



EARLY MODERN HISTORY: SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Giorgio Caravale
CENSORSHIP AND HERESY
IN REVOLUTIONARY
ENGLAND AND COUNTER-
REFORMATION ROME

Story of a Dangerous Book

GENERAL EDITORS: RAB HOUSTON AND EDWARD MUIR



Early Modern History: Society and Culture

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Giorgio Caravale

Censorship
and Heresy
in Revolutionary
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Reformation Rome

Story of a Dangerous Book

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACDF	Rome, Archivio della Congregazione per la dottrina della fede
ARSI	Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
BCT	Biblioteca Comunale di Trento
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli Italiani</i> , Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1960–
<i>Dialogo</i>	Aconcio, <i>Dialogo di Giacompo Riccamati</i> (1558), in Aconcio, <i>De Methodo e opuscoli religiosi e filosofici</i> , ed. G. Radetti, Florence, Vallecchi editore, 1944, 181–210
<i>Essortatione</i>	Aconcio, <i>Una essortatione al timor di Dio: con alcune rime Italiane, nouamente messe in luce, in Londra, Appresso Giouanni Wolfio, seruitore de [P']illustrssimo signor Filippo Sidnei, [1579?]</i> , in Aconcio, <i>De Methodo e opuscoli religiosi e filosofici</i> , 285–301
HP	Hartlib Papers, Sheffield University Library (Sheffield, England)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, in Association with the British Academy: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2000</i> , ed. H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison, Oxford and New York, 2004 (online edition)
PM	M. Firpo and D. Marcatto, <i>Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone</i> , new critical edn, 3 vols, with the collaboration of L. Addante and G. Mongini, Rome, 2011–2015

- Satan's Stratagems* Aconcio, *Satan's Stratagems*. Translated from Jacopo Acontio, *Satanae stratagemata*, 1565; with an introduction by Charles D. O'Malley; prepared by the personnel of the Work Projects Administration, San Francisco, California State Library, 1940
- Somma* Aconcio, *Somma brevissima della dottrina christiana* (1558), in Aconcio, *De Methodo e opuscoli religiosi e filosofici*, 211–284
- Stratagemmi di Satana* Aconcio, *Stratagematum Satanae libri VIII*, ed. Giorgio Radetti, Florence, Vallecchi, 1946

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Introduction

On the morning of Wednesday 8 March 1647, the Presbyterian theologian Francis Cheynell, an influential member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines—an institution appointed by the Long Parliament to restructure the Church of England—appeared before his colleagues to read out a report that censured a book entitled *Satan's Stratagems*, which had been published almost a century before (in 1565) by an Italian exile named Jacob Acontius. A few years later, on 21 April 1654, many miles away from Westminster Abbey in the secret rooms of the Vatican palaces, the cardinals in the Congregation of the Index ordered one of their consultors to examine the same book—which had recently been republished in Amsterdam (1652)—and draft a detailed censure. In this way, in the mid-seventeenth century, Revolutionary England and Counter-Reformation Rome both focused on the same author with censorial and repressive intent. All this happened almost a century after the work had first been published and its author had first been censored. What was hidden behind the intriguing title exalting *Satan's Stratagems*? What was so redoubtable that it triggered the censorial mechanisms in two countries long lined up on opposing fronts? Why did a book published almost a century before still constitute a threat to these opposite extremes of seventeenth-century Europe? These are the main questions that I shall try to answer in this book, in an attempt to understand the extraordinary success of *Satan's Stratagems* and contextualize its line of thinking.

Acontius published *Satan's Stratagems* in the sixteenth century, at a decisive turning point in the history of religion. When the typographer Claude Senneton published the French edition of *Cent et dix considérations divines* by Juan de Valdés, translated together with Celio Secondo Curione's preface by the Breton Huguenot Claude de Kerquefinen (1563), the Reformed authorities regarded it with some suspicion. They promptly added marginal notes to the text to reiterate the centrality of the doctrine of predestination and prevent any individualistic interpretation of the principle of the inward illumination of the Spirit.¹ However, these precautions were not sufficient to set the minds of the worried theologians in Geneva at rest and Jean Calvin himself later stepped into rebuke the reckless printer of Lyons.² This alarm bell was a forewarning of the harsh attack launched two years later against Adrien Gorin, a pastor at the French Reformed Church in Emden, who was guilty of translating and publishing Valdés's *Ciento diez consideraciones divinas* into Flemish. The venerable Company of Pastors in Geneva and Théodore de Bèze strongly encouraged the Churches of East Frisia to punish the 'scandalous' Gorin in a suitable manner. The condemnation of Valdés was the inevitable consequence of an onslaught that had now extended beyond the austere city of Geneva. In the same year that Claude de Kerquefinen printed the French edition of Valdés's works, Bernardino Ochino's *Dialogi triginta (Thirty Dialogues)* was published in Basle. This work, lauding religious tolerance, was explicitly directed against the Swiss Churches' process of authoritarian involution, and was elegantly translated into Latin by Sebastian Castellio of Savoy for the publisher Pietro Perna.³ It is worth highlighting that Castellio had been attacked by Théodore de Bèze for his Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures—the final dramatic act of this polemic was played out in the early 1560s. Castellio had also just published *Conseil à la France désolée* and was beginning to distribute the manuscript of his well-known *Dialogi quatuor* among his most faithful supporters.⁴ These texts collected the most accomplished products of a tradition that praised religious individualism and freedom of conscience, and were therefore bound to clash with Swiss orthodoxy. Just as the editions of Valdés's works had aroused the suspicions of the Swiss theologians, leading to attacks, Bernardino Ochino was compelled to leave the city of Zurich hastily, to take refuge among the Polish anti-Trinitarians and Moravian Anabaptists. Sebastian Castellio was also harshly attacked by the physician Adam Bodenstein in the same year, 1563, and was only saved from serious accusations of heresy

(not least being the translator of *Dialogi triginta*) by his timely death. The beheading of the heretical anti-Trinitarian Valentino Gentile in Berne in 1566 marked the height of this repression. The years around the publication of Acontius's masterpiece therefore coincided with the final realization by Italian and Spanish religious exiles that their long-standing hope of dialogue with the Reformed authorities was impossible. While the demise of Michael Servetus at the stake in Geneva in 1553 had been a dramatic indication of the lack of communication, the beheading of Gentile provided definitive confirmation that there was no longer any margin for discussion. *Satan's Stratagems* is therefore the product of a time when the Reformed Churches had completed their process of dogmatic hardening, with all the consequences that this implied in terms of restricting freedom and raising protective barriers around the besieged 'citadels'.⁵

While Acontius's masterpiece was soon added to the Index in Catholic countries, it was not subjected to Anglican censure owing to the protection granted by Queen Elizabeth I and the more tolerant climate in England at the time.⁶ Or to be precise, it was not censured at the time of publication. As we shall see in Chap. 3, more than eighty years passed before *Satan's Stratagems* was examined by a Presbyterian censor. Acontius's work is part of a long tradition of heretical writings that were censured by Catholics and Protestants alike. For example, the sensational case of the arrest and burning at the stake of the anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus saw the Roman Inquisition collaborate with the local authorities in Geneva in 1553.⁷ This confirmed the convergence of objectives between the repressive institutions of both religions, which had already emerged two years before in the case of the heretic Giorgio Siculo (who was burned at the stake in Ferrara in 1551).⁸ Then there were the cases of Sebastian Castellio from Savoy, who escaped the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions only to suffer violent attacks even in tolerant Basle,⁹ and Bernardino Ochino, the former General of the Order of Capuchins, who fled the Italian peninsula in 1542 but was banished by the Town Council of Zurich, where he had taken refuge, following the publication of his *Dialogi triginta*.¹⁰ At the end of the century there was the case of Francesco Pucci, who was fiercely targeted by the Protestants and finally tried and sentenced to death by the Roman Inquisition.¹¹ Finally, there was Tommaso Campanella, who was repeatedly censured and tried by the Holy Office in Italy and also attracted significant censorious attention from Protestants in the early seventeenth century.¹² By following

the lives of these authors and their writings, the early modern historian can identify a leitmotif that links their names to the assertion of themes and doctrines that were destined, at the height of the age of confession-alization, to sow the seeds of religious tolerance and freedom that only flourished in the second half of the seventeenth century, offering the eighteenth-century *respublica litterarum* the theoretical basis for building an Enlightenment society that was open to religious diversity and hostile to inquisitorial repression.

The following pages feature an attempt to read Jacob Acontius's masterpiece in the light of the most recent historiographical knowledge, but above all in view of the reconstruction of his biographical and intellectual journey, which did not always follow a linear course (Chap. 2). This detailed analysis of *Satan's Stratagems* will allow us to understand the reasons for its extraordinary success in the publishing world in seventeenth-century Europe, with particular reference to England. It was here that the book acquired its biggest following and, perhaps inevitably, its fiercest detractors: in the middle of the English Civil War, *Satan's Stratagems* played a central role in religious and political debate and was used by supporters and opponents of the revolutionary ideals as a blunt weapon to corner their opponents. The 1647 censure by the Presbyterian Francis Cheynell and his committee of theologians did not have any dramatic impact on the fortunes of the work, as it came at a time when the repressive mechanisms had lost much of their effectiveness. In fact, the book was promptly and repeatedly reprinted over the following years until the change in the political climate in the mid-1650s removed any leeway for new publishing projects (Chap. 3). In the meantime, a Latin edition of *Satan's Stratagems*, published in Amsterdam in 1652, had somehow reached the desks of the Congregation of the Index, the Roman body founded in the 1570s that challenged the Holy Office for the right to intervene on matters of book censorship. Equipped with some decidedly dated controversialist instruments, at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Congregation of the Index first tried to extend its sphere of influence to Catholic countries outside the jurisdiction of the Italian peninsula. However, by the 1650s its scope had become limited to ordinary administration, dealing on a case-by-case basis with texts that were—sometimes randomly—signalled by its team of consultors, a zealous reader or the impromptu emergence of a suspect case. The censure of *Satan's Stratagems*, written in the mid-seventeenth century by the Jesuit theologian Girolamo Savignano, gave the Roman

cardinals the opportunity to reconfirm a condemnation officially formulated at the end of the previous century. Although it is a single case that does not allow us to make general considerations, it is undeniable that a detailed examination of the text—leaving aside its formal characteristics—reveals the backwardness of the cultural instruments still used in Roman censure.¹³ As the censorship body had not moved on from the anti-Protestant polemics of the previous century and was evidently unable to adapt to the changing cultural debate in Europe, it could only demonstrate its ineffectiveness and ultimately its pointlessness (Chap. 4). Finally, documentary appendices feature the full text of the English censure and an English translation of the Latin Roman censure (Appendices A and B).¹⁴

NOTES

1. Cf. S.F. Baridon, *Claude de Kerquefinen, italianisant et hérétique*, Geneva 1954, 23–24, note 2; M. Firpo, ‘Introduzione’, to J. de Valdés, *Alfabeto Cristiano e altri scritti*, Turin 1994, cxxxviii.
2. J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *Juan de Valdés réformateur en Espagne et en Italie*, Geneva 1969, 63 ss.; M. Firpo, *Tra alumbados e ‘spirituali’*. *Studi su Juan de Valdés e la crisi religiosa italiana del Cinquecento*, Florence 1990, 114 ss.; Firpo, ‘Introduzione’, cxl.
3. See now M. Firpo, “Boni christiani merito vocantur haeretici”. Bernardino Ochino e la tolleranza’, in *La formazione storica dell’alterità. Studi di storia della tolleranza nell’età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondò*, promoted by Henry Méchoulan, Richard H. Popkin, Giuseppe Ricuperati and Luisa Simonutti, 3 vols, I, sec. XVI, Florence, 2001, 161–244.
4. The reference is to H.R. Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio, 1515–1563: Humanist and Defender of Religious Toleration in a Confessional Age*, Aldershot 2003; first German edition, 1997.
5. On this point, see Ch. 2.
6. It seems that Acontius’s work was instead judged extremely harshly by the Genevan pastor and censor Simon Goulart, who verbally admonished the Dutchman Jan Uytenbogaert, at the time a student in Geneva, and forbade him to read *Satan’s Stratagems*, which he saw as ‘the most wicked book in the world’ (‘le plus méchant livre du monde’): this is mentioned by Pierre Bayle in the entry about Acontius in his *Dictionnaire*, based on an account by Uytenbogaert (P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Amsterdam 1720, 68). On Simon Goulart’s role as a censor in Geneva between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see I. Jostock, *La censure négociée. Le contrôle du livre à Genève, 1560–1625*, Geneva 2007.

7. On Servetus and his arrest, see at least the work by R. Bainton, recently available to Italian readers for the first time with an introduction by A. Prosperi: *Vita e morte di Michele Serveto*, Rome 2012. For the original English edition, cf. R. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511–1553*, Boston, MA, 1953.
8. On the death of Giorgio Siculo and the collaboration between the two ‘inquisitions’, cf. A. Prosperi, *L’eresia del Libro grande. Storia di Giorgio Siculo e della sua setta*, Milan 2000, 191–233.
9. Regarding him, see the cited volume by Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, 170–209.
10. See the pages dedicated to this question in the dated, but still valid monograph by R. Bainton, *Bernardino Ochino. Esule e riformatore senese del Cinquecento 1487–1563*, Florence 1940, but cf. above all the more recent M. Taplin, *The Italian Reformers and the Zurich Church, c. 1540–1620* Aldershot 2003, 111–169.
11. Regarding the story of Pucci and the triple controversialist attack against him in the early 1590s, a foreboding prelude to his conviction by the Inquisition at the end of the century, see G. Caravale, “Un’eresia al di fuori del cristianesimo”. Francesco Pucci nell’Europa di fine Cinquecento’, *Rinascimento*, 50, 2010, 399–423; and G. Caravale, *The Italian Reformation outside Italy: Francesco Pucci’s Heresy in Sixteenth Century Europe*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2015, 188–217.
12. On Campanella and Catholic censure against him, cf. G. Ernst, ‘Cristianesimo e religione naturale. Le censure all’ “Atheismus triumphatus” di Tommaso Campanella’, *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*, I–II, 1989, 137–200, as well as the censure against *De praedestinatione, electione, reprobatione et auxiliis divinae gratiae cento thomisticus* (typis mandato Parisiis apud Tussanum du Bray, via Iacobaea, sub spicis maturis, 1636) published in T. Campanella, *Opuscoli inediti*, ed. L. Firpo, Florence 1951, 145–163, and the renowned essay by L. Firpo, ‘Filosofia italiana e controriforma. III: La proibizione delle opere del Campanella’, *Rivista di filosofia*, 41, 1950, 390–401.
13. For an overview of Roman censorship in the seventeenth century, see M. Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell’Italia del Seicento. Tra repressione e mediazione*, Rome 2011.
14. The original Latin version of the Roman censure has been published, together with an Italian translation of the document, in the original Italian edition of this book: cf. G. Caravale, *Storia di una doppia censura. Gli Stratagemmi di Satana di Giacomo Aconcio nell’Europa del Seicento*, Pisa 2013, 196–221. The historiographical essay about the incredible story of the publication of the monograph about Jacob Acontius by

Charles Donald O'Malley, which was ready for the press in the late 1930s but was not published until 1955, published in the Italian original version of the book (Caravale, *Storia di una doppia censura*, 223–239), has not been reproduced here in this English version of the volume according to a joint decision by the author, the series editors and the publisher.

Jacob Acontius: From Trent to *Satan's Stratagems* (1565)

1 A JOURNEY OF FAITH BETWEEN THE PAPACY AND THE EMPIRE

Little is known about the life of Jacob Acontius, not even his exact date of birth. He was born in Trent or Ossana, probably in around 1520, studied law and was admitted to the College of Notaries in Trent in February 1546, after having practised the profession since at least 1540.¹ A couple of years later, in June 1548, the course of his life changed when he met Archduke Maximilian, son of Emperor Ferdinand I, who stayed at Trent on his way to Spain.² Although the meagre documentary sources—a legal act signed by the young notary in the presence of the future Emperor—suggest that this was probably a fleeting encounter, it had significant repercussions. When the then King of Bohemia returned from Spain, exactly 3 years later, he stopped in Trent once again. It is highly likely that he met Acontius for the second time on this occasion and persuaded him to travel to Vienna, an invitation to the court that soon turned into a permanent stay lasting over 4 years. Acontius was probably referring to this stay in Vienna when he mentioned ‘many years of my life spent at court’³ in a letter to a friend some time later. Although we cannot put an exact date on the time he spent in Vienna, it is probable that he was there from 1551 to 1556, when he decided to return to Trent to serve in the secretariat of Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, who had just been appointed Governor of Milan.

Fig. 1 Jacobus Acontius, unknown artist (possibly late seventeenth century)



It was during this period—between 1548 and 1556—that he nurtured the decision to leave the Catholic fold for the Reformed camp. However, it is difficult to establish the times and stages of this transition without more certain documentation (Fig. 1). For example, it is not clear whether Acontius made his choice during his time in Trent—in which case his decision to follow Maximilian to Vienna would be seen as a result of this early conversion—or subsequently, during his long spell at the Archduke's court in Vienna. It is possible—even probable—that the heated religious turmoil that characterized life in Trent from the early 1540s onwards made an impression on the inquisitive young notary. In her 1988 study of the fortunes of Erasmus of Rotterdam in Italy, Silvana Seidel Menchi partly focused her attention on notaries and their natural exposure to 'Lutheran contagion'. Indeed, Roman Inquisition courtrooms witnessed a constant procession of notaries who had been fatally attracted by the sirens of religious dissent. It all started when a humble shoemaker was questioned about the presence of Lutherans in Asolo—less than a 100 kilometers from Trent—during a 1547 enquiry. His naively immediate reply was 'yes, there are lots of notaries who speak around here', and that the heretical groups met to read the epistles of St Paul at the 'chancery of notaries'.⁴ In many cases, this religious restlessness had been triggered by reading religious texts by Erasmus of Rotterdam; he was an author with whom notaries were already familiar through his grammatical and rhetorical works.⁵ It is easy to imagine that

Acontius's role as a notary led to his familiarity with Erasmus's works; a familiarity he would put to use many years later as a religious exile far from the peninsula. Acontius's friend Leonardo Colombini was also a notary—they finished their studies together and both joined the College of Notaries in Trent—and was first put on trial for heresy in 1564, a few years after Acontius left the country (he was tried again in 1579). While Acontius was still in Trent, Colombini's friend and correspondent Giovanni Antonio Zurletta was also tried for heresy.⁶

In any case, it is not essential to establish whether it was a question of Acontius's pro-Lutheran propensities guiding him towards the court of a prince who was clearly favourably inclined towards Protestants (for obvious political reasons), although he had never officially sided with them,⁷ or, conversely, the milieu of the court inspiring him to leave the Catholic faith once and for all. Acontius's move to the Reformed faith was probably the result of a gradual process made possible by his rising impatience with Catholic intransigence and ultimately triggered by the irenic and conciliatory atmosphere at the Viennese court. After all, the 1540s—Acontius's last decade on the Italian peninsula apart from a short spell in Milan and Trent in 1557–1558 before he left the country definitively, to which we shall return later—featured a significant increase in Roman repressive measures against the spread of heretical dissent. These formed part of the project to redefine the dogma of the Catholic doctrinal patrimony, which was threatened by the inroads made by the Reformation on the peninsula. Although Trent provided a distinctive vantage point, Acontius must have been an informed and attentive observer of the profound transformation of Roman power over the course of that decade. However, after leaving the city, he experienced a completely different climate at Maximilian's court that was certainly more favourably disposed towards religious conciliation; he encountered an early form of Lutheranism tinged with irenic tension that must have nurtured his sympathies for Reformed ideals, in stark contrast to the uncompromising Swiss Protestantism that he later encountered after leaving the peninsula definitively. Acontius was in Vienna in the years following the Battle of Mühlberg and, significantly, the failure of the 1548 Augsburg Interim—the statement through which Charles V responded to the perceived affront of Rome's unilateral decision to transfer the Council from Trent to Bologna. These were years in which the Emperor chose to give fresh impetus to the peace-making spirit that had driven the failed series of religious colloquies in the 1540s, although this time he focused

exclusively on the Empire and its difficult political balance instead of Rome. The new rules introduced by the Interim, particularly the marriage of priests and lay reception of the Communion cup, continued to fuel the hopes of those in the German-speaking world who supported religious reconciliation between Catholic and Reformed princes over the following decades.⁸ In the immediate future, however, it proved impossible to achieve Charles V's long-cherished aim of repairing the political fracture that had divided the Empire since the second decade of the sixteenth century. In the early 1550s, the Emperor was forced to gradually become aware of the failure of his irenic dream of a reunified Empire under imperial protection, reluctantly accepting the religious and political division in his territories, which was finally formalized by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. Although there must have been a climate of resignation in Brussels following Charles V's decision to abdicate the imperial title, share his territories between his brother Ferdinand I and his son Philip II, and retire to the monastery of Yuste, political hopes and visions at Maximilian's Viennese court continued to be driven by ideals of peace and reconciliation for several decades. Acontius gradually embraced Lutheranism in this climate, which was pervaded by Maximilian's irenic optimism, and his conciliatory and tolerant approach to religion was influenced by this model for years to come.

2 THE *DIALOGO DI GIACOPO RICCAMATI*: SEEKING A METHOD AND MAKING NICODEMITE PLANS

The *Dialogo di Giacopo Riccamati* *Dialogo di Giacopo Riccamati* provides an interesting outline of Acontius's personal anguish and journey of faith in the early 1550s.⁹ It was published in Basle in 1558, but, as the author testifies, it was written in Vienna under the auspices of the Archduke.¹⁰ As its title suggests, the work is a dialogue between two imaginary characters, Muzio and Giacomo Riccamati, with two opposing—or at least extremely diverse—states of mind, which can both be partly attributed to the author at different moments on his journey of faith. Muzio embodied the unwavering faith of a lifelong Catholic who had always lived on the Italian peninsula and seemingly had no doubts about the religious doctrines inherited from his forefathers. He was a God-fearing man who had been taught not to explore 'things that are too challenging and too high-minded' ('cose troppo ardue [...] et troppo alte'),¹¹ convinced that 'his judgement' would not 'be sufficient to distinguish the sincere

expositions of the Gospel from petty and sophistic ones',¹² and equally sure that his duty as a Catholic was to follow the decrees of Rome without asking too many questions about the imposed doctrines, being particularly careful to avoid contact with the 'contagious' Lutherans. Despite these unshakable certainties of faith, Muzio was aware of the ailments afflicting the Church of Rome at the time. However, he genuinely hoped that a Council in the near future would miraculously heal them. His hopes reflected the weight of expectations that this 'assembly of all Christendom' had generated in the period immediately before the Council was convened and for a few more years after 1545, leading the most sensitive souls—which probably included Jacob Acontius at some point—to think about the renewal of the Roman Curia and doctrinal reconciliation with Protestants.

Giacomo Riccamati sat on the other side of the imaginary debating table in the *Dialogo*: a man of faith dedicated to defending the quest for truth. He did not offer ready-made recipes for salvation and tended to undermine the certainties used by Muzio to defend his apparent inner serenity by revealing the errors committed by the papacy, above all the obtuseness of its response to Lutheranism. In other words, the author assigned him the task of planting the seed of doubt in the soul of a devoted Catholic, persuading him that if questioning his certainties meant executing a divine commandment, then measuring his doctrines against someone with different ideas meant making a fundamental contribution to the quest for divine truth. It is easy to see the figure of Riccamati as the profile of a man beset by doubts, who nevertheless manages to transform his state of disquiet and uncertainty (and consequent apparent weakness) into a symbol of great strength of spirit over time. When rereading the *Dialogo* over five centuries after it was written, the clear impression is that Acontius used the work to depict the religious anguish he had experienced in the years before deciding to move to the Archduke's court or before definitively abandoning the Catholic faith, creating a dialogue featuring agonizing inner conflict between the reason (and certainty) of his Catholic origins and Italian past, and the emergence of doubts that first tormented him at length and then led him to move away from his roots. The point of arrival of Riccamati's journey of faith in the *Dialogo* was identified by the Lutheran flag. However, it was not a definitive destination by any means, not just because it would be replaced by new adventures in far-off and unknown places, but because the author's focus and reasoning did not concern

the final outcome or the relative suitability of the destination, but rather the method required to reach it, wherever it may have been.

Riccamati seemed to express the many questions that the religious crisis in the early sixteenth century had generated in the mind of Acontius and many other like-minded restless souls. With the proliferation of religious confessions on the Italian peninsula, he asked himself why nobody seemed willing to question their certainties; the many sects generated more or less directly by the Lutheran rift should have been enough to sow the seed of doubt in the minds of Catholics that they were in the wrong and had previously been deceived. Riccamati felt that the basic observation that only one of the many religions was true should have immediately led them to observe that ‘an infinite multitude of people were mistaken in the past’. They only had to look beyond the limited horizons of their home turf and be driven by the desire to check ‘what certainty there is’ that their ‘religion is good’, taking ‘those who criticise it’ seriously, even if just to ‘know what reasons and evidence they bring along’, so that they can imagine ‘what answers could be given in response’, thereby ‘making a diligent comparison’ and striving to understand how much they could ‘really be sure of the truth’.¹³

It is clear from a perusal of the *Dialogo* that the main target of the polemical attack was the Church of Rome. Luther’s paean to the ‘freedom of the Christian’ had sensationally opened the floodgates—despite his subsequent partial rethink—on a river that had been flowing more or less sedately for centuries, giving rise to an uncontrolled torrent of currents of varying sizes: it was no longer possible to behave as if nothing had happened and the unity of Christianity had never been questioned. People could no longer uncritically assimilate the religion of their fathers—the faith in which they had been brought up—without first asking searching questions about the quality of their chosen path or reformulating the reasons for their choice after thorough analysis. Riccamati thus asked Muzio the rhetorical question: ‘If someone embraces the doctrine that he has been taught and stubbornly persists with it, without wanting to attest whether it is genuine or false, does it not seem like a random path?’¹⁴ Those who only embraced the ‘doctrine of the Roman Church’ because ‘it had been taught to them first’, and because it had been ‘embedded in the soul’ with ‘the example of their fathers and many others that educated them in childhood’ were effectively admitting to themselves and God that if they had been born to fathers who were

'Turkish or Jewish, or from another sect of infidels', and if their religion 'had been taught to them first', they would calmly have 'followed the Turkish, Jewish or indeed any other religion'. The implications of religious relativism—the equality of the three monotheistic religions—were used here as a bugbear to persuade Muzio to abandon his unshakable certainties. The only remedy for those who did not wish to embark on a 'random path' and who wanted to be sure that their chosen religion was 'good and holy' was to verify that 'it was such' through 'the word of God'.¹⁵ Those who refused to measure themselves against others or, even worse, took refuge by choosing to blindly persecute difference soon lapsed into ignorance and superstition. By closing the door in the face of divine truth, the intolerance of those who 'object as soon as the Gospel appears, without even wanting to understand what it was, using bans, imprisonment, stakes and all sorts of supplications, persecution and cruelty [...] to prevent it from developing and to oppress it' would only lead to further separation from God.¹⁶

Riccamati was therefore trying to sow the seed of doubt in Muzio's mind (for him it was a certainty) that Rome's reaction to the spread of Lutheranism, characterized by total closure and repression, was a sign of the obtuseness, weakness and—ultimately—the bad faith of the Church: 'their biggest mistake' was their 'perverse stubbornness in wanting to class something as an abomination without first understanding what it was'. The rejection of any kind of dialogue was so all-encompassing, added Riccamati, that when a representative of the Roman Church had finally decided to listen to Protestants, he had done so 'with such rotten and corrupt judgement' that even 'the bright light of the sun' had appeared to him as 'darkness'.¹⁷ In the light of attacks by Lutherans, instead of 'using due diligence to learn the truth or falsity of one's faith' or taking advantage of the opportunity to question one's certainties and renew the reasons for belonging to one's faith through a frank and transparent debate, checking that it corresponds to the dictates of the Gospel, the Roman hierarchy had quite unscrupulously 'avoided them [Lutherans], accused them and persecuted them as great heretics'.¹⁸ In this way, they 'foolishly' spurned every opportunity for 'discussion of the faith', showing their fear of 'lapsing into heresy', as if 'changing views' was the gravest danger for a man of faith.¹⁹

In response to Riccamati's persistent reasoning, Muzio showed all the fragility of the faithful Catholic whose atavistic certainties have been snatched away. He felt that opening his heart and mind to the Lutherans

would be tantamount to the risk of being fatally attracted to their innovative message. As a resident of a Catholic country, the prospect of dialogue seemed to be full of uncertainties. Indeed, he saw four equally impracticable options: ‘keeping it secret’—the Nicodemite choice—appeared increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of greater inquisitorial oppression; publically retracting heresy guaranteed a lifelong stigma of ‘infamy’; fleeing involved the painful abandonment of ‘fatherland, family and friends [...] and everything’; and martyrdom—the choice to make a pertinacious stand and ‘go to the stake ignominiously’—was not for him. It was better to postpone the inevitably dramatic choice and wait for a ‘free and holy Council’ to be convened, in the hope of being ‘enlightened by the truth’ and, furthermore, ‘without any danger’.²⁰ This late appeal for a Council (the *Dialogo* was published in 1558, although it had been written a few years previously) probably reflected the aforementioned weight of expectations that those who, like Acontius, were sensitive to religious change must have placed in the forthcoming opening of the Council of Trent in the early 1540s. Until it was actually convened and issued its first doctrinal decrees in 1546–1547, and even afterwards (think of Giorgio Siculo’s prophetic *Epistola* of 1550), the Council was responsible for the projection of numerous appeals, hopes and utopian dreams into the collective consciousness of the time, all aimed at the future prospect of healing the fracture in Christianity. After the early 1550s, however, all this inevitably became part of a past overtaken by events and Riccamati was forced to bring Muzio sharply back to reality: hoping that Lutherans and Catholics would come to an agreement on the ‘controversies of religion’ was tantamount to hoping that ‘God and the devil’ would reach a joint understanding. His attack ended with a rhetorical question—‘Can’t you see how long this practice has been in place?’²¹—that betrayed all the disenchantment of those—none more than Acontius—who had been forced to painfully accept the failure of the prospect of reconciliation following the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547 and Charles V’s last attempts to seek religious and political unity in his Empire, adapting to a new equilibrium that soon found its first legal expression in the Peace of Augsburg (1555).²²

However, the final outcome of the process of disillusionment experienced by Acontius through Riccamati was not explicit adhesion to Lutheranism, although various textual allusions suggest that it was the religious confession that the author of the *Dialogo* leant towards. Instead, Acontius’s central message was an invitation to place the search

for religious truth at the centre of one's life path by 'scrutinising the truth with great diligence [...] regarding things related to the pious worship of God and our salvation', without deviating from the teachings of the Gospel. While careful and meticulous study of the holy texts was to be encouraged ('read and contemplate the Scriptures assiduously'), it was also essential to favour constant debate with different positions of faith about the truth and the most fruitful way to reach it: 'let us ask everyone what the right way is' was the explicit invitation formulated by Acontius–Riccamati in the *Dialogo*.²³ The Council was certainly required, but not in the traditional way; it needed to be 'in many pieces', an ideal meeting of all Christians consisting of many short sessions offering daily opportunities for exchanging and discussing views on matters of faith among friends and experts: 'You and I will do our part today, two or three other friends will do theirs tomorrow.' The best recipe for the ultimate triumph of the divine truth was to 'stimulate each other to study the Scriptures' ('accend[ersi] l'un l'altro allo studio delle Scritture'), listen to 'everyone's opinions' and compare them to assess 'which ones are most in keeping with the Holy Scriptures' ('quali sieno alle Scritture sacre più conformi'). The main lesson that emerged from the *Dialogo* therefore concerned the method adopted in the search for divine truth rather than the content of faith.²⁴ With regard to the latter, as we shall see, Acontius referred his readers to another text that was subsequently enclosed with the *Dialogo*: the *Somma della dottrina cristiana*. The original concept behind the *Dialogo* was different; when it was drafted (in around 1554–1555), he did not intend to abandon his country, but return to his place of birth—as he duly did in 1556—to make his contribution to the search for truth. After having been away from the Italian peninsula for more than 5 years, except for short work trips,²⁵ and still (partially) aware of the power relations in play at the time, Acontius wanted to mark his return by launching a covert propaganda campaign aimed at sowing the seed of doubt within the fortress of solid certainties which supported Rome's temporal and spiritual power. He intended to use the text completed at the Viennese court as a weapon; as it was written in Italian, it was designed for an Italian audience. The terms of this Nicodemite propaganda campaign were revealed at the end of the *Dialogo* by the Catholic Muzio, now ashamed about the 'serious and reckless errors' committed thus far and having been persuaded to leave the 'darkness in which he was living' in order to clarify, most of all to himself, 'whether he was walking along the path of truth or that of error'.²⁶ This was after asking

for more information about the Lutheran doctrine and getting Riccamati to promise to give him ‘a little book to read’ that would help him to ‘separate the wheat from the chaff’—the reference is to the *Somma della dottrina cristiana*.²⁷ Indeed, Muzio encouraged him to ‘summarise all this reasoning that you’ve done with me in writing’, recommending, however, that he should publish it under a title ‘that would not frighten off scrupulous men, but exhort them to read it’.²⁸ The idea was to distribute the volume around ‘streets and inns’ (‘contrade e hosterie’) by implementing a Nicodemite plan of dissemination in which the apparent randomness of the material distribution of the text would conceal its precise proselytizing objective:

Copies could be thrown down at night around the quarters of the city, giving the impression that someone had randomly lost them, and some could be placed in taverns as if they had been left behind by travellers; in short, it could be disseminated everywhere in a thousand different ways.²⁹

A title ‘that would not frighten off scrupulous men, but exhort them to read it’ was an essential condition for the success of the plan and its aim to convince even the most reluctant Catholic believers, while at the same time avoiding the increasingly tightening grip of censorship. The final title chosen by Acontius—at Muzio’s behest—was *Dialogo [...] nel qual si scuoprono le astutie con che i lutherani si sforzano di ‘ngannare le persone semplici et tirarle alla loro setta: e si mostra la via, che harebbero da tenere i prencipi e magistrati per istirpare de gli Stati loro le pesti delle heresie*, which astutely presented the theme of the work under a reassuring controversialist guise while disclosing its content to those who wanted and were able to read between the lines. In this way, by being passed around in cities and gaining widespread exposure, this manual of persuasion would become an instrument for spreading the method to ‘seek the truth’. Muzio concluded

on seeing the ways and the sequence of points that you have used with me, some could also use them with their friends (if the opportunity arose), while others could give the book directly to their friends, adopting an appropriate argumentative nuance,

adding the final comment that ‘it really is disgraceful that the world has to remain so blind and in such gloomy darkness’.³⁰

The propaganda project outlined in Muzio’s concluding remarks never came to fruition. After returning to the Italian peninsula in the second half

of the 1550s, Acontius might have realized that the substantial strengthening of the inquisitorial and censorship network—now much more far-reaching under the Carafa papacy than the situation he had encountered just a few years before—made it too risky to publish his *Dialogo*. Alternatively, he might have abandoned the idea of printing the book—it was only published a few years later in Basle after he had become a religious exile—and used his stay on the peninsula to experiment with the discreet and reserved channels of manuscript circulation. Although there is no documentary evidence to demonstrate that the text was distributed, the existence of a manuscript version of the *Dialogo* with some significant differences compared to the printed edition makes such an eventuality plausible.

The manuscript copy, which might predate the final printed version published by Pietro Perna in 1558,³¹ also provides insight beneath the murky veil that often enshrouds the problematic drafting phase of a work only known in its final printed version. It is a first and more moderate draft that probably coincides with a less advanced stage in Acontius's religious journey. It stands out from the printed edition for the notable absence and clear sweetening of some of the most markedly anti-Roman passages in the final text. Indeed, the manuscript version bears no trace of the explicit allusions to persecution, 'bans', 'imprisonment', 'stakes' and 'to all kinds of torture' by the executors of papal will, the explicit identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Antichrist,³² or the polemical attacks on princes and magistrates persecuting heretics to appease the religious powers. Its tone is much more subdued, reflecting the profile of an author besieged by doubt, a man still hesitating before taking the decisive step. The printed text, by comparison, is much more clearly defined, taking shape both as a paean to the method of perennial truth-seeking and the work of a man who had left his doubts behind and joined the Reformed camp by bluntly rejecting papal authority and its religious arsenal.³³

Which form of Protestant faith did Acontius finally decide to endorse? By attempting to answer this question, we can cast light on his religious torment, which is otherwise difficult to grasp in its most hidden aspects, and above all reach a better understanding of successive developments in his religious thinking. As mentioned, the form of Lutheranism that Acontius encountered and embraced in Vienna was fully focused on a call for the religious freedom of Christians and direct personal readings of the Bible, firmly grounded in the spirit of liberty before authority and

tradition. This is certainly the image of Luther's followers conveyed in the *Dialogo*, where—using Riccamati as a mouthpiece—they are compared to ‘all of the prophets, Christ and the apostles’ who had been subjected to savage ‘calumny’ in the past.³⁴

3 THE *SOMMA BREVISSIMA DELLA DOTTRINA CRISTIANA*: THE ‘BENEFIT OF CHRIST’ AND ANTI-ROMAN POLEMICS

The image of Lutherans as prophets, apostles and so on is substantially confirmed in the *Somma brevissima della dottrina cristiana*, the short work written by Acontius to accompany the printed version of the *Dialogo* and illustrate basic Reformed doctrine.³⁵ As it was also in Italian, it was probably conceived to be part of his thwarted Nicodemite propaganda project. It reads as a small tribute composed in honour of the Bible as the only source of knowledge. Acontius uses presumed adherence to the holy text as his yardstick, either embracing a given doctrine or launching polemical attacks accordingly. The faith that he espoused was ‘grounded in extremely clear, candid and resolute testimonies of Scripture’, all aimed at ‘exalting the mercy, grace, goodness and glory of God’, while at the same time ‘deflating and lowering the pride of men’.³⁶ The harshness of predestination had been expunged from this faith to make room for the central role played by the ‘benefit of Christ’s death’; as it was ‘impossible for someone to be saved’ because of ‘the nature and the condition of man’, God had

sent his only-begotten son Jesus Christ, moved by an unfathomable love and goodness, so that, as a man, he could come to the aid of our folly. The aid was such that he took all of our sins and iniquities onto himself and was severely punished on the cross, as if he had committed all of our sins.³⁷

The salvific effects of this sacrifice guaranteed man total restoration of his perfect state of grace before the original sin.³⁸ However, the benefit of Christ’s death ‘does not yet belong to all men’, meaning that ‘not everyone is saved’. Indeed, ‘this grace and favour’ are exclusively reserved for those who have faith, those

who believe [...] not the history of events surrounding Christ [like the Jews], but firmly believe that they are some of those that Christ died for, and believe that their sins were forgiven by Christ through pure grace.³⁹

On the other hand, according to 'Catholics' the 'benefit of Christ's death was imperfect' because by mounting the cross the Son of God had only erased our sins (and Adam's original sin) 'with regard to guilt, but not yet with regard to punishment'. For Acontius, this was why they maintained that in order to 'fulfil the punishment' the soul of man needs a post-mortem trip through purgatory or the 'intercession (as they say) of those who do good for the dead', or that it is necessary to satisfy by works while still alive.⁴⁰ Therefore, Catholics placed 'the justice of man in works more than anything else'. However, as the Scriptures clearly stated the opposite, namely that 'the Son of God fully erased all the sins of those who are saved', it followed that man is not obliged to do good works to 'recompense for his sins or erase them', as Catholics maintain, but only 'to be obedient to God as a good son, so that his name is glorified and so that he can be as similar as possible to his master Jesus Christ'.⁴¹

Therefore, the Scriptures teach us 'that the only road to salvation is the remission of sins and the justice promised to us in Christ and through Christ, which is received through faith'.⁴² With regard to those who indicate a different path to reach salvation, 'there is no doubt that they want to teach a different Gospel from the one taught by the apostles'.⁴³ Acontius's form of Lutheranism—which he probably chose to embrace while at the Viennese court—was therefore strongly influenced by the doctrine of the *Benefit of Christ*, an anonymous text published in Venice in 1543. Given that the book circulated widely around the Italian peninsula in the mid-1540s, it is easy to imagine that he enjoyed the opportunity to read it before he left Trent at the end of the decade. The *Somma* contains a lot from the *Benefit of Christ* and little in terms of predestination; there are clear traces of Luther's ideas on the freedom of Christians and reading the holy text directly, and few signs of the increasing dogmatic and doctrinal rigidity adopted by Protestant Churches in the mid-sixteenth century. It has already been mentioned how much Acontius's version of Lutheranism was inspired by the irenic environment of the Viennese court where he spent 'a long time'.⁴⁴ This must be borne in mind in order to understand the tolerant elements of his masterwork, *Satan's Stratagems* (*Stratagemmi di Satana*).⁴⁵ Equally, in order to grasp the secret of the latter work's success in the Protestant world, above all in England, we need to take into account the aggressive anti-Roman nature of the *Somma*, which, by anticipating many parts of *Satan's Stratagems*, once again illustrates to what extent Acontius's

impatience with Catholic intolerance and the obtuseness of Rome's reaction to the challenge of Lutheranism was at the root of his choice of faith.

The *Somma brevissima della dottrina cristiana* mirrored the dialogue-based structure of its companion work (the *Dialogo di Riccamati*), continuing the imaginary debate with the arguments and objections put forward by the Catholic camp. The synthesis of its savage anti-Roman attacks was the accusation that Catholics had deviated dangerously from the route outlined by the principles in the holy text. Acontius wrote that after it had been established that Catholics could not prove any of their doctrines on the basis of Scripture, they had striven to sustain a number of points: 'the authority of the Church, that is of the Pope, the cardinals and the bishops, and also of the Pope by himself (who wants to be above the Church), is greater than that of Scripture'; 'that the Church can judge what should be admitted or not admitted as authentic'; 'that Scripture does not contain everything that is part of the Christian doctrine, but that the apostles taught many things exclusively by word of mouth'; 'that the Pope and the Church have the authority to make new laws and oblige men to obey them under pain of mortal sin'⁴⁶; 'that they can create new articles of faith and those who do not believe in them are heretics who cannot be saved'; 'that the Pope, who claims to be the Vicar of Christ, and the Church are governed by the Holy Ghost, and cannot err'; 'that therefore interpretation of the Scriptures is exclusively their responsibility and not that of others'.⁴⁷ Naturally, justification by works and faith was not the only point on which the Catholic doctrine deviated from the Holy Scriptures. Acontius consistently adopted Lutheran reasoning to stress that the only sacraments ('visible signs' that represent the 'good news of our redemption through Christ') mentioned in the Scriptures were baptism and the Eucharist: the popes had therefore wrongfully increased them to seven.⁴⁸ He also targeted the Catholic habit of worshipping saints and auricular confession—a highly useful instrument through which priests were able to 'imprint their swindles and fallacies firmly in the souls of simple men'.⁴⁹ He ended by reviewing the arguments of apologists for the Holy Roman Church and demolishing their theories one by one. Some had attempted to 'make excuses for the popes by saying that what they did with their traditions and institutions was not a question of adding to the precepts of God', but instead 'was only a way of providing guidance and showing the right path to be able to observe these precepts flawlessly'. Acontius cut such reasoning

short—‘this is tittle-tattle’—with the view that ‘it is clear to see that they value their traditions much more than the precepts of God’.⁵⁰ To those who claimed that removing the central role of works for purposes of salvation paved the way for immorality—‘the exclusion of works stops men from learning how to do good and cheapens them, smoothing the path for the license of the flesh’⁵¹—he answered provocatively that although not everybody in Reformed countries was a saint by any means, he was sure that ‘you will not find all the whoredom, adultery, hatred, animosity, envy, murder, cheating, blasphemy and other nasty vices I could name that are frequently found in the Papacy’, but rather ‘a way of life with great innocence and simplicity’.⁵² Others had objected that ‘the doctrine and religion of the Roman Church had been considered good and holy for so long and by so many and by such great countries’ that it was impossible to believe ‘that our fathers must have been blind and let themselves be deceived’, or that ‘a certain Martin Luther only started to open his eyes after many centuries and see what many learned and able men before him had not seen’.⁵³ Acontius responded by saying that ‘the same considerations’ could be made by Turks or Gentiles ‘to affirm their faith’, as ‘their religion had lasted much longer and been embraced by more countries and peoples than that of the Roman Church’. And yet there was no doubt—especially in the minds of Catholics—that ‘the Gentiles were mistaken’ and ‘the Turks are seriously mistaken’.⁵⁴ As in the final printed version of the *Dialogo*, the climax of the anti-Roman attack led the reader to associate Rome with the Antichrist:

We say that although the Pope professes to be a Christian and the shepherd of all Christians, he teaches and has others teach a doctrine that is essentially anything but Christian.⁵⁵

These aggressive anti-Roman polemics also featured in Acontius’s masterwork, *Satan’s Stratagems*, alongside harsh attacks on the dogmatic rigidity of the Protestant Churches, forming a (seemingly) ambiguous and contradictory blend. We shall return to both aspects in Chap. 3 to analyse the success of the work in seventeenth-century Europe.

4 TOWARDS ENGLAND: RETURN AND ESCAPE FROM THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

In mid-1556, Acontius decided to return to Italy, an idea that he had probably never abandoned. He had always seen his stay in Vienna as an opportunity for a long break—somewhat significantly, it was punctuated by several short Italian trips—rather than definitive exile.⁵⁶ The drafting of the *Dialogo* in Vienna and the associated Nicodemite propaganda plan prove that he had not renounced his ambition to promote a work revealing the nefarious influence of the papacy on religious life on the peninsula and, more generally, Rome's intolerant attitude. Returning to the area he had left 5 or 6 years previously, Acontius chose—perhaps at the suggestion of an eminent advisor⁵⁷—the protection of Cristoforo Madruzzo, also known as the Cardinal of Trent, a man of the Church who was able to offer him sufficient reassurances on matters of faith due to his open and tolerant attitude. Acontius had probably known him since his time in Trent and had appreciated his broad-mindedness as a student of law in Padua, when he was already a member of the Accademia degli Infiammati (Academy of the Burning Ones). Madruzzo became a bishop in 1539 and a cardinal in 1545. In 1541, he had offered protection to Ortensio Lando, a scholar and polygraph from Milan who fled to Switzerland in the late 1540s, and thanked him by dedicating to him a manuscript collection of writings by Luther and Bucer with extremely radical connotations;⁵⁸ in subsequent years, he also welcomed figures suspected of heresy such as Nicolò of Verona, the Augustinian editor of *Nova doctrina* by Urbano Regio, and Andrea Ghetti from Volterra, an Eremite friar employed by Madruzzo *in officio praedicandi*.⁵⁹ Shortly afterwards, in 1548, the Bishop of Trent conferred the title of Podestà of the City on Filippo Valentini, a humanist from Modena previously suspected of heresy by Paul III and a future exile in Valtellina in 1557. During the first sessions in Trent, the stance Madruzzo took in favour of translating the Bible into the vernacular and giving the Eucharist to laymen led to accusations of heresy from Bishop Dionigi Zanettini.⁶⁰ As a great admirer of the *Benefit of Christ*, he also took steps to help the Sicilian Bartolomeo Spadafora in 1555, when Cardinal Reginald Pole asked him to intervene with the Emperor on his behalf to prevent the involvement of the Sicilian Inquisition, which already had 'some malevolent information' about Spadafora frequenting the circle centred around Pole and Vittoria Colonna in Rome.⁶¹ These

are sufficient elements to outline the profile of a man of the Church who, also thanks to the protective shield of the imperial jurisdiction of the Principality of Trent, was able to allow himself significant room for manoeuvre away from the direct control of Rome. When Acontius returned to Italy, Madruzzo had just been appointed Governor of Milan in place of the Duke of Alba. Therefore, after a long period of imperial service, he moved to the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs, whose relations with the German-Imperial branch were not at their best. However, the Cardinal of Trent always enjoyed the favour of Charles V, and even after appointed as the Governor of Milan was very careful to keep the channel for dialogue with the German branch open, thereby encouraging constant interaction between the German world and the Roman Curia, even at the cost of displeasing the King of Spain, Philip II, who decided to replace him shortly afterwards.⁶² In this way, on 26 November 1556 Acontius arrived in Milan to be Madruzzo's secretary and remained in this role until June 1557.⁶³ There are no surviving documentary traces regarding his stay or his actions in Milan.⁶⁴ The temptation to interpret this as implicit confirmation of the implementation of his long-planned Nicodemite propaganda plan is indirectly strengthened by the fact that his time in Milan coincided with the exacerbation of Paul IV's repressive campaign, whose effects were only partially cushioned by Madruzzo's influential protection. The Governor of Milan made an effort to stem pressure from Carafa by collaborating with Ercole Gonzaga, Cosimo I and a network of agents in Rome and Venice to exonerate Pietro Carnesecchi, who was first summoned to appear before the Roman Holy Office in 1557 and given a sentence in absentia on 2 April 1558.⁶⁵ Madruzzo hosted him regularly from 1559 onwards and even expressed open disapproval of the appointment of cardinals favoured by the Pope in March 1557 by supporting the Theatines Scotti and Consiglieri, along with Dominican and Franciscan friars such as Ghislieri, Petow and Dolera, and strict canonists like Rebiba and Reumano.⁶⁶ Indeed, his troublesome stances earned explicit reproaches from the Pope on more than one occasion; he was even urged to be more vigilant in his area to prevent the occurrence of unpleasant episodes such as a prison break by two dangerous heretics.⁶⁷

The papal measures were not without political implications that were sometimes clear, for example in the harsh propaganda against the imperial court that reached its climax in February 1557: while Aconcio was in Madruzzo's service, the Pope gave orders to collect evidence that could

be used to accuse Ferdinand and his son Maximilian of heresy, continuing his refusal to recognize the former's imperial title.⁶⁸ This initiative, with its hurriedly collected evidence, was destined to remain a dead letter, overtaken by the final events in the war, but it is easy to imagine its effect on those like Acontius who were inextricably associated with the imperial court and the young Hapsburg Archduke in particular. If we believe those who said after the event that Acontius had been contemplating his escape to Switzerland for a long time,⁶⁹ it is quite legitimate to suggest that Carafa's intimidation campaign against the Ferdinand and Maximilian set off alarm bells in his head. The event which then finally persuaded him to head for the Alps was probably the sensational arrest of Cardinal Morone during the night of 31 May 1557; when news of this spread throughout the peninsula, the different European powers reacted with shock and worry.⁷⁰

A few days after this, on 19 June 1557, a letter sent from Milan informed the Duke of Mantua that

Acontius, secretary to my lord the Cardinal, who dealt with dispatches for the Court, departed without saying exactly where he was going, having left all of his writings in his room.⁷¹

Acontius's hasty departure seems to have left Madruzzo 'extremely angry about this escape'⁷² and it is easy to understand why. A message sent a few days later by the Venetian agent in Milan announced that 'messer Jacob Acontius, secretary to the illustrious Monsignor of Trent, who was responsible for his figures, has fled to go and live in Zurich as a Lutheran'.⁷³ Acontius himself returned to the religious reasons for his escape in the dedication in *De Methodo* (Basle 1558) addressed to his partner in flight Francesco Betti, recalling

the difficulties and worries that we both shouldered for so long, our common studies, wanting and not wanting the same thing and, what counts more than anything else, the same religious belief and the decision, taken jointly, to abandon our homeland for it, which created the closest possible bond between us.⁷⁴

Betti also gave an account of their planned but seemingly sudden escape in a passionate and engaging *Lettera all'Illustrissimo Marchese di Pescara*, in which he explained to his protector Francesco Ferdinando d'Avalos 'the reason why he resigned from his service'. The Roman gentleman

recounted that he had 'stayed in Basle for more than two months waiting for Acontius', before 'coming to stay in this city [Zurich]', from where he sent his long letter.⁷⁵ It is not known why the two friends separated after leaving Milan together and met up again later. Nevertheless, they probably travelled together along much of the route that took them to Chiavenna, passing through Caspano, in Valtellina. From Chiavenna, they might have reached Basle via Locarno, before moving on to Zurich.⁷⁶

The letters of recommendation that the two fugitives took to Zurich, addressed to the city's Italian community, bore the signs of their stay in Valtellina,⁷⁷ while the stopover in Basle was used to collect a letter from their friend Celio Secondo Curione addressed to the Antistes Heinrich Bullinger, a further guarantee of receiving a favourable welcome.⁷⁸ It was undoubtedly because of these influential introductions that Acontius and Betti were favourably received by the main city authorities. The 'two poor Christians, one from Rome and the other from Trent' were immediately granted financial help from the Locarnese community in Zurich,⁷⁹ and were probably offered accommodation at the house of Bernardino Ochino, a pastor in the same community.⁸⁰ This was the start of the close friendship between Acontius and the former General of the Capuchins, who had escaped from the Italian peninsula in 1542. Ochino finally settled in Zurich after a long spell in England under King Edward VI. He crossed the Channel with Peter Martyr Vermigli in 1547 at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, and stayed in England as a priest in the first Italian evangelical community in London until the Catholic Mary Tudor came to the throne (1553): Ochino was probably the first to sing the praises of the Anglican Reformation to Acontius, instilling in the latter the desire to discover the country for himself.

Acontius stayed in Zurich until the autumn of 1558, travelling to Basle at least once to supervise the publication of his three works (the *Dialogo*, the *Somma* and the *De Methodo*) by Pietro Perna, a native of Lucca. He then moved on to Strasbourg, thereby following, perhaps unintentionally, the path trodden a decade before by Peter Martyr Vermigli after his escape from Lucca, where he had been the long-term Prior of the Augustinian Canons at the monastery of San Frediano; after brief stop-offs in Zurich and Basle, he was called to Strasbourg by Martin Bucer to fill the post of Professor of the Old Testament, which had been vacant for almost a year following the death of Wolfgang Capito.⁸¹ Thus, in November 1558, Acontius found himself in Strasbourg, the place of refuge of many Marian exiles who had fled Catholic England in 1553,

together with Bernardino Ochino. It is plausible to suggest that the latter introduced Acontius to the group of English gentlemen waiting in the imperial city for better times so that they could return to their homeland. They included John Jewel, the future Bishop of Salisbury and a good friend of Ochino's, who played a leading role in Acontius's decision to move to England a year later,⁸² Robert Dudley, the future Earl of Leicester, and, above all, Francis Russell, the second Earl of Bedford, who became one of Acontius's noble English protectors and at the time employed an Italian, Pietro Bizzarri, as his secretary.⁸³

Strasbourg was probably also the place where Acontius met his future adversary Edmund Grindal, the Anglican Bishop of London, another Marian exile with an aggressive side to his character; some years later, the two clashed violently regarding the expulsion of the Dutchman van Haemstede from the foreign community in London. He also met Sir Anthony Cooke, Cecil's father-in-law, and Sir Thomas Wroth, a former favourite of King Edward VI and the son-in-law of Sir Richard Rich, who famously profited from the dissolution of the monasteries.⁸⁴ Acontius shared his enthusiasm with them about the death of the Catholic Queen Mary and subsequent rise to the throne of Elizabeth Tudor in November 1558. In this way, while his English friends were planning their return, Acontius allowed himself to be persuaded to cross the English Channel by the Ambassador Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. William Cecil, the Queen's secretary, was looking for engineers who were experts in fortification to contribute to the strengthening of the country's maritime defences, as he was worried by international developments that exposed England to French and Scottish attacks—particularly the prospect of a French attack launched from Scotland. Shortly before, for the same reason, he had asked another Italian expert, the Florentine Giovanni Portinari, to return to England, where he had previously worked in the service of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Somebody—perhaps his father-in-law, Sir Anthony Cooke—must have spoken to him about the learned Italian he had met some months before in Strasbourg, a man driven by religious feelings favourable to Elizabethan England with significant experience of fortification work, whose texts included a treatise on the art of fortifying cities⁸⁵; Cecil wasted no time in asking Throckmorton, the English Ambassador in Paris, to contact Acontius and soon afterwards, on 25 August 1559, advance notice was given of his arrival in England.

