

DIPLOMATIC PREPARATIONS FOR KINSALE: LOMBARD'S COMMENTARIUS (1600)

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Hugh O'Neill's military success against Elizabeth I in the 1590s fuelled his political ambitions¹. They also attracted the attention of England's enemies, notably Spain. Both the Northern Lords and the Spanish recognised the benefit of co-operation. Rebel success in Ireland opened new possibilities for Spanish intervention and O'Neill recognised that his continued success was impracticable without foreign support. Formal contact with Spain had been established at least as early as 1593². A Spanish reconnoitering mission in 1594 was shipwrecked³. In 1596 two Spanish missions arrived in Ireland to gather intelligence⁴. In the same year, Spanish messengers, led by Alonso Cobos, were in negotiation with O'Neill and, in July, a formal alliance with the Spanish had been signed. According to this arrangement, O'Neill and O'Donnell accepted Spanish sovereignty and, with the Archduke Albert in mind, petitioned Philip II to designate, for papal nomination, a new prince for Ireland⁵. A lull followed but in 1599, Don Fernando de Barrionuevo led a mission to confer with the confederates in Donegal Abbey⁶. In 1600 a new mission under Cerda, accompanied by Archbishop Oviedo, arrived in Donegal.

For the Spanish, however, Ireland was but a small part of a vast complex of concerns. Their interest waxed and waned according to military developments in the Netherlands and relations with England in particular. Madrid was wary of committing men and money to O'Neill until they were confident of some level of success. It is significant that they did not suggest a change of sovereignty for Ireland to the Pope until the preparations for Kinsale were well in hand.⁷

¹ MORGAN, Hiram, 'Hugh O' Neill and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland' in *Historical Studies*, xxxvi (1993), pp 21-38 and *Tyrone's Rebellion*, Woodbridge, 1996.

² HAYES-MCCOY, G. A., 'Tudor Conquest and Counter-Reformation 1571-1603' in T.W. MOODY, F.X. MARTIN and F.J. BYRNE (eds) *A New History of Ireland, iii: early modern Ireland 1534-1691* (Oxford, 1976), pp 94-141, p. 121 and John J. SILKE, 'The Irish Abroad' *ibid*, pp 587-633, pp 595-7. See also DEVLIN, Ciarán, 'Some Episcopal Lives' in Henry A. JEFFERIES and Ciarán DEVLIN (eds) *History of the Diocese of Der. foro Earliest Trines*, Dublin, 2000, pp 114-139, p. 127 and SILKE, J. J., 'The Irish Appeal of 1593 to Spain' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* series 5, xcii (1959), pp 279-90, 362-71. It is interesting to note that according to the Infanta Isabella's letter to Philip IV, 22 October 1626, Florence Conry had been in the service of the Irish nobility for 34 years. Was he active in these early diplomatic initiatives? See Brendan JENNINGS, *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders 1582-1700*, Dublin, 1964, pp 209-10.

³ SILKE, *art. cit.*, p. 370.

⁴ See ALLEN, Paul C., *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598-1621*, Yale, 2000, p. 257, n70, SILKE, *art. cit.*, p. 371.

⁵ SILKE, J.J., *Kinsale: the Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of the Elizabethan Wars* (Liverpool, 1970; reprint Dublin, 2000), p. 28.

⁶ SILKE, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁷ MORGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 34.

O'Neill realised the importance of opening up new diplomatic fronts. Already in 1596, both he and O'Donnell had written to Clement VIII, describing their rebellion as a defence of Catholicism⁸. They asked that a protector be appointed at the court of Rome and that nominations to ecclesiastical office in Ireland be made with their approval. The Pope's main foreign policy concerns at this stage were in France. Having absolved Henry IV in 1595 from the excommunication of his predecessor, Sixtus V, he was anxious that the French form a counter balance to the stifling Spanish influence on the papacy. For the moment, Ireland seemed remote and unimportant. The Jesuits, however, took steps to inform themselves on the evolving situation there. In late summer 1596 the Jesuit Father General Acquaviva allowed James Archer SJ to return to Ireland where he witnessed the victory at the Yellow Ford. Archer became a firm supporter of O'Neill and it was probably he who influenced the distinct confessional turn in O'Neill's war propaganda, especially in the correspondence to Rome, at this time. By 1599 O'Neill, obviously emboldened by his military success, felt confident enough to alert the Pope to his responsibilities in Ireland. He informed his Holiness that martial success in Ulster had reduced the enemy to offering peace terms. O'Neill was reluctant to accept them because liberty of conscience was not included.⁹ This letter was followed in 1600 by a missive from the bishop of Cork and a longer letter signed by O'Neill and MacCarthy Mor.¹⁰ Both stressed that the opportunity for ecclesiastical restoration and reform, created by the confederates' military success, ought not to be squandered.

