got some light that the congregation, though in readiness to obey his holiness, yet had made another remonstrance, which was, and I suppose is, the cause of the present delay and demur about the Brief.

In this state of things I received your letter for Bp Williams and writ back my reasons for not delivering it. I dare not venture to rely upon my

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whether they are two incomplete drafts of a single letter or of two letters. At the price of some repetition both are given in full, as each contains details not in the other.

<sup>83</sup> This is not true; see App. III.

<sup>84</sup> He was designated for the northern district from the beginning.

<sup>85</sup> Actually the pope's endorsement is on the bishop's petition that accompanied Ingleton's letter.

memory how I expressed these reasons, and should be glad you would be pleased to copy for me the words of that, and of a following letter in which I think I asked leave to burn yours to Bp Williams. Be this as it will, I could not say less than that I apprehended danger from the deliverance of your letter. Whereas it is certain that a person upon the spot observes many things that do not appear so lively at a distance; that I could have no other view in detaining the letter than the interest I am concerned for; that I could not be judged to seek an occasion to offend you without being judged a mad man; that I never had the least grudge against Fr Williams in all my life, much less against the order, for which I ever had a particular veneration and for several good reasons. Whereas, in a word, I could not reasonably be suspected of any secondary sinister intention, I might also reasonably have expected to gain credit when I judged it was not expedient for the interest of the clergy to deliver any letter that contained a congratulation to Bp Williams from any clergyman, and much more from one in that post intrusted with the education of the best part of the clergy concerns.

It happened otherwise and I was not believed, and received by yours of April 25 a second order to deliver your letter with the address Vicario Apostolico in partibus Angliae septentrionalibus (a title his holiness had not yet given him) *whether he be Vic. Apos. in the North or not*. You cannot imagine into what anguish of mind this order cast me. On one side I saw evidently that I should displease you to a very great degree if I did not obey the order you gave me. On the other side I judged invincibly that in the present conjuncture I could not obey without danger of my own conscience, in the dangers I apprehended of the clergy interest. To extricate myself out of this perplexity I resolved to send back the letter. I do suppose you think my fears very vain, and that a compliment could not be of that consequence as I imagine and magnify to myself; but that I must be immediately made accountable for it to another body, to other superiors, obliged to justify my conduct to them, and obnoxious to those who might have a handle in it, not only to my confusion but, as I still think, to the disadvantage of the clergy, had I been by this means obliged to produce the letter. Had you found a way, as it is hard to think this impossible, by means of Fr Provincial of the Dominicans or the aforesaid Dr Clarkson <sup>86</sup> or otherwise, to provide for the concern of the two universities, and then had complained to the bishops and chief men of the clergy in England that I had refused to deliver your letter and had no sufficient reasons for doing so, this is what I could never with any face have complained of. But as things are or at least appear to me, I cannot think but I have reason to take my turn of a very just complaint. I pray God to give us all one mind and one heart, and to inspire H. H. to determine what is best for the mission and Catholic faith in England.

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<sup>86</sup> Fr Clarkson has not been mentioned before in this draft; draft (ii) gives a fuller account of his part.

[ii]

What could I do? I could not overcome them: they appeared to me grounded upon experience of this very case, upon the Sentiment of the Congregation, and I will add (if I may be believed without setting down something that I know, but do not think proper to speak of at present) upon the conduct of a person of distinction here, where in relation to this very affair, I have observed greater reservedness and nicety than I myself should have judged necessary, and in things that even to me appeared very remote from the business in hand. After all, the case being fairly stated, I cannot tell whether my fears will appear of so very little consideration to our bishops and generally to the clergy in England. I know you had your eye intent upon another concern of the two universities of Douai and Louvain; which you say was chiefly the import of your letter. I would not have you think that I slighted this consideration or that I could be without concern about what you take so much to heart with a view to some great advantage, though I am ignorant of the concern in particular, yet there were many things that lessened to me the weight of this consideration. These are two catholic universities in a free commerce with Rome: the well meaning men of both have or may have their agents here, even Dominicans; men I need not fear to say, of greater capacity, experience and credit in this court, than Bp Williams can be supposed to be: and then I was not inclined to think that this concern could be of such nature as to depend upon point of time, without redress, whereas our concerns I apprehended, if my fears were not vain and idle, might be determined suddenly and irrevocably, and I could not find in my heart to concur in hastening this moment, whereas day after day something might fall out favorable, and of all things would cast away hopes the latest that is possible. But be the concern of the two universities what it will, I could not in my opinion, at that time and in the circumstances hitherto expressed, allow it to balance with the English clergy's concern and interest.