Waiting for him in London, along with the Secretary of State's men, was an annual pension of 60 pounds granted by the Queen for future services rendered in the fortification project.⁸⁶ Almost as soon as he arrived, Acontius entered the service of the Earl of Bedford, whom he had met in Strasbourg. As mentioned, the Earl also employed another Italian religious exile, Pietro Bizzarri, a historian from Perugia. Both Bizzarri and Acontius were friendly with Bernardino Ochino.⁸⁷ In 1564, shortly after Russell had been appointed Warden of the Eastern Marches and Governor of Berwick, Acontius was called to work on the castle in the latter town, where he was soon joined by Bizzarri. His name thus became associated with a project that is still remembered in English history textbooks.⁸⁸ During the months they spent together, Bizzarri drafted a short treatise dedicated to *De bello et pace*, whose irenic nature was clearly inspired by Acontius's work and thinking.⁸⁹ Bizzarri's collection of poems indirectly confirms the interpretation offered by the editors of a previously unpublished short treatise by Acontius on fortification that was recently rediscovered in a later English translation in an English nobleman's private archive⁹⁰: the issue of peace was constantly at the heart of their musings during their brief stay in Berwick. While Acontius dedicated his *Booke of fortefyinge* 'to he who loves peace and quiet',⁹¹ Bizzarri praised military engineers like Lee and Acontius in his poem *Ad Ricardum Leum Anglium*, regarding their work as noble and glorious inasmuch as they helped to keep the peace, hold invaders at bay and allow civic life to proceed smoothly.⁹²

The financial security guaranteed by the annual royal pension meant that Acontius could continue to nurture the religious aspect of his exile. Since the reign of Edward VI (1547–1553), Thomas Cranmer had supported the inception of a number of Churches of foreign exiles—providing the exiles with a place of welcome and a collective platform for making their voices heard more distinctly formed part of a clever strategy deployed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to rescue England from the state of doctrinal uncertainty bequeathed by Henry VIII. He was convinced that if this group of foreigners were given free rein to express their faith, they would provide some useful models for the construction of the fully Reformed status to which the Anglican Church aspired.⁹³ At the same time, Cranmer hoped that London's new role as a place of welcome for exiles from all over Europe would make the city the capital of the Protestant awakening.⁹⁴ It became natural for newly arrived foreign exiles in England to seek a suitable place in one of the various

national Churches that were revitalizing religious life in the capital. Somewhat predictably, however, as the years passed, the spontaneity that had driven the first steps taken by the foreign communities gradually gave way to a series of rigid rules that tended to regulate as many aspects of their religious practices as possible. First of all, in 1550, Jan Laski, an energetic Polish Reformed bishop whose time in London included a spell in Lambeth Palace (the Archbishop of Canterbury's residence), published his *Forma ac ratio tota ecclesiastici ministerii in peregrinorum ... Ecclesia instituta Londini in Anglia*, a sort of guideline that provided detailed indications of the rights and duties of members of the foreign Churches, the election and role of ministers and elders, ritual and sacramental rules, checks on orthodoxy and the morality of each member of the congregation. Laski's text, which was fully endorsed by Cranmer, balanced Presbyterian concessions with a system featuring Episcopal leanings; it was undoubtedly a step forward in the stabilization process for Churches that had started as spontaneous gatherings but later followed precise rules in terms of organization and control.⁹⁵ It was probably no coincidence that Bernardino Ochino was replaced that year as head of the Italian Church by the more inflexible Protestant Michelangelo Florio, with Cranmer's blessing.⁹⁶ Regardless of who was at the helm, life was hard for the Italian Church of London from the start because of the relative scarceness of Italians and the tendency of Italian merchants, bankers, artisans and mercenaries in London to resist affiliation with any Church due to their instinctive intolerance of rules and the cautious attitude of those planning to return to their homeland at some point rather than end their days in prison.⁹⁷ It thus disbanded almost immediately in 1553, when Mary Tudor came to the throne, and was unable to reform until 1565. However, its survival over the following decades (until after 1600) was not due to the presence of Italians, but the adhesion of a large group of Flemish exiles, who had broken away from their national Church at the end of 1567, and the participation of a significant number of Englishmen in the ecclesiastical life of the community.⁹⁸

The initial situation mapped out by Thomas Cranmer in the late 1540s soon changed significantly. After the Catholic chapter of Mary Tudor, the Anglican Church recouped all the reforms introduced by Edward VI in enhanced form by anchoring them in a more systematic framework. Foreigners living in London were no longer asked to provide inspiration for a theological and doctrinal model; instead, their presence

was used to confirm the goodness of the choices made by the English Church. In terms of policy, the impetus from the government in London was to strengthen the doctrinal orthodoxy of these Churches. Laski's *Forma*, which was still the reference text for the internal organization of such Churches, safeguarded egalitarian and radical statements through censorship entrusted to influential laymen and applicable to all confrères (including ministers), and the institution of prophecy, which allowed even the most humble member to rise from his pew and provide his interpretation of the Bible as long as he could prove that he had received direct and unquestionable divine inspiration. However, in the new political framework in the second half of the 1550s, there was a drop in such utterances aimed at defending the original evangelical and egalitarian spirit of the foreign Churches.

Therefore, when Acontius arrived in England, over 10 years after Cranmer had established the foreign Churches in London, the religious outlook of these institutes had changed radically. As the Italian Church had been disbanded a few years previously, at some point Acontius joined a small group of Spaniards who had created a small community centred around Casiodoro de Reina in 1559. This Morisco had fled from the Hieronymite monastery of San Isidoro del Campo in 1557,⁹⁹ and started to preach to members of a Spanish community in London that had formed at the time of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's wedding. Acontius received a warm welcome and became one of the most influential members of the Consistory by 1562; he was even described in some testimonies as the 'head of our Consistory'.¹⁰⁰ However, the only ecclesiastical bodies officially approved by the Bishop of London, Edmund Grindal, were the French and Flemish Churches. The former was dominated by the assertive character of Nicolas des Gallars, one of the most distinguished ministers in Geneva, who was chosen as its leader directly by the Geneva Consistory in April 1560 and made it a sturdy defensive stronghold of Protestant orthodoxy. The latter had been reorganized by Adriaan van Haemstede, a liberal and conciliatory spirit who later fell afoul of harsh censorship by members of his Church in the mid-1560s in the wake of the growing rigorism in London. Jacob Acontius became directly involved as a result of the presence of a group of Anabaptists of Dutch origin, disciples of Menno Simons, who had settled in England during the reign of Henry VIII. Under Queen Elizabeth, they fell victim to the government's increasing intolerance towards 'irregular' religious groups on English soil and were given 20 days to leave the Kingdom in

October 1560. Elizabeth stated that other refugees would receive the full support of the government as long as they took an uncompromising stance towards the redoubtable ‘sect’. After being invited to a meeting with the Anabaptists, Adriaan van Haemstede promised to champion their cause with Edmund Grindal, recognizing them as disciples and granting them his protection. However, the Consistory of the Flemish Church—above all Pierre Delenus—refused to back van Haemstede’s stance and he was excommunicated on 14 November 1560 after a series of turbulent meetings. He was thus forced to leave the country on 15 December.¹⁰¹

The Dutch minister’s view, which caused such a sensation in his Consistory, was that the Anabaptists—‘infirm members of the body of Christ’—could receive grace as long as they accepted ‘the remission of sins and salvation thanks to the sacrifice of the only mediator and *grand-petre* Jesus Christ, striving for justification through the Holy Ghost’.¹⁰² This was a battle that Jacob Acontius wanted to embrace. He made his first statements on 2 September 1560 to the elders and ministers of the French and Flemish Churches and 2 days later in a letter to Nicolas des Gallars. He focused on an extremely subtle doctrinal question related to the reality of incarnation—or the human nature of Christ—put forward by van Haemstede to establish the thin dividing line that would make the Anabaptist proposition acceptable or not.¹⁰³ According to Des Gallars, Acontius’s standpoint was even more extreme than the Dutch minister’s stance, opening the way to denial of the human nature of Christ, or denial of the incarnation.¹⁰⁴ This dispute went on for several months. In November 1560, Edmund Grindal became involved when Acontius sent him a long letter in which he tried to use all the influence of the prestige and distinguished references he had accumulated as a Queen’s pensioner and engineer in charge of coastal fortifications to help his friend.¹⁰⁵ However, he only managed to delay the Dutchman’s sentence of excommunication by 3 days; after a few weeks, the latter was forced to set sail for Enden, while his supporters in the Flemish Church were called to sign a profession of orthodox faith. Acontius continued to defend him even after the ruling, sending a letter to the Church of Geneva,¹⁰⁶ and personally striving to persuade him to return to England in their frequent correspondence.¹⁰⁷ Finally, in July 1562, Acontius sided with van Haemstede when he refused to sign a formal retraction suggested by Grindal, unconcerned about compromising his position in the eyes of the top echelons of the Anglican Church. In any case, beyond the specific details of the episode, which developed inside the Flemish

Church but extended much further with the involvement of the most influential religious authorities in extremely subtle doctrinal debates on the nature of the divine seed, what was really at stake was the question of exercising authority in doctrinal matters. The expulsion of van Haemstede was not the only explosive case in Elizabethan England in the early 1560s: there were two controversial episodes in 1563 centred around Cassiodoro de Reina, a minister of the Spanish Church accused of anti-Trinitarianism and moral perversion,¹⁰⁸ who was forced to flee and was tried in absentia in London, and Justus Velsius, an enlightened thinker inspired by Schwenkfeld who was expelled from England.¹⁰⁹ It has been noted that these frequent cases of intolerance showed the triumph of the Presbyterian model favoured by the Anglican episcopal polity—a rigidly hierarchical constitution supported by ministers appointed by external and isolated religious authorities rather than the community of believers, an orientation that tended to suffocate the autonomism and democratic radicalism of the Congregationalists.¹¹⁰ Acontius was fully immersed in this growing climate of intolerance and personally bore the consequences of the dogmatic and disciplinary rigidity of the national Churches in London. After Reina's escape, together with members of the Spanish community who lacked a leader, he asked to take Communion with the French Congregation, but the Consistory invited him to first purge himself of the suspicion of heresy, as they did not want their consent to sound like implicit approval of van Haemstede's ideas. Acontius appealed to Grindal for the umpteenth time, but his defence was judged to be unsatisfactory by members of the Consistory of the French Church.¹¹¹ He fared no better a few months later with the reconstituted Italian Church, now led by Girolamo Ferlito, an exile from Palermo who had fled to Geneva to escape the rigours of the Inquisition and was appointed by the Geneva Consistory to breathe fresh life into the Italian congregation in London¹¹²: on this occasion too, Acontius's application seems to have been rejected.

5 *SATAN'S STRATAGEMS*: A RESPONSE TO REFORMED INTOLERANCE, A RECIPE FOR PEACEFUL CHRISTIANITY

It was in the midst of these events that Acontius drafted his masterwork, *Satan's Stratagems* (Basle, 1565; Fig. 2), a work that fully reflects his impatience with the growing climate of intolerance to which he himself had fallen victim to on a number of occasions. Indeed, the book is full of (sometimes savage) criticisms, harsh reproaches and passionate

Fig. 2 Frontispiece of the 1565 Basle edition of Acontius's *Satanæ Stratagemata*

S A T A N A E
S T R A T A G E M A T A L I
B R I O C T O,

I A C O B O A C O N T I O
Auctore.

- Accessit eruditissima Epistola de ratione edendorum librorum, ad Iohannem Vuolfium Tiguripum eodem auctore.



B A S I L E A E
A P V D P E T R V M P E R N A M
M. D. L X V.

exhortations regarding the direction taken by his Reformed companions. At the same time, his target audience was the Protestant world, which he now felt part of¹¹³: it is no coincidence that his attacks are full of references to ‘our’ Reformed Christians, whom he always set in contrast to the ‘papist enemy’ in his prose. His continuing polemic against the increasing doctrinal rigidity of the Reformed Churches and their progressive move away from Luther’s original message of evangelical liberty at the beginning of the century was therefore carried out from within that world. He displayed the wounded sensibility of someone directly involved who was especially annoyed by the betrayal of the very spirit and ideals that had attracted him in the first place. Although he never makes explicit references to events and people, it is clear that many passages in his eight books are directly inspired by his personal experience, above all the expulsion of the Dutch minister van Haemstede, which was the episode that had affected him most the most.¹¹⁴ Despite the numerous attempts made by van Haemstede and Acontius to explain how the former’s words had been misunderstood, the accusation of heresy had been blindly repeated until the achievement of the final persecutory objective of expulsion from England. In Acontius’s eyes, the arrogance and pride displayed by many

Reformed ministers in dealing with matters of faith was irrefutable proof that they were falling prey to Satan's tricks just like the 'Papist enemy', betraying the original values of the Gospel that they used to fight for, even to the point of renouncing personal property and comforts:

It is surprising at what pitch of sanctity they think they have arrived, and how they despise and esteem as nothing those who do not imitate them—and this is the more grievous, because they are of those, who have not hesitated to become exiles for the Gospel's sake, and forfeit possessions, honours, comfort, kinsmen and friends, and because in the beginning they made so fair a show. I know what I am saying. I am acquainted with many; they are not of one place or one nation, but all alike were exiles for Christ's sake. Alas, my brother! The path you have entered upon is not the right one! You did enter upon the right path once, but have turned aside from it. But verily that which now you tread will lead you to destruction! Come back to the right path, while you may, while yet daylight continues!¹¹⁵

Acontius had met these Marian exiles in Strasbourg and Frankfurt in the second half of the 1550s. They had fled England several years before the frenzy of Mary Tudor's anti-Protestant repression, aimed at restoring Catholicism, persuaded him to embrace the cause of the 'Gospel'; he then followed them back to their homeland when Mary Tudor was on her deathbed. Now at a distance of some years after these events, he could not bear to see the Marian exiles transformed into 'stern and harsh censors',¹¹⁶ accusing them of 'having your eyes fixed only on your dignity, reputation and the public opinion of you, that you may be accounted as gods among men' and wanting to 'afflict and oppress your brothers, and take to yourselves a kind of dominion over their consciences, and thus surround Satan's kingdom with a wall and build up its bulwarks!' In this way, Acontius reiterated, they would only succeed in building 'the walls of the Devil's kingdom, thereby constructing its defensive stronghold'. He warned that 'it was not at Rome that the papacy first came into being; it derives its origins from our first parents. There is none of us, who does not cherish his own papacy in his heart',¹¹⁷ attacking them with the extreme insult of a comparison with the much-despised 'Papism'. The path to follow was one dedicated to love and charity for one's neighbour, 'to gentleness, to the duties of charity and to that which is true, not to a counterfeit kind of saintliness',¹¹⁸ rather than hatred and domination of consciences: 'verily charity has not the eyes of the lynx to see another's blemishes; it has no eyes at all; it is altogether blind, it covers its neighbour's sins and suffers them

not to be seen'.¹¹⁹ True love does not involve interrogating people and scrutinizing their every move in order to catch them out:

to turn a blind eye to the sins of our neighbour, to put the best construction on all things, to think naught but what is good of another, all these things are so closely allied to charity, that, where they are not, charity cannot be—any more that there can be fire, where there is no heat.¹²⁰

Acontius depicted his former companions as indulgent with themselves and inflexible and unmerciful with others.¹²¹ Before looking at your neighbour, 'there is still more than enough for you to do at home, and that the words *Physician, heal thyself!* (Luke 4: 23) may still be justly said to you'.¹²² While Acontius underlined that it was pointless—and moreover anti-Christian—to denounce other people's sins in public,¹²³ he also felt that the practice of public penance adopted by most Reformed Churches was profoundly wrong and counterproductive. He compared the practice to auricular confession and the 'no common disgrace' that Catholics were subjected to through this unrighteous instrument of power.¹²⁴ He asked himself: 'do not the Papists try to persuade us by that same reason that their auricular confession is necessary? Why do we reject it here?', before answering, 'for this reason of course, that we do not think room ought to be left for human inventions or calculations of convenience and inconvenience'.¹²⁵ In the same way, with regard to the imposition of public penance, he felt that 'it was not ordained from on high and is not necessary for the keeping of any divine ordinance, [there is sufficient harm in it, inasmuch] as men claim authority to impose any yoke on men, for that belongs to God alone'.¹²⁶ It was not wrong to expect a sign of regret from those who, after 'disregarding not only two or three brothers, but the Church itself', did not want to 'abstain from something unbecoming to a Christian'.¹²⁷ The way to heal tension in a Christian community was, however, not to expect those who committed errors to carry out an act of public penance before the whole Church.¹²⁸ The main path for re-admittance to the community, thereby repairing the fracture caused by the estrangement, was *correctio fraterna*¹²⁹: what should triumph among the faithful of any Church was 'to be most ready to forgive and do anything rather than nurse feelings of triumph'.¹³⁰ 'If neighbours and those who consort with the outcast testify that he is showing his repentance in no doubtful way and reproaching himself for his act',¹³¹ in other words 'if he afterwards shows any signs of penitence

and men worthy of credit testify that it is so, when this has been signified to the church, he should be restored to the place he held before, and this too should be done with as little verbal display as possible'.¹³²

Acontius's critique of the increasing disciplinary and doctrinal rigidity of the Reformed Churches went beyond the specific question of the expulsion and desirable reintegration of the 'infected member'. His polemic went straight to the heart of the issue, openly arguing against extensive use of the confession of faith, a defensive stronghold behind which almost all Protestant Churches had taken shelter, ready to open fire on anyone that betrayed their oath:

What objective is pursued through this meticulous demand for confessions of faith? It is desired that he who errs is in some way forced to betray himself – and when you have acknowledged this, what use will it be? A lot (you will say), as it will be possible to admonish him; and if he repents, I will have acquired a brother, while if he persists, he will be excluded from the Church, where he will not corrupt others. But because those who err learn, there will be no need for this institution. Since if there is no tyranny in the Church and if pastors combine true charity and erudition with great gentleness and humanity, those who dissent from the Church on certain points will reveal themselves of their own accord; they will approach, inquire and call the matter into question. They will present their reasoning or pieces of evidence by drawing them from the Holy Scriptures. They will not refuse to hear solutions that are the joint product of charity and sound erudition, and if matters are treated cleverly, humanely and carefully, the truth will always prevail. If instead there is tyranny, nothing can be more suitable for the practice of tyranny than these institutions; they are nothing but slaughterhouses of consciences.¹³³

Acontius felt that these 'slaughterhouses of consciences' were instruments of power that were ends in themselves, means of controlling consciences whose only effect was to favour the practice of dissimulation by members of the Churches.¹³⁴ The very existence of the growing number of confessions of faith in the Reformed world had given rise to an uncontrolled number of religious sects that were often in conflict with each other, offering the papist enemy the opportunity to denounce the Protestant rift. This could only be explained as work engineered by Satan:

Whereas Satan fervently desires that those who have declared war on that his mighty kingdom of the Roman Church should appear to be divided

into as many parts as possible we exceedingly further his desires. I admit that I cannot regard this with, approval. [...] I, for my part, should not disapprove, if certain churches agreed about those articles of religion, which it is necessary to salvation to know, and also had one common confession of that faith, that just as in truth they belong to one body, so they might also be seen to belong to it. But since that is not done, I would rather there was no confession than so many.¹³⁵

He emphasized that although the ideal objective was for all Churches to share a single confession of faith, this was not a feasible prospect in the religious framework of the time, so the best auspice was not to have any. Only in this way would it be possible to escape from the infernal machine fuelled by Satan, consisting of indignation, pride, arrogance, animosity and endless disputes about insignificant doctrinal details:

[T]hey defame one another [...] when some controversy arises among them (as we have said), while they are discoursing they light upon those things, which we said before occur in disputations; and their minds being stirred and disordered they are not careful what they do, following the impulse of their indignation; and this happens the more easily, the more importance both parties or at any rate one thinks is involved in the matter in controversy.¹³⁶

This was the result:

Our dear ones are foully slain before our very eyes; neither age nor sex is spared; even the very unborn babes are doomed to death and their bodies torn in pieces. What are we doing meanwhile? Seemingly all this is nothing to us! Intrepidly we quarrel, strive and brawl. Petulantly we bandy insults, abuse and reproaches. Thus the common cause is daily dishonoured more and more, we daily stir up more bitter hatred against ourselves and sharpen a sword for the common foe, for him some day to draw upon ourselves, and furnish him with the faggots, wherewith to burn our bodies.¹³⁷

This happened because of those in the Reformed world:

[W]hen any people embraces the Gospel there are many of the people, who would as readily have embraced any other doctrine you will as that of the Gospel; seeing they feel no concern for religion at all [...] there are not wanting such among them as, though they really care naught for religion, yet pretend they love it dearly, bestow much labour on Holy

Writ and become learned in things divine and eloquent disputers, and at length attain to the office of teaching and preaching. And since (O horrible!) there is a great gulf betwix heart and tongue, and since they teach far other than they act, it manifestly redounds to the very groat discredit of the Gospel.¹³⁸

With regard to these people, he continued: 'wherefore by their impure life worthy of many scathing rebukes, they are a shame and disgrace to the Gospel, whose praises they magnificently mouth maybe over their cups, not to say in the company of harlots; those men some day will be justly punished by God for their impiety and crimes'.¹³⁹ They therefore needed to cast away their 'ambitions, vain babblings, wrath, enmities, quarrels, discords and all other affections!' and avoid the 'foolish trust and gall' that Satan used to obfuscate our minds.¹⁴⁰ He made it clear 'that a man should never make an end of speaking in abusive terms of the pope of Rome, the cardinals, the monks and the priests, that he should never cease to be angry at their impostures and errors, and should make no distinction of foods for religion's sake, they would all to a man admit that godliness by no means consisted in things of this sort alone' and that it should not be used as a pretext for censoring others' works and actions.¹⁴¹ When 'artything comes to their ears about their neighbour', such men do not 'lovingly admonish him and exhort him to remember his duty', but instead 'discuss him slanderously with any one you will, rather than address a single word to the man himself. They will quickly publish the matter abroad and make no end to their whispering, till some other subject offers itself whereon they may practise that remarkable godliness of theirs.'¹⁴² Christians should instead use 'maximum gentleness and moderation' with their neighbours in order to 'acquire the souls of men for God' rather than 'render to every man according to his merits'.¹⁴³ The best way to apply this Christian pedagogy involved proceeding gradually, starting from a truth 'which meets with readiest assent and is less open to calumny'. For example, he advised teachers or preachers to deal with justification by faith before the impiety of the mass, the worship of saints and images and other things of that kind.¹⁴⁴ In this way, pastors would achieve their objective of imparting the fundamental truths of the faith without triggering any dissent or controversy.

His proposal to stop the cases of abuse of power that he frequently witnessed was closely connected to the heart of the message in *Satan's*

Stratagems, namely reducing the truths of the faith to a few essential shared principles. Acontius felt that the confession of faith was acceptable as long as it did not ‘force one to mention a dogma that is not one of the main points of the Christian religion that must be known in order to be saved’.¹⁴⁵ The Reformed Churches had to ‘settle for a simple confession of faith including only the fundamental points of the religion’, without ‘devising any law or institution which the consciences of men might be bound to one day’.¹⁴⁶ Acontius made a heartfelt appeal to his former companions who had become the inflexible censors of others’ behaviour: ‘let them leave the secrets of hearts to God’, while refraining from commanding souls or founding laws.¹⁴⁷

On this point, Acontius could fall back on a solid humanistic tradition stretching from Erasmus of Rotterdam to reflections by the Savoyard philologist Sebastian Castellio and the former General of the Capuchins Bernardino Ochino. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Erasmus had been one of the first to stress that the theologian’s duty was to instruct rather than repress, recalling old Church practices whereby ‘the heretic was given an attentive hearing’. Erasmus underlined that ‘if he explained himself satisfactorily, he was absolved; if after conviction of heresy he remained obstinate, his supreme penalty was to be excluded from communion with the Church’. The main target of his polemic was the dogmatic attitude that typified the top echelons of the Church hierarchy:

formerly someone was considered a heretic if he deviated from the Gospel, the articles of faith or something of similar authority. Nowadays, if anyone differs however little from St Thomas, he is a heretic. [...] Anything that does not please or is not understood is heresy.¹⁴⁸

Erasmus maintained that it was not right that an error of any kind be punished by burning unless it was linked with sedition or any other crime which the laws punished by death.¹⁴⁹ His attack on the repressive methods adopted once too often by the Church authorities and his tolerant irenic proposal led him to suggest a return to Christian origins, with a simple living faith freed from the trivialities of decadent theology. This faith was limited to an essential core of articles that everyone could identify with. According to Erasmus, ‘some learned and devout men’ should gather ‘to extract from the most pure sources of the Gospel, the apostolic writings and their best commentators a kind of résumé of the whole “philosophy of Christ”’,¹⁵⁰ which he summarized as follows:

The essence of Christian philosophy consists in understanding that all our hope rests in God, who grants us his gifts freely through the mediation of his Son. The death of Jesus redeems us, baptism unites us to his Body; dead to the lusts of this world, we must live in accordance with his lessons and example, do good to all.¹⁵¹

The idea of a core faith limited to essential principles that could garner approval from a wide range of existing religious confessions bore considerable fruit over the following decades, although different elements were stressed at different times.¹⁵² Those who welcomed his proposal included Sebastian Castellio, after the dramatic events surrounding the Spanish anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus, who was sentenced to burn at the stake by Calvin in Geneva in 1553. In works such as *De haereticis an sint persequendi* (1554) and his subsequent manuscripts *Dialogi IIII*, Castellio developed the idea of the *fundamentalia fidei* necessary for salvation, continuing down the path outlined by Erasmus. Indeed, he invited men to discuss 'the path to follow in order to reach Christ, namely how to put our lives right', criticizing the custom of those who wasted energy by debating 'the state and function of Christ himself, and where Christ is now, what he is doing, in what sense he sits to the right of the Father, in what way he is one with the Father. And then discussing the Trinity, predestination, free will, [...] angels, the state of souls after this life'¹⁵³: all of these issues and questions were seen as superfluous to purposes of attaining the eternal life. Therefore, while developing his proposition based on the ideals of religious tolerance, Castellio strove to indicate an analytical method and procedure for discussion, outlining a path that could lead to a positive outcome by attributing central importance to human reason.¹⁵⁴

Despite clearly distancing itself from Castellio's mystical rationalism to embrace radical spiritualism grounded in inner enlightenment,¹⁵⁵ Bernardino Ochino's *Dialogi triginta*—published in Basle in 1563 and translated into Latin by Castellio—also followed the same path with a clear community of intent and views.¹⁵⁶ Ochino felt that as heretics were merely misguided they should be educated rather than burned at the stake; using violence against them and insulting them in public only revealed the fragility of their reasoning and beliefs.¹⁵⁷ They should never be put to death, as heresy was not one of the offences that God had delegated to civil magistrates.¹⁵⁸ A good Christian should instead admonish and educate heretics with charity and gentleness; punishment was only

legitimate in view of any unlawful behaviour. Only in the event of persistent heresy should they be avoided for a period of time.¹⁵⁹ The question of the legitimacy of the punishment of heretics by civil magistrates was at the heart of a lively theological debate that had developed over the decades (and even centuries), partly thanks to the fundamental contribution by Erasmus of Rotterdam and Sebastian Castellio, about a passage from the Gospel: the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13: 24–30), which has been described as ‘a fragile shield used as refuge by those who rejected the use of force in matters of faith’.¹⁶⁰ The passage inspired a wide range of different interpretations. On one hand, wheat and tares—good seed and poisonous weeds—provided ‘an exemplary two-track model to distinguish and contrast the chosen people from the others, the deviants and rejects’. On the other hand, however, the text made it impossible for the chosen ones of the kingdom of God to ‘eradicate’ the others, postponing this moment until the final harvest, namely ‘the end of this world’ (Matthew 13: 40): wheat and tares had to remain together.¹⁶¹ From St Augustine onwards, the parable of the seed had attracted opposing interpretations that highlighted either that tolerance of the bad seed was a sign of a good Christian or that it was not necessary to wait for the return of Christ to harvest crops, so the tares should be burned immediately.¹⁶² Erasmus of Rotterdam offered his interpretation, which was in line with Augustine’s thinking, in *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei*, published in Basle in 1522, earning censure from the Valladolid Council:

The servants who want to cut out the weeds before the time are those who think that the false apostles and heresiarchs should be suppressed by the sword and by corporal punishment. But the Master of the field does not desire their destruction, but rather that they should be tolerated in case they should amend and turn from tares into wheat. If they did not amend, the task of chastising them one day should be left to their judge.¹⁶³

Returning to this reading shortly afterwards to answer critics of his biblical paraphrase, Erasmus further specified the terms of his reflection, maintaining that it was a question of distinguishing between the powers of bishops and the secular authorities. While the former were only supposed to use evangelical clemency in correcting and guiding the faithful, the latter were free to use force against those who had a disruptive impact on the life of the society as a whole.¹⁶⁴ The point was to affirm once and for all that violence was extraneous to Christianity and that

coercion could do nothing regarding matters of conscience and inner convictions. Castellio also adopted this interpretative line, which had reached Erasmus from Augustine, when addressing princes—the holders of temporal and political power—in the introduction to his anthology of passages in defence of religious freedom:

Be happy with the sword that God has entrusted you with: punish thieves, punish traitors, false witnesses and others of the same ilk. As far as religion is concerned, defend the pious against affronts by others. This is your duty. Theological doctrine should not be dealt with by your sword. Otherwise, if the theologians have you handle their doctrine using your arms, a doctor will reasonably be able to ask you to defend him using arms against the opinions of other doctors; and dialecticians, orators and those with other skills will be able to do the same thing.¹⁶⁵

With clear reference to the exegesis of the parable of the seed by Erasmus and Castellio, Ochino used his *Dialogi triginta* to inveigh against pastors who forgot their duty and claimed the right to separate outcasts from saints, thereby substituting Christ, who was the only one that could carry out such a task at the end of time.¹⁶⁶

Acontius picked up the thread of these reflections by providing his version of the ‘variously interpreted passage’, saying that ‘when the servants asked whether they should go and gather up the tares, the householder is said to have replied that they should not go, lest haply while they gathered up the tares, they rooted up also the wheat with them’.¹⁶⁷ For him, this was a definite ‘testimony to Christ’s fondness for tolerance’.¹⁶⁸ He rejected ‘the explanation given by some, that Christ does not here do away with any kind of rigour, but warns us that evil must be tolerated, which cannot be amended without destruction’, stressing that it ‘does not seem to be consistent with the householder’s words’.¹⁶⁹ He had no more sympathy for the exegesis of those ‘who would have it that the whole cleansing of the church is here referred to, which the Lord bids be put off till the last day, but that he does not on that account forbid particular cleansings of churches’.¹⁷⁰ He felt that it was clear that

the wheat represents the godly, the tares the ungodly persons [...]. The field is the world. Therefore to gather up the tares from the field is to kill the ungodly and remove them from among the living in this world. But the Lord forbids that to be done and would have them grow together with the wheat and not be separated until the time of harvest.¹⁷¹

Naturally, this rule did not apply to ‘certain heinous offences’ that ‘must be held in check by the avenging sword’: for cases of adultery, murder and similar crimes, it was the magistrate’s duty to punish the guilty party or parties appropriately by separating them from the rest of the community.¹⁷² However, magistrates were not supposed to deal with matters of faith—there was total agreement with Castellio and Ochino and their joint intellectual point of reference, Erasmus of Rotterdam. Acontius took this reflection even further by adding an element to defend the religious sphere against interference from civil powers; he found an extra reason in his fallible conception of man to prevent magistrates from dealing with the hidden mysteries of the conscience. He felt that in a magistrate’s mind

a man who is not in errore may seem to him to be in error, or one who is not so grievously in error to be very grievously in error, may easily happen, is most surely proved by all the many controversies between very learned men, by which the church is at all time vexed.

For this reason, they could never be allowed to ‘judge controversies of dogma between believers.’¹⁷³

Moving beyond the absorbing but limited discussion of the exegesis of a single biblical passage, using words that Acontius faithfully reproduced in *Satan’s Stratagems*, Ochino focused on the origin of heresies, created at the instigation of Satan due to the corrupt habits of ministers, the hatred and envy that divided them, the pride and enthusiasm for pointless innovation that assailed them, or more simply their ignorance and vanity, even the excessive faith that led men to worship them as gods.¹⁷⁴ The Roman Antichrist bore a huge responsibility—Ochino accused him of gradually corrupting the original evangelical message by inventing arbitrarily imposed rules and doctrines, which introduced the germ of error and heresy into Christianity.¹⁷⁵ Acontius fully supported this sentiment and reiterated it in his masterpiece, just as he picked up and developed the attacks launched by Ochino against the Reformed Churches, which were becoming increasingly similar to the Roman Catholic Church in their execrable habit of replacing the evangelical word with their magisterium.¹⁷⁶ The harsh polemic against the dogmatic impositions of the dominant orthodoxies inspired by Castellio found a natural outlet in Ochino’s work with a heartfelt appeal for a radical reduction in the number of *fundamentalia fidei* necessary for salvation, diluted to simply faith in Christ as the Messiah and saviour of humanity

without any consideration of the dogmatic arsenal (Trinity, sacraments, Holy Communion and baptism) used as a shield by the main religious confessions.¹⁷⁷ Although there are some obvious differences between the two texts—such as Ochino's focus on a non-speculative faith consisting of inner certainties and charitable work that Acontius would not have endorsed with his insistence on the scriptural basis of faith—the continuity of themes and reflections between the *Dialogi triginta* and *Satan's Stratagems* is wholly evident, from an apology for religious tolerance and Christian freedom to a defence of doctrinal pluralism and a rejection of all coercion in theological matters. Bolstered by reading Ochino's work, which shared the same publisher as *Satan's Stratagems*—Pietro Perna from Lucca—Acontius persevered with determination down the well-trodden path and developed his version of the arguments in question. His starting point was clear and irrefutable: 'it cannot be hoped that the happy day when all men think equally about all matters will ever arise for the Church of God'. Unanimity of opinion was simply an ideal that would never be created in the earthly world. The only way to achieve the common goal of religious harmony was to identify a few truths necessary for salvation, with everyone agreeing to accept them and tolerate each other, discussing 'their controversies in a friendly and courteous way, like brothers'. Each religious confession had to renounce part of its identity so that they could all converge around a single symbol of faith. The beneficial effects of such an agreement between the Churches would be visible to all Christians immediately: 'assuredly such an accord of the Churches would allay much talk among men, and remove many great stumbling-blocks, which retard the progress of the Gospel to a remarkable extent'. Acontius had no doubt over the content of this 'very old and short confession, which is ascribed to the apostles and is called a watch-word, and which every one accepts'¹⁷⁸: it had to be formulated so that:

it so included all things which are necessary to be known for the attainment of salvation, that nothing whatever is left out; and on the other hand, if any things are of such a kind, that even if a man departs from the truth therein and persists in his error to the end, nevertheless hope of his salvation ought not to be abandoned, of those things the confessions contains nothing.¹⁷⁹

The form in which these few essential truths for salvation were conceived was also vitally important for Acontius; 'they had to be presented in such

a way, that it can neither appear to admit him who does not admit them, nor appear not to admit him who does'.¹⁸⁰

Acontius maintained the same line of reasoning with regard to establishing which divine truths would unite the largest number of existing Christian sects and confessions. He felt that the essential truths were those that no one could misunderstand, those that emerged from a simple reading of the holy text with its clear language and evident meaning.¹⁸¹ On the contrary, the propositions that had to be condemned or rejected included 'only those things that contradict the truths of the faith so much that it is necessary to know that one cannot believe both in what needs to be believed and what is condemned'.¹⁸² In other words, the only doctrines that needed to be censured were those that clearly contradicted the few essential truths of the common confession of faith. The first example he put forward inevitably concerned the doctrine at the top of his ideal list of fundamental principles, the 'benefit of Christ's death': 'one cannot ascribe justification to Christ alone and also to the law at the same time; [...] as it is necessary that it is only ascribed to Christ and those who ascribe it to the law are rightly condemned'.¹⁸³ Christ had saved humanity by sacrificing himself on the cross for all Christians and only those who believed in this benefit could aspire to eternal salvation, while those who denied this fundamental principle placed themselves outside the harmonious religious community outlined by Acontius in *Satan's Stratagems*. What followed—a detailed six-point list of the fundamental doctrines on which to base the common 'symbol of faith'—was a clear and methodical compendium of his religious anthropology. Acontius affirmed that there is only one God, and with him 'the one who he sent, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost'; it could not be justified in any way to 'deny that the father is one thing and that the son is something else, as Christ is really the son of God'. His seventeenth-century detractors used this slightly ambiguous statement as proof of his supposed anti-Trinitarianism.¹⁸⁴ For Acontius, man was deeply corrupted by the original sin and could do nothing to save himself without divine assistance¹⁸⁵; the second point in his list said that 'man is subject to the wrath and judgment of God'.¹⁸⁶ The only opportunity for salvation was through the intervention of 'his son Jesus Christ, who, on becoming a man, died for our sins and rose from the dead for our justification'. It was enough to believe in the benefit of Christ's death to attain eternal life.¹⁸⁷ Finally, Acontius used these doctrinal assumptions to make a first draft of his confession of faith to preserve

religious peace and harmony, an extract which is worth reproducing in full:

I know one true God and the one that he sent, Jesus Christ, his son, and the Holy Ghost. I know that this is God's law: '*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord* etc. *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them*' [Deut. 6:4, 27:26]. I believe in the resurrection of the dead and that the living and the dead will be judged; those who have behaved righteously will attain the eternal life, while those who have behaved unjustly will be tormented. And as I, conceived in sin and by nature a child of rage I have seriously erred against the law of God, I recognize that I am a subject of God and guilty of eternal death. However, since, at the established time, God sent his son Jesus Christ into the world, who on becoming man *died for our sins and rose for our salvation*, and released us from our sins with his blood, for which sinners are forgiven, and *neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, I trust that I will obtain life in his name and through his grace. I know of only one baptism, in the name of the father, the son and the Holy Ghost. If anyone wishes, they may also add the condemnation of errors that contradict the aforementioned faith, in this way: I reject the verdict of those who deny that the son is one thing and the father is something else. I therefore recognize that Jesus Christ is truly the son of God. I do not place justification in the law, or in the commandments, or in the inventions of men, but only in Christ. And I do not hope to be saved through the Blessed Virgin, or any saint, or through any other name, but only through Christ.¹⁸⁸

A similar confession of faith would certainly be the best way to 'reach an understanding between Christians'.¹⁸⁹ Otherwise, 'as long as everyone wants his judgement to be a rule and a law for all others in every belief', the consequence will inevitably be 'that everyone is seen as a heretic by everyone else' and that 'there will be no limit to the number of sects, fights, turmoil and hostility'.¹⁹⁰ Only if 'men were persuaded that all those who accept this symbol [...] should be accepted [...] as Christians and brothers and must be admitted [...] to ceremonies of worship', then the same religious controversies would be 'treated with much greater equanimity'. Indeed, after eliminating the animosity and hatred that exasperate the minds of theologians and men of faith, 'adversaries would be deprived of every opportunity to defame'.¹⁹¹ After being established, Acontius specified that the limited set of common truths would not be

treated as an untouchable simulacrum, as someone might well receive ‘a new revelation’ from God. This person would not necessarily be a theologian or leading pastor.¹⁹² ‘An opportunity of speaking ought to be given oven to the most unlearned’¹⁹³ and nobody should have the gall to maintain that he who ‘rises in order to contradict [...] acts recklessly’, as God might well have chosen such a man to make ‘this truth clear in the Church through him’.¹⁹⁴ The reason for this was fairly simple: ‘God would have himself recognised as the author of his gifts; he would not have his glory ascribed to our studios or intellects, but to himself. If you hear a wise word from the mouth of some unlearned man, you must [...] recognise God as the author.’¹⁹⁵ This defence of common prophecy, which attracted the attention and favour of the English supporters of the Congregationalist model in the following century,¹⁹⁶ was rooted in ancient customs and traditions.¹⁹⁷

Naturally this power of prophecy granted to individuals within the community could not enjoy unlimited freedom. Acontius perceptively noted that there was a thin boundary separating the community’s need to ‘abide by the decision of those who sit with him’ from the likelihood that the bearer of doctrinal innovation would be seen as ‘a disturber of the Church’.¹⁹⁸ In order not to cross this boundary, a divine prophet—whether educated or ignorant—had to submit to the judgement of the members of the community after expressing his ideas and if his suggested innovations were not approved, he had to abandon them.¹⁹⁹ If he persisted in obstinately maintaining his point of view against the opinion of the other community members, he would be rightfully accused of being a ‘disturber of the Church’, just like the community members that insisted on him retracting his ideas.²⁰⁰ If the Church wrongfully decided to condemn him and ‘remove him so as not to acknowledge him as one their own’, it would certainly not achieve the objective of ‘separating him from Christ’. On the contrary, the Church rejects someone only ‘because he does not accept the doctrine delivered from on high, and that which is necessary to be known for the attainment of salvation’.²⁰¹ In other words, for Acontius, consistency with the dogma of a specific Church could not be used as a parameter for assessing the opportuneness of doctrinal innovation; the best variable was how far removed it was from the set of essential truths for salvation and, more generally, ‘the ears should be accustomed to recognise nothing as worthy of credence save only the oracles of God contained in Holy Writ’.²⁰² In his conciliatory irenic vision, anyone could have his say and contribute to the truth

if inspired to do so by God: 'there will be no reason why any man should be excluded, who is seen to be at all endowed with godliness and God's Spirit'.²⁰³ For this reason, his idea of councils was very different from the view that materialized at other times in Church history: he took a harsh line on the presumed universal validity—imposed by the Roman Catholic authorities in an authoritarian way—of decrees issued by councils:

but that councils can err we doubt not; nay, nothing is more certain than that they very often have erred. But if we obey some wicked decision of a council, we are not assured by any testimony in the word of God that we shall be excused.²⁰⁴

The only way to make councils a useful instrument of divine truth was to see them as forums for open discussion that were not binding for anyone.²⁰⁵ These pages showcased one of the central points in Acontius's thinking, which had already been clearly expressed in *Dialogo di Riccamati*, namely the central role played by method and the importance of an ongoing laborious search for truth with no preconceived certainties or blind dogmatism.²⁰⁶ He felt that councils had to meet

after the controversies that upset the Church have been expressed and everyone has been given the power to speak freely, in order to allow those who the Lord has chosen to reveal something useful about the question to speak and say what they hear.

After all those who feel inspired to contribute to the debate have spoken, 'the others then judge', but not in such a way that 'the majority make a law which imposes acceptance of what someone says', but rather 'in a way that everyone considers what has been said' and, 'when it seems to have been proved by suitable evidence from the divine letters', it is adopted by the council, 'striving to persuade the others, not through the authority of the council, but through the testaments of the Word of God heard at the council'.²⁰⁷ Only in this way, with a joint 'symbol of faith' for all Churches and a constantly open-minded attitude towards the search for divine truth, would it be possible to create a situation whereby 'he who does not think the same, at any rate as far as the chief heads of doctrine are concerned, knows that he does not belong to that congregation' and leaves of his own accord.²⁰⁸ Only by focusing on doctrine and the divine oracles that support it—and not men who defend it through the supposed integrity of their lives and 'often unstable men's piety'—would it be possible to avoid

the ‘controversies full of strife and quarrelling’ that estrange Christians from the truth and instead maintain a stable level of faith in God.²⁰⁹

6 THE ANTI-CATHOLIC POLEMIC

It should be clear by now that Acontius did not shy away from claiming affinity with the Reformed front.²¹⁰ This helped to characterize his harsh and radical polemic as part of a critique within the Protestant universe. In a certain sense, it was a contribution aimed at stimulating a return to the original spirit of Lutheranism through compliance with the dictates of the Gospel and the freedom of Christians, which the Reformed Churches had progressively abandoned over the course of the sixteenth century in favour of rigid dogmatism that helped to stabilize a fragmented religious framework but inevitably led to an intolerant disposition that was anathema to a free and conciliatory spirit like Acontius. Despite the violent attacks against Protestant pastors and theologians, and the radical nature of the doctrinal proposal in *Satan’s Stratagems*, the work escaped censorship in Elizabethan England. This can be explained by its use of Latin, the decision to publish it in far-off Basle and, above all, its heartfelt dedication to Queen Elizabeth and the close ties that Acontius managed to forge with the English court in the years leading up to publication.²¹¹ In addition to these factors, his eight books were also guaranteed a positive reception in Anglican–Reformed circles by the virulent anti-Roman polemic with which *Satan’s Stratagems* was imbued; it featured even more venomous content than his previous *Somma brevissima della dottrina christiana*.²¹² Apart from the vitriolic anti-dogmatic critique aimed at the Protestant world, Rome was Acontius’s main polemical target; the gradual corruption of the evangelical doctrine, aided by the constant obfuscation implemented by bishops, cardinals and popes to the detriment of the original evangelical truths, had started there. Acontius supported his case with a wide range of examples. A good starting point was the weak interpretative foundations on which Rome had constructed its temporal and spiritual power:

Lastly there is another reason, when from some true proposition a false one is wrongly deduced, and men then use the consequences in place of that proposition, whence it was drawn. Thus when the famous words: ‘Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’ (Mat, 16:19),

the pope of Rome has wrongly inferred that proposition, whereby he affirms that he can enact new laws and set up new heads of doctrine (they call them articles of faith) and compel men both to keep the former and believe the latter, he is making use of that consequence as a proposition delivered him from on high.²¹³

Corruption and obfuscation were the best ways to describe the procedure that Rome had implemented with regard to the sacraments:

After some time there were men who thought that any sacred or holy rite was called by the name of sacrament, and so began to transfer that name also to the laying on of hands, to matrimony, penance, confirmation and extreme unction. And the result was that, since baptism and the supper had acquired a name they shared in common with things quite different, their fashion was obscured. [...] Thence too it resulted that, as it was agreed that baptism and the supper were instituted by our Lord, so it was commonly believed that all those which were called sacraments were instituted by him.²¹⁴

This short step had opened the gates to the depths of the blindest popular superstition. With regard to the sacrament of confession, there had been genuine scriptural obfuscation: 'if, though the meaning which the words express is the same, they are nevertheless expounded as if they meant something else. This is the case with the words: "Go and show thyself to the priest" (Luke 5: 14), from which has been derived the proposition, whereby every man is bidden to tell his sins to a priest.'²¹⁵ This was a 'most cunning invention to magnify and establish that papal domination' because 'that practice of confiding sins each year to the priest's ear, on which occasion these papist spies search out aught they think to their advantage' allowed them to use the collected information as an instrument of blackmail and power.²¹⁶

The 'innovation' of Mass was also a case of a 'mistake' and a 'specious pretext'. The 'first Christians' had used it as a formula to 'preserve accepted institutions from laxer observation [...] nothing else than a precaution to prevent the Lord's very salutary institution from falling into disuse and being done away with'. They thus 'celebrated the memory of the death of the Lord', replacing 'primitive worship' where all onlookers 'flocked in great numbers to break the bread' with a priest who took it together with the wine in the presence of many. However, its value had been completely distorted by those like the popes who arbitrarily

decided to ‘change the name of the signified thing to the signifier, calling the act a sacrifice rather than a commemoration of sacrifice’. In this way, almost without anyone realizing, ‘the Lord’s very simple institution of the breaking of bread was turned into that very august and elaborate ceremony of the mass by a strange kind of metamorphosis’.²¹⁷ This ‘lavish and intricate act’ had acquired such ‘honour’ in the Catholic world that it was hard to believe ‘that there is greater devotion than participating in it daily’ and ‘nothing is as normal to anyone as attending Mass’. Adopting the same perspicacity and irony that runs through much of his work, Acontius concluded his attack with a highly realistic social portrait:

And so we find that, when friend meets friend, at the time it is celebrated, he asks him as of a thing, which no one is supposed to pass by, whether he has heard mass, or where he has heard it, or whether he will go and hear it with him in this church or that.²¹⁸

The power system built up over the centuries by the popes was based on both an absurd claim of infallibility and the state of ignorance and fear in which the faithful were left²¹⁹: the latter was a basic requirement for the achievement of the former. Left in the dark about religious truths, ‘the naïve population’ became increasingly convinced that they would not be able to understand divine words, even those that appeared to be clear.²²⁰ By propagating the ignorance of their believers, the popes managed to impose ‘one change in doctrine for the worse’ after another in such a way that they were not even ‘noticed’ by the people, thereby giving rise to a systematic and irreversible process of ‘corruption of doctrine’, which in turn, in a vicious circle with no way out, ‘surrounded men with great darkness’ and made them ‘fall into terrible error’²²¹:

Therefore if any religion has been set up and established among the people, and that a false one, since they imbibe it as children with their mother’s milk—at a time when there is no judgment whatever—and afterwards hear parents, domestics and neighbours all speaking about it with one voice, and when the idea is impressed upon their tender minds that, if any one believe otherwise, he is most assuredly to be tormented in the everlasting fires of hell, such delusions do not allow the judgment to grow, but stunt it and altogether destroy it, so that it can see no light, And so it can neither find out the truth by its own efforts, nor can it bear it, if any would fain reveal the truth to it.²²²

Acontius painted a gloomy picture that seemed to offer no escape to Catholic believers: 'wherefore the man who was born in the midst of errors, since he holds them to be truth, cannot fail to love them and to hate the truth, which is repugnant to them'.²²³ Therefore, 'it was by no means surprising that 'men are so unwilling to be removed from the darkness of popery'. The diabolical control mechanism built up over the centuries by 'papists'²²⁴ became even more effective as it managed to numb the consciences of believers with a clever system of punishments and simple tools for expiation of guilt:

For although the papists require certain things, which a man is unwilling to do, and forbid others, which he would like to have permitted him [...] nevertheless, if a man transgresses, they offer him very easy ways of atoning for his transgression, such as the frequent hearing of masses and the buying of them, the saying of certain number of prayers, the purchase of papal diplomas, whereby sins are remitted at a very small cost, and other trifles of that kind.²²⁵

The believer was therefore imprisoned by a fiendish blend of repressive elements and productive moments:

And so those who make it their business to oppress the truth partly inspire fear by exile, confiscation of goods, dishonour and most cruel punishments, and partly allure men to ungodliness by dangling splendid rewards before them and catch them as a man catches fishes.²²⁶

Not even the spread of the 'Evangelical truth' by Luther and his followers had managed to lift the obfuscation that enveloped Catholic believers, as the 'Romans' used 'the arts of calumny' so that 'the people may not inquire too curiously how just a cause there is for punishing men of this kind with death, nay, that they may applaud their execution'. All they had needed to do was 'invent the name of a heresy or sect or make use of some old one and condemn it', maintaining 'at first that Luther was reviving the errors of John Huss and Wiclef', accusing his 'sect, as they call it' of the 'foulest disrepute' to the extent 'that men cannot mention its mere name without displeasure'.²²⁷

7 THE UNIVERSALISM OF HUMAN PASSIONS

Acontius's biting anti-Roman polemic and explicit claim of affiliation with the Reformed front, expressed several times,²²⁸ meant that *Satan's Stratagems* did not fall foul of Elizabethan censorship even though it also contained a radical and even aggressive critique of the process of dogmatic inflexibility employed by the Reformed Churches, above all the foreign ones in London. However, although the success of the work was certainly connected to the author's royal protection and, more generally, the adaptable and open-minded stances taken by Elizabeth I and her entourage, it was not limited to the Anglican world: in the century following the publication of the first edition in Basle, 21 editions were printed in five languages in six countries. We shall return in Chap. 3 to the reasons why the work was so well loved in seventeenth-century England, but to understand its general success we need to focus on its constituent universalistic elements featuring broad-ranging reflections about the nature of man, the author's ability to shed light on the most hidden and fleeting aspects of the human soul and the most obscure mechanisms of theological disputes. All of these factors made *Satan's Stratagems* a valuable text for deciphering the complex code of religious controversy and doctrinal conflict wherever it arose, irrespective of the essentially geographical context that the vast majority of religious polemical writings in circulation at the time inevitably referred to.

The starting point for his reflection was strongly influenced by the pessimistic Reformed anthropological concept of the corruption of human nature following the original sin.²²⁹ Almost immediately, however, from the first of his eight books onwards, Acontius's analysis abandoned the path of theological discourse to enter the more universal sphere of human passions, taking the form of a shrewd psychological examination of the sins that this corruption of the spirit was sure to foster: 'And hence it is in the first place that he loves himself beyond measure, but with a blind and extravagant love, seduced whereby he abhors his own true good; but he pursues that which is bad for him.' Pride and arrogance are the 'corrupt' feelings that take over the human soul with consequences that become increasingly redoubtable as the level of power of those that nurture them increases:

For as soon as he is exalted to some rank or greater fortune, he thinks that any man you will owes him all things, to minister to his advantages even to his own disadvantage, to revere him and honour him, and that he has the best of rights to make use of any man and all that he has at his good will and pleasure.