Despite the apparently improved diplomatic possibilities Ireland now presented, Clement VIII, however, was not immediately inclined to respond favourably to O'Neill's demands. There were many reasons for this. Firstly, from the viewpoint of European diplomacy, Clement, who had not been the preferred candidate of the Spanish cardinals in the conclave of 1592, was anxious to lessen papal dependency on Spain. Consequently he was inclined towards France¹¹. Because O'Neill's military success was predicated on Spanish help, Clement was less than keen to support him. Indeed, he must have been less than charmed to learn that the Irish were actually descendants of pre-historic Spanish migrants¹². Secondly, he, like other Catholic rulers, entertained the hope that after the death of the aged Elizabeth, her expected successor, James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary, queen of Scots, would convert to Catholicism¹³. He was anxious to do everything to facilitate the realisation of these rather extravagant expectations, heartened as he was by the example of Henry IV. Hence he feared anything that might endanger the Stuart succession. Supporting O'Neill could facilitate a Spanish victory and a Spanish succession in Ireland and later in England. Thirdly, Clement knew that unless O'Neill enjoyed the support of all Irish and English Catholics, his suggestion in his letters that victory in Ireland would be a stepping stone to the retaking of England, was so much rhetoric¹⁴. The Jesuit Christopher Holywood, who in 1598 was selected by Acquaviva as Irish superior, had informed the Father General of domestic opposition to O'Neill. These concerns were echoed by his successor, Robert Field. Their reservations appear to have corroborated information already available in Rome that created a negative impression of church in the kingdom, especially among the Gaelic inhabitants.¹⁵ In the late 1590s the Pope was especially concerned that so

⁸ HAGAN, J., 'Some Papers relating to the Nine Years War' in *Archiv. Hib., Hib., ii* (1913), pp 274-320, p.281.

⁹ HAGAN, *art. cit.*, pp 286-7. Lombard to Clement VIII, 28 September 1599.

¹⁰ HAGAN, *art. cit.*, pp 287-9. The bishop of Cork's letter is dated April 1600, the confederates' letter, 30 March 1600.

¹¹ ALLEN, *op.cit.*, p. 74. See HAAN, Bertrand, 'Les réactions du Saint-Siège à l'édit de Nantes' in Michel GRANDJEAN and Bernard ROUSSEL (eds) *Coexister dans l'intolérance: l'édit de Nantes* (1598), Geneva, 1998, pp 353-68.

¹² HAGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 305.

¹³ This hope was entertained in Ireland. See SHEEHAN, Anthony J., 'The Recusancy Revolt of 1603: a reinterpretation' in *Arch. frib.*, xxviii (1983), pp 3-13.

¹⁴ The Old English had made clear their disapproval of O'Neill to the internuncio in Brussels, to the Jesuit Father General, Acquaviva and to the Pope. See *Arch. Uib.*, iii (1914), p. 242.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Wolfe's letter to [Lainez?], [1561] in *Monumenta Angliae III*, pp. 371-74.

many Catholics in Ireland and England remained loyal to the crown¹⁶. Indeed, the prominence given to the problem in the 1600 memorandum, possibly prepared by Lombard, for Clement on the duties of the Nuncio to be appointed to the confederates indicates how large the problem of Catholic divisions in Ireland loomed in the eternal city. The fact that age-old animosity between natives and more recent arrivals had been exacerbated by fears regarding challenges to land titles, both ecclesiastical and temporal, in the event of an O'Neill victory, added to the sensitivity of the situation¹⁷. Further complicating this issue was the fact that Papal policy itself was inconsistent. Pius V's 1570 excommunication of Elizabeth released her subjects from obedience. However, Gregory XIII's April 1580 instruction, in an audience with Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion, allowed Catholics to continue to accept Elizabeth as their temporal ruler¹⁸. Further, many loyalists in Ireland held that Pius V's bull applied only to England. This confusion muddied the waters and could be interpreted to give the semblance of Papal sanction to continued loyalty to Elizabeth and even opposition to O'Neill.

Given these papal reservations, O'Neill needed an energetic, obedient agent in Rome, preferably of Old English background, to counter the negative information being sent on by sources like Holywood and Field. By sheer coincidence, a talented Irish man had recently arrived there. In 1599, the Waterford-born Peter Lombard (1554-1624) had been sent by the faculty of theology of the university of Louvain to represent them in a doctrinal dispute then being adjudicated by the congregation *de auxiliis*, set up by Clement VIII in 1597. Of Old English extraction,¹⁹ Lombard came from a merchant family, which had opted for the Catholic reform. He had been sent to Louvain in the 1570s, and, in the principal University of the Spanish Netherlands, had distinguished himself as a student and professor²⁰.

It is difficult to say anything definite about Lombard's view of O'Neill before 1599²¹. We do know that most of his Old English countrymen in Ireland remained loyal to Elizabeth²². However, his prolonged stay in the Spanish Netherlands, then in the throes of religious war, and his residence in Louvain, one of the theological powerhouses of the Catholic Reform, may have disposed him to view O'Neill's campaign differently. Further, O'Neill, possibly with Archer's prompting, so emphasised his commitment to a Catholic restoration in Ireland and in his letters to Clement and Mathei, the Cardinal Protector, that Lombard too may have fallen under his spell. It must be remembered too that, if Lombard entertained any ambition for ecclesiastical preferment in Ireland, O'Neill was obviously a man to be courted, at least for the moment. If this was the case, his intuition proved sound.

¹⁶ HAGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 283. On Irish Catholic fears regarding O'Neill see Hiram Morgan, *art. cit.*, pp 24-6, 28 and J. J. SILKE, 'Hugh O'Neill, the Catholic Question and the Papacy' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, series 5, civ (1965).