I know very well it is free and easy for anyone of the clergy to write what and when he pleases to Bp Williams, but as it is impossible for anyone at a distance to judge of the circumstances of any concern and the humour of persons on whom it depends, as well as one on the spot; as to all things committed to my care, I understand it an *epieikeia* to be sometimes very necessary: otherwise contrary to the intention of those I serve, I may instead of doing good concur to an irreparable damage. This liberty has all along been allowed me by the bishops and never that I know of taken ill.

Could I have foreseen this long delay in Bp Williams' vicariate I should certainly have rather advised the clergy to write letters of just remonstrances to be represented to the congregation, than congratulations to Bp Williams. But this was impossible to be foreseen or to guess, at any period of time about a thing that is every moment in his holiness' power. Thus far is meant for a

supplement to my last letter <sup>87</sup>, which after many contrasts of uneasy thoughts I own I writ under some disturbance of mind, and so judged it necessary still farther to explain and justify myself. But this is not all. A farther trouble and perplexity followed which surprised me still more than yours of April 25.

Bp Williams sent to me to require your letter, of which he had received advice and I think directions to demand it, by a letter from their Provincial, who had transcribed your complaints against me from your own letter to one Dr Clerkson at Louvain (one I do not know). All that I could answer was that I had indeed received such a letter and had detained it with intention to deliver it when the supposition on which it had been writ came to be verified, but that this happening to be deferred I had sent it back, with my reasons to you for doing so; that as to any disappointment of business I was not privy to, I was sorry, but hoped the bishop was either otherwise informed or that you would find ways and means to retrieve it.

Now, dear sir, I beg leave to take my turn of complaining. It is certain that though we all mean one thing, yet there may be a difference of opinions and judgments among us about ways and means of managing our concerns. As long as this remains among ourselves, whoever happens to be in the wrong is only accountable to his own superiors and brethren, remains covered with a fraternal compassion and no handle is given to any other body of men with other views to make an advantage of it. Since ever I came to know anything of the clergy concerns I seem to have feared nothing so much as disagreements and parties among ourselves, and believe this apprehension to be obvious from the experience of past times. I understand always to be excepted such things as cannot be rectified among ourselves, for then, without regard to anyone, redress is to be sought where it is to be had. Now supposing me to be in the wrong by detaining your letter to Bp Williams, I cannot for my life persuade myself that this fault of mine is so enormous as to deserve no cover of fraternal compassion <sup>88</sup>.

#### XIV

Fra Tomaso Domenico Guglielms ... espone con tutto l'ossequio come contro il suo volere essendogli convenuto traternersi in Roma a proprie spese per più mesi, a fine di superare molti ostacoli che gl'hano prolongata fin hora la sua partenza, ritrovandosi perciò impossibilitato dal potere intraprendere un si lungo e pericoloso viaggio per mancanza di dannari; supplica l'EE. VV. a volerlo gratiari di qualche sussidio dal Collegio Urbano de Prop. Fid. acciò che quanto prima, a beneficio de Cattolici essistenti in quelle Provincie, possa col portarsi ivi esercitare il suo officio di Pastore.

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<sup>87</sup> This seems to refer to a previous letter and not to draft (i), which mentions the intervention of Clarkson.

<sup>88</sup> WCA, XXXVIII, no. 130.

Tomaso Domenico Williams ... le rappresenta esser stato provveduto del vicariato Ap. del North del Regno d'Ingh., e desiderando partire in breve per la sua residenza, non ha modo di fare il viaggio, attesto che nella dimora fatta lungo tempo in Roma per assodare il detto vicariato Apos., gl'è convenuto consumare quanto haveva per il suo mantenimento. Supplica perciò con tutto l'ossequio l'EE. VV. degnarsi ordinare che venghia somministrato all'oratore il bisognevole per fare il sudetto viaggio conforme questa S. Cong. s'è degnata praticare con i altri V. A. che son partiti da Roma per la loro residenza <sup>89</sup>.