Each of these men sees himself almost as a God and 'if he acquires a little learning, straightway he thinks that he knows everything, and is the only one who knows, so that the whole world ought to be governed by his wisdom'.²³⁰ Obfuscated by the haze of his own arrogance, the man of power 'is uncommonly fond of enjoying bodily pleasures to the full and he displays the greatest lack of restraint in regard to these matters. He loves this present life and bestows all his thoughts upon it; of the life to come he thinks not at all. He fondly imagines that this life will last for ever.' This insatiable yearning makes him blind to knowledge of God and his will; he is so full of himself that he thinks God wants to be worshipped with the same gifts that he appreciates: 'gold, silver, stones of great price, and great gems and costly buildings'.²³¹ However, Acontius's harsh analysis was not limited to men of power²³²: Man is by his very nature beyond measure 'arrogant, high-minded, intemperate, greedy, insatiable, covetous, a supplanter, deceitful, quarrelsome, envious, revengeful, murderous, blind, headlong, harsh, wicked and born with a disposition to every evil deed.' For this reason,

he readily puts the worst construction on things which concern his neighbour and is exceedingly suspicious [...] Wherefore if his neighbour has gained aught of advantage or of glory, he envies him and, if he can, prevents him from gaining it; he belittles the reputation of his neighbour, magnifies his faults and brings false charges against him; if any one opposes him somewhat in any matter, he is extremely prone to anger and hatred and cannot easily lay aside his displeasure, nay rather, whets him more and more till he ends in bloodshed, destruction and the most horrible kinds of vengeance.²³³

By applying these emotional mechanisms to the field of doctrinal and theological polemics, it was easy to understand why the number of controversies increased on a daily basis with seemingly no chance of curbing them. After ascertaining that it was difficult for anyone 'to bear contradiction with equanimity', it was also easy to observe that every difference increased the level of hatred between individuals. Furthermore, 'if to all

this are added insults and calumnies on the part of the adversary, it must needs be that the feelings are much more powerfully affected still'.²³⁴ The adversary's doctrine is often confuted before being properly understood and is not listened to 'attentively and with patience'. There is no attempt to 'suspend judgment until the very last'. Blinded by hatred and rage, either adversary can make this mistake:

When at the very first word he imagines he can guess what the other means, and anticipates his words with his own judgment, the result will be that, since the latter means one thing and the former understands him to mean another, he will not confute the adversary's arguments, but those things which through his own hastiness and false interpretation he has conceived in his own mind.²³⁵

The 'bitter, insolent and insulting words and, maybe, threats'²³⁶ naturally aggravate the situation, as the person concerned 'firmly persuades himself that his adversaries, since they cannot defend their cause by reasoning, have put all their confidence in mere violence and insolence'.²³⁷ At this point, it becomes difficult to bring the religious polemic back into the realm of proper judgement:

Since a mind discomposed can neither understand nor judge aright, if the mind of the man who is led astray by error, besides that the error is in other respects also by no means aptly confuted, is further discomposed by abusive words [...], he can much less easily recognize his error.²³⁸

The experience accumulated by Acontius in his years at the law courts allowed him to observe these dynamics with the clinical eye of an impartial observer. If man indulges his self-satisfied and proud nature by appearing 'to surpass others, if possible, in all things', he is 'unwilling' to 'give way to any one or admit his own mistakes':

As a proof of this, take those who go to law about some matter; how hard it is to persuade those who are seeking or denying aught unjustly, that they are acting unjustly! And moreover the more their passions are kindled by contention, the more disagreeable and grievous it appears to give way.²³⁹

By following these psychological mechanisms, the division in matters of faith was fostered and doctrinal errors were consolidated:

Thus peoples are split up into sects, which pursue one another with a more than Vatinian enmity, sparing no kind of insult. Men indulge the more therein, because they do not suppose they are obeying the impulses of their own passions, but doing something highly pleasing to God, though really they are daily incurring God's greater wrath and becoming involved in thicker darkness.

The perverse dynamic triggered by this behaviour, which Acontius had already illustrated, meant that disputes between different sects spread like wildfire: 'These discussions spread errors abroad, because clamour that is heard at them, and the brawls to which they give rise, give men much to talk about.'²⁴⁰ It was an endless spiral in which feelings ran high and each adversary resorted to arguments that he would never have dreamed of using, simply because he was caught up in the heat of the moment and rage, thereby significantly increasing the distance that separated him from the truth and his opponent:

[E]ach party is wont to bring forward many arguments in favour of its own view, if contention somewhat whets and inflames men's minds, it is easy to see that no few things are both affirmed and denied on either side, which they would never have either affirmed or denied had their minds been composed.²⁴¹

Therefore,

when any one seems to be straying a foot's breadth from the right path, think there is nothing else to be done but forthwith to sound the trumpet and fill the air with reviling, abuse and clamour; whatever comes uppermost, though often nothing could be more inept, seems the aptest retort to make, and we imagine that in this way we are doing our duty finely and that great praise is due to us on that account—wise men indeed, seeing we are bringing oil to quench a fire!²⁴²

The proliferation of subsequent controversies resulted in an exponential increase in the 'number of dogmas, the so-called articles of faith' and therefore the number of religious sects, with each one embracing one of these (new) articles of faith.²⁴³

Acontius provided a simple solution to stop the perverse destructive spiral of Christianity, an antidote to the snares engineered by Satan: 'sweetness, gentleness, patience, modesty, love of peace'.²⁴⁴ Indeed,

if those who walk in error were so disposed as to be willing patiently and with quiet and undisturbed minds to listen to those who disagree with them and carefully weigh the value of their reasonings, as if there were really some possibility (in spite of all appearances) of their being in error, very many would be converted from their errors,

without fuelling the high rate of conflict and discord that was troubling Christianity.²⁴⁵ Listening and patience were the two antidotes suggested by Acontius to escape Satan's traps, naturally accompanied by a drastic reduction in the truths of the faith needed to obtain salvation; he felt that reducing the number of essential articles to a minimum would instantly remove the enormous pressure and strong emotional investment that each religious sect or confession created regarding single articles of faith, which were often—he underlined—completely unnecessary for attaining the eternal life. Even if the doctrine encountered were clearly false, 'nevertheless before you decide on stirring up any strife, you have still to consider what the importance of the matter is'. Acontius suggested focusing on the aim

to divert men's minds from curious and valueless questions of that kind, not because the things said are false, but much more that there may be no sad waste of precious time: and moreover it often chances that, while a trivial matter is being dealt with, on one side or the other propositions are rashly put forward by men whose minds are disordered by the heat of contention, which, since they are of greater moment, no little corrupt the purity of doctrine.²⁴⁶

The acute psychological analysis developed by Acontius regarding the sins of man and the perverse interpersonal dynamics triggered by them cast new light on the characteristic mechanisms of religious disputes. No one before him had been able to reveal the evil workings that powered doctrinal controversies so clearly, providing some fundamental indications for escaping from the perverse spiral of personal clashes and confessional conflict that entire societies were caught up in at the time. The success and greatness of this work dedicated to the *Satan's Stratagems* lay chiefly in the extraordinary ability that Acontius demonstrated in this respect.

NOTES

1. For the document in the Ossana parish archive that shows Acontius in his role as a notary in 1540, see G. Radetti, *Introduzione*, in J. Aconcio, *De methodo e opuscoli religiosi e filosofici*, ed. G. Radetti, Florence 1944, 4. Between 18 and 22 January 1546, Jacob Acontius and Leonardo Colombini (about whom, cf. also p. 10) appeared before the College of Notaries in Trent, which assembled in the lower hall of the Bishop's Palace next to the cathedral, asking to be formally admitted (which happened respectively on 21 and 22 January); both were judged 'sufficiently learned and brilliant in the rhetorical arts' ('satis docti et luculenti orationibus'), but did not yet have the fundamental requisite of being enrolled in the city register of *cives*. The Episcopal Court took steps to grant them citizenship and on 22 February 1546 both were considered suitable and were unanimously admitted to the College of Notaries. Nothing is known about Acontius's studies, but it is possible that he did not have any university qualifications, as they were not necessary to practise as a notary; cf. BCTn (Biblioteca Comunale di Trento), ACT1, 4272, anno 1546, cc. 163r–164r, 166r–168v; edition of the Colombini trial in L. Masé, *La 'peste luterana' contagia un notaio. I processi per eresia a carico di Leonardo Colombini (1564–1579)*, Università degli Studi di Trento, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Corso di Laurea in Lettere, rel. prof.ssa S. Seidel Menchi, a. a. 1995/1996, 21–25; cited by R. Giacomelli, *Jacopo Aconcio. La vita*, in P. Giacomoni and L. Dappiano (eds.), *Jacopo Aconcio: il pensiero scientifico e l'idea di tolleranza*, Trent 2005, 203–232, esp. 206–208 and 208–210 for Acontius's few surviving acts. For an up-to-date bibliography regarding Acontius, see the entry by J. Tedeschi, in John Tedeschi (comp.) with James M. Lattis, *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture: A Bibliography of the Secondary Literature, ca. 1750–1997*, with a historiographical introduction by Massimo Firpo, Modena and Ferrara 2000, 107–115, in addition to the various recent essays cited in this book.
2. On 29 June 1548, in the presence of Archduke Maximilian, the reconciliation between two members of the aristocracy took place in Ala, near Trent: Acontius signed the relative document in his legal capacity. The two men presumably first met on that occasion (cf. C.D. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, trans. Delio Cantimori, Rome 1955). On 13 September, in the same year, Madruzzo married Maria of Habsburg, his uncle Charles V's daughter, in Valladolid (cf. S. Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, New Haven, CT, 2001, 19).

3. 'Molti anni di vita trascorsi a corte'; letter from Aconcio to John Wolf, 20 November 1562, in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 325–356, quotation on 349.
4. The names of numerous notaries appear in the Inquisition registries, especially at the beginning of the second half of the century (1555–1580); cf. S. Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia 1520–1580*, Turin 1988, 322ff.
5. The reference is to works such as *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Ioannis* and *Novum Testamentum* in the Venetian edition of 1526, which were often found in notaries' houses together with works by Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon, Bullinger, Vermigli, Ochino and Vergerio (Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia 1520–1580*).
6. The year 1548 marked the start of the first inquisitorial trial (the second one was in 1552) against the merchant Giovanni Antonio Zurletta, a sign of the rampant religious dissent in places such as the German quarter of San Pietro, which was home to both Acontius and Ascanio Schrattenperger, a dogged supporter of the mortality of the soul and the heresy of the three imposters. The latter was tried in 1568, 4 years after the first trial of the notary Leonardo Colombini, Acontius's friend (K. Pischedda and S. Seidel Menchi, *La politica del dissenso. Cristoforo Madruzzo e gli eterodossi*, in Giacomoni and Dappiano (eds.), *Jacopo Aconcio*, 155–169, esp. 167–168).
7. The Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, the Bishop of Alife, did not hesitate to label him a heretic (O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 12, note 40). It is significant that Vergerio had dedicated his *Agli inquisitori* to him in 1559 (cf. P.P. Vergerio, *A gl'inquisitori che sono per l'Italia. Del catalogo di libri eretici*, n.p. 1559). Moreover, there were Protestants in the prince's service, even after his Spanish marriage, and he had contact with evangelical ministers such as Giovanni Sebastiano Pfäuser (Vergerio, *A gl'inquisitori che sono per l'Italia*). On Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg, future Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and the milieu of his Viennese court, see Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, 32–49, who even suggests that Acontius played a role in Maximilian's spiritual development (39–40).
8. On this issue, besides the essential G. Constant, *Concession à l'Allemagne de la comunione sous les deux espèces. Etude sur le débuts de la réforme catholique en Allemagne (1548–1621)*, 2 vols, Paris, 1923, cf. E. Bonora, *Roma 1564. La congiura contro il papa*, Rome and Bari 2011; and G. Caravale, *Preaching and Inquisition in Renaissance Italy: Words on Trial*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2016, 129–161.
9. The complete title of the work is *Dialogo di Giacomo Riccamati ossanese nel qual si scuoprono le astutie con che i lutherani si sforzano di 'ngannare*

le persone semplici et tirarle alla loro setta: e si mostra la via, che harebbero da tenere i prencipi e magistrati per istirpare de gli stati loro le pesti delle heresie. Cosa in questi tempi ad ogni qualità di persone non solo utile, ma grandemente necessaria da intendere. Interlocutori il Riccamati e Mutio D (hereinafter referred to as *Dialogo*); cf. the modern edition edited by G. Radetti in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 183–210.

10. 'A dialogue that I wrote in Vienna in the Italian language, the first few pages of which I showed Your Highness' ('Un Dialogo que yo escrevi en Viena en lengua Italiana, del quel mostré el principio a V. Alt.a'), he wrote to Maximilian, sending him a printed copy of the booklet (cf. letter from Argentina [Strasbourg] of 27 November 1558, in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 319–320, quotation on 320). The presence of a manuscript in the National Library in Vienna supports the hypothesis that Aconcio sent or gave a copy to Maximilian (cf. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 77).
11. *Dialogo*, 183.
12. 'Esser bastante a discernere le spositioni sincere della Scrittura dalle cavillose et sofistiche'; *ibid.*, 196.
13. *Ibid.*, 188–189.
14. 'Se alcuno abbraccia quella dottrina che prima gli viene insegnata et in quella ostinatamente persevera, senza volersi certificar mai s'ella è sincera o falsa, non vi pare egli che sia un camminare a caso?'; *ibid.*, 203–204.
15. *Ibid.*, 204.
16. 'Al primo spuntar dell'evangelio, senza punto voler intender che cosa si fusse, subito con bandi, con prigionie, con fuochi et con ogni sorte di supplici, persecutioni e crudeltà s'oppose [...] per impedire il corso suo, et per opprimerlo' (*ibid.*).
17. *Ibid.*, 192.
18. 'Usare alcuna diligenza per conoscer la verità o la falsità della [propria] fede'; 'di fugirl[i], d'accusarl[i] et di perseguital[i] come [...] grand'heretic[i]'; *ibid.*, 191.
19. *Ibid.*, 198.
20. *Ibid.*, 200.
21. 'Non vedete quanto tempo ha che si sta in su questa prattica?'; *ibid.*, 201.
22. See the considerations made above on p. 11.
23. 'Investigar diligentissimamente il vero [...] circa le cose che al pio culto d'Iddio et alla salute nostra s'appartengono'; 'si leg[g]ano e si considerino diligentemente le Scritture'; 'Dimand[iamo] a tutti qual sia la via buona'; *Dialogo*, 194–195.
24. 'Get hold of a Bible and wherever you find Scripture passages cited, check whether they are faithfully quoted or not. Then, for the parts before and after the cited words, try to understand how they should be

- interpreted. If you do all this, I assure you that you will obtain great knowledge of divine matters in a few hours and that it will seem like you have left gloomy and wretched darkness for brilliant and smiling light. You will also understand the enormity and detrimental nature of the deception of those who, by suggesting that one can only become knowledgeable about these subjects after extremely long and laborious studies, ensure that very few people dedicate themselves to them; in particular, they frighten off those like magistrates and princes who should instead devote themselves to these topics and try to understand their meaning'; *ibid.*, 208–209.
25. This can be indirectly deduced, for example, from the opinion expressed by Acontius in 1564 when he was involved in fortification work in the seaside town of Berwick, which also provides information about his past as a military engineer: he had been trained by leading experts in the military art, such as Count Francesco of Landriano and Giovanni Maria Olgiati, Charles V's chief engineer, whom Acontius mentions with special affection and gratitude and who had worked on, among other things, the 'rampart' ('bastionate') fortification of the stronghold in Alessandria in 1554; cf. V. Gabrieli, 'Aconcio in Inghilterra (1559–1566). I baluardi di Berwick e gli "Stratagemmi di Satana"', *La Cultura*, 21, 1983, 309–340; 323.
 26. *Dialogo*, 202.
 27. Regarding which, cf. here below.
 28. 'Tale che non pure non ispaventasse gli huomini scrupolosi, ma gl'inuitasse a leggerle'; *Dialogo*, 209.
 29. 'Potrebbonsene di notte gittar per le contrade alcune copie sì fattamente che potessero parere a caso perdute, potrebbonsene lasciar da' viandanti per le hosterie come dimenticate: in somma si potrebbero in mille modi seminar per tutto'; *ibid.*
 30. 'Altri [...] vedendo i modi et l'ordine che voi havete usati con meco, gli potrebbero poi usare anch'essi (offendosi l'occasione) con i loro amici; altri potrebbero, quando con un colore et quando con un altro, porre in mano a' loro amici il libretto stesso' (*ibid.*).
 31. For an edition of this manuscript version, see Aconcio, *De methodo*, 387–397.
 32. Acontius was referring to the Antichrist and the deceptive forms in which he would appear according to the Scriptures, introducing a 'doctrine that appears to be Christian but is actually quite the opposite of Christian', in such a way that those who proceed with his doctrine 'will believe that they are definitely good and true'; *ibid.*, 189. A few pages further on, after leaving Muzio on tenterhooks for some time, Riccamati started to put his cards on the table (up to a point). He said that there

were already men 'in our time' who claim to be able to demonstrate that 'the Antichrist is already in the world and has already been reigning for many years' and further maintain that the Antichrist is none other than 'the Pope with his Roman Church': these people are none other than 'the Lutherans'; *ibid.*, 192.

33. Cf. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 95.
34. *Dialogo*, 208.
35. Acontius makes no reference to it in the manuscript version of the *Dialogo*; cf. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 94.
36. *Somma*, quotation on 228.
37. *Somma*, 219–220.
38. 'And we came out of it clean and pristine, as if neither Adam nor we, who are descended from him, had ever sinned, but had always observed the divine law perfectly; and in this way the damnation of the law was annulled and removed, along with all of its power to condemn us' ('Et noi ne sia restati scarichi, netti et mondi, come né Adamo né noi che da lui siam discesi, havessimo mai peccato, ma sempre perfettissimamente osservata la divina legge; et in tal modo fu scancellata et levata via la maledittione della legge, et tutta la forza ch'avea di condannarci'); *ibid.*, 220.
39. 'Che credono, [...] non la historia dei fatti di Christo [come gli ebrei], ma credono fermamente d'esser del numero di quelli per li quali Christo è morto, et che credono per Christo essergli per pura gratia perdonati i loro peccati'; *ibid.*
40. 'Beneficio di Christo [era] imperfetto'; 'quanto alla colpa, et non anchora quanto alla pena'; 'sodisfare alla pena'; 'suffragi (come essi dicono) di coloro che fanno bene per li morti'; *ibid.*, 244.
41. *Ibid.*, 248.
42. *Ibid.*, 235.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Cf. above, pp. 10–11, 19–20.
45. Regarding which, see below.
46. 'L'autorità della Chiesa, cioè del papa, de' cardinali et de' vescovi, et ancho del papa solo (il qual vuol esser sopra la Chiesa) è maggior di quella della Scrittura'; 'che a lei sta di giudicar qual sia da esser ammessa o non ammessa per authentica'; 'che la Scrittura non contiene tutto ciò che alla dottrina christiana s'appertiene, ma che gli apostoli molte cose insegnarono solamente in viva voce'; 'che 'l papa et la Chiesa ha autorità di far nuove leggi et di ubligare gli huomini ad osservarle sotto pena di peccato mortale'; *Somma*, 229.
47. 'Che posson formar nuovi articoli di fede, a i quali chi non crede sia heretico, né possa esser salvo'; 'che 'l papa, qual pretende esser vicario di

- Christo, et la Chiesa sono governati dallo spirito santo, et non possono errare'; 'che perciò a loro solamente s'aspetta lo interpretare le Scritture, et non ad altri'; *ibid.*, 230.
48. *Ibid.*, 223.
49. 'Imprimer ben negli animi de' semplici le loro barrerie et inganni'; *ibid.*, 253.
50. 'Scusare i papi con dir che non è stato aggiunger a i precetti d'Iddio quel che essi hanno fatto con le lor traditioni et istituti'; 'è stato solamente un dar alcuni indirizzi, et un mostrar la strada per poter perfettamente osservare essi precetti'; 'si vede molto bene che in assai maggior rispetto tengon essi le sue traditioni che non fanno i precetti d'Iddio'; *ibid.*, 242.
51. 'Lo escluder le opere è un levare a gli huomini lo studio di bene operare, un fargli diventar da poco, et un aprir la strada alla licenza della carne'; *ibid.*, 272.
52. 'Non vi troverai quei tanti puttanissimi, adulteri, odi, nemicitie, invidie, homicidi, barrerie, bestemmie, et altri vitii brutti da nominare, che si trovano frequentissimi nel papato'; *ibid.*, 273.
53. 'Sì lungamente et da tanti e sì grandi paesi la dottrina e religione di quella [romana Chiesa] [era] stata riputata et buona et santa'; 'che i nostri padri debbian essere stati ciechi e s'habbian lasciati ingannar'; 'un Martin Luther solo dopo tante età harà cominciato ad aprire gli occhi et vedere egli quello che non han veduto tanti dotti e valent'huomini che sono stati avanti lui'; *ibid.*, 275.
54. 'La religione dei quali molto più in lungo era durata et da più paesi e popoli era stata per buona abbracciata, che quella della romana Chiesa'; *ibid.*, 276.
55. 'Noi diciamo che benché il papa faccia professione d'esser christiano, et d'esser pastore di tutti i christiani, nondimeno insegna e fa insegnare una dottrina in sustanza alla christiana in tutto contraria'; *ibid.*
56. Cf. above.
57. It does not seem implausible that Acontius reached Milan through the favour of Cardinal Otto von Truchsess, the future Cardinal of Augsburg, who provided a link to the territories of the Empire and was very close to Madruzzo. The relationship between Maximilian and Madruzzo seems to have broken down in 1552, when the former suspected the latter of having tried to poison him to favour the succession of Philip of Spain to the imperial throne (cf. Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, 27).
58. Pischedda and Seidel Menchi, *La politica del dissenso*, 160.
59. *Ibid.*
60. G. Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471-1606)*, Bologna 1997, 75 and 78.

61. Pischedda and Seidel Menchi, *La politica del dissenso*, 163.
62. In line with imperial policy, his irenic profile was coherent until the end, so much so that in 1571 in the Consistory he suggested inviting Protestant princes to join the alliance against the Turks, meeting with strong opposition from Pius V (*ibid.*, 169).
63. A letter from Madruzzo to his delegate Trajano, who was with the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole II, is dated 23 November 1556; it was written by Acontius in his capacity as secretary (L.N. Cittadella, 'L'ultimo decennio di Ercole II', *Archivio storico italiano*, 1877, 209–210; 'Nuovi documenti di Jacopo Aconcio', *Studi trentini*, 3, 1925, 234–238, esp. 238; O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 14; Radetti, *Introduzione*, 6).
64. As it was written recently, 'neither the documentation in the General Archive in Simancas nor that in the State Archive in Milan that refer to Madruzzo's governorship in Milan conserve any trace' of Acontius (Pischedda and Seidel Menchi, *La politica del dissenso*, 155).
65. M. Firpo and D. Marcatto, *I processi inquisitoriali di Pietro Carneseccchi, 1557–1567*, critical edn, 2 vols, Vatican City 1998–2000, II/2, 519–521, 524–526, 550.
66. Writing confidentially to his friend Gonzaga on 1 April 1558 regarding a Conclave that seemed imminent due to the Pope's precarious health ('a pear that is about to fall as it is already extremely ripe'), he defined the new cardinals, with his typical aristocratic disdain, as men of little importance, simple 'Theatines and friars' ('chietini et frati'); PM, v. III, 223 note 356; M. Firpo, *Filippo II, Paolo IV e il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone*, in M. Firpo, *Inquisizione romana e Controriforma. Studi sul cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509–1580) e il suo processo d'eresia*, new edn, Brescia 2005, 361; Pischedda and Seidel Menchi, *La politica del dissenso*, 171–172.
67. L. Fumi, 'L'inquisizione romana e lo stato di Milano', *Archivio storico lombardo*, 37, 1910, 438; O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 14–15.
68. A. Paris, '"Trento è tedesco ed ha la lingua sciolta". Cristoforo Madruzzo e Giovanni Morone tra Impero e Inquisizione', in M. Firpo and O. Niccoli (eds.), *Il cardinale Giovanni Morone e l'ultima fase del concilio di Trento*, Bologna 2010, 159–186, 171–172. A message from Ludovico Tridapolo to the Duke of Ferrara, of 19 June 1557, different from the one referred to in note 34, validates this hypothesis: 'The cause of Aconcio's departure might have been the severity of Paul IV, who sent Madruzzo a brief in Milan, ordering him to proceed against those who supported the escape of Claudio Pralbino, an Augustinian priest with the name Angelo Maria, a staunch heretic' ('Causa forse del dipartirsi dell'Aconcio fu il rigore di Paolo IV il quale aveva mandato un breve al Madruzzo a Milano con ordine di procedere contro quelli che

- favorirono la fuga di Claudio Pralbino prete eremitano di S. Agostino col nome di Angelo Maria eretico convinto'); 'Nuovi documenti', 237; Radetti, *Introduzione*, 9.
69. Celio Secondo Curione revealed this in his letter presenting Aconcio and Betti to Bullinger in Zurich, writing that the pair had promised to leave the peninsula and take refuge with the Protestants the year before (letter from Curione to Bullinger, in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 398).
 70. This reanimated the by-now ragged group of cardinals protecting the interests of the double-headed eagle on the peninsula, above all Ercole Gonzaga. A few days after Morone's arrest, the Cardinal of Trent also ordered his representative in Brussels 'to make sure that the King takes Morone into account during the negotiations to make peace with the Pope'; PM, v. III, 156 note 104. The lack of comments about the arrest of the influential cardinal illustrates the circumspection with which Madruzzo operated, along with his tendency to adapt to the course of events without hesitation. In their Introduction to *Il cardinal Giovanni Morone e l'ultima fase del concilio di Trento*, Massimo Firpo and Ottavia Niccoli define him as 'intellectually and politically modest, bound—with great naivety—to a vague and by now old-fashioned Erasmian ideal, certainly accommodating but incapable of the discretion instead attributed to Morone's character in the common perception'; 16–7. For an up-to-date bibliography on Madruzzo, cf. PM, v. III, 431–432, note 117.
 71. 'Il Concio, segretario di monsignor cardinale, il quale haveva carico de' disacci per la Corte, se ne è andato senza che si sappia di certo dove, havendo lasciate nella sua camera tutte le scritture'; letter from Ludovico Tridapolo to the Duke of Mantua, 19 June 1557, Milan, in 'Nuovi documenti', 237–238; O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 14; Radetti, *Introduzione*, 8. Tridapolo was convinced that Acontius had gone to the court in Vienna to deal with a matter on behalf of the Count of Landriano.
 72. Letter from Ludovico Tridapolo to the Duke of Mantua, 19 June 1557, Milan.
 73. 'Messer Giacomo Concio, segretario di monsignor illustrissimo di Trento, che aveva la cura delle cifre, si è fuggito per andare ad abitare a Zurigo come lutterano'; letter of 27 June 1557, Milan, in 'Nuovi documenti', 238; O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 15; Radetti, *Introduzione*, 9.
 74. 'Le fatiche e le preoccupazioni che quasi in comune abbiamo a lungo sostenute, i comuni studi, il volere e non volere la stessa cosa, e, ciò che conta più di tutto, la stessa credenza religiosa e la decisione, parimenti presa, di abbandonare per essa la patria [che] ci hanno uniti con un vincolo stretto più di qualsiasi altro'; *Giacomo Aconcio tridentino a Francesco Betti romano*, in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 77.

75. 'Dimorato in Basilea per più di due mesi per aspettarvi il Contio'; 'ven[ire] e ferma[rsi] in questa città [Zurigo]'; F. Betti, *Lettera di Francesco Betti romano all'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo marchese di Pescara suo padrone, ne la quale da conto a sua eccellenza de la cagione perche licenziato si sia dal suo seruigio*, Basle, 1557.
76. Betti's letter to the Marquis of Pescara was written in Zurich.
77. This is what transpires from a document in the family archive of Francesco Orelli, a member of the Locarnese community in Zurich, quoted by Taplin, *The Italian Reformers*, 98.
78. Curione's letter to Bullinger is dated 1 July 1557; cf. the text in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 398.
79. 'Due poveri cristiani, uno di Roma l'altro di Trento'; Taplin, *The Italian Reformers*, 98 note 153.
80. On the Locarnese community in Zurich, in addition to the cited work by Mark Taplin, cf. also F. Meyer, *La comunità riformata di Locarno e il suo esilio a Zurigo nel XVI secolo*, trans. Brigitte Schwarz; preface by Adriano Prosperi, Rome 2005.
81. On Vermigli, see the bibliographical entry in Tedeschi, *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 536–553, as well as G.O. Bravi, "Non voler predicare il falso né ingannare il populo". Pier Martire Vermigli a Lucca', in R.A. Lorenzi (ed.), *Riformatori bresciani del '500. Indagini*, Brescia 2006, 33–60, esp. 56–60 on his teaching work in Strasbourg. In 1549, the Swiss Zwinglian Churches approved the *Consensus Tigurinus* as a result of the rapprochement between the Churches of Geneva and Zurich carried out by Heinrich Bullinger. A few years later in 1566, 2 years after Calvin's death, the rift between the two Protestant Churches became permanent, given the refusal of the Calvinists and Zwinglians to accept the Lutheran formula of the Eucharist, while Swiss unity was preserved by the *Confessio Helvetica*.
82. Writing to Vermigli from London on 22 May 1560, Jewel said that 7 months previously he had given Acontius—'an Italian now with the Duke of Bedford'—some money to send to Zurich for Ochino. John Jewel (1522–1571) studied at Merton College and then at Corpus Christi College in Oxford. He taught rhetoric until 1547, the year of the arrival of Peter Martyr Vermigli, who had such a profound influence on him that he decided to abandon the religious life. At the beginning of the Catholic Restoration, despite some attempts to find a compromise, he was forced to leave England and joined Vermigli in Zurich. When Elizabeth came to the throne, he was able to return home in March 1559 and embark on a brilliant ecclesiastical career: he was appointed Archbishop of Salisbury on 1 January 1560. His best known work is the *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana* (1562), thanks to which he

- became the champion and official theologian of Anglicanism; see the entry by J. Craig in ODNB, and M. Firpo, *Pietro Bizzarri esule italiano del Cinquecento*, Turin 1971, 217 note 2.
83. Gabrieli, 'Aconcio in Inghilterra', 312.
 84. *Ibid.*, 311.
 85. Acontius himself revealed that he had written the treatise, which he had translated into Latin in around 1562 (letter from Acontius to John Wolf, 20 November 1562, in Aconcio, *De methodo*, 325–356. Quotation in this case is from p. 349).
 86. To be precise, starting on 27 February 1560. On 8 October 1561, he received his letters of naturalization and obtained English citizenship (P. Denis, 'Un combat aux frontières de l'orthodoxie: la controverse entre Acontius et Des Gallars sur la question du fondement et des circonstances de l'église', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 38, 1976, 55–72, 58; see also O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 28).
 87. Bizzarri might have met Ochino for the first time in 1539, when he was just 14 years old (Firpo, *Pietro Bizzarri*, 21), and probably met him again in Strasbourg in 1547 before leaving for England (*ibid.*, 24). They stayed in contact from 1549, when Bizzarri was appointed as a professor at St John's College (at the beginning of 1550, Bizzarri met John Bradford, a professor at Pembroke Hall and a close friend and disciple of Bucer, at Ochino's house; cf. *ibid.*, 29). Bizzarri then made contact with Francis Russell through Ochino (*ibid.*, 30).
 88. Acontius's role was to act as a consultant to the English engineers already working there, rather than a specialist called into manage the fortification work (Gabrieli, 'Aconcio in Inghilterra', 318): on 26 May 1564, the Queen herself ordered Sir William Pelham to travel to Berwick to 'consult Portinari [another Italian in Elizabeth's service] and Acontius and Lee about the fortifications there' ('consultarsi con Portinari e Aconcio e Lee circa le fortificazioni sul posto'); *ibid.*
 89. Firpo, *Pietro Bizzarri*, 42 and 107.
 90. J. Aconcio, *Trattato sulle fortificazioni* (Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Studi e testi, 48), ed. Paola Giacomoni, with Giovanni Maria Fara and Renato Giacomelli, edn and trans. Omar Khalaf, Florence 2011.
 91. In a world dominated by a permanent aspect of conflict, Acontius felt that man was obliged to fortify his spirit just like the cities in which he lived, to defend himself against the tricks of enemy armies and the equally fearsome traps of Satan, the master of irreconcilable religious discord and interminable doctrinal controversies (*ibid.*).
 92. Firpo, *Pietro Bizzarri*, 108.

93. A. Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535–c.1585*, Aldershot 2008, 45.
94. Ibid., 59.
95. Regarding the *Forma*, cf. L. Firpo, *La Chiesa italiana di Londra nel Cinquecento e i suoi rapporti con Ginevra*, now in L. Firpo, *Studi sulla Riforma in Italia*, Naples 1996, 117–194, esp. 120–121.
96. Overell, *Italian Reform*, 53.
97. Firpo, *La Chiesa italiana di Londra*, 122.
98. Ibid., 123. On the Italian Church of London in the seventeenth century, see the article by S. Villani, 'The Italian Protestant Church of London in the 17th Century', in B. Schaff (ed.), *Exiles, Emigrés and Intermediaries Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions* (Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, 139), Amsterdam and New York 2010, 217–236.
99. After sampling Calvin's doctrinal rigorism in Geneva, where he led a small Spanish congregation, and a spell in Frankfurt, where he became a member of the French Church, he joined a group of English exiles who were about to return home.
100. Firpo, *La Chiesa italiana di Londra*, 131. The testimony is by Baldassarre Sanchez at the trial of Casiodoro de Reina in London in October 1563 (cf. E. Boehmer, *Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries from 1520: Their Lives and Writings, according to the late Benjamin B. Wiffen's Plan and with the Use of his Materials*, III, Strasburg 1904, 11; O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 36).
101. Ten other supporters of van Haemstede were excommunicated a few months later on 4 May 1561, following enquiries conducted by the Dutch Consistory (Denis, 'Un combat', 56).
102. 'La remissione dei peccati e la salvezza grazie al sacrificio dell'unico mediatore e *grand-pretre* Gesù Cristo, aspirando alla giustificazione attraverso lo spirito santo'; *ibid.*, 57.
103. Ibid., 61.
104. Ibid., 60–62.
105. Ibid., 62; Firpo, *La Chiesa italiana di Londra*, 130; this lost apologia is known thanks to a letter that Acontius wrote to Grindal in 1565, summarizing its content.
106. At this point, Jean Utenhove also wrote to Calvin and Bullinger to defend the conduct of the Consistory of the Flemish Church; cf. Denis, 'Un combat', 62.
107. Firpo, *La Chiesa italiana di Londra*, 131.
108. Casiodoro de Reina was also accused of being a follower of the Spanish doctor Michael Servetus. Both charges were later proved to be unfounded; according to Firpo, the Spanish exile's misadventure seems

- to have been due more to theological rivalry than proven guilt; cf. *ibid.*, 133.
109. Denis, 'Un combat', 65.
 110. Firpo, *La Chiesa italiana di Londra*, 138.
 111. *Ibid.*, 133–134.
 112. *Ibid.*, 136; Firpo writes that the Italian colony was still divided and more intent on seeking earthly gains than the true faith (137).
 113. For example, while speaking about the issue of the Council, Acontius explained that 'since I have not now to do with the Papist, but with those, who would have the gospel truth restored, there is no need to prove in many words that no council has the right either of laying down now laws or of setting up new forms of worship'; *Satan's Stratagems*, 94. On *Satan's Stratagems*, as well as the studies included by John Tedeschi in his aforementioned bibliographical entry (cf. note 1), see also A. De Groot, *Acontius's Plea for Tolerance*, in R. Vigne and C. Littleton (eds.), *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America, 1550–1750*, Brighton 2001, 48–54.
 114. There is a clear reference to this episode when he writes about 'such spectacles', when someone who has been misunderstood is accused of heresy, notwithstanding the fact that he explained that 'he did not mean that which offended others, and held no new option' (*Satan's Stratagems*, 163–164). Cf. also where Acontius reiterates that he will not name names or confront anyone personally because he does not want his work to be seen as a personal attack, but a general reflection about religious conflict and ways of dealing with it (*ibid.*, 47).
 115. *Ibid.*, 102.
 116. *Ibid.*, 103.
 117. *Ibid.*, 195.
 118. *Ibid.*, 103.
 119. *Ibid.*, 102.
 120. *Ibid.*, 103.
 121. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 333.
 122. *Satan's Stratagems*, 104. The first step was therefore to put right one's own life (*Stratagemmi di Satana*, 339).
 123. To this end, Acontius used the example of Joseph, who did not denounce Mary in public after discovering that someone else had made her pregnant, but was minded to repudiate her in private (*Stratagemmi di Satana*, 337).
 124. 'But some one perhaps may add that it would nevertheless be profitable and indeed necessary, because it is clear that it involves no common disgrace, so that men find it a stronger check restraining them from licence

in sinning. But here nothing is heard but human counsel; the voice of God, which alone cannot deceive, is not heard' (*Satan's Stratagems*, 128).

125. Ibid., 128–129.

126. Ibid., 129.

127. 'Disprezzat[o] le ammonizioni non soltanto di due o tre fratelli ma della stessa Chiesa'; 'astenersi da una cosa indegna di un cristiano'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 395. This passage is not included in the English edition.

128. *Satan's Stratagems*, 128.

129. Ibid., 129.

130. Ibid., 128.

131. Ibid., 127.

132. Ibid., 129. He felt that censure only needed to be imposed in one case: 'But for what reasons will there be occasion for censure? Assuredly is reproved in a man on the plain evidence of the word of God, if he does not when admonished consent to abstain from it' (ibid., 129).

133. 'Che cosa si cerca con questa diligente richiesta di confessioni? Si vuole che chi erra in qualche modo sia costretto a tradirsi—e quando l'avrai riconosciuto, che utilità ci sarà in ciò? Molta (dirai), in quanto sarà possibile ammonirlo; e, se si pentirà, avrà acquistato un fratello, se si ostinerà, sarà escluso dalla chiesa, onde non corrompa gli altri. Ma perchè coloro che errano imparino, non ci sarà bisogno di questa istituzione. Poichè se nella chiesa non ci sarà tirannia e se nei pastori la vera carità ed erudizione sarà congiunta con una grande mansuetudine e umanità, coloro che dissenteranno in qualche punto dalla chiesa si riveleranno spontaneamente; si accosteranno, interrogheranno, metteranno la cosa in questione, presenteranno i loro argomenti o le loro testimonianze dalle divine lettere; non ricuseranno di sentire le soluzioni provenienti insieme dalla carità e dalla solida erudizione. E se le cose saranno trattate abilmente, umanamente e prudentemente, la verità vincerà sempre. Se invece la tirannide c'è, niente può essere più adatto all'esercizio della tirannide di tali istituzioni; non sono che meri macelli di coscienze'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 457. This passage is not included in the English edition.

134. Acontius wrote as follows: 'It is probable that if those who dissent from the Church on any matter are threatened by a danger or a dishonour, many will certainly hide their feelings' ('È verosimile che, se coloro che dissentono dalla chiesa in qualsivoglia cosa sono minacciati da un pericolo o da una vergogna, molti nasconderanno volentieri il loro sentimento'); *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 459. This passage is not included in the English edition.

135. *Satan's Stratagems*, 168; cf. also *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 495.
136. *Satan's Stratagems*, 162–163.
137. *Ibid.*, 190–191.
138. *Ibid.*, 163.
139. *Ibid.*, 162–163.
140. *Ibid.*, 195.
141. *Ibid.*, 100.
142. *Ibid.*, 102.
143. 'Somma dolcezza e moderazione'; 'acquistare a Dio gli animi degli uomini'; 'rendere ad ognuno secondo i meriti'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 327. This passage is not included in the English version.
144. *Satan's Stratagems*, 164.
145. 'Da costringere uno a far menzione di un dogma che non sia dei punti principali della religione cristiana che si debbono necessariamente conoscere per salvarsi'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 455. This passage is not included in the English edition.
146. 'Accontentarsi di una semplice confessione di fede che comprend[esse] solo i punti fondamentali della religione'; 'escogitare nessuna legge o istituzione, dalla quale un giorno le coscienze degli uomini possano essere legate'; *ibid.*, 461; cf. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 149. This passage is not included in the English edition.
147. *Satan's Stratagems*, 149. With regard to 'the other dogmas', Acontius's recipe was for the community to undertake to 'twist the errors which will emerge spontaneously and be revealed using useful and beneficial demonstrations' ('convellere con utili e acconce dimostrazioni gli errori che spontaneamente emergeranno e si riveleranno'); *Stratagemmi*, 455. Only in this way would it be possible to prevent 'any controversy arising, especially for a short time, if no one rejects the sentence disapproved of by those who command, it will not be accepted into the bosom of the Church' ('qualunque controversia sorga, specialmente da poco tempo, se qualcuno non respinge la sentenza riprovata da coloro che comandano, non viene accettato nel grembo della chiesa'); *ibid.*, 455. This passage is not included in the English edition.
148. Letter to Albert of Brandenburg, Archbishop of Mainz, 19 October 1519; *Erasmus, Opus Epistolarum*, ed. P.S. Allen, 11 vols., Oxford, 1906–1947, t. IV, 101, 102 and 106; J. Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, New York 1960, 117.
149. Letter to George, Duke of Saxony, 12 December 1524; O. E., t. V, 604–606; Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, 118.
150. Letter 858, 14 August 1518; O. E., t. III, 365; Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, 125; cf. the letter he sent to his friend Paul Volz, which he included as a preface to the new edition of the *Enchiridion*

- militis christiani* in 1518; J. Lecler, *Storia della tolleranza nel secolo della Riforma*, 1967; Brescia 2004, 149.
151. Letter 1039, 1 November 1519; Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*, t. IV, 118; Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, 126; cf. the letter he sent to his friend Johannes Slechta, November 1519; Lecler, *Storia della tolleranza*, 150. His idea was to limit the faith to a small number of articles and leave the rest to free discussion; in his treatise the *Spongia* (1523) against the reformer Ulrich von Hutten, he wrote 'on those questions which are the usual subjects of Scholastic debates I would not dare deprive a man of his life if I were the judge, nor would I risk my own' (*Spongia adversus aspergines Hutteni*; Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, Lugduni Batavorum, Curâ & impensis Petri Vander Aa, 1703–1706, t. X, c.1663; Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, 127).
 152. Erasmus saw tolerance of religious sects as a necessary but temporary expedient in view of the reconstruction of unity and, in this respect, his irenic conciliatory proposal was superseded by the course of events over the following decades.
 153. 'Della strada per la quale si possa arrivare al Cristo, ossia della correzione della nostra vita'; 'dello stato e della funzione di Cristo stesso, e di dove lo stesso Cristo sia adesso, cosa faccia, in qual modo sieda alla destra del padre, in qual modo sia uno col padre. E poi della trinità, della predestinazione, del libero arbitrio, [...] degli angeli, dello stato delle anime dopo questa vita'; Preface to his anthology *An hereticis sint persequendi*, addressed to Cristoph of Württemberg, quoted in M. Firpo, *Il problema della tolleranza religiosa nell'età moderna*, Turin 1978, 111–112.
 154. Castellio's reason was, however, still 'Dei filia', far removed from Spinoza's *ratio*. In other words, it was a mystical reason—as it has recently been defined—that did not substitute faith (which is still driven by will rather than intellect), but was used by faith to define its contents. He felt that obscure and controversial passages of Scripture should be subjected to the judgement of reason ('rectum atque sanum'). It also had the task of ascertaining limits and deferring for further analysis and debate those matters that did not seem clear enough to be shared and accepted by others; M. Firpo, "'Boni christiani merito vocantur haeretici". Bernardino Ochino e la tolleranza', in *La formazione storica dell'alterità. Studi di storia della tolleranza nell'età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondò*, promoted by H. Méchoulan, R.H. Popkin, G. Ricuperati and L. Simonutti, 3 vols, Florence 2001, I, 161–244, esp. 188. On the issue of tolerance and reason in Castellio's thinking, there are also useful points to consider in the recent works by M. Bracali, *Il filologo ispirato. Ratio e spiritus in Sebastiano Castellione*, Milan 2001,

- and S. Salvadori, *Sebastiano Castellione e la ragione della tolleranza. L'ars dubitandi fra conoscenza umana e veritas divina*, Milan 2009.
155. Indeed, Ochino reaffirmed a clear distinction between reason and faith. With no objective criteria of truth and even the authority of the Bible swept away, the only thing left for him was the certainty of one's faith, trust in the spirit of God that addresses the spirit of man directly, the inner testimony of his word (Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 190–192). Acontius also distanced himself from Castellio's rationalism, for example when he wrote that 'nothing is surer than this, that (as far as the doctrine of religion is concerned) we can have nothing that is sure save on the testimony of the voice of God' (*Satan's Stratagems*, 21).
 156. On the personal friendship between Jacob Acontius and Bernardino Ochino and their many common friends, cf. above, pp. 27–28. The two had numerous opportunities to meet in the immediately preceding years, especially in Zurich, where Ochino welcomed Acontius to his private home, and Strasbourg, where they had joint friendships with many Marian exiles whom Ochino had met during his time in England under Edward VI and introduced to Acontius, thereby creating the conditions for the latter to join them on their trip across the English Channel after the death of Mary Tudor.
 157. Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 163.
 158. Ibid., 164. In his *Dialoghi triginta*, Ochino established 12 conditions that he deemed necessary for a heretic to be punished by death, through a dialogue with his alter ego, Cardinal Morone (ibid., 165).
 159. Ibid., 166–167.
 160. A. Prosperi, 'Il grano e la zizzania: l'eresia nella cittadella cristiana', in Pier Cesare Bori (ed.), *L'intolleranza. Uguali e diversi nella storia*, Bologna 1986, 51–86 (now also in Adriano Prosperi, *America e Apocalisse e altri saggi*, Pisa and Rome 1999, 211–237), esp. 54.
 161. Prosperi, 'Il grano e la zizzania', 54–55.
 162. Adriano Prosperi dwells at length on the two opposing interpretations in ibid.
 163. R.H. Bainton, 'The Parable of the Tares as the Proof Text for Religious Liberty to the End of the Sixteenth Century', *Church History*, 1, 1932, 82–85; Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, 122. On Matthew 13:24–30, besides Prosperi, 'Il grano e la zizzania', cf. also Lecler, *Storia della tolleranza*, 146, and S. Pastore, *Il Vangelo e la spada. L'Inquisizione di Castiglia e i suoi critici*, Rome 2003, 199–204, which, among other things, reconstructs the context of the 1527 censure against Erasmus by the Valladolid Council.
 164. Prosperi, 'Il grano e la zizzania', 74.

165. S. Castellione, *Fede, dubbio e tolleranza, pagine scelte e tradotte*, ed. G. Radetti, Florence 1960, 61; Prosperi, 'Il grano e la zizzania', 74.
166. B. Ochino, *Dialogi triginta*, 2 vols, Basileae, per Pietrum Pernam, 1563, II, 439; Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 171.
167. *Satan's Stratagems*, 65.
168. 'Testimonanza della simpatia di Cristo per la tolleranza'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 146. This passage is not included in the English edition.
169. *Satan's Stratagems*, 66. He continued, referring to the passage from Matthew: 'for he does not say: "Yes, go, but see to it carefully that you do not root up the wheat also along with the tares!" but he altogether forbids them to go and would have tares and wheat alike grow together until the harvest. From this it is clear that great violence is done to the words by such an interpretation' (66).
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
172. 'Certi mostruosi delitti'; 'debbono essere tenuti a freno dalla spada vendicatrice'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 229. This passage is not included in the English edition. Cf. *Satan's Stratagems*, 67.
173. *Satan's Stratagems*, 70. Instead, civil magistrates were allowed 'to punish irreverent words against God, to chastise those who have ventured to abandon the whole Christian religion and who have ventured to induce any one else to abandon it. If any strange forms of worship have been set on feet or any images put up, he should remove them; he should shield the necks of the godly from the violence and injury of the ungodly, keep the public peace, and other things of that kind' (73).
174. Ochino, *Dialogi triginta*, II, 417–418; Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 166.
175. Ochino, *Dialogi triginta*, I, 11; Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 169.
176. Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 169.
177. Ochino, *Dialogi triginta*, II, 162, 166; Firpo, 'Boni christiani', 174–175.
178. *Satan's Stratagems*, 169.
179. Ibid., 170.
180. Ibid.
181. Ibid., 170. Cf. also *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 521.
182. 'Soltanto quelle cose che contraddicono talmente alla fede delle verità che è necessario conoscere che uno non può insieme credere in ciò che bisogna credere e in ciò che si condanna'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 523. This passage is not included in the English edition.
183. 'Uno non può porre la giustificazione nel solo Cristo e insieme anche nella legge; [...] poiché è necessario che essa sia riposta nel solo Cristo, giustamente sono condannati coloro che la ripongono nella legge'; ibid., 523. This passage is not included in the English edition.

184. 'Colui che egli mandò, Gesù Cristo, e lo spirito santo'; 'negare che altro sia il padre, altro sia il figlio, poiché Gesù è veramente figlio di Dio'; ibid. Cf. below, Ch. 3. This passage is not included in the English edition.
185. *Satan's Stratagems*, 21.
186. 'L'uomo è soggetto all'ira e al giudizio di Dio'; 'suo figliuolo Gesù Cristo, il quale, fatto uomo, per i nostri peccati è morto e per la nostra giustificazione è stato risuscitato dai morti'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 523. This passage is not included in the English edition.
187. 'Se crederemo nel figlio di Dio, nel nome suo conquisteremo la vita eterna'; 'in nessun altro c'è la salvezza; non nella beata Vergine, o in Pietro, o in Paolo, o in qualsiasi altro santo, o in nome di che altro sia'; 'la giustificazione non sta nella legge, né nei comandamenti e nelle invenzioni degli uomini'; ibid., 525. This passage is not included in the English edition. Concluding his synthetic note, he specified that this was because 'justification cannot be found in any other; not in the Blessed Virgin, or in St Peter, or in St Paul or any other saint, or in the name of anyone else', just as 'justification is not in the law or the commandments or the inventions of men'.
188. 'Conosco un solo vero Dio e colui che egli mandò, Gesù Cristo, suo figlio, e lo spirito santo. Conosco che è legge di Dio quella: "*Ascolta Israele, il Signore Iddio tuo Dio è unico* etc. È *maledetto chi non avrà eseguito tutte le cose che sono scritte nella legge.*" Credo che avverrà la resurrezione dei morti e che saranno giudicati i vivi e i morti; coloro che avranno agito giustamente, andranno verso la vita eterna, quelli che avranno agito ingiustamente verso il supplizio. E poichè io, concepito nel peccato e per natura figlio dell'ira ho gravemente mancato contro la legge di Dio, riconosco di essere soggetto al giudizio di Dio e reo di eterna morte. Ma poichè, nel tempo stabilito, Dio ha mandato nel mondo il figliuolo suo Gesù Cristo, che, fatto uomo *per i nostri peccati è morto, e per la nostra giustificazione è risorto*, e che ci liberò dai nostri peccati col suo sangue, per il quale si annunzia il perdono ai peccatori, *e in nessun altro c'è salvezza, e non vi è, sotto il cielo, alcun altro nome dato agli uomini, per il quale noi abbiamo ad essere salvati*, confido che in suo nome e per grazia sua otterrò la vita. Conosco un solo battesimo, in nome del padre e del figlio e dello spirito santo. Se a qualcuno piaccia, potrà aggiungersi anche la condanna di quegli errori che contraddicono alla fede sopra esposta, in questo modo: respingo la sentenza di coloro i quali negano che altro sia il figlio e altro sia il padre. Riconosco quindi che Gesù Cristo è veramente figlio di Dio. Non pongo la giustificazione nella legge nè nei comandamenti nè nelle invenzioni degli uomini, ma soltanto in Cristo. E non spero di salvarmi per mezzo della beata

- vergine o di qualsiasi santo o per mezzo di qualsiasi altro nome, ma per il solo Cristo'; *ibid.*, 526–527.
189. 'Redigere una simile confessione di fede che soddisfacesse tutti coloro che appartengono alla universale chiesa di Dio, così da farli ritenere che essa debba adoperarsi come simbolo e che tutti debbano accontentarsi di essa e non esigere la confessione di più cose ancora'; 'raggiungere una concordia fra i cristiani'; *ibid.*, 528.
 190. 'Fino a quando ognuno vorrà che il suo giudizio sia norma e legge per tutti gli altri nel credere ogni cosa, e che non sia lecito non obbedirgli'; 'che tutti siano da tutti considerati eretici'; 'non ci sarà un limite alle sette, alle risse, ai clamori, alle ostilità'; *ibid.*, 528–529.
 191. 'Gli uomini si persuadessero che tutti coloro che accettano questo simbolo [...] vanno accettati [...] come cristiani e fratelli e debbono essere ammessi [...] alle cerimonie del culto'; 'trattate con molto maggiore equanimità'; 'sarebbe tolta agli avversari ogni occasione di calunniare'; *ibid.*, 529.
 192. 'Qualche nuova rivelazione'; 'La scienza delle cose divine non deve essere considerata come frutto delle nostre vigilie, dei nostri studi, dei nostri ingegni'; 'viene da Dio e dal suo spirito'; 'sul momento [di] donarla ad uno'; 'al più sciocco'; *ibid.*, 299.
 193. *Satan's Stratagems*, 91.
 194. 'Se si leva per contraddire'; 'agisca temerariamente'; 'quella verità sia palese per mezzo suo nella Chiesa'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 298. This passage is not included in the English edition.
 195. *Satan's Stratagems*, 91.
 196. Cf. below, Ch. 3.
 197. Acontius explicitly referred to the 'old Church of the Jews' but also added that this practise had lasted in Christian Churches until at least the time of Constantine (*Satan's Stratagems*, 91–92).
 198. *Ibid.*, 93.
 199. Cf. *ibid.*, 93. Acontius also offered some useful advice to those who wanted to introduce new features into the credo of the community, suggesting a series of precautions to help them: 'They only must be admonished, to whom after the pioneers God has revealed aught, to make use of great tact in publishing such things, and not to assail others insolently, as if making it a reproach to them that they have not seen all things; not to suppose that they have for any private reasons maliciously tried to cover or corrupt aught. A suspicious mind becomes not a Christian man, nor indeed one that is ungrateful towards those, through whom God has bestowed some great benefit upon his church. And let them not at the very first word boast that they have something quite new to reveal, which no one has marked before, or in which great

men have been grievously deluded, or use other silly words of that kind. In this respect methinks the prudence of some is greatly to seek; for although on some occasions their opinion had very little novelty about it, they have wished to impress men's minds by presenting it in a new form and so getting a reputation for novelty. By doing this they have brought divers tragedies on themselves and have sorely vexed the Church of God—which ills might perchance have been avoided, if only some little tact had been used' (ibid., 173).