¹⁷ MORGAN, *art. cit.*, pp 304-7.

¹⁸ J. J. SILKE, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁹ See LYNCH, John, *De Praesulibus Hiberniae* ed. J. F. O'DOHERTY, 2 vols, Dublin, 1944, i, p. 137. See SILKE, J. J., 'The Irish Peter Lombard' in *Studies*, lxiv, 125 (1975), pp 143-55; 'Later relations between primate Peter Lombard and Hugh O'Neill'; 'Primate Lombard and James I' in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, xxii (1955), pp 15-30, pp 124-50.

²⁰ *Arch Hib.*, v (1916), p. 162. In a report to Gregory XIII, written possibly by Dermot O'-Hurley in the early 1580, Lombard is mentioned as a promising student in Louvain.

²¹ He may have shared the political views of his near contemporary Richard Stanihurst. The latter's contributions to *Holinshed's Irish Chronicle* and his own *De rebus in Hibernia gestis* suggest an exclusive option for an Old English-spearheaded civilising offensive on barbaric, Gaelic Ireland.

²² See CAREY, Vincent, 'Bi-lingualism and identity formation in sixteenth-century Ireland' in MORGAN Hiram (ed.) *Political ideology in Ireland 1541-1641*, Dublin, 1999, pp 45-61 and CABALL, Marc, *Poets and Politics*, Cork, 1998, pp 66-7. On Richard Creagh's attitude to questions of racial difference see LENNON, Colm, *Archbishop Richard Creagh of Armagh, 1523-86*, Dublin, 2000, pp 137-40.

From his letter to Lombard dated 7 March 1599, it is clear that O'Neill has already been in touch with Lombard. In this missive, O'Neill expresses his concern that English Catholics in Rome have accused him of waging war not for the sake of religion but for his own personal advantage²³. He energetically denies the charge, insisting that the first of all his demands in the various peace negotiations with the queen to date had been the liberty to profess the Catholic religion. For this reason, Lombard, he continues, must clear up the ambiguity surrounding the Pope's stance towards the rebellion in Ireland by demanding a sentence of excommunication against all O'Neill's opponents.

O'Neill's arguments for aid grew more sophisticated as his Roman correspondence continued. In the letter to Mathei in particular, he sets his campaign ever more firmly in the context of the restoration in Ireland of a reformed Catholic Church. Significantly, in an obvious referente to the severe shortage of suitably trained clergy in Ireland, a factor, which must have been a source of concern to Rome, O'Neill underscores the importance of the role of the new continental seminaries in the Catholic restoration. This is linked to the military campaign that O'Neill claims an important part of the European Catholic restoration, a part of the religious settlement recently reached in Ferrara, France and Hungary.

While he was subject to O'Neill propaganda, Lombard was also, significantly, on good terms with Roben Persons SJ, rector of the English College in Rome²⁴. Through Persons he may have been influenced by the far-fetched opinion that some members of Elizabeth's council were in favour of the archduchess Isabella succeeding to the English throne²⁵. If he was exposed to this rumour it could only have increased the attraction of working for O'Neill. Lombard entered O'Neill's service and with Andrew Wise²⁶ acted as his agent at the Papal court. In letters to Clement and Mathei written on 27 and 28 April 1600, O'Neill mentions Lombard as his representative²⁷. In that capacity, Lombard penned the *Commentarius*²⁸.

This very substantial memorandum was prepared to enlist papal and Spanish support for the northern lords. In its structure and content, Lombard's memorandum had precedents. In 1574 David Wolfe SJ has prepared a 'Description of Ireland' for Philip II²⁹. In early 1580, for instance, Dermot O'Hurley, from 1581 archbishop of Cashel, presented a report on the state of the Church in Ireland for Gregory XIII.³⁰ In his memorandum, O'Hurley claimed that Ireland, despite the introduction of heresy, had remained committed to the Holy See and that the Irish, despite some recent, rather spectacular exceptions, were of good character.

While memoranda like Wolfe's and O'Hurley's provided Lombard with a general model, for exact information he was dependent on the letters coming from the O'Neill camp in Ireland. It is not surprising that a great deal of the detail contained in O'Neill's correspondence with Clement and Mathei, and in Captain Martin de la Cerda's O'Neill-sourced report to the Spanish king in 1600, is repeated in Lombard's work³¹. Indeed, several themes from O'Neill's long 1600 memorandum to the Pope and Cerda's report to Philip III, are elaborated in Lombard's

²³ HAGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 283. See also *Commentarius*, pp 12-14 and O'GRADY, J. (ed.) *Pacata Hibernia*, ii, pp 345-6.

²⁴ SILKE, J. J. *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁶ HAGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 296.

²⁷ HAGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 290.

²⁸ The original is held in the Barberini archive. A version was published in Louvain in 1632. A more reliable version was prepared by Patrick F. Moran, Dublin, 1868.

²⁹ For a text see BEGLEY, John, *The Diocese of Limerick in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Dublin, 1927, pp 37-50, 494-515.

³⁰ *Arch. Uib.*, v (1916), pp 157ff.

³¹ On Credá's report, see SILKE, J. J., *op. cit.*, pp 75-8.