## XV

Con mia somma consolazione ho sentito che V. E. sia stato agraziato da N. S. della Prefettura della Prop. Fede, e benchè da molto tempo doverei presentarmi a V. E., il mio lungo e tedioso viaggio m'ha impedito di questo onore d'essere noto alla somma bontà di V. E. Onde spero d'essere scusa e dichiaro che nissuna nuova mi potrebbe essere tanto grata che la Promozione di V. E. alla Prefettura della Prop. Fede; e come non solamente questa Carica, ma molte altre sono dovute al suo gran Merito, io come uno de suoi più inutili servitori ma bensì affectionato al pare di qualsisia, mi raccomando alla suprema Protettione di V. E. La sua innata bontà a me è ben cognosciuta e al mio povero gregge. Sono fra pochi giorni di partenza per il Nord d'Inghilterra, dove già per la divina grazia ho ordinato ottimi Ministri per il bene delli afflitti Cattolici. Devo però insinuare a V. E. che non ho alcuno ne meno l'emolimento d'un Ducato Romano, e non so come posso fare un viaggio così disastroso non avendo niente, se non la sola provvidenza divina, e li Cattolici del mio Distretto sono così aggravati di Gabelle che devono annualmente pagare al Governo la metà de loro beni, e consequentemente a me subsidio veruno non possono dare, onde mi raccomando a V. E. come mio particolare Patrono acciò la S. S. mi dia qualche Prepositura e Canonicato dove stimarà convenevole, e se il vescovo non puole vivere se non in miserie come potrà mostrare il decoro d'uno Prelato della S. Sede, essendo tanti miserabili e afflitti Cattolici nel mio Distretto.

Io ho tutta mia speranza in V. E., e dichiaro che non ho altro al quale posso ricorrere. Li favori e grazie di V. E. mandate al Mons. Nonzio di Bruxelles sempre veranno sicure alle mie mani. Ho ordinato alli mei Missionari, e sono sopra ducenti sotto la mia cura, di raccomandare V. E. quotidianamente nelle loro orazioni e sacrificii.

Lovanio 18 Luglio 1727 <sup>90</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> A, ff. 271-2. On 16 aug. 1726 he was granted 150 scudi (A, f. 269).

<sup>90</sup> AP. Sc. Rif. nelle Cong. Gen. 21 July-26 aug. 1727, f. 150. On 26 aug. this petition was passed on to the secretary of state. (Acta Cong. Gen. 1727, f. 359). Williams also asked the master-general to represent his poverty to the pope and beg

XVI

Copia di lettera del Sig. Cav.re Gascoignes al S. Card. Corsini il primo del 1732.

Mi prendo la libertà di rappresentare a V. E. l'infelice situazione di Mons. T. W., che essendo stato nell'anno 1725 consecrato vescovo Tiberiopolitanus et V. A. in Septentrionalibus nostris Provinciis, ebbe allora promesso d'esser provveduto di qualche susistenza, ma che non avendo fin ora ricevuto cosa veruna è stato necessitato d'aver ricorso alla mediocre carità de i Particolari nel suo Distretto, le quali però cominciano a straccarsi talmente del peso di tale contribuzione che questo povero Signore, tutto laborioso, degno e santo ch'egli è, si vede in punto d'abbandonarsi a una estrema necessità: Ed io essendo testimonio oculare del suo bisogno ed altresì del merito sublime di detto Prelato non ho esitato di raccomandare all'E. V. un soggetto che altro ostacolo non puol avere per esser degno della di lei Carità, che quello d'esserle incognito.

Per la Congregazione di Propaganda.