200. Ibid., 93.
201. Ibid., 96.
202. Ibid., 139.
203. Ibid., 97. Later, Acontius also reflected on how to recognize a real follower of truth (*Stratagemmi di Satana*, 469–471).
204. *Satan's Stratagems*, 94–95.
205. Ibid., 96.
206. Ibid., 136, for the invitation to seek one's own path to truth alone.
207. 'In modo da permettere che, espone le controversie che turbano la Chiesa, e data facoltà ad ognuno di parlare liberamente, coloro cui sarà piaciuto al Signore di rivelare qualcosa di utile alla questione parlino e dicano ciò che sentono'; 'gli altri poi giudichino'; 'il maggior numero faccia una legge la quale imponga di accettare ciò che dice qualcuno'; 'in modo che ognuno consideri ciò che è stato detto'; 'quando sembri comprovato da adatte testimonianze delle lettere divine'; 'sforza[ndosi] di persuaderlo agli altri, non per l'autorità del concilio ma per quelle testimonianze del verbo di Dio che ha imparate nel concilio'; *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 313. This passage is not included in the English edition.
208. *Satan's Stratagems*, 96.
209. Ibid., 176.
210. Cf. above.
211. On the system of censorship in Elizabethan England, see C.S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*, Cambridge and New York 1997.
212. On the anti-Roman element of the *Somma brevissima della dottrina cristiana*, cf. above pp. 22–23.
213. *Satan's Stratagems*, 81–82. Acontius's critical reflection continued thus: 'But there is one kind of false consequences that is remarkably hard to detect, because they are partly deduced from assumptions, which either are not expressed or perchance not contained in the thought, but are thus accepted without any controversy, as if they proceeded from things quite certain and plain. That is the case with the consequence, which has just been mentioned. For in order to make out that the power of enacting laws was granted to Peter, the word binding must mean the

same as enacting laws. For in that way you argue quite rightly: to bind is to enact laws; the power of binding was granted to Peter; therefore the power of enacting laws was also' (ibid.).

214. Ibid., 83. 'At length even bells (as men call them) began to be baptised—and what else was this than to give occasion to the ignorant commons to think that there was just as much in the baptism of man as they know there was in that of a bell, and thus the memory of the washing away of sins in baptism, which the baptism made with water signifies was made by the blood of Christ, disappeared?' (ibid.).
215. Ibid., 81. Cf. also *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 271.
216. *Satan's Stratagems*, 146.
217. Ibid., 84.
218. Ibid., 146.
219. Ibid., 87. Cf. also the controversy about ecclesiastical offices as a source of corruption (*Stratagemmi di Satana*, 283).
220. *Satan's Stratagems*, 86.
221. Ibid., 87.
222. Ibid., 140.
223. Ibid., 141.
224. Acontius stressed the 'trade in souls' ('commercio delle anime') implemented by Rome: 'The Roman Pope, cardinals, bishops, monks and other men of the same kind are driven against the evangelical truth by their high status, wealth and the advantages they usually receive from trade in souls, and as magistrates, princes and kings they become oppressors and rage against us' ('Il romano pontefice, i cardinali, i vescovi, i monaci e gli altri uomini della stessa risma, [sono] spinti contro la verità evangelica dalle loro grandi dignità, dalle ricchezze, dai vantaggi che erano soliti ricevere dal commercio delle anime, e come magistrati, principi e re, divenuti loro carnefici, inferociscano contro di noi'); *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 451. This passage is not included in the English edition.
225. *Satan's Stratagems*, 141–142.
226. Ibid., 158; for the harsh anti-Roman Catholic polemic, cf. also *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 491 and 493.
227. *Satan's Stratagems*, 153.
228. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 479; cf. also ibid., 493, on the anti-Roman Catholic propaganda that defames Protestants and propagates their terrible reputation, making people move away from them.
229. *Satan's Stratagems*, 5.
230. Ibid., 6.
231. Ibid.

232. On this issue, see also Acontius's considerations regarding the avidity and malice, simulation and dissimulation that always surround power: 'For simple men, enemies of all guile and all evil arts, since they suppose they should take greater pains to be good than to seem so, will very easily be outdone in acquiring a reputation for saintliness by skilful men greedy of office; for they will be less careful in hiding their blemishes. They will labour rather to get rid of their faults than to disguise them, they employ no devices to win the favour of men. He who has set his heart on office will be most careful to hide all his faults; he will most carefully fall in with those things, which he sees are most approved by those, who can give him promotion, and will leave nothing undone in the way of pretending, dissembling and flattery, if only he can make himself acceptable to them in every possible way; and by this covert kind of soliciting, which requires much more art and toil, the ungodly sometimes no less gain their ends than they would, if they were allowed to make use of the open method' (ibid., 86).
233. Ibid., 7.
234. Ibid., 11–12.
235. Ibid., 12.
236. Ibid., 14.
237. Ibid., 15.
238. Ibid., 13.
239. Ibid., 13–14.
240. Ibid., 15. Acontius returned to the issue of the proliferation of religious sects and confessions later in the work, recalling the pointlessness of multiple doctrinal positions: 'If there is one God, one Christ, one baptism, one faith (Eph. 4:5), what is the meaning (they say) of all these names of confessions? If there is agreement of opinion among you, if there is one faith, how comes it that there is not one confession of faith common to you all?' (ibid., 167).
241. Ibid., 16.
242. Ibid., 17–18.
243. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 463. This passage is not included in the English edition. Cf. also ibid., 577–579.
244. Ibid., 463.
245. *Satan's Stratagems*, 19.
246. Ibid., 25.

Fortunes and Misfortunes of *Satan's Stratagems* in Seventeenth Century England

1 SATAN'S STRATAGEMS AMONG CATHOLICS, ARMINIANS AND LATITUDINARIANS: THE FIRST OXFORD EDITION (1631)

Jacob Acontius's *Satan's Stratagems*, as we shall see throughout this chapter, was published several times in England during the seventeenth century, and his *Essortatione al timor di Dio* was released posthumously in London by John Wolf in 1579.¹ However, he was not the first sixteenth-century Italian exile whose works were printed in English. Before him, Bernardino Ochino and Peter Martyr Vermigli had spent a significant part of their troubled existence in London achieving a resounding success: several of their works were translated and published in England between the late 1540s and the late 1570s.² While the staunch Reformed orthodoxy of Vermigli's writings guaranteed a Protestant readership, the translation and distribution of Ochino's works in English was limited to his more explicitly anti-Roman sermons, as well as those that focused on the issue of predestination and divine election. Little interest was shown in *Dialogi triginta*, a more open and tolerant work published in Basle in 1563.³ The manuscript English translation of Sebastian Castellio's *Dialogi IIII*—a treatise extolling religious tolerance—was halted in the early 1580s by Sir Francis Knollys, the Treasurer of the Household, while the court strongly disapproved of the distribution of the Latin version of the work, following the first London edition in 1571.⁴ Consequently, it was not translated into English until 1610.⁵

The hostility towards the distribution of Castellio's work helps us to understand why, despite its initial positive reception at court, Acontius's book was never reprinted in England during the sixteenth century after the first Basle edition of 1565. Indeed, Elizabeth I's religious policy took on a progressively staunch pro-Reformed nature between 1575 and 1585, in the wake of an international situation increasingly polarized by the political and military conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Consequently, the reappearance of a work that was highly critical of certain trends in the Reformed world (albeit with a distinctly anti-Roman tone) could well have become a source of embarrassment for the English court. Thus, after the first Latin and French editions in the mid-1560s,⁶ *Satan's Stratagems* only garnered further success in Europe in the following century. A highly successful Latin edition was published in Basle in 1610,⁷ while the first Dutch translation appeared in The Hague a year later, produced by the French pastor Johannes de la Haye, who also translated various works by the irenicist François du Jon.⁸

Acontius first met with success in the Dutch Republic towards the end of the sixteenth century. Dirck Coornhert (1522–1590), one of the best-known champions of religious tolerance, was among the first to use and commend *Satan's Stratagems*. His most famous works—*Synod of Freedom of Conscience* (1582) and *Trial of the Killing of Heretics and the Forcing of Conscience* (1590)—focused on the virtue and necessity of open discussion based mainly on the text of the Holy Scriptures and always driven by a critical spirit and the ultimate aim of establishing religious truth. Coornhert cited Jacob Acontius in these works to illustrate the pointlessness and harmfulness of deploying force to convince those in the wrong to change their minds. Using the jurist's writings as backup, Coornhert maintained that the spiritual nature of heresy meant that it could only be combated by spiritual means. As heresy was rooted in the (mistaken) judgement of individuals and was not part of their wills, heretics needed to be treated as brothers to be persuaded and corrected, rather than enemies to be attacked.⁹ The same spirit of charity towards those who had erred was cited in the late sixteenth century by Cornelis Pieterszoon Hooft (1547–1626), a rich merchant from Amsterdam, who was mayor of the city on several occasions after 1588 and another enthusiastic reader of *Satan's Stratagems*. In perfect accordance with Acontius's calls for freedom of discussion, Hooft claimed that as the Bible lent itself to the most disparate interpretations, it was deeply unjust to condemn anyone simply for defending a different point of view.

Above all, there was nothing worse than the inflexible attitude and use of restrictive measures adopted by Reformed pastors against those that defied their authority.¹⁰ Acontius soon became associated with those who were considered dangerous libertines, sceptics and potential atheists by the Reformed Churches in the late sixteenth-century Dutch Republic. Acontius's name and work thus inevitably became involved in the dispute between Arminians and orthodox Calvinists, Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants that ignited in the Dutch Republic in the first twenty years of the seventeenth century, leading more or less directly to even more widespread circulation. The points of contention were the doctrine of predestination and relations between the State and the public Reformed Church. Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), a minister of the Reformed Church of Amsterdam, had started to show his impatience with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination in the early 1590s, suggesting that it made God the only cause of man's sin. He claimed that it was not wrong to affirm that the elect could also lose divine grace and maintained above all that Christ had died for all sinners, not only for the few elect. Following his appointment to the prestigious chair of theology at the University of Leiden in 1603, Arminius began a long dispute with one of his Leiden colleagues, Francis Gomarus, an orthodox Calvinist, who branded his stance as heretical. Arminius replied to his adversary by asserting that orthodox Calvinists lacked charity towards those that expressed themselves differently and threatened the peace and unity of the Church by associating individual salvation with the acceptance of every single dogma that they defended. The irenic embracing of doctrinal divergences advocated by Arminius was based on the distinction between essential and non-essential parts of the Christian doctrine, acceptance of human fallibility and the abandonment of all forms of dogmatism within the Dutch Reformed Church.¹¹ It was not difficult to find reverberations of the teachings of Jacob Acontius and his *Satan's Stratagems* in these positions. Indeed, a preacher from Deventer named Sibel recalled a 1608 lecture by Arminius when he halted a rebuttal of Calvin and his writings in order to refer his audience to the testimony of the Scriptures and the works of Sozzini, Castellio and, above all, Acontius.¹² *Satan's Stratagems* was translated into Dutch shortly after this lecture at the height of the clash with orthodox Calvinists. In 1610, the Arminians presented their famous Remonstrance, which consisted of five articles against Calvinist predestination. The text was drafted by Jan Uytenbogaert, a minister of the Reformed Church who, together

with Simon Episcopius, picked up the baton from Arminius after his death in 1609. The translation of Acontius was published a year after the Arminian Remonstrance thanks to the work of Johannes de la Haye, a French Reformed pastor. De la Haye was not technically an Arminian, but his irenic overtures soon aroused the suspicions of the orthodox Calvinists: he was suspended from his position in 1618 and only death saved him from going on trial. In his preface to the text, he introduced *Satan's Stratagems* as the most appropriate means to quash the causes of confessional dispute and find a way to overcome the religious conflict that was tormenting the Dutch Republic; he defined it as a 'book of Christian love' that could aid peace and unity, a powerful 'alarm bell' serving as a reminder to be constantly vigilant against the stratagems invented by Satan. De la Haye promised his readers that the text would champion the causes of civil authorities, pastors and all those concerned with fashioning peace by showing them what was needed to obtain salvation.¹³ With political support from Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the Land's Advocate of Holland, the highest official in the Dutch Republic, the Remonstrants asked for their five articles to be submitted to a national synod convened by the government in order to modify the Belgian confession of faith approved by all Calvinist congregations in the Netherlands in the early 1560s. They also wanted the Dutch Church to recognize the higher authority of the State, or rather the right of civil magistrates to supervise the public Church and its teachings. The orthodox Calvinists—immediately rechristened Counter-Remonstrants—sought every means to oppose what they perceived as an attempt to attack the freedom of the Church by forcing it to accept the principles of tolerance championed by the Arminians. They defended the autonomy and freedom of the Church to impose discipline on their heterodox ministers without interference from civil magistrates. The doctrinal controversy was thus closely interwoven with a political and jurisdictional battle. Prince Maurice of Nassau, the stadtholder and military commander of the Dutch Republic, sided with the Counter-Remonstrants; he was deeply opposed to the 12 Years' Truce concluded with Spain by Oldenbarnevelt in 1609. The tug-of-war between the two men embodied the two spirits of the Dutch Reformed Church, reaching its tensest moment in 1618 with the arrest and imprisonment of Oldenbarnevelt under the threat of military intervention by Maurice of Nassau and the States General of the Netherlands. Convened by the latter in November 1618, the Synod of Dordrecht condemned the Arminian Remonstrants

as heretics and disturbers of the Church and State, reiterated the doctrine of predestination in its strictest interpretation and confirmed the indisputable authority of the confession of faith of the Reformed Church and its catechism. Uytenbogaert and Episcopius were forced to leave the country, and many Remonstrants followed them into exile. It was only in 1625 after the death of Prince Maurice that they were able to return to the Dutch Republic and had the opportunity to exercise their faith again in some Dutch cities without persecution.¹⁴

The success of Jacob Acontius and his work played a role in the heated controversy surrounding these events. Johannes Wtenbogaert (1557–1644), one of Arminius's most influential successors, frequently mentioned his intellectual debt to Acontius, recalling sarcastically among other things that in 1570s Geneva the Calvinist pastor Simon Goulart had held him up as a dangerous author and strongly discouraged the reading of his works.¹⁵ Indeed, the Counter-Remonstrants referred to him as 'damned Acontius'.¹⁶ The dispute between Arminians and orthodox Calvinists was further exacerbated by the so-called Vorstius affair. Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622) was a German theologian called into teach theology at the University of Leiden after the death of Arminius. He soon started to use this position to argue that the essence of God was not infinite, and that God had limited knowledge of the future and could not be present in every part of the universe. His audience became increasingly convinced that he was a deeply sceptical heretic who adopted doctrinal positions dangerously beyond the confines of Christianity. Moreover, Vorstius made no effort to hide his ties with Socinians, the followers of the rationalist from Siena Fausto Sozzini; as well as maintaining contact with them and distributing their books, he acted as the promoter and editor of an edition of Sozzini's writings. It was easy for the Counter-Remonstrants to equate his opinions with those of the Socinians and use him to drive the Remonstrants into a corner. The fact that Arminius had been on good terms with Vorstius and that Wtenbogaert and other Arminians had exercised their influence in his favour when he was appointed to the chair in Leiden made the Remonstrants suspicious of any involvement with his doctrines. This led orthodox Calvinists to affirm that their dispute with the Arminians was more about defending Christianity as a whole than the issue of predestination or grace. For their part, the Arminians were soon forced to distance themselves from their troublesome ally and embarrassing connection. They duly issued a Confession of Faith in 1621 in Antwerp to

show that their theology was far more moderate than their opponents had implied.¹⁷

It was not the first time that Acontius had been associated with Sozzini and the Socinians. Johannes Völkel (1565–1616), who was Fausto Sozzini's friend and one of the writers of the Racovian Catechism (1609), the flagship text of Polish Socinianism, as well as the author of *De vera religione*, which many saw as a summary of Socinian thought, mentioned *Satan's Stratagems* on several occasions, saying that he was in perfect agreement with Acontius on the matter of the authority of the Holy Scriptures and the fact that they contained all essential knowledge for purposes of salvation.¹⁸ The German Socinian Martin Ruarus (1588–1657), Dean of the Racovian Academy from 1620 to 1622, also knew and appreciated Acontius's work. He showed his familiarity with *Satan's Stratagems* in a letter written before 1616, expressing his agreement with Acontius's idea of drastically reducing Christianity to its essential elements.¹⁹ The most combative Protestant polemicists wasted no time in branding Acontius a dangerous crypto-Socinian. In his *Harmonia remonstrantium et socinianorum*, Johannes Peltius made explicit reference to Acontius in the same terms, claiming that those who wanted to attain eternal salvation needed to know more than the simple faith or obedience to Christ's commandments endorsed by Acontius.²⁰ Another man who spoke of Acontius in similar terms to a crypto-Socinian was David Pareus (1548–1622), a Lutheran member of the theology faculty in Heidelberg.²¹ The negative reference was naturally to Acontius's doctrinal suggestion of a highly restricted number of core truths, the only ones that needed to be followed to achieve salvation. They did not include the doctrine of the Trinity, which was deemed essential by all Reformed confessions. This dangerous association linking the name of Acontius to the Socinians led the Arminians to distance themselves from his work.²² More than 40 years passed before *Satan's Stratagems* saw the light of day in the Dutch Republic again, in very different circumstances from the context of the early 1600s.²³

While in the Dutch Republic the fortunes of Acontius suffered a setback, in England his work soon became very successful. Religious and political events in England and the Dutch Republic had become closely interwoven at the time of the Vorstius affair. Matthew Slade (1569–1628), the English rector of the Latin school in Amsterdam, first introduced the Dutch Calvinist Sibrandus Lubbertus—Vorstius's

fiercest opponent—to the Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot (1562–1633), who brought Vorstius's *De Deo* to the attention of King James I. The involvement of the King of England was not accidental; the Jesuit Martin Becanus (1563–1624), in his frenzy of anti-Calvinist polemics, had previously associated the King with Vorstius's redoubtable doctrines in 1610. James had already stepped in several times over the preceding months to prove this was false and to prevent the German theologian from being appointed to the chair of theology in Leiden. However, in order to remove any lingering doubt about his supposed support for these ideas he published an official statement against Vorstius's errors in 1612.²⁴ Despite this clear stance against possible Socinian influences, James I was far from being in league with the Dutch Counter-Remonstrant movement. Partly thanks to his impetus, the religious climate in England was changing quite dramatically, especially compared to the predestinationalist turning point at the end of the sixteenth century. Inspired by the then Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift, at the helm of a group of English Calvinists dissatisfied with the formulation of the thirty-nine articles of faith of the Anglican Church, the so-called Lambeth Articles were drafted in 1595 in an attempt to include the supralapsarian doctrine of predestination. Even though the request was not approved by the then Queen, Elizabeth I, it expressed a deeply rooted trend within the Anglican clergy. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, this Calvinist faction was opposed within the Church of England by a group of clergymen with similar opinions to the Arminians, including Richard Neile, Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge and John Overall; in the 1620s they gathered under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud. These two opposing doctrinal trends clashed directly for the first time in a non-university context at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604; from that moment on, the controversial debate continued with intensity and rigidity for at least another 20 years. Anglo-Saxon historiography has interpreted the influence exercised by these two contrasting doctrinal trends on English monarchs at the time in different ways. Nicholas Tyacke, who was one of the first to undertake a systematic study of the movement of men and doctrines rechristened English Arminianism, identified the main reason for its success as a reaction to the rigid Calvinist direction taken at the end of the sixteenth century. Although Elizabeth I did not accept the demands of the supporters of the Lambeth Articles, the strictly Calvinist leanings of the English clergy forced their opponents to organize forces

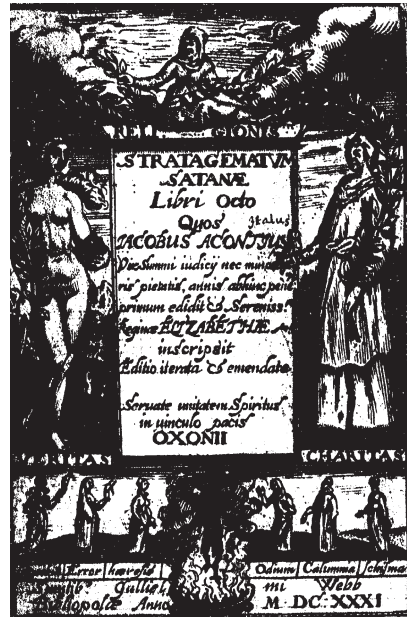
and come out into the open. After the Synod of Dordrecht, the arrival of many Arminians, banished from Dutch soil, in England strengthened the English anti-Calvinist movement, which later achieved its greatest success soon after Charles I came to the throne, with the 1626 Proclamation banning any debate on the issue of predestination. Tyacke felt that English Arminianism enjoyed further success in the following years with Lord Falkland's Great Tew Circle and his Latitudinarian friends, who embraced the legacy of the English anti-Calvinists and lent their ideas to ideals of religious tolerance.²⁵ On the other hand, other Anglo-Saxon historians have opposed Tyacke's interpretation by denying that the Church of England ever welcomed radical Calvinist leanings at the beginning of the seventeenth century; English theology instead followed a 'middle road' well away from any form of extremism. Therefore, they feel that the strengthening of Arminian leanings in 1620s England cannot be explained as a reaction to the Church of England becoming more doctrinally rigid in Calvinist terms, but as the result of changes in the international balance of power. The accusation of Arminianism was used with particular emphasis during the 1620s due to the 30 Years' War, which triggered a wave of militant Protestantism. Charles I's 1626 decision to ban any discussion on the hot topics of religious controversy including predestination, strongly reiterated two years later (1628), was therefore not because he subscribed to Arminian doctrines in anti-Calvinist terms, but rather because he wanted to reduce the toxic impact of the violent clashes creating a rift in the Church of England. After this delicate moment in foreign policy passed and peace returned to England in the 1630s, Arminianism disappeared from the horizons of English politics and never re-emerged as a relevant issue during the Civil War in the 1640s.²⁶

Regardless of the explanation provided for the polarization of religious debate in the first few decades of the seventeenth century (pro-Arminians against orthodox Calvinists), it is an undeniable fact that a group of lay and religious men who firmly believed in ideals of peace and stability established themselves in England in the 1620s and 1630s, striving to reconcile religious differences within the scope of renewed Christian harmony. Their religious message was in keeping with the stance adopted by the Dutch Arminians, with whom many of them had maintained direct or indirect contact, and was chiefly bound together by anti-Calvinism. This group provides the context for the 'rediscovery' of Acontius's work in the early 1630s.

In actual fact, the first English reference to Acontius's text can be found in the 1610 Latin edition of William Bradshaw's *English Puritanism*,²⁷ translated by William Ames, a theologian and Protestant controversialist. In the preface, Ames mentions Acontius in a list of important figures in the Protestant world, before warning the reader not to be distracted by 'Satan's stratagems' in the search for truth—a clear reference to the Italian exile's work.²⁸ It is difficult, however, to see Ames and Bradshaw as Acontius's followers. Although it contained a call for freedom of conscience, Bradshaw's volume defended 'the rigidest sort of those that are called Puritanes', whom James I, Archbishop Bancroft and his Anglican prelates accused of heresy and schism. He maintained that the word of God was the only canon to follow on religious matters, that every congregation was a true visible church and that the minister of each congregation was the only spiritual figure of authority to which one should submit. Fearing persecution from the ecclesiastical courts dominated by Anglican bishops, Bradshaw (and Ames) hoped for more leniency from civil magistrates. For this, they appealed to the temporal supremacy of the State over every Church, stating that no power on earth had the right to force the consciences of men. However, this was a clearly defensive strategy and it did not prevent them from asking for external compliance to be imposed on the wicked and the irreligious.²⁹ Indeed, it is no coincidence that William Ames sided with the most intransigent Calvinists in the Dutch Republic after leaving England to escape Anglican persecution in 1610, supporting their battle against Arminianism,³⁰ and even requesting the death penalty for all persistent and blasphemous heretics a few years later.³¹

The first sign of wholly favourable reception in England came two decades later, in the aforementioned historical and religious context, when the first Latin edition of *Satan's Stratagems* appeared in Oxford in 1631, published by William Webb, a bookbinder at the Bodleian Library (Fig. 1). The publication of the work was suggested by Christopher Potter,³² a moderate Puritan theologian who had been involved in a months-long controversy that was destined to last until the beginning of the following decade. A brief overview of this dispute will help to explain why Acontius's work was published in Oxford. Potter was educated in the strict Calvinist principles of Queen's College under the provostship of Henry Airay, a position he was himself later appointed to in 1626. He adopted some Arminianesque positions at the end of the 1620s following a long stay in the Dutch

Fig. 1 Frontispiece of the 1631 Oxford edition of Acontius's *Stratagematum Satanae*



Republic where he was in close contact with the Remonstrants. His old Presbyterian companions duly condemned him and accusations of Pelagianism and Arminianism forced him to distance himself publicly from these doctrines on more than one occasion. He did so with somewhat ambiguous expressions, such as ‘I love Calvin very well and, I must tell you, I cannot hate Arminius’ in his *Appello evangelium*.³³ However, he could not hide his enthusiasm for Hugo Grotius’s doctrines, which he also shared with his friends in Lord Falkland’s Great Tew Circle³⁴: he repeatedly encouraged his students to read *De veritate religionis christianae*, one of the Dutch irenicist’s works that two of his pupils—Francis Coventry and Thomas Crosfield—duly translated and published in 1632 under the title *True faith explained*.³⁵ His moderate and irenic doctrinal stance is summed up more effectively in his handwritten testament of 21 February 1646 than in any treatise. In it, he stated that he was ending his days ‘abhorring all secte, sideinge and tyranny in Religion and holding Communion with all holy Christians through the world that love the same Lord Jesus in sincerity, [...] agreeing with all such in things that are necessary [...] (which I take to

bee but fewe and cleerely revealed in the New Testam[en]t').³⁶ Potter had already focused on these ideals of peace and unity among Christians in a sermon given in March 1628 to mark the consecration of his uncle Barnaby Potter at Ely House.³⁷ Now the Provost of Queen's College Oxford, he appealed for an end to the ongoing theological controversies that were undermining the unity of Christianity, inviting men to 'give themselves leave without passion, rightly to apprehend and consider the diversities and degrees of divine truth. Many truths are profitable, very few necessary.'³⁸ The vast majority of religious matters that had divided the sharpest minds of every age turned out 'to be not fundamentall, not essentiall to the faith'.³⁹ He concluded—clearly addressing representatives of the Holy Roman Church—that it was completely futile to wait for an absolute and general consensus about every single truth, as this would only encourage a dangerous form of tyranny within the Church.⁴⁰ Instead, it was enough to nurture the peace and unity of Christians around 'all the maine Articles of the Catholique faith'⁴¹ by reaching a unanimous consensus about a 'short Creed' just as the ancient Church had suggested and calling it 'the Rule of faith', citing the authority of Irenaeus and Tertullian.⁴² He then clarified which principles he was referring to and which truth they depended on:

Gods free grace, which I acknowledge to bee the whole and sole cause of our predestination, conversion and salvation, abhorring all damned doctrines of the Pelagians, Semipelagians, Iesuites, Socinians, and of their ragges and reliques, which helpe onely to pride and pricke up corrupt nature.⁴³

The main target of his attack was Rome: 'The Church of Rome hath adulterated and obscured her Catholique verities with intolerable superadditaments.'⁴⁴ In the heated climate of the early 1630s, his polemical and provocative attacks were sure to garner a response. It was a Jesuit priest that duly took up the baton—unsurprisingly given Potter's daring juxtaposition of the doctrines of the Company of Jesus and the redoubtable Socinians. Matthew Wilson, alias Edward Knott, joined the Company in Rome in October 1606 and, after serving at the English College for 15 years, he was sent back to England to help the Jesuit mission. His polemical talent emerged in the late 1620s during a heated dispute between regulars and seculars about the appointment of a bishop placed in charge of the English mission, which he strongly opposed.⁴⁵ However, it was Christopher Potter's 1628 sermon that really incited the young Jesuit's controversialist streak.⁴⁶ Writing a few months later, Knott replied that:

The holy Fathers in the most primitive times, who are iustly called *Fathers*, and revered as such by us, were yet withall most obedient and humble children, to the *holy catholicke Church* of their time; and so treading in those very steps, which had been traced out for them by the holy ghost in holy Scripture, they have shewed many wayes, how they beleaved and knewe, that there was but one *true Church*, and that the perfect *unity* thereof, was to be so very carefully maintained, as that whosoever broke it, must everlastingly perish.⁴⁷

Indeed, he felt that ‘no reason can be given, why if there be allowed any more true Churches then *One*’.⁴⁸ In this way, he reformulated Potter’s appeal for the unity of the Church and peace among Christians in anti-Protestant terms: ‘Out of this *One Church* there is no salvation’, he proclaimed to his unnamed interlocutor.⁴⁹ A few pages further on, this implicit accusation became totally explicit:

presumption and pride, which is expressed by choosing, and obstinately maintaining of any doctrine or discipline, contrary to the iudgment and commaundement of the catholicke Church, and by refusing to submit therein to the same Church, is that wherein the very life and spirit of schisme and heresie doth consist.⁵⁰

In his eyes, the ‘diabolicall degree of obstinacy’ that led Protestants to ‘preferre their owne sence and judgment, in things belonging to the faith and worship of our Lord God, before the resolution and direction of his holy Catholicke Church’⁵¹ was the original sin that had broken the ancient unity and prevented it from being re-established. With his effective and provocative rhetoric, Knott was at a loss to explain how it was possible to accuse the Church of Rome, using insulting epithets such as ‘the seate of Antichrist, the Synagogue of Satan, the very center of superstition and idolatry’, while maintaining at the same time that the differences between Catholics and Protestants did not concern fundamental points of faith, but only questions unrelated to salvation.⁵² He dismissed Potter’s Latitudinarian suggestion of finding unity of consent in a few fundamental points of faith as a ‘mere Chimera’. However, while he was willing to concede that some doctrines were more important than others, he could not agree with the idea that doctrines imposed by the Church of Rome were considered irrelevant for purposes of salvation.⁵³

Potter’s reply to the Jesuit’s arguments—through an intermediary—is where Jacob Acontius came into play. The Provost of Queen’s College

decided to refer to the perspicacity and argumentative sharpness of a text published many decades previously—*Satan's Stratagems*—which was still incredibly topical in the early 1630s. Published in its original Latin edition in Oxford a few months after the publication of Knott's *Charity mistaken*, the work was perfect for illustrating and expanding on the arguments in his 1628 *Sermon*. However, as Latin significantly reduced the target audience, Potter was soon forced to step up his efforts. While the 1631 edition of Acontius's work effectively broadened the horizons of the personal polemic, adding an unprecedented depth of analysis and perspective to his positions, he needed to return to direct debate and use the more widespread and understandable vernacular language to respond to the Jesuit's sword-thrusts. In this way, two years later, Potter published his *Want of charitie iustly charged* (1633).⁵⁴ Once again, he chose not to name his interlocutor, but his target was clear from the beginning: 'no Protestant denyes the catholique Church to bee one; they all deny the present Romane to be that one Catholique'.⁵⁵ Returning to one of the main arguments in his *Sermon*, he reiterated that 'the unity of the Church is nothing hindred by diversity of opinions in doubtfull matters. It is a great vanity to hope or expect, that all learned men, in this life, should absolutely consent in all the pieces and particles of divine truth.'⁵⁶ He underlined that 'this unity consists in the unity of faith, not of opinions; and in an union of mens hearts and affections, by true charity; which will easily compound or tolerate all unnecessary differences [for salvation]'.⁵⁷ Following the path previously marked out by Acontius, Potter insisted on the inevitability and even the usefulness of different positions on matters of faith coexisting within a single Church, providing that these were about 'secondary, probable, accidentall or obscure points'⁵⁸: 'as in a musicall confort a discord now and then [...] sweetens the harmony; so the variety of opinions, or of rites in partes of the Church, doth rather commend then prejudice the unity of the whole'.⁵⁹ When it came to identifying the truths of faith needed for salvation, Potter took his cue from Acontius:

the substance of christian religion, which is, faith in Iesus Christ, the sonne of God and saviour of the world, with submission to his doctrine, and obedience to his commandements.⁶⁰

This was the only truth needed to attain the eternal life and the 'catholique Church' was the only depository of this truth contained in the Holy Scriptures; the Fathers of the Church were referring to this

‘necessary faith or truth’ and not to other ‘difficult questions’ when they alluded to maintaining an ‘exact and perfect unity among catholique christians’.⁶¹ After reiterating his point of view, strengthened by the sound reasoning of *Satan’s Stratagems*, Potter counter-attacked by upholding the Protestants’ decision to move away from Rome:

there neither was, nor can be any just cause to depart from the Church of Christ, no more then from Christ himselfe. But to depart from a particular Church, and namely from the Church of Rome, in some doctrines and practices, there might be just and necessary cause.⁶²

This was the choice adopted by Luther more than a century before and constantly reapplied by Protestants over the following decades. However, rejecting the corrupt ‘popish’ Church did not mean distancing oneself from ‘those maine essentiall truthes, which give her the name and essence of a Church’⁶³: contrary to Knott’s insinuations, he saw no contradiction between the two positions. To give more substance to this Latitudinarian affirmation and build a bridge for dialogue with his adversaries, Potter added that salvation would not only be granted to those who died as Catholics while ignoring the truth, but also to all followers of the ‘Roman religion’ who did not have sufficient means to discover the truth, or simply could not find ‘sufficient motives to convince their conscience that they are in error’.⁶⁴ Somewhat inevitably, this form of ‘charity’ provoked the English Jesuit into replying once again. This time, he was determined to end all discussion by demonstrating that salvation could not be earned in more than one Church and that Protestants were living in a state of schism and permanent sin.⁶⁵ Not content with this polemical clash, in 1636 Knott published *A Direction to be observed by N.N. A Direction to be observed by N.N.*, a treatise in which he also accused Potter’s friend and associate William Chillingworth—who soon became involved in events surrounding the publication of *Satan’s Stratagems*—of Socinianism and apostasy. With Potter’s encouragement to join the controversialist wrangling, Chillingworth clearly felt obliged to rise to the challenge.

2 WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH AND JACOB ACONTIUS: A POSTHUMOUS ASSOCIATION

Born at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Chillingworth was a theologian with an interesting and tormented personal background. Raised against the backdrop of the Anglican Church under the

influential protection of William Laud, who was both the Archbishop of Canterbury and his godfather, he was gradually assailed by doubt and reached the point where, as a contemporary source said, 'by degrees he grew confident of nothing, and [became] a sceptic, at least, in the greatest mysteries of faith'.⁶⁶ As he admitted in a letter to his friend Gilbert Sheldon at the end of the 1620s, it was the desire for greater certainties that prompted him to leave the Anglican Church and embrace the Catholic faith. In this way, William Laud's godson left England for the Catholic seminary in Douai in 1630. Although the conversion stunned many of his friends and colleagues, it was far from definitive and soon gave way to fresh uncertainties and mood swings. The stay at the French seminary failed to dissipate the doubts gnawing at his conscience and he returned to England less than a year after his departure. According to the Jesuit John Percy (alias John Fisher), who inspired his initial conversion to Catholicism, for a while Chillingworth was 'torn between the two communions: although he was officially Catholic, he started attending the Anglican Church again'.⁶⁷ He described Chillingworth as 'doubting between both communions, and though gone over to the Papist, yet still came to our Churches'. In the end, there was such pressure from his old companions—Archbishop Laud in primis—that the 'spirit of free and impartial research' that he felt had guided his choices, or rather non-choices, in those years finally found a resting place in a definitive return to the Church of England.⁶⁸ However, the fluctuating nature of his double conversion influenced the way he approached matters of faith. In 1635, he refused a promotion offered through his godfather William Laud, stating that his conscience would not allow him to endorse (at least) two of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, one of which concerned the Athanasian Creed. More generally, he continued to harbour serious suspicions about any form of dogmatic certainty and was constantly driven by a rational form of deep-rooted scepticism. This attitude often prompted Laud, among others, to have misgivings about his writings; for example, it led Chillingworth to describe the Arian doctrine, commonly condemned as heretical, as 'either a truth, or else no damnable haeresy'.⁶⁹ In 1638, he finally convinced himself that the Anglican Church allowed its members an acceptable degree of Latitudinarianism and accepted the promotion he had been offered some years previously, duly becoming Chancellor of Salisbury Cathedral and Master of Wyggeston's Hospital in Leicester. It was probably not by chance that he also published his main work, *The Religion of Protestants*

a Safe Way to Salvation, that same year. It was a work that could be read in many different ways: a systematic defence of his friend Potter's doctrinal positions, a reasoned attack against the Jesuit Knott, a treatise with clear anti-Roman overtones and a paean to doctrinal Latitudinarianism advocating an individual religion free of suffocating dogmatism. Like Potter, Chillingworth denied that Catholics necessarily lived in a state of damnation, but unlike his friend, he attempted to demonstrate that there was some truth on both fronts by disassociating the prospect of eternal salvation from membership of a particular Church. He aimed to show that doctrinal conflicts need not be moral issues and to relocate true Christianity in individual ethics and conduct.⁷⁰ In his work, Chillingworth reversed the accusation frequently levelled at Protestants, indicating that Rome was the main culprit for dividing Christianity. What he found totally unacceptable was Rome's insistence that its Creed and jurisdiction extended universally under the aegis of the principle of the infallibility of its doctrines⁷¹:

This presumptuous imposing of the senses of men upon the words of God, the special senses of men's consciences together, under the equal penaltie of death and damnation; this vaine conceit that we can speak of the things of God, better then in the word of God; this deifying our owne interpretations, and tyrannous inforcing them upon others [...]. This restraining of the word of God from that latitude and generality, and the understanding of men from that liberty, wherein Christ and the Apostles left them, is, and hath been the only fountaine of all the schisms of the Church, and that which makes them continue the common incendiary of Christendome, and that which (as I said before) teares into pieces, not the coat, but the bowels, and members of Christ.⁷²

Chillingworth exhorted his readers to 'take away this Persecuting, Burning, Cursing, Damning of men for not subscribing to the words of men, as the words of God'⁷³; it was necessary to give Christians freedom and 'require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master but him only'.⁷⁴ The only way to drive away 'tyranny, which is the Divels instrument to support errours, and superstitions, and impieties' was to 'let those leave claiming Infallibility that have no title to it'.⁷⁵ He concluded his irenic appeal as follows:

I say take away tyranny and restore christians to their just and full liberty of captivating their understanding to Scripture only, and as rivers when they have a free passage, runne all to the ocean, so it may well be hoped by

Gods blessing, that universall liberty thus moderated, may quickly reduce christendome to truth and unitie.⁷⁶

Anyone that had read the 1631 Oxford edition of *Satan's Stratagems* would have recognized the unmistakable influence of Acontius on the English theologian's words. After Potter endorsed the work (also) in response to his Jesuit disputant's insinuating arguments, Jacob Acontius became an integral part of the long-standing controversialist polemic, with William Chillingworth now taking up the baton. It is therefore no surprise to find Acontius explicitly mentioned in the context of a passionate appeal for truth and unity in a form of Christianity freed from the tyranny of the dogma of human infallibility. Chillingworth publicly recognized his debt of gratitude to Acontius's text: 'this persuasion is no singularity of mine, but the doctrine which I have learnt from divines of great learning and judgment. Let the reader be pleased to peruse the seventh booke of Acontius *de Stratagemata Satanae*.'⁷⁷ Indeed, in terms of his thinking, Chillingworth was moving in exactly the same direction taken by Acontius almost a century previously when he moved to England. He maintained that Catholics and Protestants agreed on many fundamental questions of faith and that this set of common beliefs was far more important than any difference of opinion:

Christians must be taught to set a higher value upon those high points of faith and obedience wherein they agree, then upon these matters of lesse moment wherein they differ, and understand that agreement in those, ought to be more effectual to joyne them in one communion, then their difference in other things of lesse moment to divide them. [...] For why should men be more rigid then God? Why should any error exclude any man from the churches communion, which will not deprive him of eternall salvation?⁷⁸

Acontius had started his lucid analysis in the 1560s with the same questions and they were clearly just as relevant decades later.

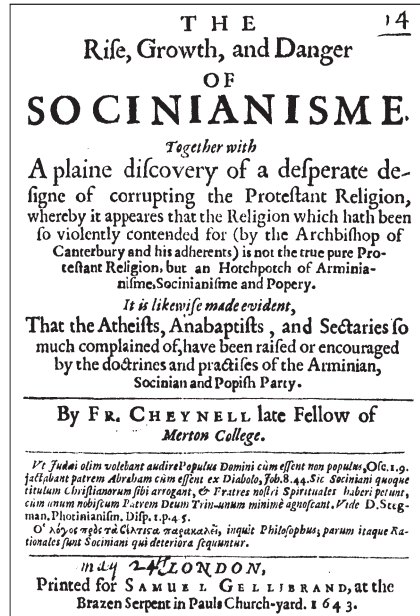
3 THE FIRST PURITAN RESPONSE: *THE RISE, GROWTH AND DANGER OF SOCIANISME* (1643) BY FRANCIS CHEYNELL

Chillingworth's explicit reference to Acontius's book and Potter's endorsement of the Oxford edition were not isolated gestures by enlightened individual theologians removed from the religious and

cultural context of England at the time. Latitudinarian trends became even more firmly established in England in the 1630s; they were originally inspired by William Laud's Arminian Latitudinarianism, but broke free from their influential but cumbersome patron. Both Potter and Chillingworth were, each in their own way, important exponents of these currents of thought. While the former had gradually but irreversibly distanced himself from his Presbyterian background to adopt more open and tolerant positions, the latter—as we have seen in Sect. 2—followed a singular religious path which was wavering and uncertain, but ultimately wholly in keeping with his rational and anti-dogmatic spirit. After returning to England in 1631, Chillingworth joined the famous circle at Great Tew in the Oxfordshire countryside, home to Lucius Cary, second Viscount of Falkland. The incredible book collection in Falkland's library provided a backdrop and support for lengthy philosophical and theological conversations involving some of the most brilliant intellectuals of the time, including Gilbert Sheldon, George Morley, the poet Edmund Waller and the scholar John Hales, with whom Chillingworth had particularly close ties.⁷⁹

The religious climate that favoured the flourishing of this intellectual circle in the 1630s started to change in the first few months of the following decade. The harsh Calvinist resistance to Laud and Charles I's episcopal projects soon also spread from the Scottish Kirk to the English parliamentary majority, which gradually adopted pro-Calvinist Presbyterian positions. Laud was duly imprisoned in 1641; he remained in prison until his death in 1645. Therefore, at the outbreak of the Civil War, the Episcopal party was experiencing a downturn and the Presbyterian party was significantly on the rise after years of persecution by the Archbishop. In a major reversal of roles, the members of the Presbyterian party—who had previously fought for the freedom of their conscience and to maintain their survival space—now acted as heresy hunters. Among other things, they introduced a parliamentary bill requesting the death penalty for all heretics.⁸⁰ One of the most hardened and intransigent hunters was Francis Cheynell. After suffering the disdain of his Oxford colleagues (he had been elected a fellow of Merton College in 1629) for his anti-Arminian stance and after failing to graduate in theology in 1641 for the same reason, Cheynell was waiting for the first opportunity to take revenge for the injustice and give vent to his polemical streak. On 5 April 1642, he was elected to represent Pembrokeshire

Fig. 2 Frontispiece of Francis Cheynell's *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianism* (London 1643)



in Westminster Assembly of Divines,⁸¹ and in 1643 he was appointed Rector of Petworth,⁸² and also launched one of the fiercest anti-Socinian treatises ever published in England: *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianism* (Fig. 2).⁸³

Its main thesis was that Socinianism had ‘created an opening for atheist libertinism by promising salvation to all heretics and ignorant people’. According to Cheynell, the principal culprit was William Chillingworth and he duly launched a direct and personal attack the following year with his *Chillingworth novissima*.⁸⁴ The accusation of Socinianism had been made—probably for the first time in seventeenth-century England—a few years previously by George Walker, Rector of Saint John Evangelist, against his religious colleagues. In 1641, he published a work entitled *Socinianisme in the fundamental point of justification discovered and confuted*,⁸⁵ whose main targets were John Goodwin, who he scornfully referred to as ‘Socinian John’, and Anthony Wotton, his presumed Socinian teacher.⁸⁶

Walker had actually first formulated his accusation of Socinianism against Anthony Wotton in the 1610s by writing privately about him

and his work to friends and colleagues. He had been deeply influenced by the texts of German and Dutch Calvinist polemicists such as David Pareus (1548–1622) and Sibrandus Lubbertus (1555–1625), two of the fiercest opponents of the Dutch Arminians at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He subsequently convinced himself that Wotton's writings contained traces of the same dangerous Socinian heresy that the Calvinist controversialists claimed to have found in the works of the Remonstrants. However, his position was somewhat isolated and he failed to earn any esteem in the English religious debate. This was not only because Wotton's thinking was objectively different from the Socinians, but also because few English Protestant theologians at the time were willing to exacerbate potential causes of tension by focusing on their opponents' views.⁸⁷ Walker had to wait almost 20 years before he was able to use the controversialist category again, this time successfully. Charles I's decision to silence any debate on predestination in the late 1620s made it difficult, if not impossible, to criticize anti-Calvinist positions, but also—and above all—Arminian doctrines. This contributed indirectly to rekindling the spectre of Socinianism, which had not met with as much success in England as it had in the Dutch Republic. Indeed, Calvinist controversialists discovered that the accusation of Socinianism was a new polemical tool, not only because the Socinians were unanimously seen as heretical, even blasphemous, but particularly because it was perfectly possible to oppose them by using and promoting the core principles of Reformed theology. Reformed theologians were forced to use their imagination and creativity in choosing their theological issues and began to understand the usefulness of targeting the Socinians, as it allowed them to demonstrate the intellectual coherence of their Reformed stance.⁸⁸ Therefore, when Walker went back on the offensive with his accusation of Socinianism in the early 1640s, he won considerable favour in the theological debate of the time. In 1640s polemics, the accusations of Socinianism and anti-Trinitarianism were intertwined: as we shall see in this same section, on pp. 106–107, in Cheynell's work the two terms soon became synonyms. This was not the first time that the spectre of anti-Trinitarianism had been raised in England—between 1548 and 1602 at least eight people had been burnt as anti-Trinitarian heretics. Four of these cases had happened in Norwich, including one man who claimed that 'Christ is not God ... but mere ... sinfull man, and an abominable Idoll.' Then, in 1612, Bartholomew Legate, a preacher who was a member of the sect of the

Seekers, and Edward Wightman, an English Anabaptist, had been sentenced to death for anti-Trinitarian heresy.⁸⁹

Like many of the controversialist labels used in doctrinal polemics, the terms Socinian and anti-Trinitarian were also widely and quite arbitrarily employed; it would actually have been difficult to demonstrate that Wotton and Goodwin's doctrines reflected those of the exile from Siena, Fausto Sozzini, and his European followers. The juxtaposition regarding William Chillingworth boldly and confidently made by Francis Cheynell was equally fragile. These were incendiary weapons brandished by the most skilled Presbyterian polemicists to spread a climate of suspicion and fear and isolate their predestined victims both culturally and religiously. While striving to trace the genealogy of this 'highly dangerous Socinian heresy', Cheynell even mentioned Archbishop William Laud, claiming that although he had pretended to fight Socinianism, it was easy to see that his regulations were promulgated to support these 'dangerous heretics' rather than suppress them.⁹⁰ He added that Laud was known to have done everything possible to further the career of William Chillingworth, who was strongly suspected of Socinianism.

To take a stand against Chillingworth, Cheynell did not hesitate to side with his fiercest rival, the Jesuit Edward Knott, thereby adding fresh impetus to a polemic that showed no signs of concluding. After pointing out with a blend of provocation and satisfaction that Chillingworth was yet to reply to the Jesuit's latest retort entitled *Christianity maintained* (1638),⁹¹ Cheynell underlined the idea that the Reformed Churches could not have found a better polemicist than Knott to substantively reject the 'Arminian' Chillingworth's 'conceited peace proposals': what advantage would there have been for the Protestants if the Pope had been dethroned to make way for the 'queen' Reason that the 'Socinians' supported? He therefore implicitly alluded that on this occasion it was better to side with the papist enemy than yield to Chillingworth's Socinian rationalism and Arminian irenicism.⁹²

After remembering Chillingworth and Knott, Cheynell could not avoid mentioning the third protagonist in the religious controversy that had been underway since the beginning of the previous decade: Christopher Potter. Unsurprisingly, he had nothing but bad things to say about him: Potter had defended the Protestant point of view by flavouring it with lots of 'arminian leaven' and had 'sweetned' the papacy with so many 'gentle scruples' that he fully deserved the Jesuit's biting polemical allusions.⁹³ Arminianism and Socinianism were thus

used interchangeably as controversialist instruments. In the framework of the religious polemic, the substantial differences between the Dutch Remonstrants who followed Arminius and the disciples of Fausto Sozzini's work and thinking disappeared, sacrificed on the altar of (supposedly) greater accusatory efficacy. However, Cheynell was not the first to undertake Arminian–Socinian scaremongering. In 1624, Nicolaas Bodecherus, an ex-Remonstrant defector, had already levelled the accusation of Socinianism at the new Remonstrant confession in a work eloquently entitled *Sociniano-Remonstrantismus*.⁹⁴ A few years later, Johannes Peltius wrote his *Harmonia remonstrantium et socinianorum* (1633), followed by the Genevan Calvinist Nicolaus Vedelius, who accused Episcopius of being imbued with 'Socinian milk' after he had dared to reply to Bodecherus, distinguishing between Arminian and Socinian positions.⁹⁵ These polemics were the poisoned fruit of the violent pamphlet-based polemics that had accompanied and followed the sensational expulsion of the Arminians decreed by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618–1619. Many of these Dutchmen, who suddenly found themselves without the right to speak in their homeland, chose to move to England at the time of William Laud (and Charles I). In this way, the venom of the bitter controversy accompanied them across the English Channel. It was therefore no wonder that one of the best-informed English Calvinist polemicists picked up the baton. Cheynell underlined that the problem was 'three Kingdoms infected at once with this deadly disease' of Arminianism and Socinianism. Charles I, and particularly William Laud, were responsible for having spread it around Scotland through the dependable James Wedderburn.⁹⁶ The latter had been ordained a minister in Hartstone in 1615 and immediately began collaborating with Laud to draw up a liturgical formula for use in the country. Two years later, he was appointed professor at St Mary's College in St Andrews, where, according to the Presbyterian polemicist's reconstruction, 'this Wedderburn had poysoned the young students in Divinity'. Finally, at the wish of Charles I, he ended his career as Bishop of Dunblane and Dean of the Chapel Royal in Stirling (1636), where he managed to 'vent all his arminian errors [...] in despite of all the presbyteries'.⁹⁷ Cheynell omitted the unfortunate epilogue that saw him forced to flee Scotland for the second time and seek protection from the Archbishop of Canterbury again after being deposed by the Assembly of Glasgow for his heterodox doctrines in December 1638.⁹⁸ What interested the author of *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme* was

to emphasize the nefarious influence of Laud and Charles I—along with the role played by their followers—in spreading Arminian and Socinian doctrines even beyond English borders. Thomas Sydserf, a Scottish prelate in Edinburgh,⁹⁹ and above all William Forbes, the first bishop of the Scottish capital,¹⁰⁰ were also held up by Cheynell as some of the most active disseminators of the Arminian–Socinian plague in the Church of Scotland. For more in-depth analysis of the matter, he simply referred the reader to the recently published work by Robert Baillie, one of the most learned Presbyterian ministers. After being specially selected by the main Scottish leaders, Baillie had published a pamphlet entitled *Ladensium Αυτοκαταχρησις, or The Canterburian's Self-conviction. Or an evident demonstration of the avowed Arminianisme, Poperie, and tyrannie of that faction, by their owne confessions*,¹⁰¹ before travelling to London on a mission to draw up a set of accusations against William Laud and his attempt to introduce 'Papist innovations' into the Scottish Kirk. Cheynell thus attributed the blame for the spread of the Arminian and Socinian heresy to the top echelons of the English Church, identifying the pinnacle of the propaganda campaign as Charles I's statement ordering the Assembly of the Kirk not to inflict censorship against Arminius's followers upon pain of harsh condemnation. To his mind, Charles I had not been satisfied with spreading the doctrine in Scotland and his followers had even reached Ireland, where the Archbishop of Canterbury's propaganda campaign was developed by George Downham—Bishop of Derry from 1616 to 1634, former chaplain to James I and a close friend of Andrew Willet—and William Chappel, a pupil of William Ames with clear Arminian leanings, chosen personally by Laud in 1634 as Dean of Trinity College Dublin.¹⁰²

After tracing the redoubtable genealogical lineage of Socinianism, identifying its political mould and reconstructing the salient stages of a still-thriving doctrinal polemic, Cheynell pinpointed one of the main culprits for the ongoing popularity of the doctrines in England: the Italian exile Jacob Acontius. After Johannes Peltius had written about him, Cheynell deemed that he was 'guilty of a socinian syncretisme', painting him as a follower of Fausto Sozzini in the same way that Nicodemus followed Christ, 'by stealth and in the dark'. In order to lend strength and authority to his accusations, he relied on the 'judicious and learned Pareus', the author of the *Irenicum* (just as he later appealed once again to the 'learned professour' Peltius). According to Cheynell, Pareus was a man with a 'very peaceable disposition, willing to compose all differences

which might fairly and honestly be compounded', who could not be suspected of any adverse bias.¹⁰³ 'The socinians have one principle which draws a great party after them of all heretikes and sectaries. Nothing (say they) is fundamentally necessary to salvation but only faith or obedience to the commands of Christ': in other words, they 'make faith and obedience all one'. Acontius had been 'a great stickler in this point' that saw obeying the precepts of Christ as the only fundamental tenet and his work had helped 'open a wide gap to let in all heresies into the Church'. Cheynell's train of thought then turned to the anti-Trinitarian danger: 'men might deny the Godhead of Jesus Christ, and almost any article of the christian faith, and yet be christians good enough in their conceit'. Although the man responsible for the 1631 Oxford edition—thereby putting the redoubtable work back into circulation almost 80 years after it had first been published and restoring lifeblood to every kind of heresy—was known to all, his name did not appear on the cover or anywhere else in the volume. Nevertheless, Christopher Potter became known as 'Doctour *Potters Stratagems*' in Oxford. However, the dangerous nature of the book did not lie so much in the name of its promoter as in its author's 'pretence of moderation and charity' which would deceive 'men that understand not his *Stratagems*'; for example, by leading the reader to believe that his indulgence of Socinians was simply dictated by a desire for peace. Instead, the book was full of traps, such as the dedication to Queen Elizabeth, along with 'hopes of being saved without the acknowledgement of those mysteries which the [Anglican] Church hath long held for necessary Articles of faith'.¹⁰⁴ To make his accusatory exhortation even more persuasive, Cheynell did not refrain from citing entire passages from Book III (of eight) of *Satan's Stratagems*, which he deemed the most dangerous and which most faithfully reported Acontius's thinking:

He believed (quite rightly) that the man called Jesus came from God and had grace from him; and in this way he hoped to be able to gain health through him. I leave it to anyone to judge how plausible it is that he knew all the propositions that the Church saw as necessary articles of faith for so long; and there are many other places where the same conclusion is reached.¹⁰⁵

Referring to Acontius's alleged anti-Trinitarianism, Cheynell noted that he referred to Christ as a man who 'came from God' rather than

writing that 'Jesus was God' ('mark he doth not say that he *was God*'). Furthermore, with regard to Abraham, Acontius alluded to the fact that he was not aware of the theological principles that were subsequently considered fundamental articles of faith and 'that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed'. Cheynell was shocked to report that 'he seems to leave it doubtfull whether Abraham did beleeve in Christ or no'.¹⁰⁶ Cheynell was sure that the Reformed Churches were the polemical target of many passages in Book III. Continuing his faithful reproduction of Acontius's work, Cheynell wrote: 'furthermore, there is total silence surrounding the minutiae of religion that some people think must not be ignored. The mystery of salvation through his descendents is announced secretly and obscurely.'¹⁰⁷ Cheynell concluded that the phrase 'some people' concealed—though not very secretly—a clear reference to the Reformed Churches and their doctrinal positions. He felt that passages like this and many others in Book III of *Satan's Stratagems* showed that Acontius wanted to reach out to those that had questioned the articles of the Christian faith in the 1560s: he immediately thought of Michael Servetus, burnt at the stake for his anti-Trinitarian doctrines in 1553, as well as Lelio and Fausto Sozzini and their rational anti-dogmatism. What most troubled Cheynell was the spectre of anti-Trinitarianism. Acontius had written that Sabellius had been justly accused of heresy for saying:

that the Father did not differ from the Son, but he is not so forward to call them heretikes who deny that the Son hath the same nature with the Father; he tells us that we must beleeve Christ to be the Sonne of God, and to be made man, but he doth not presse us to beleeve that Christ is God.¹⁰⁸

It was important not to be taken in by the apparent moderation of an author who came across as 'tender' even on the topic of transubstantiation, stating explicitly that he did not want to take a position on such a controversial question of such little relevance. These were Acontius's words on the subject, faithfully reported by Cheynell:

There was a great and truly tragic controversy about the interpretation of those words: 'take it, this is my body'. Let us see then if this matter is of such importance that as a result one group scorn and mistreat the others, showering them with all sorts of insults and seeing them as enemies. In this respect, I do not need to reveal which group I adhere to; I will simply

confess that I belong to all of them, as I do not doubt that all of them belong to the true Church of God.¹⁰⁹

According to Acontius, ‘the issue of the Eucharistic dispute was about the meaning of the words, not about the truth’¹¹⁰; for his refuter such statements offered excellent support ‘to the coarsest heretics, convincing them that the only difference separating them from us [Reformed Christians] concerns the meaning and interpretation of certain scriptural passages’.¹¹¹

Therefore, Acontius was the perfect incarnation of the Socinian spirit. Anyone still in any doubt simply had to read the umpteenth passage from Book III, which left no room for any misunderstanding:

If you are amazed that the truths that we have listed as essential to know do not include some details of the religion held in the highest consideration, carefully examine the whole of the Old and New Testaments and look for any evidence for teaching that these details need to be known and that anyone who has not understood them cannot be saved. Consider how many of them could have been known to the people of Israel, who nevertheless must have been saved by the same faith that we have.¹¹²

‘This is just the socinian device’ was Cheynell’s peremptory conclusion, with yet another allusion to the ‘pretended moderation and feigned charity’ of the ‘rotten author’.