Commentarius, especially in the closing sections which deals with the latest phase of the war campaign³². Lombard integrates into his work O'Neill's references to recent military victory and to the improved strategic strength of the confederates who now hold ports and towns. The northern lord's belief that the Irish campaign is essential to the health of European Catholicism is accepted by Lombard, particularly the consideration that Confederate success in Ireland will strengthen the position of Catholic claimants to the English throne on the expected death of Elizabeth.

While O'Neill's memorandum does not treat of the original 1155 papal grant of Ireland to the English kings in any detail, it does remind Clement that his predecessor's grant engages papal responsibility for the current war in Ireland. Lombard takes up this point and expands it massively. Lombard also integrates into his work O'Neill's petition for an indulgence for participants in the rebellion, a sentence of excommunication for those who oppose it, the appointment of a nuncio, the approval of the Ulster Lords for any ecclesiastical appointments and the Pope's help in gaining Spanish aid³³.

It is clear from the *Commentarius* that Rome was well informed about Irish and English Catholic opposition to O'Neill's campaign³⁴. Although Lombard never addresses this problem directly, it is clear that it sets the agenda for his memorandum. Indeed, the anti-O'Neill Catholic party in Rome acts like an off stage voice throughout the *Commentarius*. In the liminal chapters, for instance, a series of implied criticisms are rejected: of Gaelic lordship; of the kingdom's capacity to operate as a modern economy; of its commitment to Rome. Taking the offensive, Lombard presents Gaelic lordship as historically compatible with ecclesiastical independence and downplays the differences between the original Gaelic and the more recently arrived Norman population. He refers to his English ancestry, on the one hand implying that this has not prevented his supporting O'Neill, on the other hand stressing that his own position is pro-Catholic rather than anti-English³⁵. Unhesitatingly, Lombard defends the traditional Irish political system against charges of chaos, positing the existence of an office called *maximus Hiberniae rex* which he ambitiously describes as *monarcha*. Significantly, he adds that, at the time of the coming of Christianity to Ireland, this office was held by an O'Neill ancestor³⁶. On the issue of Irish loyalty to the papacy, a point on which the Pope, apparently, had doubts, Lombard is reassuring: « . . . *san/ addicti penitus imperio Sedis Apostolicae, se ac sua omnia non in spiritualibus tantum sed et in temporalibus subjectos illi agnoscentes...* ».

Lombard is also anxious to convince the papacy that investment in an Irish Catholic crusade will bring material as well as spiritual benefits to Catholic Europe. Again he appears to be arguing against negative sources active in Rome. Fully conscious that no modernising European State could live on religion alone, he turns, therefore, to the perennial question of the viability of the Irish economy. If it has experienced difficulty, this is entirely attributable to English domination of resources, transport and information. In a section that could only have warmed Spanish fishermen's hearts, Lombard waxes eloquently on Ireland's maritime wealth and castigates the English government for

³² HAGAN, art. cit., pp 297-300.

³³ O'Neill is careful to reassure Clement that Spanish help will not be prejudicial to papal prerogatives in the kingdom, a point Lombard takes up.

³⁴ Roman information on this problem is accurate. See the memorandum prepared for Clement on the appointment of a nuncio to the confederates, Hagan, art. cit., pp 303-12.

³⁵ In particular see Comm. pp 100-101. A similar sentiment is expressed by David Rothe in his *Analecta*, ed. MORAN Patrick F., Dublin, 1884, p. 95.

³⁶ *Comm.* p. 21.

preventing foreign nations profiting from the resource³⁷. The same English government, mostly on the advice of Irish officials and pressure groups in England, actively discourages prospecting for minerals, being anxious to reserve these resources for their own benefit³⁸.

In countering the apparently established opinion that Ireland is technically backward, Lombard display an impressive knowledge of the country's potential for trade and exchange. In arguments designed to appeal to foreign monarchs anxious to foster trade, he points to the excellence of Irish ports, the country's favoured geographical position and its potential to participate in European trade³⁹. Though his views on Irish viticulture strike the modern reader as recklessly sanguine,⁴⁰ his proposals for the development of the linen industry, encouraging Ireland to imitate Belgium, proved prophetic.

The points of cultural history and political economy are only an introduction to a more extensive treatment of Ireland's commitment to religious truth. Countering implied claims that Irish Christianity was without antiquity, infected by heresy and lukewarm towards the faith, Lombard underlined its antiquity and repeated the tradition that the faith may first have been preached there by St James the Apostle. Thus he adroitly refers to the continuity of the Spanish connection between the pagan and the Christian eras. He extols the status of St Patrick, whom he presents to his readers as a missionary patron of international standing⁴¹. Finally, he emphasises the essential missionary nature of the Church there, first to heresy-ridden Britain⁴², later to Gaul⁴³, Belgium⁴⁴, Germany⁴⁵ and Italy. According to Lombard, Ireland's glory years were Christian, missionary and dominated by the achievements of great, roving saints.