Essendo stato mandato per V. A. nella Provincia di York in Inghilterra dalla g. m. di Papa Bened. XIII, Mr Williams colla sola promessa di volerlo provvedere, ha egli sofferto il fato di quasi tutti gli Assenti di essere andato in dimenticanza, di maniera che egli ha unicamente campato delle piccole carità che ha incontrato, le quale mediante le deplorabili circostanze degli amici suoi in queste parti non è possibile che gli vengano continuate, di maniera che questo buon ecclesiastico si trova veramente ridotto all'ultima indigenza, e meriterebbe per ciò la caritatevole compassione della S. Cong. di Prop. che se potesse ottenere qualche moderata pensione, canonicato o Benefizio si ridurrebbe in grado di andar girando a cavallo incognitamente per il suo distretto, come si costuma, e che egli ha praticato fin ora ogn'anno, benchè con gran disastro e fatica essendo assai ampio, ma che per mancanza di mezzo non potrà fare in avvenire, e sarebbe con grave scapito della nostra santa Fede <sup>91</sup>.

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for a benefice. On 28 aug. 1728 ' Respondit R. mus id suarum partium et virium non esse, nec audere se privatis huiusmodi interpositionibus molestum esse Suae Sanctitati, quae aliunde in bonum commune ordinis abunde profusa est. Dum tamen occurrerit occasio aliqua velle se in favorem dicti Ill.mi ad S. S. facere quod potuerit '. (Reg. 214, f. 12).

<sup>91</sup> AP. Sc. Rif. nei Congressi. Anglia 1728-40, f. 401. On 10 march 1732 the cardinals granted him 50 scudi pro una vice tantum (AP. Acta Cong. Gen. 1732, f. 127).

## XVII

Internunzio at Brussels to Card. Petra, 24 July 1733

Ricorre alla benignissima Protezione dell'E. V., Mons. Williams ... ad effetto voglia da codesta S. Cong. ottenerle qualche charitativo sussidio nelle sue estreme indigenze. Et in fatti, se mai ha occasione la detta S. Cong. di esercitare le sue larghe elemosine per sollievo de' poveri Missionari che travagliano nella vigna del Signore sotto l'oppressione dell'eretici, questa certamente è la congiuntura più propria.

Trattasi d'un Religioso vescovo e V. A. della S. Sede quale attualmente è obbligato a fuggire ne luoghi più deserti e remoti per evitare le carceri e tormenti; essendo stato di già dal pseudo-arcivescovo di York rilasciato l'ordine della di lui cattura, e questo per aver egli fatta una Strepitosa conversione di un Ministro protestante, il quale istruito dal sudetto prelado ha generosamente rinunciato alla sua pingue prebenda e si è pubblicamente dichiarato cattolico <sup>92</sup>. Vede bene V. E. quanto sia giusto il sollevare il mentovato V. A. nelle ultime miserie costituito, quale oltre l'essere aggravato d'anni si ritrova esausto talmente di danaro che ne pure puol sodisfare ad alcuni debiti per necessità contratti <sup>93</sup>.

## XVIII

Bp Williams to Propaganda, 1736

Fra Tommaso Domenico Williams ... espone qualmente si trova in grandissima penuria nella sua vecchiaia tanto per non essergli fin ora verun assegnamento o provisione dalla S. Sede, o altronde, a differenza della tre altri V. A. in detto regno quali si trovano ben provisti, quanto per la miseria presente del suo Gregge, dal quale fu per l'addietro mantenuto, come si puol testificare da più Persone veridiche esistenti in Roma: Onde è costretto a ricorrere all'innata Bontà di VV. EE. supplicandole di qualche sussidio o per via di pensione o altrimenti come la somma prudenza di VV. EE. giudicherà più conveniente <sup>94</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> This was a certain Mr Bridges, parson of Kippax (Yorks). (Palmer, p. 489).

<sup>93</sup> AP. Sc. Rif. nei Congressi. Anglia 1728-40, f. 401. This letter was passed on to the cardinal secretary of state who on 22 aug. 1733 instructed the internunzio to pay Williams 300 scudi (Nunz. Fiandra, 153A, f. 221).

<sup>94</sup> AP. Sc. Rif. nella Cong. Gen. ,23 July 1736, f. 164. On this date the cardinals considered his petition (AP. Acta Cong. Gen. 1736, f. 284). They stated that he had been appointed by Benedict XIII 'non ostante il contrario sentimento di questa S. Cong.', and this may account for the fact that he was less generously treated than the other V. As. Matthew Pritchard, the Franciscan V. A. of the western district, received between 1718 and 1736 no less than 1300 scudi (ib. f. 430).