Cheynell felt this was enough and ended his closing statement here. He could not foresee in 1643 that the events of the English Civil War would soon bring back to the fore supporters of the independence of the Congregationalist Churches and champions of religious tolerance, forcing orthodox Presbyterians like him back into a corner and creating the conditions for a new even more redoubtable version of the eight-volume ‘pernicious’ work that still occupied centre stage in the English religious debate almost a century after its initial publication. He could not foresee the need to take even more direct and official action against *Satan’s Stratagems* a few years later; he felt he had already criticized it enough in his anti-Socinian pamphlet.

4 JOHN GOODWIN AND THE TWO ENGLISH VERSIONS OF *SATAN'S STRATAGEMS* (1647 AND 1648)

The first English translation of the first four books of *Satan's Stratagems* was published on the initiative of John Goodwin. It appeared in London on 24 February 1647—and not, as was previously thought, in February 1648, the date of the second English edition—with a preface by Goodwin himself dated 9 February 1647, but without the letter from John Dury mentioned in the title. It was printed by John Macock and was 'to be sold' by John Hancock 'at the entrance into Popes head'. The date 24 February is handwritten on the copy owned by the British Library (Thomason Collection), as is the date of publication: historians were previously deceived by the year 1648 mistakenly printed on the cover with the 8 corrected to a 7 by hand. The edition contains a short undated dedicatory letter from the translator—whose identity is unknown—to Sir Thomas Fairfax, Commander-in-Chief, and Oliver Cromwell, Lieutenant General 'of all the Forces in England, raised by authority of Parliament, for defence of the Commonwealth', which is preceded by another dedication 'To the Right Honorable. The Lords and Commons of England, in the High Court of Parliament assembled', in which the translator specifies that if the work is received positively, they will proceed rapidly with the translation and publication of the remaining four books (Fig. 3).¹¹³

John Goodwin's preface 'to the reader' offered a first indication of the political and religious motives that had inspired the act of publication and his words vividly expressed the fiery climate at the time. The religious clash between Independents and Presbyterians had become increasingly harsh since the beginning of 1645, in particular following the defeat of Charles I at Naseby against the New Model Army, with the emergence of the central role played by Cromwell's army in the military conflict between Parliament and Crown, and the radical nature of its working-class element. The clash soon left the restricted confines of the Westminster Assembly of Divines,¹¹⁴ passed through the chambers of Parliament and reached the streets of London. As a result, Presbyterian attacks from lay pulpits in squares and religious pulpits in churches became more violent, directed even more vehemently against the group of sectarians and Independents that were suspected of wanting to undermine the social and political order with their radical proposals exalting tolerance and religious freedom. The first lines of

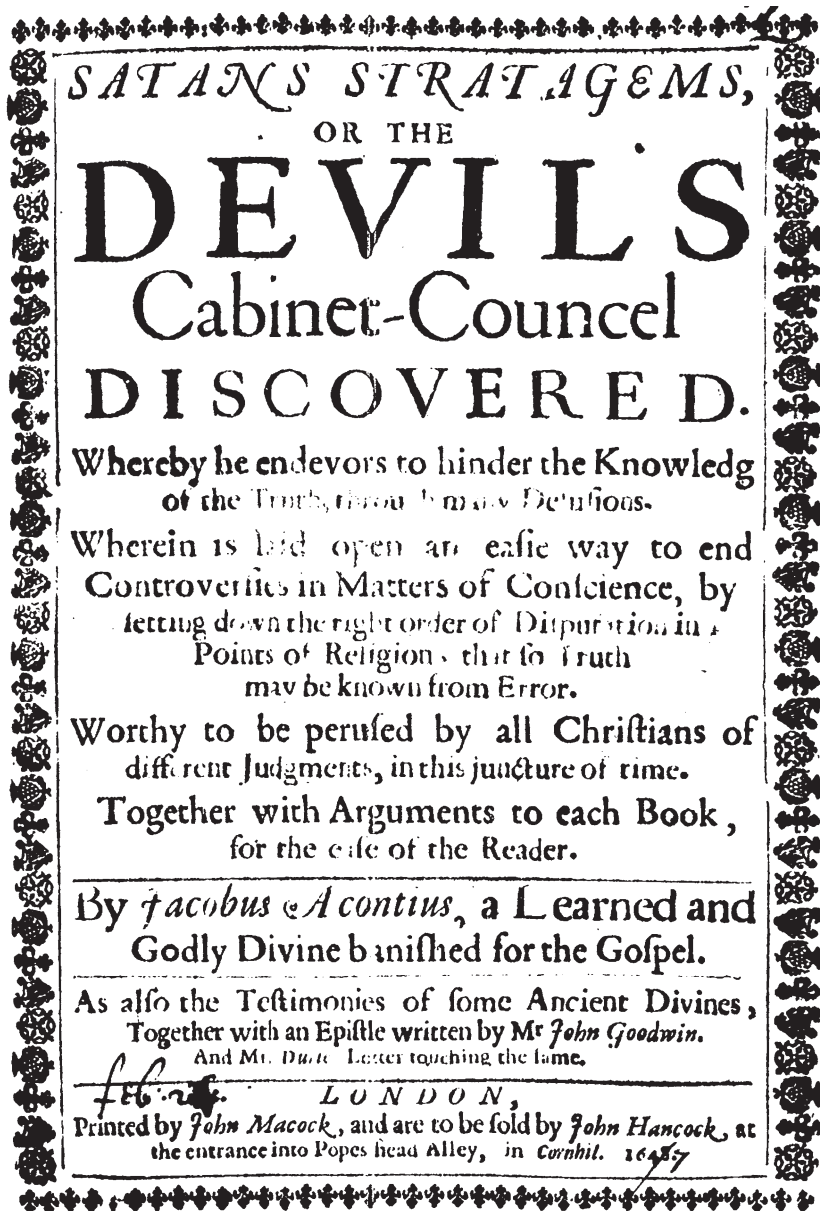


Fig. 3 Frontispiece of the 1648 [1647] London edition [sold by John Hancock] of Acontius's *Satans Stratagemes*

Goodwin's preface referred precisely to these zealous preachers attempting to incite the urban masses with their polemical invective:

Amongst the many strains of that unreasonableness in men, which renders the days we live in, so calamitous and sad, there is scarce any more deplorable or comporting with our misery, then for men to have their mouths wide open in declaiming against what they are pleased to call errors and heresies, and their ears fast shut against all christian means and directions, either for the discovery and eviction of them to be such, or for the suppression of them, being so evicted.¹¹⁵

Anyone who even dared to recall 'ancient Truths [...] after a long and injurious ejection' was immediately branded a bearer of 'old accursed errors and heresies'.¹¹⁶ If these passionate polemicists were not 'armed with confidence of truth in them' and did not 'blow a trumpet to prepare the Magistrate to battle against errors and heresies', invoking 'fire' and the 'material sword' against those who disagreed with their certainties, thereby guaranteeing the 'victory and triumph' of Satan, and instead 'call[ed] more for light from heaven' by 'conscientiously study[ing] the Christian Art, and Method of this Warfare', then 'their warfare against such enemies would be much sooner accomplished', because 'amongst all weapons, there is none like unto light to fight against darkness'.¹¹⁷ Goodwin added that the best way to free oneself from the traps laid by Satan and leave the murky web of errors and heresies holding the men of the time in check was to follow the path indicated by Jacob Acontius:

I have not met with any author comparable to this now in thine hand, for a christian genius and dexterity, in teaching that desirable and happy art, as well as composing differences in matters of judgment, as far as a composure in this kind may with the honor of truth be admitted; as of opposing that which it not meet to be admitted to composition.¹¹⁸

There were so many proposals and suggestions in the pages of his masterpiece that the author could easily have inverted the sense of his chosen title:

He intituleth his book *Stratagemata Satanae*, Satans Stratagems. He might as properly with respect to the matter of it, have stiled it *Stratagemata Christi*, the Stratagems of Christ, inasmuch as the wisdom which is

revealed from Heaven, for the countermining of Satan in his attempts upon the precious souls of men by error and heresies, is here drawn out in such happy directions and instructions for that purpose, that had they their wight and worth in practise and due obedience, the Kingdom of Error and heresie would soon be shaken.¹¹⁹

Investing the full weight of his moral authority, John Goodwin thus openly encouraged the reading of the work, which he felt always had something new to teach:

Reader, though I am none of those that are facile to strike hands, or become surety for debt, yet thus far I dare engage for the treatise in thy hand, that if thou wilt diligently peruse it, it shall recompence thee with a better thing then repentance for thy pains. The Father of lights and God of Truth according to the unsearchable riches of his Grace in Christ, ‘break up at last all the fountains of the great deep’ of Truth and open the ‘windows of Heaven’, that knowledg may fil the Earth as ‘waters cover the sea’; keep thee and me from the danger and defilement of Error and Heresie; and vouchsafe us the honor of being instruments in his hand, for the preservation of others also from the same misery.¹²⁰

This unusual declaration of love for an author who had died almost a century before was a natural step in John Goodwin’s intellectual career, developing from his Calvinist background into the loudest and clearest voice among the many defenders of religious tolerance during the English Civil War. It has been said that he created the most complete and effective version of the fallibilist doctrine of the Independents and English Congregationalists, promoting a ‘progressive’ concept of the knowledge of Christians, the role of individual research and the need for controversy in a framework that placed emphasis on the life of the congregation as the ideal arena for research and debate.¹²¹

Goodwin had started rejecting the dogma of divine predestination to embrace the doctrine of the universal salvation of humankind in the 1630s. He felt that the latter was better suited to the original spirit of the Gospel and the needs of human reason:

The great and maine promise of the Gospel, that whosoever beleeves on Jesus Christ (or on God through Christ) shall be saved [...] is both a readier and cleerer, and more satisfying foundation for men to build their hopes for salvation.¹²²

Goodwin stayed loyal to this doctrine over time, reflecting and pursuing his reading on the most controversial theological implications. In 1650, he published a work with the unequivocal title *Truth's conflict with error. Or universall redemption controverted*.¹²³ This faithfully reported a discussion between Goodwin, who defended the idea of the universal salvation of believers, and Mr Powell, who instead asserted the Calvinist perspective of salvation as the reserve of God's elect. The debate had taken place on 31 December 1647—therefore a few months after the publication of the English translation of the first four books of *Satan's Stratagems*—in the church in Coleman Street where Goodwin was the parish priest. According to the publication three years later, Goodwin had argued that 'God did intend, or the intention of God in the death of Christ was that all Adams posterity should be saved and redeemed'¹²⁴ and that 'God intends the salvation of all, because he affords and exhibits means proper for the salvation of all by the death of Christ.'¹²⁵ The culmination of the controversy was the interpretation of a passage from John (3: 16) that Goodwin quoted explicitly ('for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life') to maintain that 'by the world is meant all mankind without exception'¹²⁶ and not the 'elect of God' as his Calvinist opponent claimed.¹²⁷ These positions had led to repeated accusations of Arminianism and Socinianism over the years, but Goodwin had always been extremely careful to distance himself, such as in 1644 when he clearly expressed his disapproval of the former for 'opposing the Deity of Jesus Christ' and the latter 'that questions the person of the Holy Ghost'.¹²⁸ In the eyes of his opponents, however, such stances could not lessen the radical subversive drive of the Latitudinarian doctrine that Goodwin extended to the confines of the New World. As he had written in 1642 with his customary provocative streak:

If so great a part of the world as America had remained unknown for so many generations, well may it be conceived that many truths, yea and those of maine concernment, and importance, may be yet unborne.¹²⁹

These biting provocations about highly topical issues in the religious debate of the time clearly reveal the gradual development of the deep-rooted conviction that the search for truth was an endless task that required man to enjoy complete 'libertie and freedom of judgement and understanding'.¹³⁰ The aspect of Acontius's analysis that Goodwin

fully endorsed—even before the sceptical premises that led the former to advocate reducing the necessary doctrines for salvation to a few principles and admit that it was impossible to define an ‘error’—was the concept of Christian life founded on personal research and the process of (individual and collective) knowledge, which firmly advocated the usefulness of dissent and controversy.¹³¹ By following the path outlined by Acontius and taking some of his axioms to extreme consequences, Goodwin eventually went beyond *Satan’s Stratagems*, highlighting a subtle but significant difference between his epistemological position and that of his mentor. In his *Hagiomastix* (1647), Goodwin affirmed that even with regard to the ‘known principles of Christianitie’, there could turn out to be ‘thousand thousands’ of interpretations, ‘who have had as rich and deep a sence of Religion, as our *Anti-Querie-masters*’.¹³² As a result, everything—even the fundamental principles on which Acontius had built his creed—had to be questioned on a constant basis: he wrote in his *Theomachia* ‘in every Way, Doctrine or Practice which is from God, there is somewhat of God himself’, presenting an idealized image of religious diversity.¹³³ On the basis of this Latitudinarian doctrine grounded in indisputably fallibilist premises, Goodwin even undermined one of the cornerstones of Independent thinking by seriously questioning the legitimacy of intervention by a magistrate. He felt that magistrates had to be regarded in relation to the fact that nobody could be certain of possessing the absolute truth and the fallible nature of human intellect, especially with regard to religious matters; by taking enforcement action, they ran the risk of fighting against God. Goodwin explained this by referring to a biblical episode—Gamaliel’s advice not to persecute the apostles so as not to ‘fight against God’ (Acts, 5: 34–39)—which had been the crux of arguments by Castellio and Acontius in the previous century.¹³⁴

5 PRESBYTERIAN CENSURE: THE INTERVENTION OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY (1647)

The publication of the first English edition of the initial four books of *Satan’s Stratagems* certainly did not go unnoticed. A few years previously, after a military agreement had been signed with Scotland to expand the Presbyterian system to England, an assembly of theologians from all over the country was convened in Westminster in 1643 and charged with recommending Church reform. It included a minority group of Independents who did their utmost to defend the

'Congregationalist way' that safeguarded the autonomy and independence of the individual congregations scattered nationwide. Nevertheless, the Presbyterian majority did not take long to impose their point of view. Five of the Independents—tellingly called 'five dissenting brethren'—drafted a document that they used to appeal to the civil authorities and public opinion, asking for leeway for the Congregationalist Churches (but not, for example, for the Separatist Churches). Although their attempt at compromise initially seemed to find an audience among the more moderate representatives of the Presbyterian front, the clash soon escalated, leaving no more room for dialogue. It is thus not surprising that Robert Baillie, the Scottish delegate in Westminster, informed a friend that the Assembly had recommended admonishing John Goodwin and others for their attempts to assemble congregations.¹³⁵ More generally, the political climate of the country was changing rapidly around the microcosm of Westminster. After Charles's defeat at Naseby (14 June 1645), the orthodox members almost completely abandoned discussing any specifically doctrinal or ecclesiological issues. After the end of 1645, they mainly focused on equating independence and separation with political, social and religious anarchy, as well as stressing the need to adapt to the decisions of magistrates in all respects, convinced that the latter would sanction a Presbyterian system and outlaw supporters of independence at the same time.¹³⁶ Specifically, on 1 January 1646, the ministers of worship from London and Scotland sent the Westminster Assembly a letter opposing any form of concession on the matter of religious tolerance.¹³⁷ Over the following months, the Presbyterians built their agenda around this radical proposal—the repression of opponents through the direct intervention of magistrates—and hoped to be able to implement it thanks to their political supremacy in Parliament, the Westminster Assembly and the government bodies in the city.

The religious climate both inside and outside the Assembly had become fiery. After Cheynell wrote *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianism*, anti-Trinitarianism flared up due to two such prominent figures as John Biddle, sometimes referred to as the 'Father of the English Unitarians', and Paul Best (1590–1657).¹³⁸ In February 1645, Best distributed parts of a manuscript copy of one of his works to his friends, most notably Roger Ley, with whom he frequently discussed religious questions. Ley duly betrayed his friend's trust and denounced his heretical ideas to Parliament, leading to Best's imprisonment. The Westminster Assembly discussed his doctrines at length over the following months, even before the publication of his *Mysteries Discovered* in July 1647.

These sixteen pages, probably Best's last desperate attempt to be heard by Parliament, provided sufficient cause for a death sentence, which was finally issued on 26 July 1646 after months of pressure from his enemies.¹³⁹ John Biddle (1616–1662) was also sent to prison in Gloucester in 1645 for his anti-Trinitarian beliefs, although he was later released on bail. He was accused and imprisoned again the following year and published his treatise *Twelve Arguments Drawn Out of Scripture* from jail in 1647. John Fry (1609–1657), a member of Parliament, defended him against accusations of anti-Trinitarianism, but was himself duly accused of denying the divinity of Christ. Biddle then found another advocate in the House of Commons in Henry Vane, whose intercession led to another release on bail in 1648. Biddle's freedom was only temporary and he was arrested again in Newgate, remaining in prison until the Act of Oblivion in 1652. When his *A Two-fold Catechism* was published in 1654, it was censured and he was arrested again. In this way, John Biddle spent the rest of his life in and out of prison, before he died incarcerated in 1662, thereby paying for his anti-Trinitarian stubbornness with his life.

The explosion of these anti-Trinitarian doctrines led to a major controversialist reaction by the Puritan camp in 1645 and 1646. Two of the main English controversialist treatises—*Heresiography* by Ephraim Pagitt and *Gangraena* by Thomas Edwards—were published in the space of a few months, together with a number of polemical treatises that had limited publishing success but considerable cultural impact, such as *Truth's Victory against Heresie* by John Grant,¹⁴⁰ and *The Arraignment and Condemnation of the chiefe Heresies and Errours of these Times* by Robert Squire.¹⁴¹ Both were published in 1645 and both were strongly critical of the 'nefarious religious sects' of Papists, Brownists, Anabaptists and Seekers. Ephraim Pagitt (1575–1647), a skilled linguist at Christ Church, Oxford, the translator of the Book of Common Prayer into Greek and a strong royalist at the start of the Civil War, saw Presbyterianism as the only possible antidote to the rise of the Independents and the proliferation of religious sects following the collapse of censorship. In his main controversialist work, *Heresiography*, he accused four religious groups of endorsing heretical doctrines on the subject of anti-Trinitarianism: the Anabaptists, who believed that 'Christ is not true God but onely endued with more gifts than other men'; the Familists, who affirmed that 'it is ridiculous to say God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; as though by saying there words they should affirme to be three Gods'; the Socinians,

who denied that Christ was really God and claimed that there was no trace of the Trinity in Scripture; and the anti-Trinitarians or new Arians, who 'deny the Trinity of Persons' and refused to accept that Christ or the Holy Ghost are of the same essence as God. Applauding the executions of Bartholomew Legate and Edward Wightman in 1612, Pagitt used his treatise to ask magistrates to adopt similar measures to destroy these dangerous sects and their preachers.¹⁴² Thomas Edwards (1599–1657), an uncompromising Puritan and author of the best-known polemical treatise in the Civil War period, *Gangraena* (1646), believed that it was necessary to maintain the stability of the Church of England by defending it against the pitfalls of the Congregationalist model offered by the Independents. His fierce attack against 'damnable heresies, horrid blasphemies, Libertinisme and fearful anarchy' saw heresy more as a social than a religious problem. His controversialist treatise aimed at members of Parliament and magistrates did not contain sophisticated analysis of theological doctrines. Instead, it was essentially a catalogue of tales from daily life that portrayed the scope of the social anarchy that the heretical sects were causing in London and throughout English society. It served as an appeal to the civil authorities to intervene and repress these sects by force.¹⁴³ Successful works like this were conceived in the climate of the Westminster Assembly and measures to defend Puritan orthodoxy. The ideas and texts that circulated among the theologians in the Assembly often served as sources for hardened controversialists like Edwards, and the publication of their works in turn became the lifeblood of the Assembly's work by stoking the theologians' polemical anti-sectarian streak.¹⁴⁴ In some cases, a single person carried out the dual roles of Assembly member and controversialist author. One such man was Robert Baille, who left Scotland in 1645 to become a Commissioner assisting the Westminster Assembly. In 1647, he published a controversialist text entitled *Anabaptism the True Fountaine* that mainly targeted the Independents, whom he saw as the source of all the worst heresies at the time from Anabaptism to anti-Trinitarianism, Antinomianism, Brownism (or separatism) and Familism. In this work, Baille wrote that the collapse of censorship and the outbreak of the Civil War were directly responsible for the head-on attack against the pillars of Christianity. Baille condemned appeals for religious tolerance, blaming them for tainting the structure of the Reformed religion and inducing the faithful 'to deny Christ, to embrace Mahomets Alcoran, the Jewish Talmud, the fables of the Pagan Poets'. He felt that Episcopalian theologians had not been able to limit the spread of 'a free and absolute

liberty' of religious expression, to the extent that both the 'Godhead and Manhood of Jesus Christ, the holy Ghost, the Divinity itself' had now erupted with 'blasphemous scorn' and been replaced by appeals for the dissolution of all forms of Church, sacrament and public worship. In particular, Baille directed his rage against Antinomians who had distanced themselves from the concepts of predestination, the irresistibility of grace and satisfaction of sin through the death of Christ; Paul Best was identified as one of the main sources of inspiration of a heresy that was present in Anabaptism, Arminianism and anti-Trinitarianism.¹⁴⁵

Given this climate, it is no wonder that *Satan's Stratagems* was immediately subjected to censorial inspection by the Assembly just 4 days after publication. A committee was duly formed to analyse the work, naturally chaired by an expert on the subject—the man who had dealt extensively with the Latin version of the book, Francis Cheynell.¹⁴⁶

The controversialist scholar was not a novice in book censorship and his work on Acontius's text was just one censorial intervention in a long line. In September 1642, he was a leading player in the confiscation of a book by John Webberley when Oxford was briefly occupied by parliamentary forces under Lord Saye and Sele.¹⁴⁷ Webberley belonged to the Latitudinarian school, but was an uncompromising royalist, unlike Chillingworth and Falkland, who were only moderate supporters of the monarchy. He came across Socinian authors during the 1630s when studying for his divinity degree at Lincoln College, Oxford. He was waiting for the right moment to publish a translation of a Socinian author from Latin in 1642 when Cheynell was issued with a warrant to assist the Viscount 'to settle peace and truth in the University'. After Cheynell learnt 'of a pestilent book very prejudiciall both to the truth and peace', a search was ordered, whereupon 'the book was found in the chamber of Mr. Webberly, who had translated this Socinian Master-peece into English for his own private use, as he pretended'. However, Cheynell was not satisfied with this answer; if Webberley had only wanted the book for personal use, he would not have taken the trouble to translate it and would certainly not have stated on the cover that it had been translated 'for the benefit of this Nation' or written an Epistle to the Reader for inclusion at the beginning.¹⁴⁸ It is not clear what happened to the book. It was suggested that it should be published, enclosing a rebuttal of the text in English, but Cheynell thought it would be better to confute Socinianism in Latin. However, when he realized that Socinian tenets were 'already published in English in a book entitled Mr. Wotton's Defence against Mr. Walker', he saw no special reason to

withdraw Webberley's book. It is therefore likely that it was simply confiscated by the parliamentarians. Webberley was imprisoned and released almost immediately, while the parliamentary forces soon left Oxford and Charles I entered the city after the Battle of Edgehill in late October 1642. Cheynell subsequently continued to play the role of guardian of Presbyterian orthodoxy, such as when he denounced Erbury's Socinian opinions to the Assembly after a dispute in St Mary's Church while on a parliamentary visit to the University of St Mary in January 1647.¹⁴⁹ He was therefore undoubtedly the ideal man to censure Acontius's book.

He now had to persuade the other members of the Committee that the work needed to be strictly censored. Who were these other components and what internal balance directed their actions?

Henry Wilkinson (1610–1675), who was elected as a member of the Assembly in 1643, was a strict Puritan preacher who had experienced serious problems with the Bishop of Oxford in the early 1640s precisely because of his resolute Calvinist orthodoxy. In a *Sermon against lukewarmness in religion*, given at St Mary's Church in September 1640, he roundly condemned superficial and formalistic worship, exhorting believers to behave zealously on matters of faith by following the Scottish Presbyterian model. As a result, he was suspended not only from his position as Professor of Theology at Magdalen Hall but also from all priestly functions, and was only reinstated after a heartfelt appeal to the Long Parliament.¹⁵⁰ He was therefore Cheynell's steadfast ally within the Assembly's Committee, as he was sure to favour outright condemnation of Acontius's work.

Born in Leicester at the beginning of the century, Lazarus Seaman was a graduate of Emmanuel College Cambridge and was ordained a deacon in February 1628. Although he was always linked to the English Puritan circles closest to the Scottish stance, he maintained a balanced backseat profile throughout his quiet existence, avoiding any open discussion with the ecclesiastical authorities loyal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. His moderate outlook emerged most prominently through his involvement in the Westminster Assembly, to which he was appointed by a parliamentary order at the end of 1643. Just before he became a member of the Committee examining Acontius's work, Seaman was invited to give a short sermon in the House of Lords in which he conveyed a balanced position: 'we are neither so cold as by publique indulgence to tolerate all opinions, nor so hot as to suppress one sect. Not so cold as not to admit of Presbyteriall government upon triall, and in part; nor so hot as to receive it wholly in the power and practice.'¹⁵¹ His vote against Acontius was therefore not a foregone conclusion.

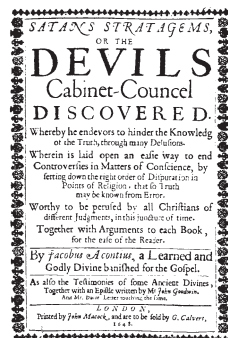
Anthony Burgess was an Anglican minister who had also been educated in Cambridge at St John's College, from whence he graduated in 1627. Although he endorsed the Presbyterian model, he was one of its least dogmatic supporters. He never said a detrimental word about the Congregationalists in his numerous sermons and he personally founded a Congregational presbytery in the parish of Saint Lawrence in 1645. However, his inclination for doctrinal rigidity and defending the Presbyterian cause emerged in 1647 when he joined his fellow London Presbyterian ministers in signing the *Testimony* against any act of tolerance towards heretics. His orthodox tendencies were then confirmed in the following years by his violent dispute with Richard Baxter about justification, in which he attacked his adversary's Arminian doctrines.¹⁵² Cheynell could be sure of his support, which was probably also the case for Thomas Temple, a Puritan preacher in London originally from Wales.¹⁵³

The final two members appointed by the Assembly adopted Latitudinarian stances that were clearly hostile to Cheynell's rigid Presbyterianism. Sidrach Simpson (1600–1655) was an independent minister closely associated with John Goodwin; in 1635 they were both severely admonished by the Bishop of London for breaking the canons of the Anglican Church. Emotionally affected by the event, Simpson chose the path of exile and travelled to Rotterdam. After a failed attempt to establish an English Church with John Ward, a pastor, and William Bridge, a teacher, he founded a new Church. As he claimed when defending himself against subsequent accusations of schism, this did not compete with the other Churches as they met 'in an open street, a noted place, neer the Exchange'.¹⁵⁴ When he returned to England in 1641, Simpson was an easy target for the hardened Puritan controversialist Thomas Edwards, the already mentioned author of *Gangraena*, who accused him of taking advantage of his public lectures to propagate the Independent Church way, 'pleading strongly for it, and for pretended liberty of conscience and toleration'.¹⁵⁵ Simpson was not intimidated and continued to preach against both the idea of a national Church and religious uniformity; it seems that he founded a Congregationalist Church in London that soon became a centre of attraction for many Independent leaders. After becoming a member of the Westminster Assembly, he joined the group of former Dutch exiles like Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge and Jeremiah Burroughs. Together, they formed a core of strong dissent in the Assembly; they signed and published *Apologeticall Narration*, which asked the Assembly and Parliament to pursue the path

of a Congregationalist Church.¹⁵⁶ In other words, everything he did was aimed at opposing rigidly Presbyterian positions and supporting the main manifestations of dissent in the Assembly. It is therefore easy to imagine that his stance on *Satan's Stratagems* was anything but hostile.

Finally, John Dury was born in Scotland to a minister of the Kirk, but grew up in Leiden, where his father was a member of the Anglo-Scottish Presbyterian Church. At various times he lived in France, Poland, Sweden and England, and even had a brief experience of the clandestine life of a Protestant community in Catholic Cologne. A close friend of Samuel Hartlib and Jan Amos Comenius, Dury carried out intense diplomatic work in the 1630s under the auspices of the English Ambassador Thomas Roe to promote the shared vision of a universal reform of Christianity. The cornerstones of his proposal were an ethical rather than dogmatic and doctrinal approach to the Christian faith and a suggested list of fundamental doctrines on which each religious confession could agree, distinct therefore from unessential doctrines and dogmas which different sects and confessions could disagree about. It is easy to understand, even from these few considerations, that John Dury's proposal was perfectly in keeping with the proposition formulated almost a century beforehand by Jacob Acontius. When he started playing an active role in sessions at the Westminster Assembly after 2 years in August 1645, it was instantly clear to all with whom he would side. His direct involvement in the English edition of the first four books of *Satan's Stratagems*—demonstrated by the preface that was only publicized in the first edition in 1647 and then actually included in the second edition in 1648 (Fig. 4)—leaves no room for

Fig. 4 Frontispiece of the 1648 London edition [sold by G. Calvert] of Acontius's *Satan's Stratagems*



doubt regarding his adopted stance in the Censorship Committee chaired by Francis Cheynell. Indeed the February 1648 edition that John Dury staunchly promoted should be seen as an initial rapid response to the censure formulated by the Committee in March 1647, the first tangible sign of dissent regarding a decision that Dury must have firmly opposed.¹⁵⁷ The presence of John Dury and Sidrach Simpson on the Committee, combined with Lazarus Seaman's presumably accommodating attitude, must have been a serious cause of annoyance for the surly Cheynell; it is no coincidence that he asked the Assembly to supplement the Committee with new resolutely Presbyterian members a few days after probing the fragile ground on which he would be forced to tread. He duly obtained this on 3 March, when four new names were added, as the records relate: 'upon a motion of Mr. Cheynell to enlarge the Committee to consider of the book of Acontius; it was ordered Mr. Gower, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Bond, Dr. Stanton added to that Committee'.¹⁵⁸

A quick look at the profiles of these new members reinforces the idea that this was a ploy by Cheynell to strengthen his position. Stanley Gower was a minister of the Anglican Church with clear Presbyterian tendencies who graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1625. He distinguished himself during his career for his rigid anti-Catholic and anti-Arminian positions and favoured the abolition of the episcopacy, which he considered an anti-Christian institution. Chosen in 1643 as one of the two representatives of Herefordshire in the Westminster Assembly, he was a sure ally of Cheynell in the Committee.¹⁵⁹ Edward Reynolds (1599–1676), Bishop of Norwich, was a moderate Presbyterian who graduated from Merton College Oxford in 1618. He was soon recognized as one of the moderate leaders of the godly in Northamptonshire, especially after the publication of his *Sermon touching Peace and Edification of the Church* (1638). He was appointed to the Assembly in June 1643 and, although he was not a particularly active member, it seems that he contributed to the preface of the *Directory for Publique Worship of God*, the profession of the faith and the catechism.¹⁶⁰ He also seemingly guaranteed Cheynell the support that he needed. Finally, Edmund Staunton (1600–1671) and John Bond (1612–1676) would also prove to be loyal supporters of Cheynell's stance within the Committee. Staunton was one of the first religious ministers to be appointed to the Assembly, after distinguishing himself as one of the most active defenders of the Presbyterian cause. He had been a vicar and preacher in Kingston since the early 1630s and it was here in 1645 that he had a heated dispute with the separatist and future Quaker John

Fielder, which ended in the latter's arrest.¹⁶¹ John Bond was a jurist and Puritan theologian, born in Chard, Somerset, and educated at St Catherine's College Cambridge. Between 1640 and 1645 he wrote works that adhered closely to Calvinism such as *A doore of hope, also holy and loyall activity two treatises delivered in severall sermons in Excester* (1641) and *Salvation in a mystery, or, a prospective glasse for Englands case as it was laid forth in a sermon preached at Margarets in Westminster before the honourable House of Commons, at their monthly fast, March 27, 1644*, published in London in 1644 when he was already a member of the Westminster Assembly.¹⁶²

At this point there was an overwhelming majority. Just 5 days after the four new members joined, Cheynell presented the Assembly with a detailed censure that clearly received majority approval from the Committee he chaired. It was welcomed by his fellow members of the Assembly with an invitation—directed at Cheynell—to draw up a refutation with in-depth objections to the four books by Acontius translated and printed by John Goodwin. The minutes of the Assembly relate the episode as follows:

Mr. Cheynell made report from the Committee appointed to consider of Acontius his book. [...] The Assembly do return thanks to the Committee, particularly to that reverend brother for the pains taken therein; and that if himself or any other of the Committee shall as from themselves publish anything for vindicating of the truth and discovering the danger in that book, it will be acceptable to the Assembly.¹⁶³

6 THREE YEARS LATER: *THE DIVINE TRINITY* (1650)

BY FRANCIS CHEYNELL

The text of the censure drawn up by Cheynell and his Committee has not been preserved among the concise entries on the minutes of the Assembly. However, Cheynell himself broadly outlined the content in one of his many polemical works, *The Divine Trinity*, published shortly afterwards in 1650 (Fig. 5).¹⁶⁴

During those 3 years (1647–1650), the Westminster Assembly had been dissolved and the climate in the country was radically different. The rapid and unpredictable developments in the English Civil War—above all military clashes on the battlefield accompanying the hushed discussions in Westminster—could not fail to influence the course of political events in the country. The balance soon changed as a result of the

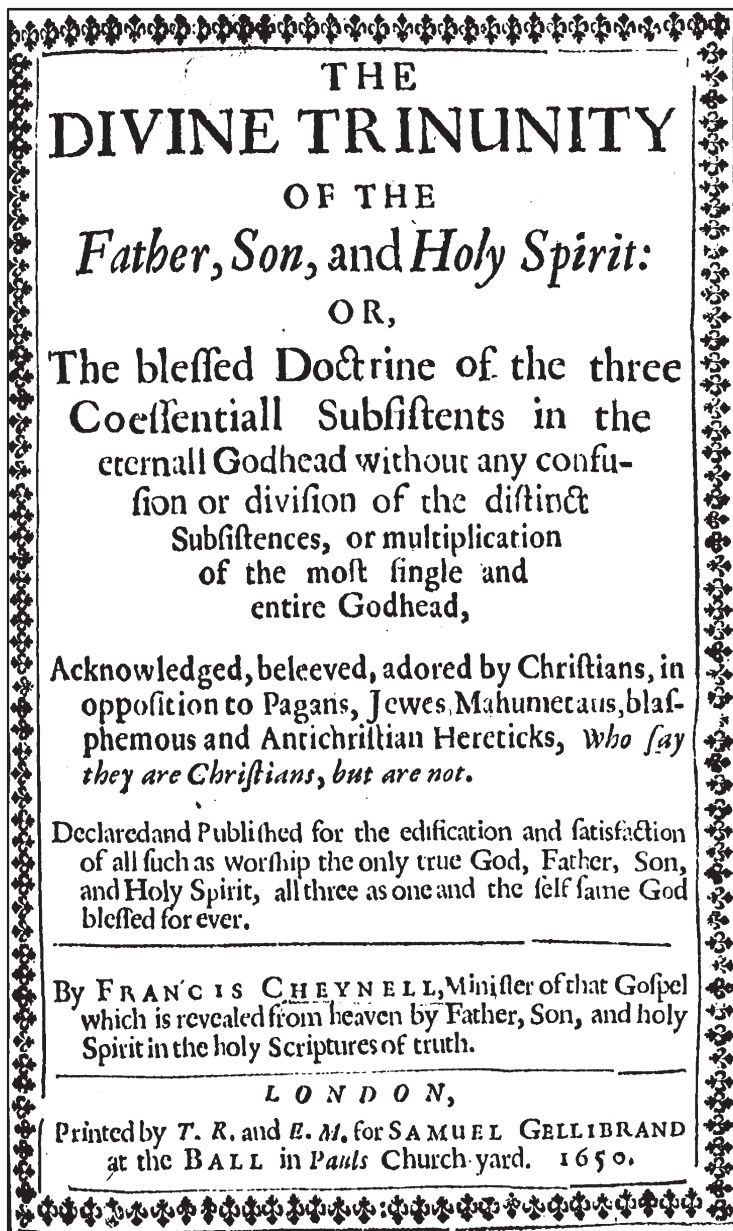


Fig. 5 Frontispiece of Francis Cheynell's *The Divine Trinity* (London 1650)

powerful entry of Cromwell's New Model Army into the political arena and the fundamental role it played in protecting the 'congregations of saints' that were widely represented among its ranks. The tyranny of radical Presbyterians such as Cheynell was seriously questioned by Erastians and Independents alike. The last hangover of the rapidly changing repressive climate featured the promulgation of an *Ordinance for punishing of heresies* in 1648, which threatened with death all those tainted by the crime of heresy.¹⁶⁵ It provoked such a wave of opposition though, that it was replaced by legislation with far more moderate sentences and a much more limited definition of blasphemy.¹⁶⁶ *The Divine Trinity* was therefore a defensive work, the result of rearguard action that attempted to defend the ground gained thus far using the habitual controversialist weapons of accusations of Socinianism and anti-Trinitarianism, even though they now had little effect in a battle that was almost definitively lost. The main targets of his polemic were once again the heretical 'atheists who deny the Son and Holy Ghost to be God', those who 'deny the Godhead of Christ' and 'overthrow the foundation of the christian faith'. Furthermore, as their worship and rituals are directed at a 'creature', they are therefore 'idolaters'. Cheynell continued 'that a meere creature cannot satisfie the infinite justice of God for the sin of man, and consequently that we are not redeemed, and cannot be justified by Christ, if he be (as they blasphemously say he is) a meere man in glory'.¹⁶⁷ He claimed that such heretics—'apostates-idolaters, blasphemers'—did not deserve any form of civil respect. Instead, they had to be scorned and ejected from the Christian community, as suggested by a passage from Matthew.¹⁶⁸ In this way, Cheynell started discussing the relationship between Church and State, and the most widespread doctrines at the time:

The princes and states of *Germany* in their 100 grivances, *Erastus* and some others would have Church-censures passed upon hereticks, apostates, &c. but they desired that profane persons and scandalous livers might be spared; a doctrine fit to be preached amongst *cyclopes*, men that have no sense or care of piety, a doctrine fit to usher in *atheisme*, or *popery*. For they say the *pope* may be deposed for heresie, but not for a profane or scandalous life. *Grotius* on the other side, and some of his followers would have scandalous persons excommunicated, but those (whom the reformed Churches have convicted of heresie) spared.¹⁶⁹

He perceived the tangible risk for England to be the triumph of a ‘strange syncretisme’, a ‘promiscuous [...] atheisticall communion’ founded on a lethal blend of Erastus and Grotius’s ‘poyson’, which would entrap Church governance by allowing men to believe in whatever they want and behave as they please¹⁷⁰; on this matter, Cheynell’s work showed that the group of intransigent Presbyterians had switched from a position of submitting to civil power—such as Bradshaw’s stance—to a stance that aimed to subjugate civil power to the dictates of an ecclesiastical body.¹⁷¹ He added that if ‘the poyson of *Erastus* and *Grotius*’ was supplemented by the traps laid in the confessions of faith composed by those such as Cassander and Acontius, ‘Satan would then have good hopes to reigne visibly in *England* in hereticall, profane, and scandalous combinations’.¹⁷² The mention of Acontius led Cheynell to think of the many pages dedicated to him in 1643, as well as the censure formulated by the Westminster Assembly Committee that he had chaired just 3 years earlier. However, before offering ‘a fair and an ingenuous account of this deliberate and premeditated censure’,¹⁷³ Cheynell took pains to present the issue to less informed readers, summarizing some of the previously developed reasoning. He thus focused on the Italian origins of Acontius and the group of associated Italian heretics: Gian Paolo Alciati, Giorgio Biandrata, Matteo Gribaldi Mofa and naturally Lelio and Fausto Sozzini, about which a few years before he had spoken of one ‘Italian Atheism’.¹⁷⁴ He recalled that *Satan’s Stratagems* had been published 3 years after the death of Lelio Sozzini, and reminded the reader of the systematic use of Acontius’s work by Dutch and English Arminians, who were intent on broadening the ideal confines of the ‘christian communion’ to include Socinians, also thanks to the reasoning provided by Acontius and the latitude of his ‘new Creed’.¹⁷⁵ He questioned the ultimate reasons for his escape from the Italian peninsula and exile in England, which were dismissed as ‘a faire pretence’, and listed once again the influential men of the Reformed Church who had attacked his doctrines over the years.¹⁷⁶ Cheynell went on to mention the numerous seventeenth-century editions of *Satan’s Stratagems*, including the 1631 Oxford edition, which had been condemned—in his opinion—‘by such as were learned and orthodox at that time in this university’, and the latest edition, published in March 1647 in London, which was the most alarming of all, as it made the first four books available to a less learned readership.¹⁷⁷ Cheynell still distinctly remembered his shock at this edition and his promptness in

flagging it up to his fellow members of the Westminster Assembly in his capacity of monitoring the circulation and publication of 'pernicious or dangerous' books:

And I did complaine to the reverend *Assembly* sitting at *Westminster*, that there was such a book lately published, dedicated to both Houses of Parliament, to the Generall, and Lieutenant Generall of all the Forces raised for the defence of the Common-wealth, and recommended to the Parliament, Army, and City as a book fit to direct them how to distinguish truth from error in that juncture of time.¹⁷⁸

In his 'Epistle to the Parliament', the anonymous translator of *Satan's Stratagems* had underlined that if the first four books were given the reception they deserved, the remaining four books would soon be translated and published. This announcement, clearly seen as a terrible threat, had prompted first Cheynell and then the Westminster Assembly to proceed 'with all convenient speed'.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, as we have seen in Sect. 5, the Committee appointed by the Assembly started work almost immediately after the text was published. The particular danger of *Satan's Stratagems* lay in the fact that 'the book is written with much art, and the malignity of it very closely couched'. Furthermore, it was full of 'plausible pretences, faire insinuations, and divers religious expressions'. Acontius was described as a 'master of his passions as well as art', which made the content of his work even more dangerous. The four books translated into English had 'many excellent passages which are of great use against the papists' with heated attacks and effective rhetoric against the Roman papacy; as a result, the work was especially appealing in the eyes of Reformed readers.¹⁸⁰ For all these reasons, Cheynell deemed that Acontius's text needed to be closely examined by his Censorship Committee.¹⁸¹

However, this planned censure never came to fruition; there is no record of searches or confiscations of the book, or even the persecution of those who had contributed to its publication and distribution. This is hardly surprising, as the press control system had been inefficient since the start of the Civil War in 1642. Although the parliamentary authorities tried to strengthen measures for censoring publications, they completely failed to monitor the huge number of texts, pamphlets and sheets that swamped the English publishing market at the time. The last specific attempt to target Socinian writings was made in 1640, when Archbishop Laud suggested including a canon against 'the damnable and cursed

Heresie of Socinianism'; the fourth canon in his version maintained that 'the frequent divulgation and disperation of dangerous Books' containing Socinian opinions was only 'too apparent'. In order to avert the risk of the social disorder that these books might trigger, it was recommended that the importers, printers and sellers of such books should be excommunicated and proceeded against in the Star Chamber, while no preacher could 'presume to vent any such Doctrine in any Sermon under pain of Excommunication for the first offence, and Deprivation for the second'. Furthermore, no student would be allowed 'to have or read' Socinian works unless special exceptions were made. However, the canons of 1640 were never implemented and were declared null and void by a resolution of the House of Commons on 15 December, as they contravened the fundamental laws of the realm and the rights of Parliament.¹⁸² Any censorship attempts made by Parliament over the next few years targeted royalist pamphlets or publications by religious sects. On 14 June 1643, the Lords and Commons in Parliament established that no parliamentary order or statement from either of the two Houses could be published without the express consent of both Houses. Moreover, no other book, pamphlet or paper could be printed or included in the Stationers' Register without approval from an authority. The printer's name had to be written clearly in printed books and no one could print titles belonging to members of the Stationers' Company without their express consent.¹⁸³ On 17 July 1647, a few months after Cheynell's Committee had concluded its work, Parliament declared that anyone found to be involved in certain publications considered 'Seditious, False, [and] Scandalous', or others which contained an 'insufferable reproach of the proceedings of Parliament and the Army' would be fined or imprisoned for up to 40 days.¹⁸⁴ These Orders of 1647 made no mention of the licence granted by the Stationers' Company and did not seek the Company's help in the search for seditious books, something which was rarely given in any case. Instead, the government assumed full responsibility for supervising publications. Public officials were appointed to track down and confiscate books that lacked a licence or were deemed dangerous. Authors were now seen as directly culpable and just as liable as printers. In this way, the prosecution of the authors of 'seditious, treasonable or blasphemous' books fell within the jurisdiction of the 'laws of the land' and Parliament.¹⁸⁵ In line with the best English historiography on the matter, it is not an exaggeration to maintain that none of these attempts produced the desired results in terms of applying the

regulations and organizing the supervision of printing in England. As a result, the circulation of *Satan's Stratagems* and many other 'seditious' books continued unabated throughout the country.

7 JOHN DURY AND THE LAST TWO ENGLISH EDITIONS OF *SATAN'S STRATAGEMS* (1650–1651)

It had naturally not escaped Cheynell's attention that one of the members of the Westminster Assembly—the Scotsman John Dury—had figured among the supporters of the book (albeit nominally, in the sense that his preface, advertised on the cover of the first English edition in 1647, did not actually appear inside). According to Cheynell's account, the members of the Assembly had insisted on Dury being part of the Committee examining the work; the Presbyterian controversialist was (probably reluctantly) forced to accept their recommendation. I believe, however, that Cheynell's version of events should be treated with due caution. He claimed that Dury immediately regretted supporting the publication and was ready to make a public retraction: the promoters of the English edition of *Satan's Stratagems* had taken advantage of his passionate love of peace to involve him in a work that seriously undermined the truth. He had always fought for a form of religious syncretism between religious orthodoxies, Protestants and Catholics, Reformed Christians and Lutherans, but his irenic ideal could never have envisaged the inclusion of Socinians in a renewed Christian communion.¹⁸⁶ To lend his account even more persuasive strength, Cheynell did not hesitate to recall that 'Dr Voetius doth in the very same breath commend Mr Dury for leaving out the socinians in his proposals for peace, and condemn Acontius for taking of them into his syncretisme.'¹⁸⁷

As Cheynell realized, John Dury had previously distinguished himself for his deep aversion to Socinianism. Indeed, a correspondent of Samuel Hartlib—a great man of culture and Dury's associate—described the procedure for interpreting the Scriptures that Dury's irenic proposal was based on as a 'method against Socinians'.¹⁸⁸ However, this loathing for Socinians did not obfuscate Dury's view in the same way that it affected Cheynell and many other Presbyterian polemicists. Untainted by controversy, he was sufficiently lucid to make a distinction between the proposals by Acontius and the Socinians; he exonerated the former from any accusations of anti-Trinitarianism, as Acontius had explicitly dismissed 'the judgement of those who deny that the father is one thing and that

the son is something else' and recognized that 'Christ is really the son of God'.¹⁸⁹

The inclusion of a prefatory letter written by Dury (addressed to his friend and cohort Samuel Hartlib, dated 9 February 1648) in the March 1648 English edition—therefore just a few months after the public censure inflicted by the Westminster Assembly—implies that the Scottish irenicist was anything but repentant about supporting the publishing project and continued to endorse it both mindfully and wholeheartedly.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, he stated in the letter: 'Dear Friend, I am heartily glad that some body hath taken the pains to translate into English *Acontii Stratagemata* in these times of strife and confusion.'¹⁹¹ Dury showed that he was very familiar with Acontius, portraying him as a versatile and learned man committed on many fronts: 'The author was an excellent man, and thoroughly knowing in many sciences; his excellency did lie in the depth and solidity of his judgment in every thing; and in the piety and moderation of his spirit in matters of religion.'¹⁹² It was probably Hartlib who first introduced Dury to the work of Acontius, who was mentioned together with the philosopher Henricus Reneri (who later became good friend with Dury) as the author of a major treatise on method.¹⁹³ The prefatory letter suggests that Dury had become a devotee of Acontius's works and had read much more than his irenic writings.¹⁹⁴ He reminded his friend that the constant disputes and violent disarray that characterized the life of the Reformed Churches during Acontius's lifetime had alienated many of Rome's fiercest opponents.¹⁹⁵ Now, as then, Satan 'doth make every truth a matter of strife; and what he cannot suppress by the power of ignorance, he endeavors to pervert by the evile use that men make of knowledg, to disappoint them of the end for which God hath given it'.¹⁹⁶ Dury was convinced that although few would adopt the remedies for the Reformed Churches suggested by Acontius, they would manage to stir the spirits of other men through the intervention of God and defeat Satan.¹⁹⁷ Dury's letter was imbued with a distinct note of optimism.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, he showed that he was perfectly aware that 'to row against the stream, to labor against wind and tyde, and the whole current of an age, and that without offence unto any, and that strongly and irresistibly (as in his age Acontius did) is not the work of an ordinary courage': Acontius was such an important example to the men of the time as he had demonstrated that it could be done a century before.¹⁹⁹ Finally, Dury thanked Hartlib's anonymous friend who had translated 'this excellent piece of learning': there was no doubt that Acontius's message of

peace would reach those who 'are free from hardness of heart in the ways of factiousness; and are not blinded with carnal ends, in the prosecution of religious controversies'.²⁰⁰

John Dury's support was so committed and mindful, and so well known in the intellectual circles he frequented that when Cheney Culpeper wrote to their mutual friend Samuel Hartlib in March 1648, he welcomed the Scotsman's profuse effort in the publication of *Satan's Stratagems*:

I am sorry Acontius is soe ill relished (but wonder not at it) & am as glad that Mr Dury, is by this or any occasion rouzed, I confesse that waytinge vpon oportunities is good, but I allsoe conceiue that sometimes a wise & zealous man will make more oportunities then he findes & truly Mr Dury can never bestryde a better cause & author.²⁰¹

Proving his ongoing loyalty to Acontius's cause, Dury was again closely involved in the project for translating into English and publishing the remaining four books of *Satan's Stratagems* 6 years later in 1654, although, as we shall see, he was riddled with doubt and uncertainty about the appropriate action to take.²⁰²

Between the 1648 edition of *Satan's Stratagems* and those new publishing project in the early 1650s there was the publication of Cheynell's censura against Acontius in his already mentioned *The Divine Trinity* (1650). After reviewing some arguments developed previously in *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme*,²⁰³ Cheynell entered into the merits of Acontius's theological proposition. He recalled that although Acontius had recognized that Christ was the son of God and indeed God himself at some points in his work,²⁰⁴ he nevertheless 'will not grant that this is necessary to be beleaved for the attainment of salvation; and therefore he left it out of his catholick creed, and syncretisme'.²⁰⁵ After quoting a few learned sources, Cheynell finally made reference to the 'Report made to the Reverend Assembly' on 8 March 1647 in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee appointed to examine Acontius's book.²⁰⁶ The first of the few concise and clearly phrased points he listed was: 'we humbly conceive, that Acontius his enumeration of points necessary to be known and beleaved for the attainment of salvation is very defective'. Specifically, 'because in the creed which Acontius framed there is no mention made either of the Godhead of Iesus Christ, or of the Godhead of the holy Ghost'.²⁰⁷ The second point was that 'although Acontius doth acknowledge Christ to be *truly* the Son of God, yet he doth

not in his creed declare him to be the *natural* Son of God'. The report commented that 'that these points are necessary to be known and believed for the attainment of salvation, is in our judgement clearly expressed in the holy Scriptures, 1 *Joh.* 5.7–20. compared with *Joh.* 17.3.'²⁰⁸ As a result:

we do conceive, that Acontius was justly condemned, because he maintains that the points of doctrine which he mentions, are *the only points* which are necessary to be known and beleaved, and did not hold forth or mention the points aforesaid as necessary to salvation And we esteeme him to be the more worthy of censure, because he lived in an age when the photinian heresie was revived, and yet spared the photinians, though he condemned the sabellians.²⁰⁹

The text concluded:

Acontius doth cautelously decline the orthodox expressions of the ancient Church, in the foure first generall synods; and doth deliver his creed in such general expressions, that as we conceive the socinians may subscribe it, and yet retaine the worst of their blasphemous errors.²¹⁰

According to Cheynell's subsequent account in *The Divine Trinity*, after reading out the points agreed with the other members of the Committee with due gravitas, he freely discussed *Satan's Stratagems* with the other theologians in the Assembly. Their spokesman duly asked him to draft a refutation at his earliest convenience.²¹¹ Cheynell naturally declared his willingness to do so and his work on the dogma of the Trinity was essentially a late but appropriate response to these pressing demands. However, as previously mentioned in Sect. 5, the religious and political climate in the country was changing rapidly and not in the direction he hoped for: the new double edition of *Satan's Stratagems* in the early 1650s would mark the final defeat in his battle. For the moment, although he felt the urgency to leave aside his bête noire Acontius and move on to other issues, he continued to direct the reader's attention to the hidden dangers of the pernicious text. For example, according to Cheynell's reconstruction, Acontius had said that 'hereticks do not intend to make Christ a lyar; the controverisie between them and us is not concerning the truth, but concerning the meaning of the words of Christ'.²¹² Cheynell responded that 'he who beleeves the words of Christ in the sense of Antichrist, and rejects the sense of Christ, and his Spirit, is not a christian, but is indeed and truth antichristian'. He explained that there was only one Scripture and 'therefore if men

be permitted in these great and weighty articles to impose a new sense upon the Church of Christ, they do clearely impose a new creed, a new Gospell upon us, and deserve that anathema'.²¹³ He added that even Grotius had refused to side with the Socinians 'and professed that he did not know a man in the grand Assembly in Holland, that would not pronounce the socinians accursed'.²¹⁴ Cheynell insisted that 'the distinguishing question [...] was the old question, Do you beleeeve that Christ is God by nature? If you do not, you are an arian; and if you be an arian, you are no christian'.²¹⁵ there is no need to say which group Acontius belonged to in his mind.