If the glorious history is contradicted by present reality, on which anti-O'Neill sources have apparently informed the Roman court, this it to be explained, according to Lombard, less by internal failings than by three successive external interventions: Viking, Norman and Protestant. The Vikings initiated the decline of the Irish church creating a situation that taxed the reforming ability of the great Malachy (1094-1148). His concern for the reform of the Irish church was shared by the Papacy. Indeed, Pope Adrian IV (c. 1100-59), Lombard continues, was anxious to intervene in Ireland and when his fellow countryman, King Henry II mooted a plan to assume the lordship of Ireland, Adrian saw his opportunity to implement reform. This was the context for the bull *Laudabiliter*, which granted Ireland as a lordship to the English kings, subject to a number of stringent conditions. These included the English kings undertaking the religious and moral reform of the Irish, their protection of the Irish Church's rights and privileges and the payment of dues to Rome.

³⁷ Comm. p. 40. 'Quae [Anglia] quidem, exclusis mercatoribus et piscatoribus aliarum nationum, suis dumtaxat subditis reservat jus et potestatem hic piscandi.'

³⁸ Comm. p. 48. 'In quo (English council) cum aliquando fuisset propositum de fodinis in Hibernia indagandis, opposuit se acerrime quidam e primis proceribus...'

³⁹ Comm. p. 52. '...haec...et multum commodarent externis nationibus, quae nunc ex remotioribus alioqui regionibus petere, vel adferre debent merces illas atque opes, quas et commodius multo et multas copiosius Hibernia posset subministrare.'

⁴⁰ Comm. p. 45. 'Verumtamen quas proferunt uvae, quando peritior accedit cultoris manus, ad maturitatem convenientem alicubi perducuntur. Et sentiunt qui situm, et naturam hujus loci penitus norunt, si in partibus occidentis, et meridiei quae Hispaniam spectant, vites cum industria et diligentia colerentur, quod vina ferrent non inferiora quibusdam Gallicis, et Germanicis.'

⁴¹ Comm. p. 74.

⁴² Comm. p. 81.

⁴³ David ROTHE revisits this theme in his *Brigida thaumaturga*, Paris, 1620, pp 67-74.

⁴⁴ For a later account of the Irish evangelisation of Belgium see VERNULAEUS, Nicolaeus, *De propagatione fidei Christianae in Belgio per sanctos ex Hibernia viros liber*, Louvain, 1639.

⁴⁵ Lombard is especially careful to point out that the so-called Scottish monasteries in the German Lands were founded by the Irish, Comm. p. 92.

In an interpretation which goes far beyond anything to be found in the O'Neill correspondence, Lombard points out that the constitutional arrangement envisaged by the bull was undermined from the start by the refusal of some Irish lords to accept Henry's title. This compromised Henry's legitimacy because, as Lombard explains, Henry's authority was contingent on both the Pope's grant and the people's acceptance of their new Lord. Lombard states, 'any title giving a right to the lordship of the kings of England over Ireland derives partly from the free grant of the Roman Pontiff, the common father of all Christians, and partly from the submission and acceptance of the inhabitants of Ireland themselves'⁴⁶. From the very beginning Laudabiliter was flawed, though, in apportioning the blame for this, Lombard momentarily adopts the pose of a disinterested commentator, hesitating between English insolence and Irish impatience⁴⁷. He is clear, though, that the malfunctioning of the medieval constitution was not sufficient reasoning for a change of sovereignty⁴⁸. This possibility only became relevant when the ordinary strains on the medieval constitution were compounded by the new strains of the Reformation settlement.

The civil oppression, which marked the medieval period, was, according to Lombard, only the prelude to the religious schism of Henry VIII⁴⁹. When he spurned marriage law, he provoked his own excommunication. This led to the breakdown of church-state relations in Ireland that was sealed when Henry claimed the head-ship of the Church in Ireland and assumed the Irish kingship in 1541. In the wake of this enormity, the Church's property was usurped; the oath of supremacy was demanded of office holders; those refusing to swear were charged with *lèse majesté*. The government undertook a proselytising campaign⁵⁰ and closed Catholic schools⁵¹.

Lombard feels compelled to do more than merely describe Ireland's woes at the hands of heretics. Stung, it would seem, by charges that heresy has infected them, Lombard defends the Irish against the accusation of attending Protestant church services. He explains that in the 1540s, when the first changes were introduced, most people were unaware of their real significance and attended the religious services of the state Church in ignorance. However, if they did, they conducted themselves as if at Mass, praying their rosaries and honouring the saints and the Virgin Mary. Later when it became clear what was really at issue they ceased to attend. Thus the congregations at state services shrank to a very few English settlers and the odd native, who attended for material gain⁵².

Any delay there was in recognising heresy was due to the neglect of the clergy. Lombard is fiercely critical of careerist clerics for whom advancement was more important than pastoral care⁵³. They continue even now, he laments, to ensconce themselves in the European colleges, acquiring some little theology, perhaps, but no civility. Later, they travel on to Rome to secure Irish benefices. He is appalled to note

⁴⁶ Comm. p. 108. 'Imprimis igitur quamvis titulus, qui dominio Regum Angliae in Hiberniam jus quodcumque tribuit, sit partim gratuita donatio Romani Pontificis communis Christianorum omnium patris, partim submissio et acceptatio ipsorum Hiberniae indigenarum.'

⁴⁷ Comen. p. 110. '...nolo tamen definire an eorundem causae et occasiones referri potius debeant in Anglorum insolentiam et impotentiam dominandi, an in impatientiam et inobedientiam Hibernorum.'

⁴⁸ Comen. pp 100-1. 'Non ex taedio potestatis, adeo ut cum quae de ea vellem libere proferre possem, nihilominus ut officium probem devotae fidelitatis, profiteor malle me abusus istius potestatis corrigi, quam jus omnino tolli.'

⁴⁹ On Henrician political thought see John Guy, 'The Henrician age' in POCOCK J.G.A. (ed.) *The varieties of British political thought 1500-1800*, Cambridge, 1993, pp 13-46.

⁵⁰ Lombard names Goodman, Cartwright, Brady of Meath, Loftus of Dublin and others.

⁵¹ Lombard comments that some Catholic schools taught not only the humanities but also Catholic doctrine, '...sic ut aliqui ex his pro privata lectione Catechismum Catholicum exponerent'. *Comm.* P. 116.

⁵² Comm. p. 122.

⁵³ This point is also made in O'Healy's submission to Gregory XIII. *Arch. Hib.*, v (1916), p. 159.

that some of these have secured office and is embarrassed that more, on the pretext of persecution at honre, wander about Europe seeking sustenance for their ecclesiastical dignity and damaging the Irish cause⁵⁴.

He contrasts their conduct sharply with that of the English and Irish priests educated abroad who have returned honre to work on the mission⁵⁵. In marked contrast to the old clergy they preach against heresy, give good moral example and witness to the ancient austerity of the Irish Church.⁵⁶ Lombard stresses particularly their role in propagating the doctrine and practice of modern Catholicism, thereby deftly linking the O'Neill campaign with the Catholic revival in which the continental seminaries are already playing a pivotal role.

Having defended the ordinary faithful against liturgical and doctrinal laxity, Lombard next makes a case for the Irish nobility who, again according to off stage critics, were sluggish in organising resistance to religious error. This, claims Lombard, was because the Dublin government was ingenious in keeping the Irish nobility on its side with a mixture of promises and threats and frequent appeals to self-interest. It was successful too in the propaganda war, denying that it was bent on destroying the common wealth and cleverly presenting religious opposition as sedition.⁵⁷ Also, the Irish nobles mistrusted their peers and such was their mutual jealousy that they proved incapable for many years of agreeing on a leader, penes quem sit summa auctoritas⁵⁸. This gave the government free rein to reduce its inhabitants to servility or worse⁵⁹.

But the tide, according to Lombard, has turned, and resistance to heresy has stiffened. Taking up a point repeatedly mentioned in Tyrone's own correspondence, he says that, on the Continent, the Irish colleges at Salamanca, Lisbon, Louvain and Douai are beginning to produce their clerical fruit. He recalls that a company of Irish soldiers under English command at Deventer in Belgium, refused to aid heretics and later declared openly for the Catholic cause⁶⁰. In Ireland, the MacMahons, the O'Rourkes and the Maguires have risen against Queen Elizabeth. So too have the O'Donnells and the greatest of all the Irish princes, O' Neill.

These events are of momentous proportions. In assessing their significance, Lombard has recourse to a device that does not appear in the extant O'Neill correspondence: prophecy⁶¹. He recounts that towards the end of his mission, St Patrick asked God for a vision of the future of Ireland. He was granted a glimpse of its terrible fate. A comforting angel told Patrick to look to the north whence the saint '*vidit modicam prius lucem in Ulidia exorientem, diu cum tenebris concertare, tandem iisdem effugatis sua fulgore totam insulam illustrare*'⁶². Traditionally, explains Lombard, there had been difficulty in interpreting this passage. Jocelin suggested that the Irish identified the disaster as the Norse invasion. For them Malachy was the rising light. Those of Norman extraction, however, believed that the disaster was the decline of the Irish

⁵⁴ He returns to this theme later on when he sings the praises of the seminary clergy. See *Comm.* p. 138.

⁵⁵ The Irish did not have to wait for the seminary priests to see the need for reform. Lombard refers to an entry in *chronicis manuscriptis Ca Capucinatorum*, lib. i, sec. v. pars i, versus finem, circa annum 1540, where an Irish deputation requested the extension of the latest Capuchin reform to Ireland. See *Comm.* p. 123.

⁵⁶ He cites Giraldus who recounts a conversation between Matthew, archbishop of Cashel and Gerald, the Papal Legate. *Comm.* p. 125.

⁵⁷ Thus the government might admit that some injury had been done by some of its officers; this was partial and in no way justified resistance. For this distinction see SKINNER, op. cú, ii, p. 177.

⁵⁸ Lombard as much as says that this is one of the consequences of the fragmented nature of Gaelic polity.

⁵⁹ '...quam si communi per omnes eius partes invasione, et populatione simul et semel facta, indigenae vel e medio tollerentur, quod de nobilibus nominatim fieri necessarium videbatur, vel gravissima attererentur servitute, quod de reliqua multitudine facilius fore iudicabant'. *Comm.* p. 147.

⁶⁰ Deventer was betrayed to the Duke of Parma by two of Leicester's commanders in February 1587. The town was retaken by the Dutch rebels in 1591.