The final attack was reserved for the despised Socinians, the object of his controversialist obsession since the early 1640s. They 'take away the right foundation of faith, hope, worship, justification', replacing it with a radically new basis by introducing 'a new Christ, a meer man, and a new Gospel, a new iudge in the highest matters and mysteries of religion, their own reason'. They therefore make human reason the ultimate judge of divine matters, without understanding that it might 'be not only fallible, but corrupt'.²¹⁶ Cheynell reiterated for the umpteenth time 'their impiety in not worshipping of the Spirit; their idolatry in worshipping one whom they esteeme to be a meere man'.²¹⁷

How did Acontius's supporters react to this third lengthy attack? As already mentioned in Sects. 4–6, the censure endorsed by the Westminster Assembly in March 1647 did not seem to affect John Goodwin and John Dury. Indeed, they hastened to reprint the text just a few months afterwards.²¹⁸ This latest polemical rebuke in *The Divine Trinity* prompted an even more immediate and vigorous response. On 22 July 1650, William Hamilton swiftly brought Dury's attention to Cheynell's newly printed volume, providing him and his fellow intellectual adventurer Samuel Hartlib with page references to the latest attacks against Acontius:

And heer it coms to my mynd, what formerly I had once a purpos to have <written> to Mr Durey about; namely to desyre him (if perhaps he knows not of the booke, or what is in it) to inqwyre for Doctor Cheynells booke intituled *The Divine [Trinity]*, and printed for Mr Gellibrand in Pauls churchyard 1650, and twrne to p. 441, and so peruse it to p. 460. and see if he find ther any thing about Acontius businesse, which may reqwyre his publick taking notice of. For my part, I think ther is: but that I remitt to his owne consideration.²¹⁹

Hamilton insisted on the necessity and opportuneness of a public response to Cheynell, and Dury took up the baton. However, his chosen formula for a reply—probably in agreement with Hartlib—was not a work dedicated to Cheynell, as this would have given him unearned recognition, albeit in a controversialist vein. It was better to launch a (double) reprint of the work that Cheynell had attacked more than any other to prove once again that Acontius's name had not been tarnished in the slightest by his biased propaganda and that *Satan's Stratagems* had never been as relevant as it was then. In this way, a faithful 1650 reprint of the complete Latin edition of 1631, therefore without prefatory or introductory letters, (Fig. 6)²²⁰ was followed in 1651 by a reprint—for the third time in 4 years—of the English translation of the first four books with an amended title, also featuring a long preface by Goodwin and Dury's prefatory letter: *Darkness discovered. Or The Satans secret stratagems laid open. Whereby he labors to make havock of the people of God, by his wicked and damnable designs for destroying the kingdom of Christ. Wherein is contained an exquisite method of disputation about religion, and putting an end to all controversies in matters of conscience. Written by Jacobus Acontius. Together with the testimony of some ancient and modern divines concerning the same* (Fig. 7).²²¹

There was also still the plan to complete the publication of *Satan's Stratagems* in English with the remaining four books. John Dury and his friends came very close to achieving their aim, but it was once again the country's changing political agenda that influenced the outcome of their publishing project. Following the revolutionary outburst that culminated in the trial and decapitation of Charles I (1649), Oliver Cromwell understood the need for order and stability, as the aristocracy and most of the gentry were moving towards reconciliation with the fallen monarchy, while the army leaders were beginning to fear the persistent influence of the radical sects. It was also for this reason that Cromwell decided to monitor and curb any residual forms of religious radicalism, starting with the Levellers. The international situation, however, gave the Independents and sectarians a few more months of freedom; the Scots refused to approve the execution of Charles I and the devalued authority of a purged English Parliament, and proclaimed Charles II, the dead sovereign's son, as king, with the Irish following soon afterwards. Faced with this danger, Cromwell was forced to deploy his army against the Scottish and royalist troops and duly defeated them at Worcester in September 1651. He did not manage to capture Charles I's son, but

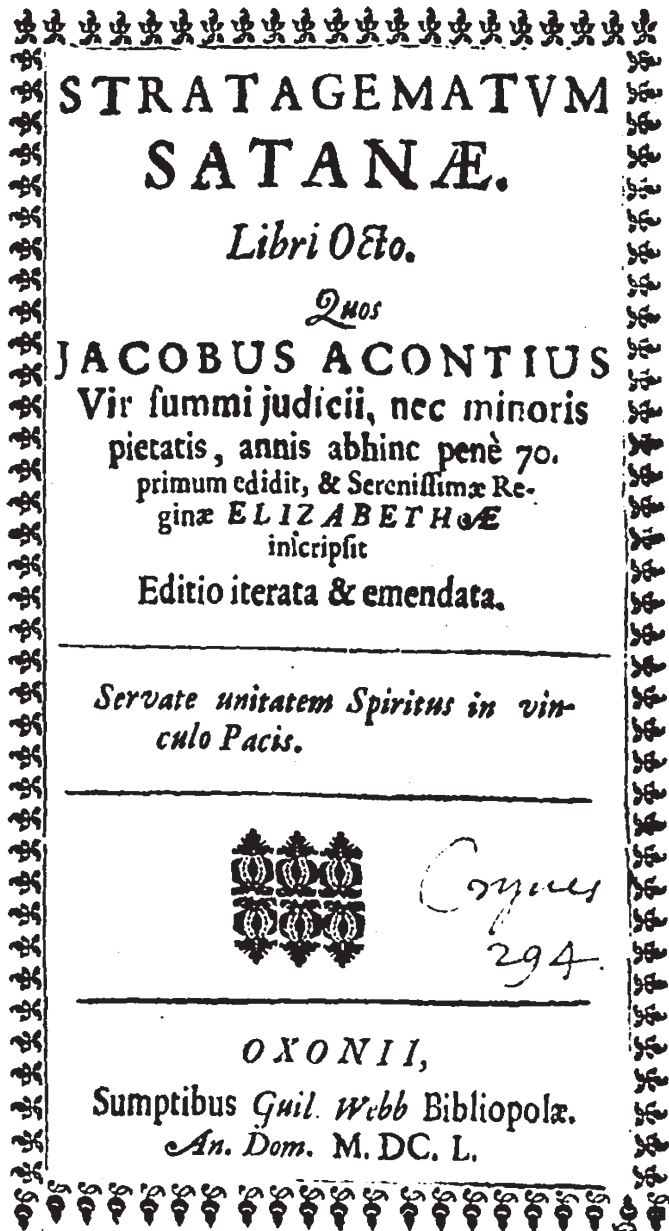


Fig. 6 Frontispiece of the 1650 Oxford edition of Acontius's *Stratagematum Satanae*

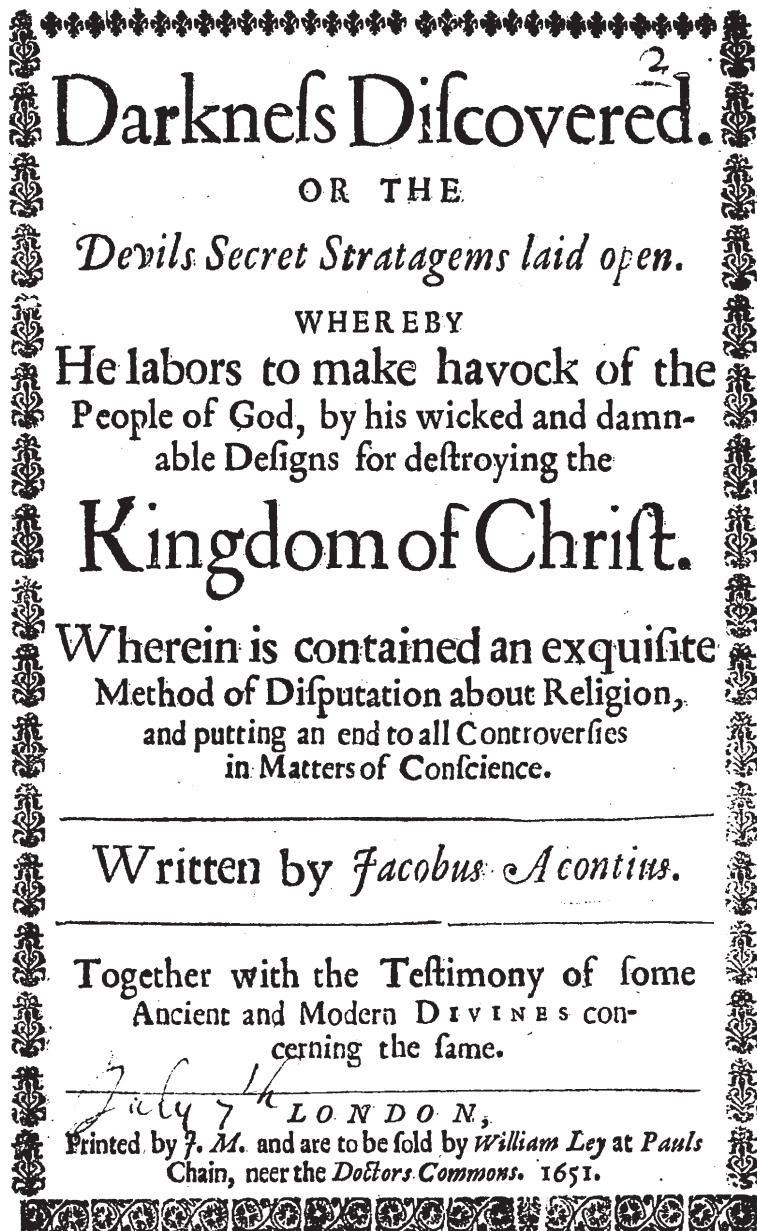


Fig. 7 Frontispiece of the 1651 London edition of Acontius's *Darkness Discovered*

was now in a position to treat Scotland as a defeated enemy by banning Presbyterian synods and installing a Government Council similar to the English model. This anti-Presbyterian development imposed by the war naturally favoured the Independents and the religious sects under their authority. This atmosphere of relative freedom and tolerance was the context for the last English edition of *Satan's Stratagems*. However, the climate became more radical once again after the Rump Parliament was dissolved by the army in April 1653 and, particularly, a few months later after the collapse of the Barebones Parliament—the final attempt at compromise between moderate and sectarian movements within the army. As Christopher Hill wrote, ‘almost all trends of opinion among the propertied class combined to denounce Levellers and levelling—the Protector Oliver Cromwell, the republican James Harrington, heads of Oxford and Cambridge colleges, town oligarchies, agricultural reformers [...] Presbyterian divines and their sectarian critics’.²²² After it had been established ‘that there was to be no further social revolution, it was inevitable that those who had done well out of the civil war should seek to consolidate their position. This, they came to recognize, could best be achieved by compromise with their defeated enemies, even at the price of retaining or restoring much of the old order’.²²³

It is therefore easy to understand why, in 1654, John Dury expressed all of his doubts regarding the planned English edition of the remaining four books of *Satan's Stratagems* to Samuel Hartlib, who remained the hidden coordinator of the whole operation²²⁴:

As for the printing of Acontius I would haue you to suspend the Resolution a while as yet, till I giue you notice of the seasonableness of the time wherein it may bee done, when; our deliberations shall fall upon the subiect of Toleration & Moderation and the Rules of handling Controversies to edification then it will bee Seasonable, but now it will not yet bee borne with all, & my Analysis of him may preiudice the business I now haue in hand; I would therefore haue the information which I am now about to giue you to precede; & that you should not precipitate any thing under my name till I give you notice.²²⁵

Beyond Dury's possible reappraisal of the necessary articles for attaining salvation and the strategic caution that can be read between the lines of this letter,²²⁶ it was the country's political agenda that put a sudden stop to Dury and Hartlib's publishing project, marking the end of the

long-running success of *Satan's Stratagems* on English soil. In the end, this was not so much due to the censure of the Westminster Assembly, which had little effect, as to the gradual but irreversible cooling of the political and religious climate, leading to the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

NOTES

1. On the *Essortatione*, published as a result of the interest shown by Giovanni Battista Castiglione, Queen Elizabeth's Italian teacher, see C.D. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, Rome 1955, 181–184, as well as the more recent work by D. Pirillo, *Filosofia ed eresia nell'Inghilterra del tardo Cinquecento. Bruno, Sidney e i dissidenti religiosi italiani*, Rome 2010, 70–74; for a modern edition of the text, see J. Aconcio, *De methodo et opuscoli religiosi e filosofici*, ed. G. Radetti, Florence 1944, 285–301.
2. Regarding the time that Ochino and Vermigli spent in London and the circulation of their works in England, see the recent work by A. Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535–c.1585*, Aldershot 2008, 41–60 and 103–124.
3. There is a list of English editions of Ochino and Vermigli's works in *ibid.*, 217 and 219. On Ochino's *Dialogi triginta*, cf. also Chap. 2, Sect. 5.
4. Londini, exeudebat Ioannes Kyngstonus. To tell the truth, the court's hostility cannot have had much influence on the circulation of the work, as four editions were published in the 1570s (1573, 1574, 1576, 1577) in London by the printer Thomas Marsh. On the court's hostility towards Castellio's work, cf. F.E. Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion, sa vie et son œuvre (1515–1563) étude sur les origines du protestantisme libéral français*, 2 vols, Paris 1892, II, 498ff. (The work was recently republished by Droz, 'édité et introduit par Max Engammare; avec une préface de Jacques Roubaud', Geneva 2010), and J. Jacquot, 'Sébastien Castellion et l'Angleterre: quelques aspects de son influence', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 15, 1953, 15–44, esp. 31–32.
5. *Good and true. A holy collection made out of the Old and New Testament. Diuided into foure bookes of conference, or discourse. Accompanied with pithy sentences, as morall obseruations vpon euery dialogue. Pleasant and profitable*. London, printed [by T. Snodham] for Henry Rockit, 1610: to be supplemented with the publishing information given by Buisson and Jacquot in their aforementioned studies. Finally, the 1670s saw the publication of the English translation of *A conference of faith written in Latin by Sebastianus Castellio; now translated into English*, London, printed by J.R. for John Barksdale, 1679.

6. On which cf. Chap. 2. For the French edition, the reference is to Jacob Acontius, *Les Ruzes de Satan: Recueillies et comprises en huit livres*, Basle, 1565.
7. The edition was edited by Johannes Grasser and there must have been a large print run given the numerous references and citations it received over the following decades (O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 201). For a later reference to this Basle edition, see Worthington's letter cited in note 224. There were other reprints of the Latin edition in Basle in 1582, 1616, 1618 and 1620 (J. Jacquot, 'Acontius and the Progress of Toleration in England', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 16, 1954, 192–206, esp. 195, note 1).
8. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 201. On Du Jon, see G. Caravale, *The Italian Reformation Outside Italy: Francesco Pucci's Heresy in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2015, 191–200.
9. On Coornhert, see G. Voogt, *Constraint on Trial: Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and Religious Freedom*, Kirksville, MO, 2000; and M. Roobol, *Disputation by Decree: The Public Disputations between Reformed Ministers and Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert as Instruments of Religious Policy during the Dutch Revolt (1577–1583)*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2010. His most famous work has recently received a modern edition: *Synod on the Freedom of Conscience: A Thorough Examination during the Gathering Held in the Year 1582 in the City of Freetown*, tr., ed., annotated Gerrit Voogt, Amsterdam 2008. On his relationship with Acontius's work, cf. A. De Groot, 'Aconcio aux Pays-Bas', in *Circolazione di uomini e d'idee tra Italia ed Europa nell'età della Controriforma*, ed. S. Peyronel Rambaldi, *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, 181, 1997, 51–66, esp. 54–55.
10. De Groot, 'Aconcio aux Pays-Bas', 56; on Cornelis Pieterszoon Hooft, see the old monograph by H.A.E. van Gelder, *De levensbeschouwing van Cornelis Pieterszoon Hooft, burgemeester van Amsterdam 1547–1626*, Utrecht, 1982 (originally published in 1918).
11. The most recent and up-to-date monography on Arminius, in addition to the classic work by Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, Nashville, TN, 1971, is Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace*, New York and Oxford 2012; see also Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Stanglin and Marijke Tolsma (eds.), *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/1560–1609)*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2009.
12. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 205. Cf. also *ibid.*, 206–207 for testimonies of the enduring popularity of Acontius among followers of Arminius. On the circulation of Acontius's work in the Dutch Republic, see De Groot, 'Aconcio aux Pays-Bas'.
13. De Groot, 'Aconcio aux Pays-Bas', 58–59.

14. For a general overview, see J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806*, Oxford 1995, 421–477; and J. Rohls, ‘Calvinism, Arminianism and Socinianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort’, in *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2005, 3–48.
15. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (*Kerckelicke Historie*, c.1646), Wtenbogaert mentioned Acontius in order to add weight to his suggestion of unity between Protestants based on reciprocal tolerance on the matter of non-essential articles, inviting his readers to read the Italian’s work; De Groot, ‘Aconcio aux Pay-Bas’, 57.
16. *Ibid.*, 61.
17. On the Vorstius affair, see most recently Rohls, ‘Calvinism, Arminianism, Socinianism’, 21–28; S. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism*, Cambridge and New York 2010, 45–50.
18. Iohannis Volkeli Misnici, *De vera religione libri quinque*, Racow, 1630, 370–372; O’Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 202. On Völkel, see R. Wallace, *Antitrinitarian biography, or, Sketches of the lives and writings of distinguished antitrinitarians: exhibiting a view of the state of the Unitarian doctrine and worship in the principal nations of Europe, from the Reformation to the close of the seventeenth century: to which is prefixed a history of Unitarianism in England during the same period*, 3 vols, London 1850, II, 428–434.
19. Ruarus also made direct reference to Acontius’s work in subsequent letters. For example, in a letter to Conrad Berg he cited the sixth book of *Satan’s Stratagems*, in which Acontius praises Luther for restoring the authority of the Scriptures and laments the loss of this authority in commentaries and interpretations; G.G. Zeltner, *Historia Crypto-Socinianismi altorfinae quondam, academiae infesti arcana... et Martini Ruari Epistolarum centuriae duae*, II, Lipzig, 1729, 110; O’Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 202–203.
20. O’Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 203.
21. Pareus’s reference is cited by Francis Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, London 1650, on which, see below; cf. O’Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 204, note 29. Gisbert Voet (1589–1676), a staunch Calvinist and bitter enemy of the Remonstrants, also wrote in his *De Trinitate* that if the Reformed Churches had considered the third and seventh books of *Satan’s Stratagems*, they would have expelled Acontius unless he had explained himself better by clarifying that he had not brought the same errors from Italy previously conveyed by ‘Alciato, Biandrata, Gribaldi and the two Sozzinis’ (this quotation is also taken from Cheynell’s work; Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 204).

22. De Groot, 'Aconcio aux Pay-Bas', 60.
23. The reference is taken from the 1652 Amsterdam Latin edition of the *Satan's Stratagems*, edited by Johannes Ravensteyn. On this edition, see Chap. 4.
24. F. Shriver, 'Orthodoxy and Diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius Affair', *English Historical Review*, 85(336), July 1970, 449–474, esp. 453–454.
25. N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', in C. Russell (ed.), *Origins of the English Civil War*, New York 1973, 119–143; N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c.1590–1640*, Oxford and New York 1987; N. Tyacke, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered', *Past and Present*, 115, May 1987, 201–216.
26. P. White, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered', *Past and Present*, 101, November 1983, 34–54; P. White, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered: A Rejoinder', *Past and Present*, 115, May 1987, 217–229; and P. White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War*, Cambridge and New York 1992.
27. W. Bradshaw, *English puritanisme containening [sic]. The maine opinions of the rigidest sort of those that are called Puritanes in the realme of England*, London, 1605.
28. 'Quod reliquum est, ut unde coepi ibi quoque desinam, Deum veneror ut avertens faciem a peccatis nostris, oculos animosque nobis illustret, ne *Satanae stratagematis* ullis a veritate, atque adeo vita moveri nos sinamus, sed eandem cum amore receptam omnibus votis et viribus promoveamus, eaque optima duce, sic huius vitae cursum conficiamus, ut ad beatam tandem perducamur per Iesum Christum qui est via, veritas, vita' (W. Ames, *Ad Lectorem*, in W. Bradshaw, *Puritanismus Anglicanus, sive praecipua dogmata eorum, qui inter vulgo dictos Puritanos in Anglia, rigidiores habentur*, Frankfurt, 1610, cc. B5r–v; the mention of Acontius is in *ibid.*, a c. A6r). Cf. also O'Malley, who, however, wrongfully indicates William Ames as the author of the work (*Jacopo Aconcio*, 201).
29. Jacquot, 'Acontius', 196.
30. See, for example, his *Coronis ad collationem Hagiensem qua argumenta pastorum Hollandiae adversus remonstrantium quinque articulos de divina praedestinatione, & capitibus ei adnexis, producta, ab horum exceptionibus vindicantur. Auctore Guilielmo Amesio*, London, 1630.
31. G. Amesij, *De conscientia et eius iure, vel casibus, libri quinque*, etc., Amsterdam, 1631. The work was translated into English after his death in 1633, under the title *Conscience with the power and cases thereof divided into V. bookes. Written by the godly and learned, William Ames, Doctor, and Professor of Divinity, in the famous University of Franeker in Friesland. Translated out of Latine into English, for more publique benefit*, [Leyden and London], [1639].

32. This was revealed some years later by Francis Cheynell, the bitterest enemy of Acontius and his English followers, in his *The Rise, Growth and Danger of Socinianism, together with a plaine Discovery of a desperate Designe of Corrupting the Protestant Religion*, London 1643, 36; cf. also O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 208. On Cheynell, cf. below.
33. The work in question was entitled *Appello evangelium for the true doctrine of the divine predestination concorded with the orthodox doctrine of Gods free-grace and mans free-will/by John Plaifere...; hereunto is added Dr. Chr. Potter his owne vindication in a letter to Mr. V. touching the same points*, London 1651, 413.
34. On the intellectual circle that gathered around Lord Falkland, cf. below.
35. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 72; on Christopher Potter, see the entry by A.J. Hegarty in ODNB.
36. Oxford University Archives, Arch. wills OP, 84; cit. in Hegarty, 'Potter, Christopher', ODNB.
37. The sermon was published the following year under the title *A sermon preached at the consecration of the right Reverend Father in God Barnaby Potter DD. and L. Bishop of Carlisle, at Ely house in Holbourne March 15. 1628. By Christopher Potter D.D. provost of Queenes Colledge in Oxford. Hereunto is added an advertisement touching the history of the quarrels of Pope Paul 5 with the Venetians; penned in Italian by F. Paul, and done into English by the former author*, London 1629.
38. Potter, *A sermon*, 59–60.
39. *Ibid.*, 67.
40. 'To expect an absolute and generall consent in all particles of truth, were a great vanity; to exact it a greater tyranny of pernicious consequence in the Church' (*ibid.*, 61–62).
41. 'Where there is a distinct and explicite assent in all the *maine Articles* of the Catholique faith, and in all conclusions cleerely, immediately, necessarily issuing from those principles' (*ibid.*, 60–61).
42. 'Those maine Articles whereof we spake, the wisdom of the ancient Church contracted out of Scripture into a short *Creed*, which they called the *Rule of faith*, and placed in it the *unity* of the Church' (*ibid.*, 63).
43. *Ibid.*, 65–66.
44. *Ibid.*, 44.
45. Hegarty, 'Potter, Christopher'.
46. E. Knott, *Charity mistaken, with the want whereof, Catholickes are vniustly charged for affirming, as they do with grief, that Protestancy vnrepented destroys salvation*, Saint-Omer, 1630.
47. *Ibid.*, 25.
48. *Ibid.*, 33.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 49.

51. Ibid.
52. 'And directly to affirme, that they departed from the Communion of the *Church of Rome*, because forsooth they *found it to be the seate of Antichrist, the Synagogue of Satan, the very center of superstition and idolatry*; [...] but yet nevertheless now [...] [they] affirme that the differences betweene them and us, concerne not the fundamentall points of faith, but only such as are not fundamentall; that therefore for their parts, they hold we may be saved, if we leade good lives in our Religion; and that they desire the like attestation of us for them; and that it is but tyranny and cruelty in the Catholicke Romane Church which keeps from allowing it; since upon the matter, the Religions of us both are the same, and the Churches in effect the same' (ibid., 72–73).
53. 'This discourse of theirs, and their standing so much upon fundamentall points of faith, in the sense which they use, is a mere Chimera. ... For though it be most true that some doctrines are in themselves of farre more importance, then some others; [...] yet so, on the other side, there is no doctrine at all concerning Religion, the beliefe whereof is not fundamentall to my salvation, if the Catholicke Church, which is the spouse of Christ our Lord, propound and commande me to believe it' (ibid., 73–74).
54. C. Potter, *Want of charitie iustly charged, on all such Romanists, as dare (without truth or modesty) affirme, that Protestancie destroyeth salvation In answer to a late popish pamphlet intituled Charity mistaken &c. By Christopher Potter D.D. chaplaine to his maty in ordinarie, and provost of Queenes Colledge in Oxford*, Oxford and [London], 1633.
55. Ibid., 22.
56. Ibid., 38.
57. Ibid., 39.
58. Quoting St Thomas, he wrote: 'Some, say they, are primitive articles of the substance of religion, essentiall in the object of faith; dissention in these is pernicious, and destroyes unity. *Others are secondary, probable, accidentall or obscure points*, wherein the oppositions and disputations of learned men proceeding modestly are tolerable, and sometimes profitable for finding out the truth. Unity in these matters is very contingent and variable in the Church; now greater, now lesser, never absolute in all particles of truth' (ibid., 39).
59. Ibid., 40.
60. Ibid., 111–112.
61. 'There is but one necessary to salvation, that wherein *the holy Scriptures [...] are able to make us wise by the faith in Christ Iesus*. The keeper of this truth and of the Scriptures in which it is treasured is the Church, not of one city, but the catholique Church, that is, the fellowship of saints dispersed

- through the whole world. And it is not in deepe or difficult questions, but in this *necessary faith* or truth, wherein the Fathers [...] justly require an exact and perfect unity among catholique christians' (ibid., 40–41).
62. Ibid., 74.
 63. 'Wee can never be joynd with Rome, in such corruptions as make her popish. But wee were never disjoynd from her in those maine essentiall truthes, which give her the name and essence of a Church' (ibid., 81).
 64. 'Our Charity reaches further to all those at this day who in simplicity of heart beleve the Romane Religion and professe it. But we understand onely those, who either have not sufficient meanes to finde the truth; or else such as after the vie of the best meanes they can have, all things considered, finde not sufficient motives to convince their conscience that they are in error. But they that have understanding and meanes to discover their error, and neglect to use them, wee dare not flatter them with so easie a censure. And much lesse them, that dare professe the Religion of the Church of Rome, when doe not beleve it' (ibid., 77).
 65. E. Knott, *Mercy and Truth, Or Charity Maintain'd by Catholiques*, London 1634; on which cf. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 71.
 66. *The life of Edward, earl of Clarendon ... written by himself*, 2 vols, 1857, 1, 52; cit. by Warren Chernaik in the biographical entry about Chillingworth published in ODNB.
 67. R.R. Orr, *Reason and Authority: The Thought of William Chillingworth*, Oxford 1967, 30.
 68. W. Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation*, London 1638, ch. 5, para. 103, 303; also quoted in Chernaik, 'Chillingworth, William'.
 69. Des Maizeaux, *An historical and critical account of the life and writings of William Chillingworth*, London 1725, 137 and 144; cit. in Chernaik, 'Chillingworth, William'.
 70. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 71.
 71. Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 50.
 72. Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants*, 198.
 73. Ibid.
 74. Ibid.
 75. Ibid.
 76. Ibid., 198–199.
 77. Ibid., 198. In addition to Acontius's work, Chillingworth also referred the reader to one of the last orations written by Girolamo Zanchi, a pupil of Peter Martyr Vermigli and another Italian exile for religious reasons, who enjoyed popularity in England: 'And Zanchius his last oration delivered by him, after the composing of the discord between him and Amerbachius, and he shall confess as much' (ibid., 198). On Zanchi, see

- the bibliographical entry by J. Tedeschi (comp.) with James M. Lattis, *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture: A Bibliography of the Secondary Literature, ca. 1750–1997*, with a historiographical introduction by Massimo Firpo, Modena and Ferrara 2000, 554–560.
78. *Ibid.*, ch. 4, paras 39–40, 209–210; also cited by Chernaik, ‘Chillingworth, William’.
 79. On Lord Falkland’s circle, see the still essential H.R. Trevor-Roper, ‘The Great Tew Circle’, in H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays*, Chicago 1987, 166–230.
 80. Jacquot, ‘Acontius’, 199.
 81. On which, cf. Sect. 5 in this chapter.
 82. R. Pooley, ‘Cheynell, Francis’, ODNB.
 83. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, for the complete title, see Foreword introducing the Appendices.
 84. F. Cheynell, *Chillingworthi novissima, or, the sicknesse, heresy, death and buriall of William Chillingworth in his own phrase, clerk of Oxford and in the conceit of his fellow souldiers the Queens arch-engineer and grand-intelligencer: set forth in a letter to his eminent and learned friends a relation of his apprehension at Arundell a discovery of his errorrs in a briefe catechism and a shorr oration at the buriall of his hereticall book, by Francis Cheynell ...*, London 1644. Chillingworth had died in this short space of time and, according to accounts of the time, when Cheynell attended his funeral he made sure that a copy of *Religion of Protestants* was buried together with its author’s body: in this way, the heresy and the heretic would rest together, thereby disappearing from the public arena forever.
 85. G. Walker, *Socinianisme in the fundamentall point of justification discovered, and confuted, or, an answer to a written pamphlet maintaining that faith is in a proper sense without a trope imputed to beleevvers in justification wherein the socinian fallacies are discovered and confuted, and the true christian doctrine maintained, viz. that the righteousness by which true beleevvers are justified before God is the perfect righteousness and obedience which the Lord Iesus Christ God and man did perform to the law of God, both in his life and death*, London 1641.
 86. H.J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England*, London 1951, 46. On John Goodwin, cf. below. On George Walker and Anthony Wotton, see the respective entries in ODNB by D.R. Como and R.L. Greaves.
 87. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 52.
 88. *Ibid.*, 55, 57.

89. I. Atherton and D. Como, 'The Burning of Edward Wightman: Puritanism, Prelacy and the Politics of Heresy in Early Modern England', *English Historical Review*, 120, 2005, 1215–1250; on Bartholomew Legate, cf. also D. Como's entry in ODNB.
90. In the fourth chapter of his *The Rise, Growth and Danger of Socinianisme*, entitled 'Whether England hath been, or still is in danger to be farther infected with Socinianisme', Cheynell referred explicitly to the culpability of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 34; cf. Appendix A). According to Cheynell, Laud had written that 'the Mysteries of Faith doe not contradict Reason, for Reason by her own light can discover how firmly the principles of Religion are true' (ibid., 40; Jacquot, 'Acontius', 200). These words had been pronounced during a debate held at the request of James I in 1622, later published under the title *A relation of the conference betweene William Lawd and Mr Fisher the Jesuite*, London 1639. On this occasion, Laud spoke out against those who claimed that all points defined by the Church were fundamental and necessary for salvation, distinguishing between fundamental points (Scriptures and Creed) and what he defined as superfluous elements or doctrines on faith (Jacquot, 'Acontius', 200).
91. E. Knott, *Christianity maintained. Or a discovery of sundry doctrines tending to the ouerthrowe of Christian religion: contayned in the answere to a booke entituled, mercy and truth, or, charity maintayned by Catholiques*, [Saint-Omer], 1638.
92. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 34–35; cf. Appendix A.
93. Ibid., 35; cf. Appendix A.
94. Cheynell mentioned it, in ibid., 35; cf. Appendix A.
95. Nicolaus Vedelius, *De episcopatu Costantini Magni; seu, de Potestate Magistratum Reformatorum circa res ecclesiasticas dissertatio repetita cum responsione ad interrogata quaedam*, etc., Franeker [it's in Netherlands] 1642; in turn, Episcopus replied to these fresh personal accusations with his *Vedelius Rhapsodus*.
96. Wedderburn was born in Dundee in 1585, but was soon 'adopted' by the Anglican Church. Cheynell explained that he was forced to flee 'for fear of censorship by the Scottish Church' (Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth and Danger*, 35; but see also R. Pooley, 'Cheynell, Francis').
97. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 35; cf. Appendix A.
98. See the entry by A.S.W. Pearce, 'Wedderburn, James', ODNB.
99. On him, see the entry by S. Adams in ODNB.
100. On Bishop William Forbes, cf. the entry by J. Cooper in ODNB.
101. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 36; cf. Appendix A.
102. Ibid., 36; cf. Appendix A.
103. Ibid., 36; see Appendix A. In particular, he cited one of Pareus's letters written in Latin in 1613 (ibid.).

104. Ibid., 37; cf. Appendix A.
105. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 185 and 187. On p. 37, Cheynell quoted the Latin version from pp. 184 and 186 (cf. Appendix A). Cheynell was in fact quoting from the 1631 Latin version of *Satan's Stratagems*.
106. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 38; cf. Appendix A.
107. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 187. The Latin version of the passage is quoted by Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 38; cf. Appendix A.
108. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 38; cf. Appendix A.
109. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 198–199; the Latin version of the passage is quoted by Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 38; cf. Appendix A.
110. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 200–201.
111. Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, 39; cf. Appendix A.
112. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, 208–209.
113. 'This is the first time it hath endeavored to speak English. If this essay shall finde acceptance, the translator intends to go in hand with the remaining books, God affording life and opportunity'; J. Acontius, *Satans stratagems, or The Satans cabinet-councel discovered. Whereby he endeavors to hinder the knowledg of the truth, through many delusions. Wherein is laid open an easie way to end controversies in matters of conscience, by setting down the right order of disputation in points of religion, that so truth may be known from error. Worthly to be perused by all Christians of different judgments, in this juncture of time. Together with arguments to each book, for the ease of the reader./By Jacobus Acontius, a learned and godly divine banished for the Gospel. As also the testimonies of some ancient divines, together with an epistle written by Mr John Goodwin. And Mr. Duries letter touching the same.* London 1648 [but 1647], c. A2v. Both dedicatory epistles appeared in the 1648 edition (*Satans stratagems, or The Satans cabinet-councel discovered whereby he endeavors [sic] to hinder the knowledg of the truth [...] wherein is laid open an easie way to end controversies in matters of conscience ... together with arguments to each book...; as also the testimonies of some ancient divines, together with an epistle written by Mr John Goodwin; and Mr. Duries letter touching the same*, London 1648), but not in the third English edition of 1651 (on which, cf. below).
114. On the Westminster Assembly of Divines cf. sect. 5 in this chapter.
115. J. Goodwin, 'The Epistle to the Reader', in *Satan's Stratagems*.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid. John Goodwin's preface to the reader is dated 9 February 1647—and not 9 February 1648 as indicated in this modern transcription—in both editions that I consulted, the first from 1647 and the second from 1648 (on which cf. above note 113).

121. P. Adamo, 'Introduzione', to J. Goodwin, *Theomachia e altri scritti sulla tolleranza*, Pisa 1996, xix–c, esp. xxii.
122. J. Goodwin, *God a Good Master and Protector*, London 1640, 118–119; quoted in T. Liu, 'Goodwin, John', ODNB.
123. J. Goodwin, *Truths conflict with error. Or, Universall redemption controverted, in three publike disputations. The first between M. John Goodwin, and M. Vavasour Powell, in Coleman-street London. The other two between M. John Goodwin, and M. John Simpson, at Albhallowes the great in Thames-street: in the presence of divers ministers of the City of London, and thousands of others*, London, 1650.
124. *Ibid.*, 7.
125. *Ibid.*, 8. And also: 'God intends the salvation of all by the death of Christ, so far as to give means unto all, which are equitable and agreeable to his wisdom, for their salvation' (*ibid.*, 8–9).
126. *Ibid.*, 10–11.
127. *Ibid.*, 10. Goodwin developed these concepts further the following year in his *Redemption redeemed*, London 1651; cf. P. Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration came to the West*, Princeton, NJ, 2003, 209.
128. J. Goodwin, *A reply of two of the brothers to A. S.*, London 1644, 24; Liu, 'Goodwin, John'.
129. J. Goodwin, *Imputatio fidei*, London 1642, preface; Liu, 'Goodwin, John'.
130. *Ibid.*
131. Adamo, 'Introduzione', xxi.
132. J. Goodwin, *Hagiomastix, or The scourge of the saints displayed in his colours of ignorance & blood: or, a vindication of some printed queries published some moneths since by authority, in way of answer to certaine anti-papers of syllogismes, entituled a Vindication of a printed paper, &c. .../By John Goodwin, pastor of a Church of Christ in Colemanstreet*, London 1647, 43.
133. 'The very substance, frame, and constitution of them, at least that which is operative, quickening and spirituall in them, what is it but a kinde of heavenly composition, the ingredients whereof are the holiness, wisdom, mercy, goodness and bounty of God, and what are these, and every of them, but God himself?' (Goodwin, *Theomachia*, title page; Liu, 'Goodwin, John').
134. Adamo, 'Introduzione', xxxvi.
135. *Ibid.*, xxxiii–xxxiv, and P. Adamo, *La libertà dei santi. Fallibilismo e tolleranza nella Rivoluzione inglese, 1640–1649*, Milan 1998, 202–207. The essential work on the Westminster Assembly is R.S. Paul, *The Assembly of The Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the 'Grand Debate'*, Edinburgh 1985. On the bold experiment of

- the gathered church of St Stephen's, condemned by the Westminster Assembly, and its varying fortunes, see J. Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in 17th-Century England*, Woodbridge and Rochester, NY, 2006.
136. Adamo, *La libertà dei santi*, 276–277.
 137. *Ibid.*, 277.
 138. On John Best, cf. C.H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England*, Oxford 2012, 22–29.
 139. *Ibid.*
 140. *Truth's Victory against Heresie*, London 1645; cf. esp. Grant's dedication; see also John Etherington, *A Brief Discovery of the Blasphemous Doctrine of Familisme*, London 1645.
 141. *The Arraignment and Condemnation of the chiefe Heresies and Errours of these Times, which May serve as an Answer to a late scandalous and blasphemous Libell: intituled The Arraignment of Mr Persecution*, London 1645.
 142. Quotations are taken from E. Pagitt, *Heresiography*, London 1645, 12, 86, 125, 154; see Geoff Kemp and Jason McElligott (gen. eds.), *Censorship and the Press, 1580–1720*, 4 vols, London 2009, II, 135–140; P. Dixon, 'Nice and Hot Disputes': *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century*, London and New York 2003, 38–39; D. Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, Oxford 2013, 201–203.
 143. A. Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution*, Oxford 2004.
 144. This aspect of circularity of ideas and texts is suggested by Hughes, *Gangraena*, 17.
 145. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 89–90.
 146. 'Upon complaint of a book of Jacobus Acontius, demanded by a member of this Assembly, and that book of *ad legem et testimonium*, it was ressetted upon the Q. This book shall be referred to a Committee to consider of it: Mr. Wilkinson, jun., Mr. Cheynell, Mr. Seaman, Mr Burges, Dr. Temple, Mr. Dury, Mr. Simpson; the care of it referred to Mr. Cheynell'; Sess. 1020, February 28, 1647, Monday morning; *Minutes of the sessions of the Westminster Assembly of divines while engaged in preparing their directory for church government, Confession of Faith, and catechisms (November 1644 to March 1649): from transcripts of the originals procured by a committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, edited for the Committee by A.F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, Edinburgh 1874, 505.
 147. McLachlan, *Socinianism*, 104–106.
 148. *Ibid.*, 106.

149. Ibid., 228–229.
150. See the entry about him by J. Spivey in ODNB.
151. L. Seaman, *The Head of the Church, the Judge of the World*, London 1647, 29; Tai Liu, ‘Seaman, Lazarus’, ODNB.
152. See the biographical entry by E.C. Vernon in ODNB.
153. Regarding Thomas Temple (c.1601–1661), born in Brecknock, Wales, and a fellow of Trinity College Dublin, there are a few biographical details in the short entry by J. and J.A. Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 10 vols, Cambridge 1922–1958 (online edn), as well as the notes on him by W. Baker, *Puritan Profiles: 54 Contemporaries of the Westminster Assembly*, Fearn 1996, in which there are also short biographical profiles of all the members of the Assembly.
154. S. Simpson, *Anatomist Anatomis’d*, London 1644, 11; T. Liu, ‘Simpson, Sidrach’, ODNB.
155. On Edwards and his controversialist work, see Hughes, *Gangraena*.
156. Liu, ‘Simpson, Sidrach’.
157. On Dury, see M. Caricchio, ‘John Dury, Reformer of Education against the Radical Challenge’, *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 18 January 2010. Available at: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3787> (accessed 11 July 2012); but above all the monograph by Pierre-Olivier Lécho, *Un christianisme sans partialité. Irénisme et méthode chez John Dury, v. 1600–1680*, Paris 2011.
158. Sess. 1024, March 3 1647, Friday; *Minutes of the sessions*, 506.
159. Cf. the biographical entry by J. Eales in ODNB.
160. Cf. the entry by I. Atherton in ODNB.
161. On Staunton, cf. the entry by John Gurney in ODNB.
162. On John Bond, cf. the entry by S. Wright, in ODNB, which, however, does not mention his involvement in the Westminster Assembly.
163. Sess. 1027, March 8, Wednesday morning; *Minutes of the sessions*, 507.
164. Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*; for the complete title see the Foreword to the Appendices.
165. Kemp and McElligott (gen. eds.), *Censorship and the Press, 1580–1720*, II, 199–202.
166. Jacquot, ‘Acontius’, 201.
167. Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 439–440; cf. Appendix A.
168. Ibid., 440; cf. Appendix A.
169. Ibid., 441; cf. Appendix A.
170. Ibid.; cf. Appendix A.
171. Jacquot, ‘Acontius’, 202.
172. Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 441–442; cf. Appendix A.
173. Ibid., 442; cf. Appendix A.

174. F. Cheynell, *The Man of Honour Described*, London 1645, 26; Dixon, 'Nice and Hot Disputes', 39. For more on these individuals, see the biographical entries by Tedeschi in *The Italian Reformation*, respectively on 116, 129–131, 321–323, 457–461, 447–457.
175. Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 442; cf. Appendix A.
176. *Ibid.*, 443; cf. Appendix A.
177. Cheynell added a frankly implausible biographical detail about Acontius, suggesting that he was still alive in 1613: 'and as I remember, in the yeare 1616, I find that he himself was living in the yeare 1613' (*ibid.*, 443; cf. Appendix A). The most reliable reconstructions date Acontius's death to around 1566; cf. O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 50–51.
178. Here, there is clear-cut evidence to support our hypothesis that a first English edition of *Satan's Stratagems* was published in March 1647, which was different from the better-known 1648 edition: 'About the beginning of March 1647 there was some part of his *Stratagems* (translated into English) published in Print at London' (Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 443; cf. Appendix A; for the hypothesis of a first English edition in 1647, see above).
179. *Ibid.*, 443; cf. Appendix A.
180. *Ibid.*, 444–445; cf. Appendix A.
181. The Committee's question about why Acontius's book had received Pietro Ramo's approval, which even Cheynell had previously focused on, was explained by the shared mathematical and engineering interests that had brought the two intellectuals together in the past (*ibid.*, 445; cf. Appendix A).
182. McLachlan, *Socinianism*, 41–42.
183. C.S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Caroline England*, Cambridge and New York 2008, 226–227; Kemp and McElligott (gen. eds.), *Censorship and the Press, 1580–1720*, II, 72–75.
184. Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 230.
185. *Ibid.*, 231; on the clandestine circulation of royalist books between 1647 and 1650, see J. McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*, Woodbridge and Rochester, NY, 2007; on censorship during the Civil War, see also R. Robertson, *Censorship and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England: The Subtle Art of Division*, University Park, PA, 2009. For Caroline England, see also S. Lambert, 'State Control of the Press in Theory and Practice: The Role of the Stationers' Company before 1640', in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds.), *Censorship and the Control of Print: In England and France 1600–1910*, Winchester, 1992, 1–32; S. Lambert, 'Richard Montagu, Arminianism and Censorship', *Past & Present*, 1(124), August 1989, 36–68; David

- Cressy, 'Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36(2), 1 July 2005, 359–374.
186. Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 445; cf. Appendix A.
 187. *Ibid.*, 445–446; cf. Appendix A.
 188. See the letter sent by the diplomat Johann Bisterfeld to Samuel Hartlib in September 1638, in which he wrote 'I vehemently approve of Dury's method against the Socinians' ('methodum Duræi contra Socinianos vehementer approbo'); HP, 27/7/4B; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 54 and note 41.
 189. Cf. Chap. 2.
 190. 'A letter of the learned and judicious Mr Dury (one of the Assembly of Ministers) to Mr Samuel Hartlib touching the Author [...] from S. James's Feb. 9. 1648' (*Satan's Stratagems*, cc. A1r–v).
 191. *Ibid.*
 192. *Ibid.*
 193. Cf. the letter from Hartlib to Dury of 13 September 1630, quoted by Lécho, *Un christianisme 'sans partialité'*, 59, note 1. There is further evidence of Hartlib's respect for Acontius as a master of logic and method in his manuscript *Desiderata in Logica* (London, British Library, Ms Sloane 638), in which he mentions his name alongside Dury and other important philosophers (cf. Lécho, *Un christianisme 'sans partialité'*, 106, note 1). The same handwritten text also suggests that Hartlib was planning an edition of a treatise by Dury together with Acontius's *De methodo* (*ibid.*, 145, note 1). Stephen Clucas even goes as far as classifying Hartlib and Dury as 'acontians methodists' (S. Clucas, 'In Search of "The True Logick": Methodological Eclecticism among the "Baconian reformers"', in M. Greengrass (ed.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, Cambridge 1994, 51–74, esp. 60; now reprinted in S. Clucas, *Magic, Memory and Natural Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Farnham 2011). Moreover, in another document, Hartlib associates Acontius with another major figure of the Italian heretical diaspora, Sebastian Castellio: 'Castalio is an author full of excellent notions and likest to Acontius of any. But because hee is branded by Calvin as an heretike therefore hee is so little regarded. If the truths which hee hase were delivered by some other Man against whom there was not such a prejudice they would bee accounted most singular things'; Samuel Hartlib, *Ephemerides anni 1642*, HP, 30/4/81A–85A, esp. 82A.
 194. This is suggested by Turnbull, who credits Dury with writing *De prae-fatione Acontii in Methodum* [1646?], found among Hartlib's manuscript documents (with the cited *Desiderata in Logica*); G.H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib Papers*, Liverpool

and London 1947, 257; cf. also Léchoť, *Un christianisme 'sans partialité'*, 145, note 1.

195. 'At the breaking forth of the Gospel, when he did live, many that were convicted of the errors of the Church of Rome, were staggered at the truth and the profession thereof by the Reformed Churches, because of the manifold disputes and the disorders found amongst them, and ever since continued by the subtilty of Satan, who not being able to hinder the breaking in of more light, doth endeavor to make it either ineffectual or hurtful to the salvation of mens souls' ('A letter of the learned and judicious Mr Dury ... to Mr Samuel Hartlib', c. A1r).
196. Ibid.
197. 'This wise man in his time did discover Satans aym, and warned his Generation faithfully, and chiefly the Watchmen, of the grand adversaries design against them: But how much this admonition is laid to heart doth appear by the distempers of all places, whereof both the causes and remedies are here discovered and offered to the Churches, but minded almost by none. However some there are, at all times, and will be, who will be affected herewith; and God is able by their means to qualifie the spirits of others, and to cast Satan under the feet of his elect and faithful servants, in his own time' (ibid., cc. A1r-v).
198. 'Therefore it is very useful that such testimonies as these should be extant; and now to us, they are very seasonable, although perhaps in haste we shall see no great fruit thereof. But our comfort is, that although the Kingdom of Heaven is as a grain mustard seed, yet it groweth at last to be a mighty great tree, so that the fowls of heaven lodg in the branches thereof. Therefore we must not be weary in well doing; for we are sure that in sowing this seed we shall not lose our labor; because the promise is, that in due time we shall reap, if we faint not' (ibid., c. A1v).
199. 'To be carried along with the stream, or to be silent when matters are not carried according to our mind, is no hard matter to any that hath any measure of discretion; but to row against the stream, to labor against wind and tyde, and the whole current of an age, and that without offence unto any, and that strongly and irresistibly (as in his age Acontius did) is not the work of an ordinary courage; therefore such as own him in his way are the more to be commended' (ibid.).
200. 'I shall therefore intreat you to remember my love and service to your friend who hath taken this profitable pains to translate this excellent piece of learning, and thank him from me for it. I make no doubt but it will be convincing sufficiently to such as are free from hardness of heart in the ways of factiousness; and are not blinded with carnal ends, in the prosecution of religious controversies' (ibid.).

201. Letter from Cheney Culpeper to Samuel Hartlib, 29 March 1648, HP, 13/213A-214B, esp. c. 213B.
202. Cf. below.
203. See, for example, Cheynell's reflections about Abraham in *The Divine Trinity*, 448 (see Appendix A), on which see also above.
204. 'I know *Acontius* doth acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, and to be God' (Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 448; cf. Appendix A).
205. Ibid., 449; cf. Appendix A.
206. For a general overview of the censorship system in the Caroline age and its virtual collapse during the English Civil War, cf. Clegg, *Press Censorship*; as well as the recent monumental documentary collection in four volumes, Kemp and McElligott (gen. eds.), *Censorship and the Press, 1580–1720*.
207. The Report made to the Reverend Assembly, 8 March 1647–1648 (Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 453; cf. Appendix A).
208. Ibid., 454; cf. Appendix A.
209. Ibid., 454–455; cf. Appendix A.
210. Ibid.; cf. Appendix A.
211. Ibid., 457; cf. Appendix A.
212. Ibid., 457; cf. Appendix A.
213. Ibid., 457–458; cf. Appendix A.
214. Ibid., 458; cf. Appendix A. Cf. H. Grotius, *Defensio fidei Catholicae de satisfactione Christi, adversus Faustum Socinum Senensem*, ed. with intro. and notes by Edwin Rabbie; with an tr. Hotze Mulder, Assen and Maastricht 1990.
215. Cheynell, *The Divine Trinity*, 458–459; cf. Appendix A.
216. Ibid., 459; cf. Appendix A.
217. Ibid.; cf. Appendix A. In the final reflection in this part of the volume dedicated to Acontius and his connections with the Socinian doctrine, Cheynell stressed that rejection was very different from persecution and that nobody should be persecuted in the name of God by civil magistrates or representatives of the Church hierarchy (ibid., 460; cf. Appendix A).
218. We are naturally referring here to the second English edition, identical to the first, again printed by John Macock but edited this time by G. Calvert. It also contains John Dury's letter to Samuel Hartlib, dated Saint James, 9 February 1648, and was therefore printed in early 1648; cf. above.
219. William Hamilton to Samuel Hartlib and John Dury, 22 July 1650, HP, 9/11/21A-22B, esp. c. 21A.
220. Oxford, sumptibus Guill. Webb bibliopolae, 1650.
221. London, Printed by J.M. and to be sold by William Ley at Pauls Chain, neer the Doctors Commons, 1651. In the copy held at the British

Library (Thomason Tracts, E. 634. 2), there is a handwritten note on the cover dated 'July 7th'.

222. C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution*, London 1972, 345.
223. Ibid.
224. There is also confirmation of this in a late letter written by John Worthington: 'Jacobus Acontius was worth your reading. I thought so many years since, though one in print did declaim against the translation of part of the book that was printed (the rest was also finished but not printed, and I think Mr. Hartlib had it) and the Assembly did snub [snub] Mr. Dury for writing a preface to the English translation. The Latin one that I have is not the Oxford ill printed one, but another of a longer paper, and printed beyond sea'; letter from John Worthington to Mr. Evans, 18 November 1664, in *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington ... from the Baker mss. in the British museum and the Cambridge university library and other sources*, ed. James Crossley, 2 vols, Manchester, 1847–1886, II, part I, 143–146; cf. also O'Malley, *Jacopo Aconcio*, 209, note 59.
225. Letter of John Dury to Samuel Hartlib, Basel, 16 September 1654, HP, 4/3/32A.
226. This is Pierre-Olivier Léchot's thesis: the missive is interpreted as clear evidence of the success of Cheynell's criticisms, leading Dury—at least officially—to stop pursuing the fundamental articles indicated by Acontius while continuing to reflect on the issue again with regard to the latter's text (Léchot, *Une christianisme 'sans partialité'*, 323 and note 2).

Satan's Stratagems and the Roman Censors

1 *DIALOGO DI RICCAMATI, SOMMA DELLA DOTTRINA CRISTIANA AND THE INDEX (1620)*

The Catholics understood the dangerous nature of Acontius's writings well before the turn of the century. *Satan's Stratagems* was added to the writings to be forbidden in the 1569 Antwerp Index, consolidated by a concurrent ban on his complete works. The same double censure was later employed by the Spanish Index in 1583 and the Roman Index in 1596.¹ The relative delay in Rome's reaction could be explained by the fact that the latter was the first official Roman Index issued after the publication of Acontius's masterpiece in 1565. It should also be borne in mind that all of the author's works, beginning with his first writings in Basle in 1558, had been published outside the Italian peninsula, following his exile; for a long time, the two Roman congregations competing for censorial jurisdiction—the Index and the Inquisition—paid more attention to works printed and distributed on the peninsula than to those published abroad. In the first few decades of the seventeenth century, after the problem of the spread of heretical doctrines on the peninsula had been solved, attempts were made to expand the monitoring activity to include works published abroad and translated into Italian—for example, there was a focus on French jurisdictional pamphlets²—and more generally writings that had appeared or were being distributed

in Catholic areas that were not under close inquisitorial jurisdiction. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine was the first to act in an initiative to combat the spread of Arminian and Calvinist writings in Catholic Flanders, both before and after the Synod of Dordrecht, attempting to block, with the help of the Papal Nunciature in Leuven, the spread of writings deemed heretical.³ A similar attempt had been made in France a few years before when the Papal Nuncio became involved in the correction of banned books, leading a team of theologians from the Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne. In both cases, however, the Roman project ended in failure.⁴ The initiative was as unrealistic as it was ambitious and its lack of success was due to the difficult political conditions in which Roman authorities operated outside the Italian peninsula. Often confronted with political representatives hostile to their action, they would have needed a much stronger and efficient bureaucratic apparatus to support their censorial projects. Bellarmine's renowned letter to inquisitors in individual Catholic provinces in 1614 stands out in the records as a conscious acknowledgement of impotence:

Most reverend father, seeing that the number of infected and pernicious books that are printed and sold is on the increase day after day, especially abroad and in Frankfurt more than anywhere else, and as God does not allow any remedy for the fact that they are sold and printed there, the most illustrious members of the Sacred Congregation of the Index have decided to at least prevent such pestiferous books from infecting Italy.⁵

Besides the huge political and bureaucratic difficulties encountered by such initiatives, there is no doubt that the Congregation of the Index was more interested in events beyond the Alps in the first few decades of the seventeenth century, largely thanks to the work of men such as Cardinal Bellarmine. One of their main targets, for example, were Italian authors whose works had been published outside the peninsula. This was the backdrop for the Index's 1620 censorship initiative against Jacob Acontius's *Dialogo di Riccamati*, published in Basel in 1558 together with another of his works entitled *Somma della dottrina cristiana*, which was also involved in the procedure started by the Roman Congregation.⁶ Over 50 years after they had been published for the first (and only) time, the two texts were condemned during a meeting held 'at the palace of the Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal Bellarmine' on 23 November 1620.⁷

The decision was made on the basis of a report presented by a consultor of the Congregation, the theologian Nicola Modorfarò, which the Congregation had probably commissioned after a copy of the book had been found in the possession of an (unidentified) suspected heretic. This censure, which is still preserved in the Index records,⁸ made explicit reference to the 'Italic sermon' ('italico sermone') of the two works and the fact that the volume was 'printed in an unknown place' ('incerto loco impressus'). The consultor of the Index saw the apparently innocent titles of the two works as a cause of suspicion and a source of great danger. In his eyes, the deceptive appeal to the piety of Christians that was implicit in the formulation of the titles made the books all the more 'pestiferous' and 'pernicious'.⁹ In particular, *Dialogo* used 'incredible artifice' to 'take the reader almost by the hand up to the threshold of the Lutheran heresy, [gradually] instilling it in his incautious mind'. The consultor denounced it with horror, as 'it teaches that the Pope is the Antichrist', claims that Scripture must be read by everyone and says that one has to 'listen to the word of heretics and read their books in order to make up one's mind independently from what the pontiffs ban on pain of anathema'. He went on to state frankly that he had not continued reading the text, as he had already been sufficiently shocked by these assertions.¹⁰ He felt that the second work in the volume, *Somma brevissima della dottrina cristiana*, should have been more realistically entitled 'compendium of the doctrine or, rather, of Lutheran madness'. It was enough to look at the handwritten index placed at the beginning of the work to realize that the text was packed full of heresies and blasphemy at the Pope's expense. Indeed, the consultor added that it was not worth mentioning to the Congregation either, as the *Somma* spoke for itself.¹¹ The censor concluded that there was no doubt that the owner of the double volume should be considered a heretic, not only because he possessed the aforementioned unequivocally heretical works, but also because the final pages of his copy contained an epigram which praised the Pope if read in the 'right order' ('recto ordine'), but contained a virulent insult against him when read 'backwards' ('a fine ad principium'): a trick that was enough by itself to condemn the owner of the copy of the 'pestiferous' work.¹² The surviving documentation suggests that the matter finished there and the Congregation of the Index consequently issued a decree banning the two works by Acontius, dated 23 November 1620.¹³

2 SATAN'S STRATAGEMS UNDER EXAMINATION BY THE CONGREGATION OF THE INDEX (1654)

When Acontius returned to the attention of the Congregation of the Index 30 years later, he was once again dealt with in a wholly random way. A Latin edition of *Satan's Stratagems* appeared in Amsterdam in 1652, published by Johannes Ravesteyn (Fig. 1).¹⁴

It is not known how news of this Dutch edition reached the desks of the Congregation of the Index, alarming its members so greatly that they activated a censorial mechanism; as with the two works written in Basle, it led to the reiteration of the censure formulated in the 1596 Index, with no further consequences for the volume. It is an established fact, however, that Pope Innocent X held a meeting at the Quirinal Palace on 21 April 1654 in the presence of Cardinals Marzio Ginetti, Giovanni Battista Maria Pallotta, Gaspare Carpino, Vincenzo Maculano, Giacomo Corradi, Carlo Rossetti, Virginio Orsini and Lorenzo Raggi, where the various works examined included the 'brand new Amsterdam edition [published] by Joannem Ravesteynium in the year 1652' of the 'work entitled *Satan's Stratagems*, eight books by the author Jacob Acontius'. A mandate was given to Father Girolamo Savignano, a Jesuit consultor of the Congregation, to prepare a detailed censure of the work.¹⁵

Savignano was born in Bologna in 1599 and started his novitiate in Novellara (Emilia) on 6 January 1613.¹⁶ Little is known about what he did in the 20 years or so after 1614 regarding his place of education, his priestly ordination or the first years after the completion of his studies. He might have taught grammar and philosophy, probably at a Jesuit college in Bologna. In any case, he professed his fourth vow in Ancona on 8 September 1632.¹⁷ He then went to Rome in 1635 and clearly earned himself a certain reputation as a speaker and preacher, as he was entrusted with delivering an official speech before Urban VIII.¹⁸ There is more certain information about his ongoing presence in Rome from 1638 onwards, when he taught physics (1638–1639), metaphysics (1639–1640) and moral theology (1644–1655) at the Roman Jesuit College.¹⁹ In 1654, he was appointed rector of the Roman Seminary for the secular clergy run by the Jesuits, a position that he held until 1657, while from 1659 to 1662 he was rector of the College of Penitentiaries of St Peter in the Vatican, appointed by the General of the Order, Goswin Nickel, for whom he also acted as an advisor and collaborator ('theologus').²⁰ In the meantime, from the mid-1640s



Fig. 1 Frontispiece of the 1652 Amsterdam edition of Acontius's *Stratagematum Satanæ*

onwards he had served as a *censor librorum* (censor of books) for granting printing licences within the Order in Rome.²¹ It is plausible that the Congregation of the Index appointed him consultor in 1650 as a result of this experience.²² His work for the Index is illustrated, among other things, by his censure against the fiercely anti-clerical *Dissertatio iuridico-politica* by the Neapolitan jurisconsult Carlo Calà—Regent of the Neapolitan Chancellery in the 1660s—published in Naples in 1646. It launched a harsh attack on the privilege and abuse of the clergy, moving from a pro-Spanish perspective pervaded with jurisdictionalism. Following Savignano's counsel, the work was censored by a decree issued by the Congregation of the Index on 20 April 1651.²³

A few years later, Savignano was called to voice his opinion on a delicate controversialist question that saw the Bishop of Saluzzo opposing the church and city authorities of Asti and Mondovì. In this instance, his report was about *Historia chronologica episcoporum pedemontanae regionis*, a work published by Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa in 1645 in Turin (the complete title was *Historia chronologica S.R.E. cardinalium, archiepiscoporum, episcoporum et abbatum Pedemontanae regionis*). Della Chiesa was a man of the Church from a family of jurists closely linked to the Marquises of Saluzzo and had been proclaimed Bishop of Saluzzo by Urban VIII on 14 July 1642. He had already been involved in ecclesiastical controversies following the publication of *Discorso della preminenza del sesso donnesco* (1620), dedicated to the Duchess of Mantua, Margaret of Savoy, and then in the early 1640s because of his close political affinity with Christine of France, widow of Victor Amadeus I and Regent of Savoy. In this instance, the work sparked vigorous protests from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in Asti, as Della Chiesa claimed that the municipality of Asti had established itself in the Middle Ages by rebelling against the bishops, its legitimate masters, and that the city aristocracy had risen to power mostly due to wealth accumulated from managing pawn shops. Filippo Malabalia, a Cistercian abbot from Asti, replied to these insinuations with an impressive anonymous work entitled *Clypeus civitatis Astensis ad retundenda tela quae auctor Chronologicae Historiae de praesulibus Pedemontanis in eam intorsit* (Asti 1647), published in the name of the municipality of Asti, as indicated in the brief preface 'Benevolo lectori Consilium Astense'. Over the 17 chapters of his work, Malabalia corrected some of Della Chiesa's mistakes, such as locating Asti in the county of Alessandria, and particularly replied to the theory that the Asti nobility

had accumulated their wealth through commerce and credit, claiming instead that this had been forced on them in order to guarantee a standard of living in keeping with their status, as there were not many resources available in the county as a result of the strength of municipal power. The political and historiographical polemic continued unabated. Firstly, Della Chiesa published a prompt reply, *Illustratio historica undecimi cap. Chronologicae Historiae praesulum Pedemontii*, in Mondovì in 1649, in which he reiterated the veracity of his sources and the accuracy of his historical interpretation. Malabalia then issued a rejoinder with his second *Clypeus civitatis Astensis liber apologeticus, varia eruditione de institutione et iuribus Regni Italiae exornatus* (Lyon 1656), in which he contested all of Della Chiesa's accusations. The last act in the long-standing confrontation was Della Chiesa's response, *Corona reale di Savoia, o sia Relatione delle provincie, e titoli ad essa appartenenti*, published in Cuneo between 1655 and 1657, which accused Malabalia of being a licensed forger. Such heights of asperity were reached that a supporter of Asti's interests saw fit to denounce the work that had first triggered the controversy to the Congregation of the Index. As Girolamo Savignano was one of the consultors asked to express an opinion on Della Chiesa's text, he was clearly considered an expert on ecclesiastical and jurisdictional matters.²⁴

It is not clear, however, which specific qualities led to his appointment to examine Acontius's work too; the choice was probably totally random, as Savignano did not have any particular experience with regard to heresy or doctrinal controversy. In any event, he diligently carried out the task shortly after receiving the assignment and the *Protocolli* (records) of the Congregation of the Index still contain a document entitled *Censure against the eight books of the work by Jacob Acontius, entitled 'Satan's Stratagems', which also includes an epistle from the author to Johannes Wolf of Zurich*.²⁵ This document makes it possible to assess the ways and means in which the work, which had already been put on the index at the end of the previous century, might have been read in Rome almost a 100 years after its initial publication, by indicating the dangers that it was still seen to embody. In other words, it allows us not only to measure, albeit through the distorted lens of censorial attack, the extraordinary topicality and richness of the work, but also to gauge the ability of the Roman repressive bodies to adjust to changes over time and adopt analytical tools to interpret the new challenges that were emerging in Europe at the time (Fig. 2).

What immediately attracted the censor's attention—perhaps somewhat inevitably—was the highly effusive initial dedication to Elizabeth I, who was Queen of England when Acontius wrote the work:

Before saying anything about the stratagems or the epistle, I am faced with Elizabeth, Queen of England, who the author has chosen as the protector of his work, publishing it in her name and under her auspices, dedicating the following praise to her on the frontispiece of the work: Jacob Acontius etc. dedicates and consecrates [this work of his] to the divine Elizabeth, Queen of England, France and Ireland, celebrated not so much for her immense royal dignity as for her excellent decorum, gifted with almost unheard-of levels of culture, knowledge of numerous languages and other highly refined physical and spiritual characteristics.²⁶

His sensibility as a champion of Catholic orthodoxy was especially offended by 'its highly unscrupulous historical falsity and the shameful and nauseating mendacity of its invention'. How could the author have been so insolent as to use 'such eulogies [...] to celebrate a woman like this'? Savignano claimed that Elizabeth had not only been a public liar, skilled deceiver and immoral corrupter of souls, but had also tarnished her reputation with serious crimes against the whole world:

On examining her decorum [Elizabeth] had such respect for virginity that while publicly pretending to be a virgin, [she] was instead in secret either the wife or, more precisely, the concubine of all men. Through her feigning, she assumed the behavioural characteristics of friendliness and gentleness to a great extent, but instead, as long as she reigned, she never stopped inflicting an endless massacre of innocents on her kingdom with great ferocity and cruelty. With an unusual form of execution, she ordered the suppression of those who wanted to convene Parliament and kept the skulls of her lovers in a room in the palace so that she could show them to her new lovers as an incitement to even greater impropriety. She crowned her savagery with the murder of the glorious and most holy Queen Mary Stuart, a most serious crime that devastated England and the whole world.²⁷

Elizabeth was therefore a sworn enemy of Rome who had mocked the Catholic religion at every opportunity after abjuring the faith by renewing her father Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy:

If we then turn our attention to the religion and faith of this woman, generally speaking she publicly repudiated Catholic dogma, placed herself at the head of the Anglican Church and acted pitilessly against the Catholics with all kinds of torture. More specifically, besides this she also left other proof of her great impiety to the execration of all posterity. While she was being ordained as the new queen and anointed with holy oil, she had the noblewomen who were present moved slightly so that they were not disturbed by the stench of the oil. While she was attending the holy sacrifice of Mass in the royal chapel, she forbade the priest to display the sacred host, as is customary. Finally, she ordered for the bones of a concubine, exhumed from a dunghill, to be placed in the sepulchre of St Frithuswith and mixed with the holy ashes, with the addition of the epigraph: ‘Here lie religion and superstition.’²⁸

Concluding his initial attack with ‘these are the shameless lies that first slight my soul in this elogy’, he went on to single out a phrase used by Acontius to address the Queen of England—‘I cannot bear the expression “To the Divine Elizabeth” in any shape or form’—and ask somewhat indignantly: ‘so with what insolence or (to put it better) with what impudence did Jacob [...] dare to attribute such a holy title to she who has never been holy in any way and lives an execrable life?’²⁹ After these ‘brief allusions’ to the author’s dedication to the Queen of England, Girolamo Savignano started his reflection on the main part of the text. Commenting ironically on its title, he insinuated that the effect of the work was exactly opposite of what Acontius had hoped for:

Although Jacob states that he wants to reveal some of Satan’s tricks, he has actually constructed some new ones himself; he says that he understands how to avoid Satan’s traps wisely, but—even worse than Satan—he himself speciously lays some new ones in order to entrap people with a single word.

In other words, wrote the censor, ‘these are not the Satan’s stratagems in terms of intention (as the schools say) but in terms of effect’.³⁰ As the length and complexity of the work did not allow him ‘to proceed by examining individual passages (which would be extremely long and boring)’, he chose to select a few and group them into three chapters. In the first of these, he undertook to collect all the passages in which the author used ‘the good and just cause as a pretext by feigning’. The second chapter was dedicated to statements that misled readers ‘purely through deceit, but with refined artifice’, while the third section focused on parts where Acontius’s impiety emerged more explicitly and directly. This way of selecting Acontius’ passages allowed Savignano to present the author

of Satan's Stratagems as a professional deceiver who was sometimes able to dissimulate his heresy but otherwise ended up with showing 'the full extent of his great impiety and unleashes it wickedly and quite openly'.³¹

The censor started by discussing those 'good and just' issues advocated by Acontius, not without specifying that, according to his personal interpretation, those 'good and just causes' were expressions of Acontius' way to confuse and deceive the reader.³² Acontius rightly complained about 'the burning desire and unbridled passion to print books' by labelling it 'an all-too-common sin of our time'. The perverse effect of this thirst to publish was that 'as many have nothing of their own to print and publish, they limit themselves to rewriting and recycling other people's content, thereby doing what has already been done'. The only result of this was that they 'illustrate them badly', undoubtedly less effectively than those who came before them.³³ On this occasion, Savignano had no difficulty in sharing a position set out by the Congregation of the Index in very similar terms some years before. The wish 'that there would be no printing for many years to come', expressed in the mid-1570s by an official worried about the Congregation's difficulty in keeping track of the ever-increasing number of books to ban and expurgate,³⁴ had translated over the years into the explicit call to 'use great caution in the publication of books'³⁵ voiced by Agostino Valier, one of its most influential members.

In keeping with this reasoning, Acontius had levelled a precise accusation against the 'modern exegetes of the Holy Scriptures', saying that they 'often weave together new interpretations when explaining a single verse and agglomerate everything that they have written down in their notes whether it is appropriate or not'. The most blatant example of this approach was 'the only epistle to the Romans, which not only seems to feature, so to speak, more commentary than words, but also commentary [...] which often contains a certain amount of bran, but little or no flour'. At least at first glance, Acontius also seemed to be moving in the right direction by condemning the high rate of religious conflict and controversy at the time: 'when contesting the opinions of others or even stamping out their errors, he exhorts us to steer well clear of insults'. Exchanging personal insults inevitably gave rise to a spiral of verbal violence and mutual hatred that was hard to break to return to an ideal of peace and harmony:

He tells us not to suffuse anyone's opinions with bitterness and, above all, to do this even less with people. In most cases, if you have offended someone with a barbed comment, even if it is a minor one, he will be upset and

vexed: he will therefore not see you as his friend any more, but will instead insult you as an enemy. So see what advantage you can hope to obtain if you have instigated spiritual wars, when instead you should have harvested the fruits of harmony of opinion and peace!³⁶

Acontius's criticisms of shepherds of souls highlighting their weaknesses and inability to act as moral examples for the Christian community also initially came across as convincing just causes to embrace:

He harshly admonishes the shepherds of souls on more than one occasion for the fact that they are no better than all the others in setting an example of virtue as a lone beacon shining and burning, because, after they themselves have spilt the salt [of discord or sin], we no longer have any way to prevent [...] the putrefaction of sin and the flesh. He says that it is no wonder that in fact the pastoral attire does not always adorn the heads of the most worthy people; when elected, those chosen to be shepherds often not only suck out the milk, but also sheer the sheep or even skin them.³⁷

Finally, the censor came to the analysis of the 'plots the evil Demon hatches for our ruin' in the eighth book of *Satan's Stratagems*. Acontius's reflection about the 'passages' used by Satan to conquer the soul of man was so extensive and detailed 'that there is practically no teaching left on this matter that Augustine, Bernard, Ambrose and the other saints can impart'.³⁸ Here Savignano displayed his first clear signs of impatience.

For Girolamo Savignano, all these 'just and good causes' were no more than 'artifices' devised by the author 'in an underhand manner' to deceive readers, 'just as the prince of darkness often purports to be dressed in light'. He summed it up as 'deceitfulness [...] by which Jacob feigns his faith and adhesion to the good cause'. The censor felt that drawing these few examples to the attention of the Congregation of the Index would make it clear that Acontius used 'our limbs against us, so that a deeply internal war is waged and we stop persecuting the enemy because we are too busy fighting amongst ourselves'. While this was the most malevolent hypothesis that Savignano formulated, the most benevolent theory had it that 'he now nourishes us with the exterior beauty of things, so that we end up languidly entrapped, captured [...] since beauty has often tightened the chains of the soul'.³⁹ However, Savignano must have been aware of the interpretative weakness (and fantasy) of this censorial attack, as he found himself obliged to conclude the first chapter

by referring its influential readers to the more persuasive observations in his 'second chapter': 'so that those who have only read these passages from his work do not think that they are holding an elegy (if that is the right term), just continue leafing through Jacob's work'.

The consultor of the Index therefore intended to reveal the perfidy of the work gradually, showing at the same time that the most dangerous elements lay also (but not only) in the author's ability to conceal his redoubtable arguments behind the guise of a cogent religious reflection on the evils of the time. This was why he decided to construct his 'censorial discourse' in pyramid form, moving from the author's most innocuous statements to his sharpest and most explicit arguments, with an intermediate stage (the 'second chapter') focusing on the pages 'in which our author starts to inflict his poison, although he does it shrewdly and in a golden cup (so it can be drunk more sweetly)'.

Savignano selected two points to show the Congregation of the Index the way in which Acontius served his poison in a golden cup. The first of these concerned the key role attributed to the 'divine spirit' as an instrument of discernment in matters of faith, while the second concentrated on the related question—central to *Satan's Stratagems*—of a drastic reduction in the number of articles of faith needed to attain salvation. The censor outlined the terms of the first issue as follows:

In controversies regarding faith, when the matter is of primary importance and we are uncertain about what must and must not be believed, he wants to appoint the divine spirit as an arbitrator in the hope that it illuminates our hearts and reveals the truth with its light. This, he says, should be our constant prayer to him, the objective of our deepest and highest supplications.⁴⁰

The reference was clearly to the numerous pages in which Acontius recommended resolving religious controversies by abandoning the polemical spirit and personal attacks, and letting oneself be guided by inspiration from the divine spirit.⁴¹ The censor felt that the 'inherent untruth' of this position lay in the fact that the apparent orthodoxy of the statement concealed the dangers of a known doctrinal heresy. If the divine spirit was interpreted as 'the illuminations and inspirations of the Holy Spirit', as it was easy to imply, then it was not only 'an opinion shared by all theologians, but also by the Council Board at the sixth Tridentine session, Chap. 5, that every good believer is obliged to start his journey of faith and take his cue from the illumination and inspiration of the Holy

Spirit, which we call prevenient and operating grace'⁴²: 'therefore, this doctrine of Jacob's, illustrated in this way, is in all respects Catholic and absolutely truthful'. If, however, attention was turned to the underlying sense of the message, Savignano felt that there was an extraordinary concurrence between Acontius's positions and those of the most redoubtable Protestant heresiarchs. In this way, still somewhat surprisingly steeped in a 'militant' anti-Protestant culture, as if he had just emerged from a mid-sixteenth-century polemic, he listed the standard bugbears of a model Catholic controversialist one after the other in order to demonstrate a doctrinal overlap that would otherwise have been difficult to prove:

What else did Luther want to say in the preface to the 'Assertions concerning all articles', or Brenz in the 'Wittenberg Confession', in the chapter on the Holy Scriptures, or Calvin in book 4 of 'Institutes', in many sections of Chap. 9 (namely 8, 12 and 13) and Martin Kemnitz in his study of the fourth session of the Council of Trent; or even Philip Melancthon in his work 'Loci communes', in the chapter 'On the Church', where although he creates a lot of confusion, he is nevertheless in fairly open agreement with the others? What was the objective of all these men, I say, if not to turn to the spirit of each individual as the private judge of controversies in matters of faith?

Therefore, in the hands of his censor, the author of *Satan's Stratagems*—the champion of a religious proposition that had alarmed the main leaders of Protestant Europe—became a simple pseudo-Lutheran who desired nothing more than to teach 'the heresy of others in such a way as to try to deceive readers with a semblance of orthodoxy'. Savignano failed to understand the book's deep-rooted criticisms of the increasing rigidity in the Protestant Churches and their presumption of truth, just as he did not grasp the radical nature of a proposal that undermined the very idea of a constituted Church, preferring instead to take refuge in firmly consolidated controversialist issues that were more reassuring.

If we compare his case with other examples of seventeenth-century censors working on sixteenth-century texts—such as the late censors of Montaigne, who were forced to evaluate a work that was far from their mental and cultural universe and therefore offered a very different interpretation from the one provided by the first contemporary censors of the same text—it is easy to observe that the hands of Savignano's mental and cultural clock had stopped back in the mid-1500s.

As the accounts in Montaigne's *Journal de voyage* show, his book collection was seized when he entered the Papal State in November 1580

and the customs officers duly confiscated several suspect volumes, including a freshly printed copy of his *Essais*, which had just been approved by the Curia of Bordeaux, as required by the royal privilege granted to the book. In keeping with his prerogatives, Sisto Fabri, Master of the Sacred Palace, oversaw the inspection of these books that potentially constituted a threat to the integrity of the area under his jurisdiction. After 4 months, Fabri received Montaigne on the evening of 20 March 1581 to discuss the merits of his writings. A similar meeting took place a few weeks later on 15 April, once again in the presence of Giovan Battista Lanci, who was both Fabri's *socio* and the Secretary of the Congregation of the Index, having recently been appointed on 17 November 1580. Despite the informal nature of the meeting and the colloquial tone of the conversation, Montaigne was effectively presented with a censure of his main work; Fabri had previously submitted *Essais* to the attention of a trusted expert with proven language skills, who had duly provided him with a detailed list of censorial observations. The fact that the censure was conveyed orally must be seen as a mark of respect for a Catholic author universally esteemed in curial circles—it should be remembered that Montaigne was a frequent visitor to the Roman home of Cardinal De Pellevé, an influential member of the Congregation of the Index. However, this should not divert attention from the fact that it was a case of genuine expurgation; the Master of the Sacred Palace exhorted Montaigne to modify the content of certain affirmations by removing the most extreme expressions and toning down others. Montaigne seemed to understand exactly what was happening and took immediate steps to acknowledge the censorial observations by publishing an amended edition (in as early as 1582). He thereby achieved his objective and none of the indexes compiled over the following decade considered the incriminated work.

Montaigne's work was subjected to further censorial intervention by the Inquisitor of Ferrara, Giovanni Battista Scarella, in January 1600, but once again there were no consequences in terms of official prohibitions. Then, in the significantly different cultural and religious climate of 1675, Montaigne's work was again censured by the Congregation of the Index. On this occasion, the interpretation by one of its most trusted consultants, Antonio Gillio of the Order of Minors, moved the censorial focus away from the instances of pro-Lutheranism (among other things) that Fabri claimed to recognize in certain parts of the text towards the more libertine aspects of Montaigne's work. Gillio placed much more emphasis

on the danger of the work than Fabri had done almost a century beforehand, concentrating on its profligate, impious and heretical nature. He was clearly affected by the widespread circulation and strong influence of *Essais* in libertine, sceptical and Epicurean circles in the mid-seventeenth century and perhaps also influenced by the French Jansenist polemical writings that circulated widely on the Italian peninsula, which Gillio was also directly involved with in terms of censorial control. In the light of the Roman consulator's vitriolic critique, Montaigne's text was judged far more redoubtable in the second half of the seventeenth century than it had been by its contemporaries. Consequently, *Essais* was included on the Index for the first time the following year (1676).⁴³

It is clear that the case of Jacob Acontius has profoundly different characteristics. The Italian exile was not a Catholic author who was esteemed in curial circles and did not benefit from top Roman contacts who could protect him from unpleasant surprises. Furthermore, there was no chance that *Satan's Stratagems* could appear as an essentially innocuous text in the eyes of his contemporaries, as *Essais* had seemed to Sisto Fabri, apart from a few necessary corrections. The outcome of the sixteenth-century censure was quite different, with Michel de Montaigne privately exhorted to modify certain parts of his masterpiece and Jacob Acontius severely and officially condemned in the Index (1596) not only for *Satan's Stratagems*, but also for his entire published output. The theological knowledge of the two seventeenth-century consulators appointed to censure the texts was also radically different: while Antonio Gillio was a connoisseur of French culture, a long-term collaborator of the Index and the Inquisition who was perfectly able to assess the dangerous nature of Montaigne's text in the light of the form and manner of its contemporary European reception, the lesser known Girolamo Savignano was poorly equipped both in doctrinal terms and from a more general cultural point of view. It is true that the text he had to deal with had first been published almost a 100 years beforehand and therefore reflected issues and problems that dogged the previous century. However, beyond any comparisons with Montaigne's late censors, the point is that even if his censorial observations had been formulated in the previous century, they would have seemed misleading and biased, as their only aim was to demonstrate what had to be demonstrated, namely Acontius's Protestant heresy. It was certainly not the first time that such mechanisms had given body and substance to Catholic repressive responses: the entire religious history of the sixteenth century is punctuated by the Roman

Inquisition acting on the basis of *quod erat demonstrandum* in order to group the different complex elements of Italian heterodoxy together in a single reassuring category. A century after the first edition of the text and, above all, a century after the most ardent period of the fight against Protestantism, it might have been reasonable to expect the seventeenth-century censor of *Satan's Stratagems* to be more critically detached and have greater discernment skills. Instead, he limited himself to using the old controversialist arsenal—Johannes Driedo, Johann Cochlaeus, Stanislaus Hosius, the Tridentine decrees and, of course, Bellarmine—as if nothing had happened or changed over the course of a century:

I said that this is a true heresy and I will not waste any further time demonstrating it, as all the controversialists agree with me: Johannes Driedo, book 2, Chap. 3 of 'Dogmas of the Church', Johann Cochlaeus in the book 'On the Authority of the Church and Scripture', the Cardinal of Warmia in 'Against Brenz's prolegomena', books 2 and 3,⁴⁴ and others including Cardinal Bellarmine who in the 'first General Controversy', book 3, Chap. 3, labels it as not just any heresy, but the source of all heresies; this can also be seen in the fourth session of the Council of Trent in the decree 'Edition and use of sacred texts', where it is stipulated that the Church must be followed in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures without resorting to any personal inspiration.⁴⁵

Savignano found the same 'inherent untruth' that he unearthed in Acontius' reflections on the 'illuminations and inspirations of the Holy Spirit' in the second of the two points that he focused on, namely the places where Acontius showed 'that there are few articles of the Christian faith that each believer has to believe in'. According to the censor, by affirming that 'only a few of the articles need to be believed in as an indispensable means of salvation',⁴⁶ Acontius 'misuses this doctrine that is true and Catholic through too much deceit'. Savignano wrote that from the time of St Thomas onwards, everyone admitted 'that the only thing necessary as an indispensable means of salvation [...] is having substantiated faith both in the Holy Trinity and Christ the Saviour, and there is no need for faith in other articles apart from the preparation of the spirit'. The only condition laid down by 'St Thomas and others', according to Savignano, was that each individual should have shown readiness to give faithful approval to any article submitted to him in an appropriate manner. Instead, the shameless and perfidious Acontius had twisted the meaning of this kind of statement. While hiding behind the

appearance of an orthodox Catholic doctrine, he had drawn radically different conclusions that now left him exposed to Savignano's accusations of heresy:

Oh what shameless perfidy! As if there were really no difference between being allowed not to have faith in any of the other things without blame and being allowed to deny them without being at fault. It is true that one could be wholly innocent in the former case, inasmuch as all the other articles might well not have been presented to us and therefore cannot demand any faith from us. However, the latter affirmation is by its very definition full of the most evil wickedness. Indeed, of course no one can deny that by repudiating the truth of an article adequately explained, he will also repudiate the same initial truth and the God that expresses it.⁴⁷

Here too, although the censor focused on the core issue, he failed to grasp the radical nature of the proposition. By continuing to treat Acontius anachronistically as a pseudo-Protestant, Savignano's censure produced the alienating effect of attributing him with a will to dissimulate or even a strategy of dissimulation. While this was true in the years surrounding his flight from Milan,⁴⁸ the line he took when he drafted his masterpiece was quite different. After all, at this later time he benefited from the personal protection of Elizabeth I and could even allow himself the luxury of adopting extremely troublesome positions within the London Reformed Churches without suffering the same harsh consequences that many of his colleagues and cohorts had to endure.

Moreover, in a paradoxical turn of events, Savignano was soon forced to contradict himself with regard to Acontius's supposed strategies of dissimulation, as the passages he examined in the 'third chapter' of his 'censorial discourse' totally undermined the foundations of the interpretation outlined in the previous two chapters. The pages 'in which the full extent of Jacob's impiety is revealed, no longer masked in any way but bare-faced and naked, and is shown completely in its entirety' removed any doubt over the openly anti-Roman nature of the work and ended up seriously calling into question the underlying assumption around which Savignano constructed his work.

The final pages of his censure focused on Acontius's most explicit passages about the Pope, the sacrifice of Mass, the sacrament of confession and good works. He wrote that Acontius denied the 'Roman pontiff' the right to 'promulgate new laws', thereby rejecting the legitimacy of his

temporal power following the Calvinist interpretation of a passage from the Gospel of Matthew.⁴⁹ Furthermore, as if this was not enough, he accused Acontius of depriving 'the pope of the authority to present anything as a new dogma of faith in which one must believe'.⁵⁰ The censor felt that it was not worth dwelling at length on these points, as 'they are too blatantly similar to Calvin and Luther', except to clarify that the passage from Matthew ('The kings of peoples command them, but for you it shall be different')⁵¹ wrongfully interpreted by Calvin (and in turn by Acontius) did not mean to ban 'civil power from combining with ecclesiastical power'. Instead, the intention was to

Beseech the heads of the Church, in the shape of the apostles, so that all those who are priests understand that they are not so much princes as shepherds and fathers; so that they position themselves as leaders of people not as secular authorities, but rather with a paternal and loving attitude.⁵²

With regard to 'the holy sacrifice of Mass', after claiming that 'he does not recognize the Eucharist as the true body and true blood of Christ the Lord, considering instead that it is only bread and only wine, which we worship through an execrable act of idolatry',⁵³ Acontius maintained that it 'is something abhorrent, an invention of Satan'.⁵⁴ He then dismissed the sacrament of confession as 'a political invention, contrived by Catholics [...] to invade all the most secret hiding places in the soul, to discover all the most secret tendencies and thereby provide the best help for running the State safely and effectively',⁵⁵ and branded good works 'most brazenly as profoundly useless and deeply superfluous'.⁵⁶ Although 'he certainly did not reach such levels of madness as to call them all mortal sins, as done by Luther [...], Calvin [...] and other heretics', he nevertheless 'considers them to be typical traits of the supporters of the Antichrist'.⁵⁷ Regarding this last point, the censor blamed Acontius for a 'perfidious' argument that aimed to devalue the contribution made by works to the justification of man before God. He summarized it as follows, reducing it 'for the sake of brevity':

These two assertions which contradict each other and demolish one another, namely that our sins are forgiven and that we make up for our sins through good works. Therefore, if we decide to recognize the first assertion, we must repudiate the second one: as a result, there will no longer be any justifying force in good works.⁵⁸

By stretching Acontius's arguments—as the censor did in the biased summary provided for the cardinals of the Index—it was easy for Savignano to reply that by distinguishing between guilt and punishment, as it was right to do, 'nothing can now prevent a sin from being remitted and forgiven thanks to Christ, the saviour of humankind, and that our works also have some validity as punishment, in some way they redeem us'.⁵⁹

It was only at the end of this long and sometimes rambling journey through the pages of *Satan's Stratagems* that the censor finally grasped—and reported to the Index—the core of Acontius's proposal, the point that had provoked strict English Presbyterians such as Cheynell and many other orthodox Calvinists before him, and at the same time inspired Independents and sectarians who championed religious tolerance like John Goodwin: 'but please let us put an end to all this heap of Jacob's errors and wickedness with a completely new sin, the worst of all'. He promptly explained what this 'sin' was:

He not only earned himself the attribution of being branded a heretic, but also a true heresiarch, the head and master of heresies, establishing a new confession of faith, a new symbol, putting it forward as a universal Creed. In this symbol, in this Confession, apart from a few things, the other things regarding the Trinity of divine persons, the divine Word made human flesh, Judgement and Hell are entrusted to the will of each individual, so that they are either believed or repudiated at will, as can be seen in the cited passage, which deals with this at exceedingly great length; and often inculcated at favourable opportunities in the previous books.⁶⁰

The 'Creed' formulated by Acontius in the wake of the prolific legacy of Erasmus of Rotterdam, Sebastian Castellio and Bernardino Ochino had reduced the essential articles required to attain salvation to a minimum.⁶¹ Although this had led to serious accusations of Arminianism, anti-Trinitarianism and Socinianism from the most passionate Protestant controversialists throughout Europe over the preceding decades, Savignano dealt with this in a few concluding lines of his 'censorial discourse', merely informing the competent authorities that this was Acontius's 'worst sin'. The chasm separating Savignano's—and indeed the Congregation's—mental universe from the vibrant world of Europe at the time can be seen just as much in the flat terse prose he employed

to signal Acontius's radical proposal as in the anti-Protestant rhetoric he adopted at length to address frequently marginal aspects of the work. In other words, the sterile and detached censorial observation about such a central and topical aspect of Acontius's proposition reflected an unbridgeable gap between the cocooned rooms of the Vatican and the dynamic reality of seventeenth-century Europe: a reality where such ideas were an integral part of the daily political and religious struggle, forcefully placed centre stage by the leading players in the doctrinal conflict of the time.

According to the surviving documentation held in the archives of the Holy Office, the censure drafted by Girolamo Savignano and his request for the book to be punished 'with a penalty equal to the others'⁶² had no direct consequences. No new decree of prohibition was issued by the Congregation over the following months and years. The censure in the 1596 Index remained in force and there was no actual need to reissue a new prohibition.

This document is therefore a testament to the backwardness of the analytical tools used by the Roman censors. They had failed to move on from their pivotal conflict with Protestant culture and its Italian offshoots in the sixteenth century, as if frozen in their moment of greatest glory and maximum expression, incapable of following the development of events and updating their instruments to the requirements of religious and political cruxes that had little in common with those of the previous century.

NOTES

1. J.M. De Bujanda, *Index des livres interdits*, vol. 10: *Thesaurus de la littérature interdite au XVIe siècle: auteurs, ouvrages, éditions avec addenda et corrigenda* (Centre d'études de la Renaissance, Editions de l'Université de Sherbrooke), Geneva 1984–2002, 50.
2. Cf. at least the essays collected in R. Savelli, *Censori e giuristi. Storie di libri, di idee e di costumi (secoli XVI–XVII)*, Milan 2011.
3. This procedure is mentioned in E. Belligni, 'Sentenza e condanna postuma di Marcantonio de Dominis', *Il Pensiero politico*, 33, 2000, 265–294, esp. 268–269.
4. G. Fragnito, 'Diplomazia pontificia e censura ecclesiastica durante il regno di Enrico IV', *Rinascimento*, 42, 2002, 143–167, esp. 151–156.
5. 'Molto reverendo padre, questi miei illustrissimi signori della sacra congregazione dell'Indice, vedendo che di giorno in giorno va sempre più

crescendo il numero de' libri infetti e perniziosi che specialmente nelle parti straniere, e più che altrove in Francfort, si stampano e si vendono, già che permette Dio, per gli peccati, che non si possi rimediare che colà né si vendino né si stampino, hanno pensato di ovviare almeno che simil peste de' libri non infetti queste nostre parti d'Italia.' The letter continued by exhorting Italian booksellers 'not to buy or request any books except those included on the list by Valentino [Leucht]', who had been specially appointed to draw up a list of safely orthodox Catholic volumes (cf. the letter in A. Rotondò, 'La censura ecclesiastica e la cultura', in R. Romano and C. Vivanti (coordinators), *Storia d'Italia*, V, *I documenti*, 2, Turin 1399–1400).

6. On the two works cf. Ch. 2.
7. 'In this way, therefore, a report was written about one of the two books, entitled *Dialogue of Giacomo Riccamati of Ossana, which reveals the trickery through which Lutherans strive to deceive simple people and attract them to their sect and shows the path that princes and magistrates should maintain to eradicate the plague of heresy from their states. Interlocutors Riccamati and Muzio*. The Most Illustrious Lords ordered the book to be prohibited' ('Ita facta relatione per eundem alterius libri, cui titulus Dialogo di Giacopo Riccamati Ossanese, nel quale si scuoprono le astutie con che i lutherani si sforzano di ingannare le persone semplici et tirarli alla lor setta, et si mostra la via che havrebbero a tenere i Prencipi et Magistrati per istirpar dagli stati loro le pesti dell'heresie. Interlocutori il Riccamati et Mutio D. Ill.mi DD. mandarunt prohiberi'); ACDF, Indice, I (Diarii), II, c. 204r: Congregation of 23 November 1620, with the participation of Cardinal Bellarmine and Cardinals Giovanni Garzia Millini, Roberto Ubaldini, Scipione Cobelluzzi (Cardinal of Santa Susanna), and Luigi Capponi, 'and certainly also the Most Reverend master of the Sacred Palace' ('nec non est Reverendissimo Magistro Sacri Palatii').
8. ACDF, Indice, Protocolli CC, cc. 305r–306r.
9. 'Tituli quidem speciosi sunt, et prima fronte, hos est primis pagellis pietate preciferunt, sed ex omnibus libris quos haeretici ad decipiendos incaute ediderunt, nullum ego pestiferum magis aut magis perniciosum esse iudico' (ibid., c. 305r).
10. 'Dialogus mirabili artificio ad luteranimum quasi mane lectorem ducit, et interim haeresis in incautas mentes instillat. Papam docet esse Antichristum fo. 13 et 15. Scripturam omnibus patere fo. 20, esse audiendos haereticos eorumque libros legendos deinde iudicandum de vera religione ex scriptura et proprio intellectu, nec interim curandum quid pontifices sub anathemate vetent, fo. 22 et 23, reliqua ne legere quidem volui cum haec ad librum haereseos, et quidem primariae convincendum sufficere possint' (ibid., c. 305r).

11. 'Altera pars doctrinae seu potius amentiae luteranae compendium inscriptum deberet, habet indicem manuscriptum operi prefixum in quo errores pro veritatibus notant, in Romanum Pontificem blasphematur fo. 33 et 89, reliquas haereses non est opus referre' (ibid., cc. 305r-v).
12. 'Illud addiderim censi et merito posse libri dominum esse haereticum tum quod librum illud apud se habuerit, tum quod in fine libri scriptum epigramma reperiatur quod si recto ordine legatur Pontificem laudat si a fine ad principium, iusto et epigrammate, eunde vituperat, quam sententiam italicis et artificio complexus est' (ibid., c. 305v).
13. De Bujanda, *Index des livres interdits*, vol. 11: *Index librorum prohibitorum 1600-1966*, 50.
14. The complete title of the edition is *Stratagematum Satanae libri octo Iacobo Acontio autore, editio novissima*, Amsterdam 1652 (hereinafter referred to as edn 1652). For the last English edition of 1654, cf. Ch. 3. There were also two editions in the 1660s: a 1660 Flemish edition and an edition published in Amsterdam in 1664, *chez Jean Ravestein*; cf. *Nouvelles de la Republique des lettres*, vol. 24, Amsterdam 1716, 556. It was not the first and would not be the last edition of the work in seventeenth-century Europe, which was under constant pressure from wrenching religious conflict.
15. 'Editio novissima Amsteledami apud Joannem Ravesteynium anno 1652', 'libellus cui titulus Stratagematum Satanae libri octo Jacobo Acontio autore'; ACDF, Indice, serie I, Diarii, V (1650-1654), c. 25v: feria 3.a, die 21 Aprilis 1654.
16. For a few basic biographical details about Girolamo Savignano, who died in Rome on 12 December 1667, cf. G. Cinelli Calvoli, *Biblioteca volante...*, edit. 2a, Venice 1734-1747, IV, 210; G. Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, Bologna 1759-1760, VII, 331; J. Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi Societatis Iesu 1641-1740*, Rome 1990, IV, 40; J. Wicki, 'Die Jesuiten-Beichtväter in St. Peter, Rom, 1569-1773', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 56, 1987, 83-115, esp. 106; and, above all, C. Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Paris and Brussels 1898, VII, col. 677.
17. ARSI, *Ital.* 9, c. 68.
18. *Sponsus sanguinum sive Christi cum cruce connubia. Oratio habita in Parasceve ad Sanctissimum D. N. Urbanum Octavum*, Rome 1635; also subsequently reprinted in *Orationes quinquaginta de Christi Domini morte habitae in die sancto Parasceves a Patribus Societatis Iesu in Pontificio sacello*, Rome 1641, 418-426.
19. Two manuscripts by Savignano about physics and logic mentioned by Sommervogel can probably be attributed to his teaching at the

- Roman College during this period (cf. Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, VII, col. 677).
20. The Roman Archive of the Company of Jesus holds three Roman letters sent to him in his capacity as rector of the College of Penitentiaries of St Peter in the Vatican. The first of these, dated 2 December 1660 and signed by the Father Provincial of the Company, Fabio Albergati, concerns the measures to be taken when nuns visited monasteries (ARSI, *Epp. Gen. Rom.*, v. 5 (I), 1658–1672, cc. 27r–v). The second letter is from the General of the Company, Goswin Nickel, dated 11 April 1661 (ibid., cc. 29r–v) and the third is from the Vicar General Giovanni Paolo Oliva, from Rome, 10 December 1661, essentially a copy of the missive he sent to Fabio Albergati on the subject of preachers (ibid., cc. 40r–v e 41v).
 21. One of the first pieces of evidence of his work as an internal censor for the Order is dated 13 March 1646 ‘ex collegio romano’, when Girolamo Savignano wrote to the top echelons about *Leo philosophus* by Giovanni Battista Giattini, which he had examined, saying that he had not found any statement against the ‘holy doctrine’ and ‘good morals’ in its pages (ARSI, *Fondo gesuitico, Censurae librorum*, 667 (1645–1649), c. 493r; on Giattini, cf. the entry by C. Preti, DBI, v. 54, 2000). Another short document with a similar tone can be dated to the spring of 1653 (ARSI, *Fondo Gesuitico, Censurae librorum*, 668 (1650–1654), c. 107r).
 22. The first documented reference to his work as a censor is on 23 February 1650 (‘prima vice’; ACDF, *Indice, Diari*, IV, c. 87r).
 23. *Censura in dissertationem iuridico-politicam domini Caroli Calà de contrabannis clericorum*, ACDF, *Protocolli HH*, cc. 298r–301v; on Carlo Calà, cf. the biographical entry by A. Mazzacane in DBI, v. 16, 1973; for the decree of censure, cf. De Bujanda, *Index librorum prohibitorum, 1600–1966*, 181.
 24. ACDF, *Protocolli HH*, cc. 469r–v, 469a r–v, 470r–v; on Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa, cf. the entry by E. Stumpo in DBI, vol. 36, 1988, and, more recently, A. Merlotti, ‘Le nobiltà piemontesi come problema storico-politico: Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa tra storiografia dinastica e patrizia’, in A. Merlotti (ed.), *Nobiltà e Stato in Piemonte. I Ferrero d’Ormea. Atti del Convegno, Torino-Mondovì (2001)*, Turin 2003, 19–56, esp. 21, 28–31, 33 s., 37–40, 45 s., 48, 53; on Malabalia, see the entry by N. Calapà in DBI, vol. 67, 2007.
 25. *Censura contro gli otto libri dell’opera di Giacomo Aconcio, intitolata ‘Gli Stratagemmi di Satana’, alla quale è annessa l’epistola del medesimo Giacomo indirizzata a Johannes Wolf di Zurigo*, ACDF, *Indice, Protocolli HH*, cc. 132r–137v; cf. Appendix B.

26. Ibid., c. 132r; cf. Appendix B.
27. Ibid., cc. 132r–v; cf. Appendix B.
28. Ibid., c. 132v; cf. Appendix B.
29. Ibid., c. 133r; cf. Appendix B.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., c. 133r; cf. Appendix B.
32. Girolamo Savignano said that he had taken these arguments from the first three books of *Satan's Stratagems* (ibid.).
33. Ibid., cc. 133r–v; cf. Appendix B.
34. Letter from a functionary in the office of the Master of the Sacred Palace, 1575, cited in A. Rotondò, 'Nuovi documenti per la storia dell'Indice dei libri proibiti', *Rinascimento*, n.s., 3, 1963, 145–211, quotation on 157.
35. The reference is naturally to *De cautione adhibenda in edendis libris*, the title of his booklet dedicated to Cardinal Antoniano that remained unpublished until the beginning of the eighteenth century. On this text and its author, besides Rotondò, 'La censura ecclesiastica e la cultura', quotation on 1439, see also G. Cipriani, *La mente di un inquisitore. Agostino Valier e l'opusculum 'De cautione adhibenda in edendis libris'*, Florence 2009. For contextualization of these statements, see G. Caravale, 'Libri proibiti, libri suggeriti. Considerazioni su illetterati e censura nell'Italia della prima età moderna', in G. Dall'Olio, A. Malena and P. Scaramella (eds.), *Per Adriano Prosperi*, vol. 1: *La fede degli italiani*, Pisa 2011, 183–189, and G. Caravale, 'Illiterates and Church Censorship in Late Renaissance Italy', in M.J. Vega and I. Nakládalová (eds.), *Reading and Guilt in XVIth Century Europe*, Barcelona 2012, 93–106.
36. *Censura contro gli otto libri*, c. 133v; cf. Appendix B.
37. Ibid., c. 133v; cf. Appendix B.
38. Ibid., c. 134r; cf. Appendix B.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid. The censor indicated at least two points in which Acontius put forward this claim: 'book 2, p. 83 and book 4, p. 190' (ibid.). See the corresponding passages in the 1652 edition on pp. 83 and 190.
41. Cf. Ch. 2.
42. *Censura contro gli otto libri*, c. 134r; cf. Appendix B. Therefore, as the Council of Trent had reiterated: 'it is good that the grace of the Holy Spirit must be implored in order to have the will to believe, thanks to which through pious affection (as the theologians say) approval can be imposed on our will, also with regard to this article, and our mind can be conquered by the obedience of faith' (ibid.).
43. On the Montaigne case, besides the essential essay by J.-R. Armogathe and V. Carraud, 'Les Essais de Montaigne dans les archives du

Saint-Office', in J.-L. Quantin and J.-C. Waquet (eds.), *Papes, princes et savants dans l'Europe Moderne. Mélanges à la mémoire de Bruno Neveu*, Geneva 2007, 79–96; the classic study by M. Smith, *Montaigne and the Roman Censors*, Geneva 1981; and P. Godman, *The Saint as Censor: Robert Bellarmine between Inquisition and Index*, Leiden, Boston, MA, and Cologne 2000, 44–47 and 339–342, see also the extensive and detailed updated work by S. Ricci, *Inquisitori, censori, filosofi sullo scenario della Controriforma*, Rome, 2008, 99–220, as well as, with particular reference to the 1676 censure, S. Ricci, 'La censura romana e Montaigne. Con un documento relativo alla condanna del 1676', ed. C. Fastella, *Bruniana e Campanelliana*, 15(1), 2008, 59–78.

44. S. Hosius, *Contra prolegomenon Brentii*, Cologne 1558.
45. *Censura contro gli otto libri*, cc. 134v–5r; cf. Appendix B.
46. Ibid., c. 135r; cf. Appendix B. The censor took the quotation from Book III, 106 (ibid.; cf. edn 1652, 106).
47. Ibid., cc. 135r–v; cf. Appendix B.
48. Cf. Ch. 2.
49. *Censura contro gli otto libri*, c. 136r; cf. Appendix B.
50. Ibid., c. 136v; cf. Appendix B.
51. The exact reference in the Gospel of Matthew has not been identified, but there is a very similar passage in the Gospel of Luke: 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them [...] But ye shall not be so' (Luke 22: 25–26).
52. *Censura contro gli otto libri*, cc. 136r–v; cf. Appendix B.
53. Ibid., c. 136v; cf. Appendix B. The censor quotes from Book III, 116 (ibid.; cf. edn 1652, 116).
54. Ibid., c. 136v; cf. Appendix B.
55. Ibid.; cf. Appendix B. The censor quotes from Book VI, 278 (ibid.; cf. edn 1652, 278).
56. Ibid.; cf. Appendix B. The censor quotes from Book III, 94 (ibid.; cf. edn 1652, 94).
57. Ibid.; cf. Appendix B. The censor quotes from Book IV, 158 (ibid.; cf. edn 1652, 158).
58. Ibid., c. 137r; cf. Appendix B. The censor quotes from Book VII, 318 (ibid.; cf. edn 1652, 318).
59. Ibid., c. 137v; cf. Appendix B.
60. Ibid., c. 137v; cf. Appendix B; the censor quotes from Book VII, 323 (ibid.).
61. Cf. Ch. 2.

62. 'Therefore, I can state without hesitation what must be thought of this work by Jacob Acontius containing the eight books of "Satan's Stratagems" and also the epistle addressed to Johannes Wolf of Zurich and the way in which the work must be censured: it reeks of heresy, presenting and proclaiming a heresiarch. May it be considered as such and punished with a penalty equal to that of the others' (*Censura contro gli otto libri*, c. 137v; cf. Appendix B).

FOREWORD TO THE APPENDICES

The following documents have been divided into two appendices. Appendix A features a transcription of the pages written about Jacob Acontius and his *Satan's Stratagems* by the Presbyterian controversialist Francis Cheynell, with pp. 34–39 of Chap. 4 of his work *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme together with a plaine Discovery of a desperate Designe of Corrupting the Protestant Religion, whereby it appears that the Religion which hath been so violently Contended for (by the Archbishop of Canterbury and his adherents) is not the true pure Protestant Religion, but an Hotchpotch of Arminianisme, Socinianisme and Popery: it is likewise made evident, that the Atheists, Anabaptists, and Sectaries so much complained of, have been raised or encouraged by the doctrines and practises of the Arminian, Socinian and Popish Party* (London, printed for Samuel Gellibrand, 1643; see British Library, E.103.14). This is followed by a transcription of pp. 439–461 of another work by Cheynell entitled *The Divine Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or, The blessed doctrine of the three coessentiall subsistents in the eternall Godhead without any confusion or division of the distinct subsistences or multiplication of the most single and entire Godhead acknowledged, beleaved, adored by christians, in opposition to pagans, jewes, mahumetans, blasphemous and antichristian hereticks, who say they are christians, but are not declared and published for the edification and satisfaction of all such as worship the only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all three as one and the self same God blessed for ever* (London, printed by T.R. and E.M. for

Samuel Gellibrand, 1650; see British Library, 4225.a.15). These pages include (pp. 453–457) the full text of the censure report on *Satan's Stratagems* that Cheynell presented to the Westminster Assembly of Divines on 8 March 1647 as Chairman of the Committee appointed to examine the work. The text has been transcribed according to essentially conservative criteria, with intervention limited to updating punctuation and use of capital letters, as well as writing abbreviated terms in full. The notes identify the people, works and historical contexts mentioned in the body of the text. Marginalia have not been transcribed in order to make the text as reader-friendly as possible.

Appendix B contains a translation of the original Latin text of the censure of *Satan's Stratagems* written by the Jesuit consultor Girolamo Savignano on behalf of the Congregation of the Index in the mid-seventeenth century, which is currently held at the Archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome (ACDF, Indice, Protocolli HH, cc. 132r–137v). The document is not dated, but it was quite likely presented to the Congregation shortly after the consultor was entrusted with the assignment at a meeting on 21 April 1654 (ACDF, Indice, Diarii, V, 1650–1654, c. 25v). The annotated transcription of the original Latin text has been published in the original Italian version of this book (cf. G. Caravale, *Storia di una doppia censura. Gli Stratagemmi di Satana di Giacomo Aconcio nell'Europa del Seicento*, Pisa 2013, 196–221).