⁶¹ JOCELIN, *Vita S. Patricii*, c. 175. On the use of ancient prophecy in the 1590s, see MORGAN, *o p. cit.*, p. 143.

⁶² *Comm.*, p. 133. See Edmund SWIFT *The Life and acts of Saint Patrick the archbishop, primate and apostle of Ireland...*, Dublin, 1809, p. 234.

Church; the rising light was *Laudabiliter* and Henry II. In a new interpretation, Lombard asserts that the affliction to which Patrick was privy was neither the Norse devastation nor the Irish Church's decline but the nefarious effects of the royal supremacy. The rising light in the north, then, can be none other than O'Neill.

This claim set the agenda for the final chapter of the *Commentarius*, in which Lombard rebuts all accusations that would disqualify O'Neill from his messianic role. While Lombard admits that his hero received an English education, he insists that he never wavered in his loyalty to Catholicism. While it is true that O'Neill's original reason for taking up arms against the Queen was not the defence of true religion but rather to free his patria from oppression, in all this he was inspired by no personal ambition. On the contrary, it was his extraordinary early success that convinced him that he had the support of divine providence to such an extent, in fact, that subsequently he swore not to return his sword to scabbard until the Catholic religion was established all over Ireland. O'Neill's aims, enunciated recently at Dungannon, demonstrate the purity of his motives⁶³.

In his military dealings, O'Neill has demonstrated his crusading calibre, tempered by Christian charity. Before war began he was willing to be subject to the Queen, on condition that the country was justly ruled. It was only when legitimate grievances went unheard that O'Neill resorted to war. The campaign has been well managed with exemplary restraint shown by the Irish side. Nor can there be any doubting O'Neill's commitment to the Catholic cause. In all peace talks he has consistently demanded, as the first condition, freedom of profession of the Catholic religion in every part of Ireland⁶⁴. His campaign has been conducted in a manner befitting a Catholic commander. It is indeed galling, continues Lombard, that anti-O'Neill rumours have prevented European monarchs, especially Philip II, coming to his aid. Lombard puts this down to the propagation of anti-Irish prejudice, Protestant and recusant alike, that the Irish are unworthy, unreliable allies⁶⁵. In sharp contrast to the Irish campaign, the English one has been characterised by every sort of subterfuge and turpitude.

These are not the only indications that O'Neill is the long awaited 'Northern Light'. Since O'Neill took the Catholic cause to heart the moral order in Ulster has improved visibly⁶⁶. The reform of both the clergy and the laity has been proceeding apace. This is especially noticeable with regard to marriage and clerical celibacy. Only legitimately celebrated marriages are recognised by the northern Lords and clerical celibacy is strictly enforced. In all this the northern Lords have been careful not to invade the prerogatives of the Church. Leaving fornicating priests to ecclesiastical justice, the Ulster leaders have moved against their concubines, punishing recidivism with mutilation⁶⁷.

For all these reasons O'Neill is deserving of assistance. Lombard asks Clement VIII to excommunicate those who oppose O'Neill, to provide material assistance and to ensure a steady supply of seminary priests. As an incentive he reminds the Holy Father that in the very

⁶³ This is probably a reference to the 'articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', dating from November/December 1599. See *Comm.* p. 156.

⁶⁴ *Comm.* p. 156. '...ac petiit conditionem, ut per universam Hiberniam concederetur catholicae religionis professio libera...'

⁶⁵ *Comm.* p. 110. The popularity of negative impressions of Ireland was facilitated by the popularity of Giraldus's account of Ireland. See Hiram MORGAN, 'Giraldus Cambrensis and the Tudor conquest of Ireland' in Hiram MORGAN (ed.) *Political ideology in Ireland 1541-1641*, Dublin, 1999, pp 22-44.

⁶⁶ The theme of the economic and moral benefits of the Catholic crusade are also explored by David Rothe, though he focuses on the seminary priests as the agents of civilisation. See *Analecta*, ed. Patrick MORAN Dublin, 1884, pp 97-8.

⁶⁷ The reported measures taken to enforce clerical celibacy are impressive if one-sided. According to Lombard '...qualia tulerunt edicta in laicos concubinarios, talia statuerunt in concubinas sacerdotum, praecipiendo sub gravissimis poenis...in foeminas ita delinquentes animadverti curarunt, exiliis, flagellationibus, deformationibus vultus per cauteria seu scissuras' *Comm.* p. 156. These measures were not unique to late 16th-century Ulster. See BOSSY, John, *Peace in the post-reformation*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 69.

recent past Catholics in France and Belgium, who have failed to oppose the enemies of the Christian Republic, excited divine wrath⁶⁸. By an act of divine providence Ireland has been chosen to combat the scourge of heresy. It behoves every Catholic prince to row in behind her. The Pope is under a double obligation to assist: as catholic prince, of course, but also as successor to the original grantor of the *Laudabiliter* constitution. Since Adrian IV granted the Lordship to the Kings of England, it is the duty of his successors to ensure that the terms of the original contract are respected⁶⁹. Lombard puts the icing on the cake in the last paragraphs. If the Irish war is successfully concluded, he assures Clement VIII, not only will Ireland regain her lost liberty but the tantalising possibility of the recovery of England beckons.

Conclusion

Lombard was among the first Irish writers to recognise the diplomatic and strategic potential, on a European level, of O'Neill's victories. He also saw how they opened a window of opportunity for a reordering of Ireland's political and confessional structures, which had been battered by Tudor state-building and stood in need of modernisation. The *Commentarius* presents Ireland to Clement VIII as a Catholic regime in waiting and O'Neill as a Catholic champion.

While Lombard's support for O'Neill was possibly influenced by career considerations⁷⁰, and his support for O'Neill later waned⁷¹, it remains true that, by throwing in his lot, even temporarily, with O'Neill, he shed much of his Old English constitutional inheritance. His criticism of royal power in Ireland was neither as consistent nor as thoroughgoing as that of his contemporary Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire (1560-1629) who was archbishop of Tuam from 1609⁷², but in 1600 at least he saw the benefit of a radical break with London. This was at least partly because, under the Tudors, the medley of Irish medieval authorities, essential to the functioning of the *Laudabiliter* constitution, had been collapsed **into what** Lombard's contemporary David Rothe would later call *laicocephala* `1; anarchy. Lombard was convinced that O'Neill, aided by the Spanish, was the best hope for Irish Catholics. For this reason he believed that O'Neill's struggle on behalf of Catholicism deserved the support of all Catholic princes.

Lombard's diplomatic mission, however, was only partially successful. In 1600, Clement VIII did grant O'Neill and his allies the same plenary indulgence as James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald (18 April 1600) and by January of the following year it was circulating in Ireland. O'Neill was recognised as 'captain-general of the Catholic army in Ireland'. That was as far as he was prepared to go. There was no grant of

⁶⁸ Lombard comments on the unity of the Christian republic saying, '...quamvis inter se civilibus institutis multum different, tamen in religionis causa, una omnes sunt Respublica Christiana, postquam constabat, quod tam notabile corporis hujus membrum, quale est regnum Angliae, a totius compage se divellens, altare sacrilegum primum aedificavi...' *Comm.*, pp 181-2.

⁶⁹ *Comm.* p. lxxx.

⁷⁰ In a letter written to O'Neill on 20 January 1601, Clement VIII praises Lombard. See MORAN, op. cit., pp x-xii. In the Consistory of 9 July 1601 Lombard was nominated for Armagh.

⁷¹ Conry to Lombard, 3 May 1627, *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on Franciscan Manuscripts* (1906) p. 105.

⁷² Ó Maolchonaire's political activism was more muscular and more durable than Lombard's. See CASWAY, Jerrold I., *Owen Roe O'Neill and the struggle for Catholic Ireland* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984, passim. For an insight into the theological underpinnings of Ó Maolchonaire's political position, see his *Sgáthán an Chrábhaidh*, Louvain, 1616, especially part ii, chapters 1-5.

excommunication. In fact, clergy in Munster were actively preaching against the Spanish invasion in 1601 and refused to desist.⁷³ In 1601, in keeping with his cautious strategy, Clement appointed the Italian Jesuit, Father Mansoni as nuncio to the confederates, passing over O'Neill's nominee, Mateo de Oviedo, archbishop of Dublin⁷⁴. For Clement the fear of Spanish dominance, the desire to cultivate the French but most of all the hope of a Stuart succession and conversion, meant that support for O'Neill would be muted at best. Lombard's *Commentarius* made little impression on a pontiff always glad of another excuse not to get involved in Ireland.

If it was a diplomatic failure, Lombard's *Commentarius* signalled significant political change in Ireland. One can, of course, doubt O'Neill's sincerity regarding the Catholic reformation envisaged by Rome. One can also question the depth of Lombard's commitment to the O'Neill campaign, given his subsequent conversion to Old English loyalist caution. However, the *Commentarius*, does integrate O'Neill crusade propaganda with Lombard's own critique of the *Laudabiliter* constitution. As such, it represents an early attempt to weld together the two dominant political tendencies in emerging Irish Catholic political thought: Gaelic political radicalism and Old English constitutional caution. Lombard's example demonstrates that it was only in situations of very extreme strain that these two tendencies within the fledgling Irish Catholic community could be harnessed for a common political or religious programme. If it took the Nine Years War to bring this about in the political mind of one member of the Old English elite, and then only temporarily, the prospects for unified Catholic action in 17th century Ireland were not good. Clement VIII's attitude to O'Neill's campaign was almost wholly influenced by questions of international politics but even he recognised this basic fault-line in the potential Irish Catholic state. It would prove spectacularly significant during the Confederate Wars⁷⁵.

⁷³ MORGAN, *art. cit.*, p. 32.

⁷⁴ Mansoni was appointed nuncio on 19 May 1601. He travelled as far as Valladolid when news of the Kinsale defeat brought this mission to an end. See HAGAN, *art. cit.*, pp 303-15 for proposals regarding the nuncios mission.

⁷⁵ On the evolution of Irish Catholic political thought in the first half of the 17th century, see essays in Ó SIOCHRÚ, Micheál, (ed.) *Kingdoms in crisis: Ireland in the 1640s*, Dublin, 2001 and OHLMEYER, Jane H. (ed.), *Political thought in seventeenth-century Ireland: kingdom or colony*, Cambridge, 2000.