APPENDIX A

ENGLISH CENSURE

1. Cheynell, Francis, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme together with a plaine Discovery of a desperate Designe of Corrupting the Protestant Religion* [...] London, printed for Samuel Gellibrand, 1643

CHAP. IV. *Whether England hath been, or still is in Danger to be farther infected with Socinianisme.*

/p. 34/Farther infected I say, for it is too evident that it hath been in some measure already infected with this pestilent heresie. I know the Archbishop of *Canterbury* did pretend to crush this cockatrice of *socinianisme*,¹ but all things being considered, it is to be feared that his canon was ordained for concealing, rather than suppressing of *socinianisme*; for he desired that none but his own party should be admitted to the reading of *socinian* books, it was made almost impossible for any that were not of his party, to take the degree of *Batchelour of Divinity* (I can say more in that point then another) or at least improbable they should have means to pay a groat a sheet for *socinian* books.

It is well known that the *Arch-Bishop* did highly favour, and frequently employ men shrewdly suspected for *socinianisme*. Master *Chillingworth*,² to speak modestly, hath been too patient, being so deeply charged by *Knot* for his inclining towards some *socinian* tenets³: no man in *Saint Ieromes* opinion ought to be patient in such a a case, and sure no innocent man would be patient. Mr. *Chillingworth* hath not yet answered—*Christianity*

maintained. The *protestants* doe not own many of those principles which are scattered in Master *Chillingworths* book, and *Knot* could observe that he proceeded in a destructive way, just as the *socinians* doe. The *reformed Churches* abroad wonder that we could finde no better a *champion* amongst all our worthies; they who travailed hither out of forrain parts blessed themselves when they saw so much froath and grounds; so much *arminianisme* and vanity in Master *Chillingworths* admired peece: What doth it advantage the *protestant* cause, if the Pope be /p. 35/ deposed from his infallible chair, and *Reason* enthroned that *socinianisme* may be advanced?

But I am afraid Doctor *Potter* may take it unkindly that I have named Master *Chillingworth* before him⁴; for his Grace employed Doctour *Potter* first, and he was cryed up as a *patrone* of the *protestant profession*, but he sowed his *calvinisme* with so much *arminian leaven*, and sweetned *popery* with some such gentle *scruples* of *Moderate Divinity* as they call it, that the *jesuites* laughed in their sleeves, and *Knot* was so pleasant that he could scarce refrain from laughing openly.

That these two great champions doe vent *arminian* principles is manifest to any man that hath but peeped into their books. Now that *arminianisme* is a fair step to *socinianisme* hath been sufficiently proved by *Bodecherus*,⁵ (though he hath been derided, he hath not been answered) *Peltius*,⁶ *Vedelius* and others,⁷ so that I need say no more in that point.

What art and care hath been used to propagate the *arminian* errours in *England*, would require a large volume, and I had laid open all their sleights and projects (had not my bookes and notes been seised on) to the full: God may give me opportunity to say something to that point yet before I finish my course.

The Church of *Scotland* complains of his Grace,⁸ for he first protected *Wederburn*,⁹ when he fled from *Scotland* for fear of the Church-censures, because this *Wederburn* had poysoned the young students in Divinity with *arminianisme* in the new Colledge at Saint *Andrews*; his Grace made the same *Wederburn* bishop of *Dumblane*, that so he might be dean of the Kings Chappell, and vent all his *arminian* errours in the *Royall Chappell*, in despite of all the *presbyteries*. /p. 36/ Then his Grace chose out 24. Royall Chaplaines, such as were most likely to preach the Deanes *arminian tenets* to the State when they saw that all preferment did run that way. I will not say any thing of Master *Sydserf*,¹⁰ Doctor *Forbes*,¹¹ &c. You may read the complaint at large in a book entitled *Ladens. Αυτοχαραχρισις*, or the *Canterburian self-conviction*.¹²

But that which did most mischief, was a large Declaration procured by his *Grace*, but sent in the *Kings name* into *Scotland*, in which their general Assembly was much condemned for passing any censure upon *Arminians*. Besides, his Grace had *two Scouts* in *Ireland*, the *Bishop of Derry*,¹³ and Doctour *Chappell*¹⁴: behold three Kingdomes infected at once with this deadly disease, by the *pestilent subtilty of one Arch-Bishop*.

But I shall make it appear that we have gone nearer to *Socinianisme* y et. *Acontius* was (as learned *Peltius* calls him) *clandestinus socinianorum assecla*; now I have wondred often what was the reason that *Acontius* was new printed in Oxford by Doctour *Potters* book-binder. Creature I might say, if I did affect the language of the times. They might as well have printed *Bonfinius*,¹⁵ for I finde him joyned with *Acontius*, they were both *sneaking socinians*, they followed *Socinus* just as *Nicodemus* followed *Christ*,¹⁶ by stealth & in the dark. *Iacobus Acontius & Bonfinius Socini clandestini asseclae*. Judicious and learned *Pareus* not long before his death writ a letter on the first of March, 1613. *ad N. N.* in which he expresseth himselfe after this manner. *Arminium vestrum sociniani in Polonia expresse ut suum nuper nominarunt, una cum quodam Bonfinio & Acontio clandestinis asseclis, quorum autoritate postularunt à fratribus orthodoxis fraternitatem, isti verò fortiter recusarunt. Acta ad me misit synodus lublinensis, cui nuper postridie natalis Domini respondi, &c.*¹⁷ *Pareus* was a man of a very peaceable disposition, willing to compose all differences which might fairely and honestly be compounded, as appeares by his *Irenicum*,¹⁸ and therefore his judgement is to be the more valued, but you see he doth not vent his own private opinion, but declares the judgement of the /p. 37/ synod; I beleieve that every impartiall reader will think this passage very considerable. The *socinians* have one principle which draws a great party after them of all heretikes, & sectaries. Nothing (say they) is fundamentally necessary to salvation but only faith or obedience to the commands of Christ, for they make faith & obedience all one, *ut supra*. Now *Acontius* was a great stickler in this point, and therefore learned *Peltius* saith, this opinion did open a wide gap to let in all heresies into the Church, and yet *Acontius* and the *socinians* thought nothing else fundamentall but obedience to Christs precepts; men might deny the Godhead of Jesus Christ, and almost any article of the christian faith, and yet be christians good enough in their conceit. *Nihilque tandem fore fundamentale praeter istud (scil. obedientiam mandatorum) ex mente Acontii & socinianorum positum*. See *Peltius* his *Epistle dedicatory*, prefixed before

his harmony.¹⁹ Well might *Acontius* his book be intitled *Stratagemata Satanae*: but sorry I am that Doctour *Potter* should be thought to have such an hand in publishing of it, that it was known in Oxford by the name of Doctour *Potters Stratagems*. I know *Acontius* doth in that book mince the matter, but the book is so much the more dangerous, and cannot but poyson young students more insensibly and irrecoverably. Besides *Acontius* his pretence of moderation and charity will work much upon men that understand not his *Stratagems*, they will conceive that he grew every day more moderate and more *accurate* also, and that he complied so far with the *Socinians* meerly out of a desire of peace. But though the book be close and dedicated to Queen *Elizabeth*, yet ever and anon he lets fall some hopes of being saved without the acknowledgement of those mysteries which the Church hath long held for necessary Articles of faith. *What did the man that was cured of the palsy beleeve? Why, (saith he) he did beleeve as it was fit, that that man who is called Iesus was from God, (mark he doth not say that he was God) and in favour with God, and hoped that he should be healed by him, and yet his sins were forgiven. Credebat enim ut par est hominem eum qui Iesus diceretur à Deo esse & apud eum gratiosum, itaque sperabat per eum sanitatem* /p. 38/ *se posse adipisci. Illa verò eum cognita etiam habuisse omnia quae diu pro articulis fidei Necessarys habuit Ecclesia quàm sit verisimile, cuique judicandum relinquo. Sunt & alia multa loca quae eòdem prorsus tendunt.*²⁰ Nay he conceives *Abraham* the Father of the faithfull to have been ignorant of those heads of divinity which we count *articles of faith*, fundamentall articles. *Abraham*, saith he, beleaved that he should have off-spring, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, that *Canaan* should be his, *Caeterum de religionis apicibus istis ignorare opinantur (scil. Reformati) fas non esse mirum est silentium quin, ipsum etiam Salutis mysterium per ejus semen Tecte admodum obscureque promittitur.*²¹ I put in (*scil. Reformati*) for doubtlesse it is a jerk at the reformed Churches, and so that passage fore-cited, *Ecclesia diu habuit*, is certainly a jerk for the *Nicene Fathers*, *Athanasius* and those ancients which required such a distinct confession of faith.²² You see he seems to leave it doubtfull whether *Abraham* did beleeve in *Christ* or no; these oblique passages and many such in his third book especially, doe shew what a good mind he had to favour them, who at that time about the year 1565. did call the *articles* of the *christian* faith into question. No marvaile if he wrote so warily when *Servetus* had been made such an example, in the year 1553.²³ Besides *Laelius Socinus* was now dead,²⁴

and *Faustus* not grown up to his maturity. *Sabellius* he saith was an *heretike* for saying that the Father did not differ from the Son,²⁵ but he is not so forward to call them heretikes who deny that the Son hath the same nature with the Father; he tells us that we must beleeeve Christ to be the Sonne of God, and to be made man, but he doth not presse us to beleeeve that Christ is God. We need not wonder at his moderation, when he is very tender even about *transubstantiation*, and unwilling to appear on either side. *Magna jamdudum fuit & vere tragica controversia de interpretatione verborum eorum: Accipite, hoc est corpus meum; non necesse est autem me hoc loco utrarum sim partium aperire, tantum catenus quidem utrarumque esse me profiteor, quod utrosque adveram Dei ecclesiam pertinere nihil prorsus dubitem*,²⁶ lib. 3, and a little after, *De verborum sententiâ lis est, non de veritate*²⁷: /p. 39/ this is an excellent device indeed to help off the grossest *heretikes*, and say that they only differ from us about the meaning of some places of Scripture. Christ saith he bids all come unto him that are heavy laden, and what saith he, will you of your own head say to any man that is comming to Christ, *Heus tu! frustra accedis qui hoc & illud non credas?*²⁸ But if you reply that *Acontius* hath not reckoned some points of religion which are of high concernment, and therefore you may safely tell a man unlesse he beleeeve them he cannot be saved; he hath endeavoured to prevent your reply by this excuse; *Si miraris inter ea quae recensuimus cognitu necessaria non numerari quosdam summo quamvis loco habitos Religionis apices, evolve diligenter, Examine* saith he *whether those high points could be known under the old Testament to the people of Israel, &c.*²⁹ This is just the *socinian device*, I will not trouble you any longer with the unsavory discourse of that *rotten author*, whose main Stratageme was a pretended moderation and feigned charity.

2. Cheynell, Francis, *The Divine Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or, The blessed doctrine of the three coessentiall subsistents in the eternall Godhead* [...], London, printed by T.R. and E.M. for Samuel Gellibrand, 1650

We must distinguish between *speculative atheists*, such as *libertines* and *enthusiasts* usually are; and *practical atheists*, such as sensuall men are known to be; for I am bold to call these hereticks atheists who deny the Son and Holy Ghost to be God after frequent instructions, and wholesome admonitions in coole blood and studied discourses; for I do not speak of such as talke vainly and blasphemously also in the heat of

disputation, or in a sudden paroxysme of temptation. But *he who doth upon mature deliberation, after the application* /p. 440/ *of so many gracious remedies* (with such meekness of wisdom as hath been said) *deny the Godhead of Christ* after it hath been made plaine to him, that if he hold this errour he doth overthrow the foundation of the christian faith, and deny the adequate object of evangelicall worship, because he doth but beleve in a creature, and so trust in an arme of flesh; and that he doth worship a meere creature, and therefore is an idolater; that a meere creature cannot satisfie the infinite justice of God for the sin of man, and consequently that we are not redeemed, and cannot be justified by Christ, if he be (as they blasphemously say he is) a meere man in glory; finally, that if *all his faith be carnall confidence, and all his worship idolatry*, it is impossible for him to be saved if he continue in that vaine faith and worship all his life.

Of such a man as this, who hath made a profession of christianity, and lived in an externall conformity, it is no breach of charity to say, *he is a subverted and self-condemned heretick, an apostate-idolater, blasphemer, &c.* and therefore we may safely reject him from christian communion, and deny all civill respect unto him: for it is to be feared he is of their strein who said, *Mat. 21. 38.* This is the heire, &c.

The princes and states of *Germany* in /p. 441/ their 100 grivances, *Erastus* and some others would have Church-censures passed upon hereticks,³⁰ apostates, &c. but they desired that profane persons and scandalous livers might be spared; a doctrine fit to be preached amongst *cyclopes*, men that have no sense or care of piety, a doctrine fit to usher in *atheisme*, or *poperie*. For they say the *pope* may be deposed for heresie, but not for a profane or scandalous life. *Grotius* on the other side,³¹ and some of his followers would have scandalous persons excommunicated, but those (whom the reformed Churches have convicted of heresie) spared. But I feare that there are too many in *England* who would have all the poyson of *Erastus* and *Grotius* put together in a directory for Church government, *that men might hold what they list, and live as they please.* What a strange syncretisme, what a promiscuous communion, what a Church shall I say, nay, what an hell would there be in such an atheisticall communion as these *mercuriall grandes* affect.

If we had but another *Cassander*,³² and another *Acontius* to compose a new confession of faith; another *Erastus*, and another *Grotius* to joine their malignity together to make a new directory for Church

government, the devill would then have good hopes to reigne visibly in *England* /p. 442/ in hereticall, profane, and scandalous combinations.

I beleeeve some may wonder to read what I write of *Acontius*; but those words did not fall as a blot upon the man from my running pen, and therefore I am ready for more reasons then one to give a faire and an ingenuous account of this deliberate and premeditated censure.

Acontius came forth of *Italy* (as *Alciate*, *Blandrate*, *Gribald*,³³ and both the *Socinus*'s, *Laelius*, and *Faustus* did) and lived in the time of *Socinus* the Elder and Younger also; the Elder *Socinus* died 1562. and printed nothing; about 3 years after his death, *Acontius* published his book of *Stratagems*, in which he gives the right hand of brotherly fellowship to the *socinians*. *When the followers of Socinus did begin to seduce, up starts Acontius and pleads for seducers*. When the arminians do enlarge the bounds of communion so far, as to take the *socinians* into christian communion, they constantly urge the authority of *Acontius* in their apology, and in their answer to the reverend professors of *Leyden*. *Acontius* thought fit to lay aside the ancient confessions of faith, and compose a new Creed, which *socinians* may subscribe. *He came into England under a faire pretence of being banished for Christs sake; but certainly his greatest danger was* /p. 443/ *of being called into question for his intimate confederacy with such as were no great friends to Iesus Christ. Indicious Pareus looked upon him as a sneaking solicitour for the socinians, and as fast a friend to them as Bonfinius himself. The learned professors of Leyden, Peltius,³⁴ *Videli*³⁵ *Voetius*,³⁶ *and a whole synode of discerning reformers, have set a brand upon him*. His book of *Stratagems* printed in the year 1565 was printed againe in the year 1610. And as I remember, in the year 1616, I find that he himself was living in the year 1613. In the year 1631 his book was printed here at *Oxford*, but generally condemned by such as were learned and orthodox at that time in this university; they thought it more fit for the fire, then the press.*

About the beginning of *March* 1647 there was some part of his *Stratagems* (translated into English) published in print at *London*; I confess I was amazed at it, but could not learne who was the translatour of it. We were at that time required to look after all books that were pernicious or dangerous. And I did complaine to the reverend *Assembly* sitting at *Westminster*, that there was such a book lately published, dedicated to both Houses of Parliament, to the Generall, and Lieutenant Generall of all the Forces raised for the defence of the Common-wealth, and recommended /p. 444/ to the Parliament, Army, and City as a book fit

to direct them how to distinguish truth from error in that juncture of time.

Moreover, the translator in his Epistle to the Parliament acknowledged, that *the book never endeavoured to speak English before; but if his essay did find acceptance, it was his intention to go in hand with the remaining books*, which all who have read, know, contains *the quintessence of those poisonous dregs which are in his third book* (now englished) *not so generally observed by unwary readers*. Whereupon the reverend Assembly chose a committee to peruse the book, and report their judgement of it to the Assembly with all convenient speed. Upon perusal of the book we found that the author was recommended by *Peter Ramus*,³⁷ but we did not much wonder at that.

1. Because the book is written with much art, and the malignity of it very closely couched.
2. There are many plausible pretences, faire insinuations, and divers religious expressions in it. The man was master of his passions as well as art, or else he had not been such an excellent agent and sollicitour in so bad a cause, and so compleat a /p. 445/ courtier as indeed he was.
3. *Acontius* spent a great part of his time in the study of the mathematicks, he was excellent in the art of fortification,³⁸ and therefore *Peter Ramus* might set the higher price upon him.
4. He hath many excellent passages which are of great use against the papists.

But that which we admired at, was, that a member of our own Assembly should recommend the book. It was therefore desired that Mr *Dury* might be added to that Committee.³⁹ When Mr *Dury* came amongst us, and saw that he had given too faire a testimony to that subtil piece, he dealt as ingenuously with us as we had dealt with him, and assured us that he would be ready to make his *retractation* as publike, as his recommendation had been made without his consent, because he clearly saw that they practised upon his passionate love of peace to the great prejudice of truth, and that he was meerly drawn in to promote a syncretisme beyond the orthodoxe lines of communication. For in all syncretisms and interimismes between protestants and papists, or between the *reformed*, and the *lutherans*, the socinians were ever banished out of the lines of christian communication. And therefore *Dr Voetius doth in*

the very same breath commend Mr /p. 446/ Dury sor leaving out the socinians in his proposals for peace, and condemn Acontius for taking of them into his syncretisme; his words are these,

Si percurrantur historiae, & sexcenti libelli (ut vocantur) pacifici (quorum catalogi editi cum consultatione Cassandri, & nuper cum libello Iohannis Duraei de pace ecclesiastica inter Evangelicos procuranda) non inuenies communi pace quae petitur, aut praetenditur, Anti-trinitanos comprehendi. Fidem etiam faciunt illa, quae anno 1635 socinianis in Polonia ad collationem de religione & oblita consilia pacis se offerentibus, unus & solus tractatus Acontii imprudentioribus nonnullis imposuit, &c. Dr Voet. *de necessitate & util. Trin.* pp. 494–495.⁴⁰

That acute and learned Divine doth in very many places set forth *Acontius* in his right colours,⁴¹ and saith the *arminians* made great use of him, and that he was but *one remove* from a socinian, or guilty of a socinian syncretisme at least, because he doth exclude the *sabellians* only, and doth not obscurely include the *photinians* within the compass of his catholike creed, *in which there is a snake lurkes, which doth not hisse, but sting*; for this moderate man /p. 447/ did never say, *that it was necessary for our salvation to know and beleeye that the Father, Son, and holy Ghost are one and the same God who is the only true God blessed for ever*. And yet it is his maine business and designe in his third book, which is now in English, and in his seventh, which I hope will never be englished, to shew *what are the only points necessary to be beleaved for the attainment of salvation*. But *Acontius* is not very modest when he comes to pass sentence upon the ancients who were rigidly orthodoxe, and faithfully severe in requiring men to beleeeve those grand articles of faith which are necessary to salvation. For when he discourses of the faith of the man sick of the palsie, he saith, *Credebat enim (ut par est) hominem eum qui Iesus diceretur, &c.*⁴² For he believed (*in all probability* saith the translatour) that that same man whose name was Jesus came from God, and was in favour with God; and therefore he hoped /p. 448/ that by this meanes he might recover his health. *But that he knew all those things which the Church hath for a long time accounted as articles of Faith necessary to be beleaved to salvation, how likely a matter it is, I leave it to every man to judge. There are likewise many other texts to the very same purpose.*

Concerning the faith of *Abraham* he speaks somewhat like an *arminian*, and an *anabaptist*, but concludes like a *socinian*, that *Abraham* did beleeeve

1. That he should be the Father of many nations.
2. That the nations should be happy by his seed.
3. Somewhat concerning the land of *Canaan*.⁴³

But (*saith he*) of those points of religion which it is judged every body is bound to know upon paine of damnation, we read not a word.⁴⁴ Yea, and the mystery of salvation it self by his seed is very closely and obceurely promised.

I know *Acontius* doth acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, and to be God, and so do the Socinians in some sense, as we have shewn: But then *Acontius* qualifies all with a pretty diversion.

Many things (*saith he*) may be reckoned up, which that we might be saved, ought both to be, and to be performed: As that our sins /p. 449/ were to be abolished, and that by a man void of all sin, and of infinite vertue and power, and he therefore to be the Son of God, yea, God and the like. *And then he presently mixes some things of lesse consequence, and concludes thus.*

Doubtless that it may evidently appeare to us that these things are likewise necessary to be known, either we must have a plaine text of Scripture that shall pronounce, *Whatsoever is necessary to be done, that also (to attain salvation) must necessarily be beleaved*. But there is no testimony of Scripture that I know which pronounces, *that what ever ought to be done ought to be beleaved*.

By this one taste you may plainly see, that though it should be granted necessary unto salvation, *that Christ should be God, abolish sin, &c.* yet *Acontius* will not grant *that this is necessary to be beleaved for the attainment of salvation*; and therefore he left it out of his catholick creed, and syncretisme, and yet condemns the sabellians, *who did not deny the Godhead of Christ, but said that he was one God* (and somewhat which they should not have said, or beleaved, that he was one person) *with God the Father*. You may hereby understand the /p. 450/ modesty of the man and cry out as he did, *Ein modestiam satis peorfrictam, usque ad os impudentiae perfrictam*. But if his seventh book (which the translator durst not adventure to English till he saw how this would take) had been translated, I need not have said any more for the discovery of this subtile Sir. judicious *Pareus*, and the synod of *Lublin* were able to detect him for all his courtship and hypocrisie⁴⁵; and D. *Voetius* doth assure us, that if the reformed Churches had taken *Acontius* his third and seventh books into their consideration, *they would have rejected Acontius from*

communion with them, unless he would have declared himself more plainly, and made it evident, that coming out of *Italy* under pre-tence of Reformation he had not brought the same errours with him which *Alciate*, *Blandrate*, *Gribald*, or *Socinus* the uncle, and the nephew brought from thence.

They who are acquainted with ecclesiastical /p. 451/ writers can readily declare what difficulties they wrestled with, and what persecutions they did undergo rather than they would consent to any syncretisme with the *arians* when it was obtruded, or yeeld to any agreement, when it was offered to them upon plausible and tempting conditions. They who have read the acts of the *Nicene*, *syrmiansian*, and both the *ariminensian* councils, *Athanasius*, *Hilary*, *Epiphanius*, *Nicetas*, *Socrates*, *Sozomen*, *Theodore*t, *Augustin*, know this to be as cleare as if it were written with a sunbeame. *Was there not an Anathema denounced against Liberius by great hilary* for yielding to such a syncretisme with the *arians*, as *Acontius* did propound for an accommodation between christians and socinians? pardon the harshness of that expression; I am not in passion, or in haste, but follow the example of the orthodoxe doctors of the Church, *who did use the name of christians in opposition to the Arians, to shew that they did not acknowledge the arians for to be christians, because they denied the true Christ, who is God-man, the only mediatour and saviour of his people from their sins.* /p. 452/ *Melancthon* and *Bucer* were men of great prudence, modesty, and moderation, as well as piety and learning, but they never offered to conclude a peace with any of these new *Arians*; they would not admit any into christian communion with them, unless they would subscribe the confessions of faith received in the foure first general councils.⁴⁶ They who deny the Godhead of our Saviour, and the holy Ghost, are anti-christian, antispiritual men; their idolatry in worshipping Christ, whom they look upon as a meere creature, their impiety in denying worship to the holy Ghost, their horrid blasphemies to the dishonour of Christ and christianity, their poysoning of soules, disturbing of christian societies, should be laid to heart by all christian magistrates, all ministers and members of Jesus Christ; and therefore this *acontian syncretisme* is abominable.

Upon these and divers other considerations I was desired to make a report to the reverend Assembly concerning the danger /p. 453/ of translating and printing of *Acontius* in English; the heads of the report were briefly these.

The Report made to the Reverend Assembly. March 8. 1647–48

By Mr Cheynell.

We humbly conceive,

That *Acontius* his enumeration of points necessary to be known and beleaved for the attainment of salvation is very defective.

1. Because in the creed which *Acontius* framed there is no mention made either of the Godhead of Iesus Christ, or of the Godhead of the holy Ghost. And /p. 454/.
2. Although *Acontius* doth acknowledge Christ to be *truly* the Son of God, yet he doth not in his creed declare him to be the *natural* Son of God.

That these points are necessary to be known and believed for the attainment of salvation, is in our judgement clearly expressed in the holy Scriptures, 1 *Joh.* 5. 7–20. compared with *Joh.* 17. 3.

We do therefore conceive, that *Acontius* was justly condemned, because he maintains that the points of doctrine which he mentions, are *the only points* which are necessary /p. 455/ to be known and beleaved, and did not hold forth or mention the points aforesaid as necessary to salvation.

And we esteeme him to be the more worthy of censure, because he lived in an age when the *photinian* heresie was revived, and yet spared the *photinians*,⁴⁷ though he condemned the *sabellians*.

Finally, *Acontius* doth cautelously decline the orthodox expressions of the ancient Church, in the foure first generall synods; and doth deliver his creed in such general expressions, that as we conceive the *socinians* may subscribe it, and yet retaine the worst of their blasphemous errors. /p. 456/.

The promises being humbly presented, we leave it to the judgement of this reverend Assembly,

Whether *Acontius* his *Stratagems* was a book fit to be translated into English, and recommended to the Parliament, army, and city to direct them how to distinguish truth from error in this juncture of time? /p. 457/.

Upon these few heads of the Report I discoursed somewhat affectionately, and freely, according to the weight and moment of the point in question. And thereupon the reverend Assembly did unanimously desire the *prolocutor* to perswade me to print something about that argument,

as soone as the heat of our employment at *Oxford* was over for the satisfaction of the Kingdom. I am very willing to obey the commands of that Assembly famous for learning and piety, even to the admiration of those great schollers, whose hearts were once espoused to another interest. If the debates of that *reverend Assembly* upon severall articles of faith were printed and published to the world, all ingenuous enemies of piety would blush at the remembrance of those bitter censures which have been passed upon men of whom this age is unworthy. But I must hasten, for my book begins to swell beyond its just proportion, and I am called away to another service, which cannot be performed at any other time.

Acontius hath invented very pretty diversions instead of excuses to abate our zeale against the most dangerous errours; he saith, that hereticks do not intend to make Christ a lyar; *the controversie between them and us is not concerning the truth, but concerning the meaning of the words of Christ.* /p. 458/ To which I answer, that *he who beleeves the words of Christ in the sense of Antichrist, and rejects the sense of Christ, and his Spirit, is not a christian, but is indeed and truth antichristian.* The sense of Scripture is the Scripture, and therefore if men be permitted in these great and weighty articles to impose a new sense upon the Church of Christ, they do clearely impose a new creed, a new Gospell upon us, and deserve that anathema. *Gal.* 1. 8. 9. though they should pretend to apostolical authority, or angelical purity. *Although we or an Angel from heaven preach any other Gospell unto you, then that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now againe, if any man preach any other Gospell unto you then that you have received, let him be accursed.* *Grotius* in the daies of his modesty refused to sollicite in the behalfe of the *socinians*, and professed that he did not know a man in the grand Assembly in *Holland*, that would not pronounce the *socinians* accursed. The distinguishing /p. 459/ question, which was then put, was the old question, *Do you beleve that Christ is God by nature?* If you do not, you are an *arian*; and if you be an *arian*, you are no *christian*.

Acontius reckons up some things as necessary to beleve which are expressed in Scripture, & some other things which are necessarily inferred from what is expressed, but *he doth not reckon up the Godhead of Christ, or the holy Ghost in his catalogue of things that are plainly expressed, or necessarily inferred*, as is most evident by his whole discourse in his third book which is now in English.

Finally, the *socinians* take away the right foundation of faith, hope, worship, justification, as hath been proved, & lay a wrong foundation;

they bring in a *new Christ*, a meer man, and a *new Gospel*, a *new iudge* in the highest matters and mysteries of religion, *their own reason*, which they might infallibly know to be not only fallible, but corrupt. They deny the true causes and means of salvation, & the right application of them; their impiety in not worshipping of the Spirit; their idolatry in worshipping one whom they esteeme to be a meere man, and refusing to be washed and purged with the bloud of the Covenant, will justifie all that reject them and their confederates from christian communion.

I am not at leasure to handle the magistrates /p. 460/ duty in this point; nor are many of them at leasure to consider all that is fit to be considered in that weighty point; but for the present satisfaction of such as know not how to study in these busie times, I shall point at some unquestionable truths for the ending of that unhappy and fatall controverisie in the Church of Christ.

1. There is no warrant given in the word to any minister of the State, or officer of the Church to molest, oppresse, or persecute any man for righteousness sake; he who doth persecute a man for following his conscience when rightly informed by the Word and Spirit of the Lord Jesus, doth certainly persecute the Lord Jesus Christ. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Iesus whom thou persecutest*; it is a fit text to be preached on this twenty second of February 1649. But I am now learning another lesson, which is to suffer persecution patiently for righteousness sake, and pray for such benefactours, who do besides their intention, and against their will, make christians happy by endeavouring to make them miserable in their outward man by an unexpected persecution. Yet I could not but take notice of the seasonableness of this truth, and put down the day, the moneth, and the yeare, as the prophet did. *Ezek. 8. 1. And it came to passe in the sixth yeare, in the sixth moneth, in the fifth day of* /p. 461/ *the moneth, as I sate in mine house, and the elders of Iudah (the princes of the people) sate before me, &c.* The great Statesmen were at leasure now in the time of the captivity to hear the prophet; if they would have heard, beleaved, obeyed before, they had never gone into captivity; for the misusing of the prophets, and despising of their message was *the sin against* the most soveraigne remedy; and when there was no other remedy, then God sent them away captive, &c. *2 Chron. 36. 16. 17. Let all such consider this, who are poasting on in the high-way to captivity.*

APPENDIX B

ROMAN CENSURE

[f. 132 r] Acontius

Censure against the eight books of the work by Jacob Acontius, entitled 'Satan's Stratagems', which also includes an epistle from the author to Johannes Wolf of Zurich.

Before saying anything about the stratagems or the epistle, I am faced with Elizabeth, Queen of England, who the author has chosen as the protector of his work, publishing it in her name and under her auspices, dedicating the following praise to her on the frontispiece of the work: Jacob Acontius etc. dedicates and consecrates [this work of his] to the divine Elizabeth, Queen of England, France and Ireland, celebrated not so much for her immense royal dignity as for her excellent decorum, gifted with almost unheard-of levels of culture, knowledge of numerous languages and other highly refined physical and spiritual characteristics.

[*In the margin:* the following is inspired by the writings of Florimond de Raemonde, George Cedrenus and Nicolas Caussin] This praise, dedicated to this woman, is a great slight to my soul, above all because of its highly unscrupulous historical falsity and the shameful and nauseating mendacity of its invention. Indeed, what is there to say? Should such eulogies have been used to celebrate a woman like this who (on examining her decorum) had such respect for virginity that while publicly pretending to be a virgin, was instead in secret either the wife or, more precisely,

the concubine of all men? Through her feigning, she assumed the behavioural characteristics of friendliness and gentleness to a great extent, but instead, as long as she reigned, she never stopped inflicting an endless massacre of innocents on her kingdom with great ferocity and cruelty. With an unusual form of execution, she ordered the suppression of those who wanted to convene Parliament and kept the skulls of her lovers in a room in the palace so that she could show them to her new lovers as an incitement to even greater impropriety. She crowned her savagery with the murder of the glorious and most holy Queen Mary [f. 132v] Stuart, a most serious crime that devastated England and the whole world.

If we then turn our attention to the religion and faith of this woman, generally speaking she publicly repudiated Catholic dogma, placed herself at the head of the Anglican Church and acted pitilessly against the Catholics with all kinds of torture. More specifically, besides this she also left other proof of her great impiety to the execration of all posterity. While she was being ordained as the new queen and anointed with holy oil, she had the noblewomen who were present moved slightly so that they were not disturbed by the stench of the oil. While she was attending the holy sacrifice of Mass in the royal chapel, she forbade the priest to display the sacred host, as is customary. Finally, she ordered for the bones of a concubine, exhumed from a dunghill, to be placed in the sepulchre of St Frithuswith and mixed with the holy ashes, with the addition of the epigraph: 'Here lie religion and superstition.'

As I said, these are the shameless lies that first slight my soul in this elogy. What is more (and I think this could be of more interest), I cannot bear the expression 'To the Divine Elizabeth' in any shape or form. In relation to this expression, one thing is certain that everybody concurs with: 'Divine' has the same meaning as hero, or rather 'God originally of human form'. However, when referred to Elizabeth, this word acquired a profane meaning, to the point where it would be difficult to consider it safe enough or well-advised to revive its true sense by using it to describe a real divinity or sanctity.

On the contrary, the expression has a sacred meaning to such an extent that, provided that we use it sincerely and authentically, those who use it in a profane sense by saying, for example, 'To the Divine Jupiter', 'To the Divine Saturn' or even 'To the Divine Caesar' commit a sin.

Neither, verily, is any support provided [f. 133r] by the fact that one can read the inscription 'To the Divine Paul', dedicated to a pope, in the Liberian Basilica on the Esquiline Hill: this use is antiquated and is so

isolated that it is the exception to a venerable rule, rather than constituting a rule of any kind or making such a use legitimate in any way.

So with what insolence or (to put it better) with what impudence did Jacob dare to call Elizabeth ‘Divine’? How did he dare to attribute such a holy title to she who has never been holy in any way and lives an execrable life?

After having started with these brief allusions rather than a proper examination, we will now deal directly with Devil’s Stratagems.

Generally speaking, I confirm that these are not the devil’s stratagems in terms of intention (as the schools say) but in terms of effect. What I mean is, although Jacob states that he wants to reveal some of Satan’s tricks, he has actually constructed some new ones himself; he says that he understands how to avoid Satan’s traps wisely, but—even worse than Satan—he himself speciously lays some new ones in order to entrap people with a single word. The well-known saying ‘in order to be able to be very bad, one starts by being good’ fits this author like a glove. In fact, if we do not want to proceed by examining individual passages (which would be extremely long and boring), but instead briefly select only a few from the work, these three can be used as the chapters of our censorial discourse.

- Firstly: Jacob sometimes uses the good and just cause as a pretext by feigning;
- Secondly: he sometimes induces errors purely through deceit, but with refined artifice;
- Thirdly: he sometimes shows the full extent of his great impiety and unleashes it wickedly and quite openly.

First chapter

This chapter examines the passages in which the author uses the good and just cause as a pretext at various points in the first, second and third books.

He labels the burning desire and unbridled passion to print books as an all-too-common sin of our time. As a result, he says, as many have [f. 133v] nothing of their own to print and publish, they limit themselves to rewriting and recycling other people’s content, thereby doing what has already been done. Often, he says, the only benefit we can obtain from reading similar authors is that by trying to illustrate certain

matters in a different way from how they were illustrated by others, they inevitably illustrate them badly, as they have already been illustrated perfectly.

He accuses modern exegetes of the Holy Scriptures who often weave together new interpretations when explaining a single verse and agglomerate everything that they have written down in their notes whether it is appropriate or not. Take, for example, the only epistle to the Romans, which not only seems to feature, so to speak, more commentary than words, but also commentary, he says, which often contains a certain amount of bran, but little or no flour.

When contesting the opinions of others or even stamping out their errors, he exhorts us to steer well clear of insults. He tells us not to suffuse anyone's opinions with bitterness and, above all, to do this even less with people. In most cases, if you have offended someone with a barbed comment, even if it is a minor one, he will be upset and vexed: he will therefore not see you as his friend any more, but will instead insult you as an enemy. So see what advantage you can hope to obtain if you have instigated spiritual wars, when instead you should have harvested the fruits of harmony of opinion and peace!

He harshly admonishes the shepherds of souls on more than one occasion for the fact that they are no better than all the others in setting an example of virtue as a lone beacon shining and burning, because, after they themselves have spilt the salt [of discord or sin], we no longer have any way to prevent [...] the putrefaction of sin and the flesh. He says that it is no wonder that in fact the pastoral attire does not always adorn the heads of the most worthy people; when elected, those chosen to be shepherds often not only suck out the milk, but also shear the sheep or even skin them. On the other hand, he suggests that there is a criterion for such elections, either because virtue is esteemed so little that it is mostly deliberately neglected and stifled, devoid of any consideration or honour, or because, although it may be highly esteemed, those who shine with it seek darkness and do not allow their priestly attire to glisten, being more content to remain hidden in secret than glisten on a candelabra.

[f. 134r] Throughout the eighth book, Jacob proceeds by explaining which theories the evil Demon hatches for our ruin and which passages he uses to worm his way inside. He is undoubtedly so well prepared with tricks that there is practically no teaching left on this matter that Augustine, Bernard, Ambrose and the other saints can impart.

You can understand here the underhand manner in which the inveterate artifice of the worst evils is shaped into all forms, just as the prince of darkness often purports to be dressed in light. You can understand which machinations he plots to our detriment by himself and which he uses others for. You understand now that he uses our limbs against us, so that a deeply internal war is waged and we stop persecuting the enemy because we are too busy fighting amongst ourselves; he now nourishes us with the exterior beauty of things, so that we end up languidly entrapped, captured and enchanted by him without hope of escape, since beauty has often tightened the chains of the soul.

Oh eminent fathers, such is the deceitfulness (as I revealed at the beginning) by which Jacob feigns his faith and adhesion to the good cause! So that those who have only read these passages from his work do not think that they are holding an elegy (if that is the right term), just continue leafing through Jacob's work.

On the 2nd Chapter

This chapter deals with some further passages in which our author starts to inflict his poison, although he does it shrewdly and in a golden cup (because it can be drunk more sweetly).

Of the numerous passages, I will only examine these two: (1) book 2, p. 83 and book 4, p. 190. In controversies regarding faith, when the matter is of primary importance and we are uncertain about what must and must not be believed, he wants to appoint the divine spirit as an arbitrator in the hope that it illuminates our hearts and reveals the truth with its light. This, he says, should be our constant prayer to him, the objective of our deepest and highest supplications.

In book 3, p. 106 et seq. (drawing together a good deal of evidence from the Holy Scriptures), he shows with sufficient clarity that an individual believer does not necessarily have to believe in every effective article of the Christian faith [f. 134v], in such a way that [if it were true that a believer had to believe every single article of faith] he would not be able to attain eternal salvation if he ignored any of them. It is as if he said: 'Oh how hard it would be if someone who ignores the forces of nature were deprived, unlike what Pelagius says, of the help of grace through Christ; and how hard it would be if someone who does not consider matters regarding grace as a truth of faith were immediately excluded from the glory [of eternal salvation]!'

But the first statement is full of falsehood! On the one hand, it is not only an opinion shared by all theologians, but also by the Council Board at the sixth Tridentine session, chap. 5, that every good believer is obliged to start his journey of faith and take his cue from the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which we call prevenient and operating grace.

Therefore it is good that the grace of the Holy Spirit must be implored in order to have the will to believe, thanks to which through pious affection (as the theologians say) approval can be imposed on our will, also with regard to this article, and our mind can be conquered by the obedience of faith.

Therefore, this doctrine of Jacob's, illustrated in this way, is in all respects Catholic and absolutely truthful. On the other hand, however, what else did Luther want to say in the preface to the 'Assertions concerning all articles', or Brenz in the 'Wittenberg Confession', in the chapter on the Holy Scriptures, or Calvin in book 4 of 'Institutes', in many sections of chap. 9 (namely 8, 12 and 13) and Martin Kemnitz in his study of the fourth session of the Council of Trent; or even Philip Melancthon in his work 'Loci communes', in the chapter 'On the Church', where although he creates a lot of confusion, he is nevertheless in fairly open agreement with the others? What was the objective of all these men, I say, if not to turn to the spirit of each individual as the private judge of controversies in matters of faith?

This, on the other hand, is precisely what Jacob wants to teach and inculcate, making a single addition of his own by teaching the heresy of others in such a way as to try to deceive readers with a semblance of orthodoxy.

I said that this is a true heresy and I will not waste any further time demonstrating it, as all the controversialists agree with me: Johannes Driedo, book 2, chap. 3 of 'Dogmas of the Church', Johann Cochlaeus in the book 'On the Authority of the Church and Scripture', the Cardinal of Warmia in 'Against Brenz's prolegomena', books 2 and 3, and others including Cardinal Bellarmine who in the 'first General Controversy', book 3, chap. 3, labels it as not just any heresy, but the source of all heresies; this can also be seen in the fourth session of the Council of Trent in the decree 'Edition and use of sacred texts', where it is stipulated that the Church must be followed in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures without resorting to any personal inspiration. I will continue by saying that while there is much inherent untruth in

accumulating the illuminations and inspirations of the Holy Spirit under the guise of private piety, there is just as much when showing that there are few articles of the Christian faith that each believer has to believe in.

Indeed, also on this point, on one hand we all admit it to a large extent, from *Summa Theologiae* 2, 2 q. 2 a. [...] 8, not only where the Gospel was not proclaimed openly, but also where the culture of the peoples stands out more clearly: not only to attain justification, but also to obtain glory, we admit, as I was saying, that the only thing necessary as an indispensable means of salvation, as they say, is having substantiated faith both in the Holy Trinity and Christ the Saviour, and there is no need for faith in other articles apart from the preparation of the spirit. On condition, however, that each individual shows readiness to give approval to the faith beyond everything and lend his unconditional support regardless of the article submitted to him in an appropriate manner.

On the other hand, however, Jacob misuses this doctrine that is true and Catholic through too much deceit, inculcating the kind of argument that we mentioned above more than once starting from p. 106 of book three: ‘only a few of the articles need to be believed in as an indispensable means of salvation; therefore, it matters little what one believes about all the others: you can affirm or negate them as you wish’.

Oh what shameless perfidy! As if there were really no difference between being allowed not to have faith in any of the other things without blame and being allowed to deny them without being at fault. It is true that one could be wholly innocent in the former case, inasmuch as all the other articles might well not have been presented to us and therefore cannot demand any faith from us. However, the latter affirmation is by its very definition full of the most evil wickedness [f. 135v]. Indeed, of course no one can deny that by repudiating the truth of an article adequately explained, he will also repudiate the same initial truth and the God that expresses it.

In order to highlight more clearly Jacob’s perfidy in constructing the argument (or more precisely the pseudo-argument) that ‘it is necessary to believe in few articles of faith, so repudiate all the others if you want to’, we need to distinguish between the forms of ignorance called ‘pure denial’ and ‘bad disposition’. Through the former, we are placed in such a position that when questioned in some way, we are so ignorant that we do not answer anything at all on this matter and, when given the option to choose one of the two sides of the contradiction, we do not choose either of them and remain impartial. For example, someone

is asked whether there are several notions or several relations in God. If he has this level of ignorance, he will neither attribute the judgement of plurality to either field nor deny it. Instead, the second form of ignorance is the one through which, when questioned in the same way, we would make the wrong selection and would say that there are more relations than notions, while the fact that the fifth notion of innascibility was added to the four relations (namely paternity, filiation, active and passive spiration) would relate to the Catholic dogma.

After having illustrated the distinction between these two forms of ignorance, I will return to the subject of Jacob and say that, apart from these few articles, he does not teach in any way regarding all the others that we are allowed the ignorance of 'bad disposition', although the ignorance of 'pure denial' is permitted. Indeed, these two forms of ignorance follow on from each other, but while one was legitimately granted, the other clearly often needs to be repudiated.

In this way (if, eminent fathers, your great benevolence will allow us to give this example), on some matters at least in a certain sense we attribute the Most Blessed Virgin with all the ignorance of the first type and 'pure denial', since she was definitely not omniscient unlike her son. Instead, as far as the second type of ignorance, 'bad disposition' is concerned, [f. 136r], no one, as far as I know, has dared to attribute any examples to her except one: Cordova, in the first book of 'Theological Questions', question 46, because of the passage from Luke 2: 'supposing him to have been in the company'. In reality, though, the word 'supposing' does not indicate that the Most Blessed Virgin actually thought 'my son is together with others'. Indeed, this could not be redeemed by the error and ignorance of bad disposition, as in truth he was not together with others, but was teaching in the temple. The word indicates that the Most Blessed Virgin developed the following idea: 'I think, or rather judge it probable that my son is in the company of others' and this totally excludes the ignorance of bad disposition and any error: the fact that he was not really in the company of others did not mean that he was not likely to be found thus.

Third Chapter

In this final chapter, we must mention some of the many passages in which the full extent of Jacob's impiety is revealed, no longer masked in any way but bare-faced and naked, and is shown completely in its

entirety. Nevertheless, we will only select those passages that deal most shamelessly with the Roman Pontiff, the holy sacrifice of Mass, the sacrament of Confession and good works.

With regard to the Roman Pontiff, (in addition to the fact that he often denigrates him in the epistle to Wolf, especially on pp. 372 and 379), these are the considerations he makes in ‘Stratagems’: in book 3, p. 90 he states that it is not the prerogative of the Pontiff to promulgate new laws; here (and even more clearly in book 2 p. 60) he seems to accept and endorse Calvin’s opinion, which in book 4 of ‘Institutes’, chap. 11, § 8, quoting from the passage in Matthew: ‘The kings of peoples command them, but for you it shall be different’ deems that the meaning of the passage is that civil and ecclesiastical power definitely cannot be combined in the same person, while instead in Matthew’s words Christ simply wanted to beseech the heads of the Church, in the shape of the apostles, [f. 136v] so that all those who are priests understand that they are not so much princes as shepherds and fathers; so that they position themselves as leaders of people not as secular authorities, but rather with a paternal and loving attitude. So what is the obstacle that forbids civil power from combining with ecclesiastical power?

[*In the margin*: See the Council of Constance, session 41, at the end] Once again in book 4, on p. 161, he deprives the pope of the authority to present anything as a new dogma of faith in which one must believe. Finally, he also attacks the pontiff for his opulence and magnificence, in book 5, on pp. 206 and 230. He becomes even more violently passionate against magnificence, as in book 5, on p. 221, he cannot bear the fact that Sigismund, King of the Romans, offered his services to Martin V with great veneration during his coronation in Constance. I will not examine these arguments in any greater detail; I have only mentioned them briefly as they are too blatantly similar to Calvin and Luther.

Regarding the holy sacrifice of Mass, he not only formulates and expresses his opinion less worthily in book 6, p. 277, but frequently execrates the adopted custom among Catholics, who are in the habit of inviting other friends here and there to hear Mass and exhorting them by their example not to neglect this religious duty on any occasion. However, he forces himself to perpetrate truly abhorrent sacrilege when he clearly states that the sacrifice of Mass is something abhorrent, an invention of Satan and, in book 6, p. 309, even a form of impiety. ‘But why?’ some will ask. On the grounds that on top of all the other heresies, in book 3, on p. 116, Jacob added that he does not recognize

the Eucharist as the true body and true blood of Christ the Lord, considering instead that it is only bread and only wine, which we worship through an execrable act of idolatry. So, eminent fathers, this is how when one heresy is defended, another one is born, as if we could be convinced by innocence at the moment in which the crimes doubled.

But what will this awful oppressor of all things sacred blether about the sacrament of Confession? In book 6, on p. 278, he thinks that it is a political invention, contrived by Catholics for this purpose, constantly maintained and used to this end to invade all the most secret hiding places in the soul [f. 137r], to discover all the most secret tendencies and thereby provide the best help for running the State safely and effectively, as if thanks to this sacrament the things that the Historian considered typical of Rome alone could be applied to the whole Church, namely that it is aware of everything and silent about nothing. Furthermore, in the same passage he calls priests who lend their ears to hear holy confessions ‘sacrificers’. Certainly, with this expression, he does not confer this designation in reference to the meaning that it has in Gellius, book 10, chap. 15 and in Livy, book 6 of ‘Punic War’: ‘*sacrificulos*, namely king of sacrifices’, but rather because in *Life of Domitian* by Suetonius he noticed, in my opinion, that mention was made of those who made sacrifices in various rites using the word ‘sacrificers’. From there, he took the opportunity to apply the term ‘sacrificers’ with the utmost contempt to our confessors too.

Finally, with regard to good works, he certainly did not reach such levels of madness as to call them all mortal sins, as done by Luther in ‘Assertions’, arts. 31, 32 and 36, Calvin in book 3 of ‘Institutes’, chap. 12, § 4 and chap. 14 § 9 and other heretics. Nevertheless, in book 3, on p. 94, he labels them most brazenly as profoundly useless and deeply superfluous. Then, in book 4, on p. 158 (so as not to be inferior to any heretic in terms of impiety), he considers them to be typical traits of the supporters of the Antichrist. At the end, in book 7, on p. 318, acting against the justifying effect of certain good works recognized by the Catholic Church, he devises this type of argument, if we allow it to be reduced for the sake of brevity: these two assertions which contradict each other and demolish one another, namely that our sins are forgiven and that we make up for our sins through good works. Therefore, if we decide to recognize the first assertion, we must repudiate the second one: as a result, there will no longer be any justifying force in good works. [f. 137v] Oh you stupid, if not perfidious individual! Either Jacob

chose not to be aware of it or he really did not know that in any sin you can seek not only what is a reason for guilt and misdemeanour for the indignant God, but also what we call punishment; certainly, if he had been aware of it, he would have understood well that nothing can now prevent a sin from being remitted and forgiven thanks to Christ, the saviour of humankind, and that our works also have some validity as punishment, in some way they redeem us; he would have understood that not only from a Catholic and Theological perspective, but also in logical terms, it is a sin to force oneself to infer that God remits sins through Christ, that therefore there is nothing left that our good works can compensate for. [...] Punishments always compensate for something [...] guilt was thanks to Christ and [...] forgiven by his merits?

But please let us put an end to all this heap of Jacob's errors and wickedness with a completely new sin, the worst of all, overlooking many other matters, against the undisputed truth of the Councils, against the worship of sacred images. In book 7, p. 323, he not only earned himself the attribution of being branded a heretic, but also a true heresiarch, the head and master of heresies, establishing a new confession of faith, a new symbol, putting it forward as a universal Creed. In this symbol, in this Confession, apart from a few things, the other things regarding the Trinity of divine persons, the divine Word made human flesh, Judgement and Hell are entrusted to the will of each individual, so that they are either believed or repudiated at will, as can be seen in the cited passage, which deals with this at exceedingly great length; and often inculcated at favourable opportunities in the previous books.

Therefore, I can state without hesitation what must be thought of this work by Jacob Acontius containing the eight books of 'Satan's Stratagems' and also the epistle addressed to Johannes Wolf of Zurich and the way in which [f. 138r] the work must be censured: it reeks of heresy, presenting and proclaiming a heresiarch. May it be considered as such and punished with a penalty equal to that of the others.

This is my declaration, Girolamo Savignano.

NOTES

1. William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, on whom see Ch. 3. According to Cheynell, Laud had written that 'the mysteries of faith doe not contradict reason, for reason by her own light can discover how firmly the principles of religion are true' (*The Rise, Growth, and Danger*, p. 40).

It seems that these words were pronounced during a debate held at the request of James I in 1622 and then published under the title *A Relation of the Conference betweene William Lawd and Mr Fisher the Jesuite*, London 1639. On this occasion, Laud said he disagreed with the view that all points defined by the Church were fundamental and necessary for salvation, making a distinction between the fundamentals (Scriptures and 'Creeds') and the 'superstructure' identified with doctrines regarding faith (cf. also J. Jacquot, *Acontius*, p. 200)

2. William Chillingworth, on whom see Ch. 3, sect. 2.
3. Edward Knott, a Jesuit, on whom see Ch. 3, sect. 1.
4. Christopher Potter, on whom see ch. 3, sect. 1.
5. Nicolaas Bodecherus, a former Remonstrant who converted to the opposing side, the author of a work with the eloquent title *Sociniano-Remonstrantismus*, in which he accused the new Remonstrant confession of Socinianism (cf. Ch. 3, sect. 3).
6. Johannes Peltius, a Presbyterian controversialist, the author of *Harmonia remonstrantium et Socinianorum*, Leiden 1633; cf. Ch. 3, sect. 1.
7. Nicolaus Vedelius, the author of *De episcopatu Costantini Magni; seu de Potestate Magistratum Reformatorum circa res ecclesiasticas dissertation repetita cum responsione ad interrogate quaedam, etc.*, Frankfurt 1642; cf. Ch. 3, sect. 3.
8. Charles I, King of England and Scotland.
9. James Wedderburn, Bishop of Dunblane, on whom see Ch. 3, sect. 3.
10. Thomas Sydeserf, a Scottish prelate from Edinburgh; cf. Ch. 3, sect. 3.
11. William Forbes, first bishop of the Scottish capital; cf. Ch. 3, sect. 3.
12. The full title of the work is *Ladensium Αυτοκαταχρησις, or The Canterburian's Self conviction. Or an evident demonstration of the avowed Arminianisme, Poperie, and tyrannie of that faction, by their owne confessions*, London, [Amsterdam] 1640.
13. George Downham, Bishop of Derry from 1616 to 1634, on whom cf. Ch. 3, sect. 3.
14. William Chappel, pupil of William Ames with clear Arminian tendencies, chosen personally by Laud in 1634 as Provost of Trinity College Dublin; cf. Ch. 3, sect. 3.
15. In all likelihood this is Antonio Bonfini (1427–1505), a humanist and court historian to the King of Hungary and Bohemia.
16. Fausto Sozzini, a Sienese exile, on whom for an initial bibliographical approach see the entry by J. Tedeschi (comp.), *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture: A Bibliography of the Secondary Literature, ca. 1750–1997*, with a historiographical introduction by Massimo Firpo, Modena and Ferrara 2000, pp. 447–457.

17. On David Pareus, 1548–1622, a German Protestant theologian, cf. Ch. 3, sect. 1.
18. D. Pareus, *Irenicum, sive De unione et synodo evangelicorum concilianda liber votivus paci ecclesiae, et desiderio pacificorum dicatus*, Frankfurt 1615.
19. Johannes Peltius, on whom cf. note 6.
20. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, Book III, pp. 184–187.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
22. Athanasius of Alexandria, an Egyptian bishop, Patriarch of Alexandria from 328 to 373, a great defender of Trinitarian dogma. While still a deacon he took part in the Council of Nicaea in 325 at the request of Emperor Constantine to resolve the question raised by Arius's preaching about the nature of Christ.
23. Michael Servetus, a Spanish anti-trinitarian exile, sentenced to death by burning by John Calvin in 1553. For an initial bibliographical approach, see the entry by J. Tedeschi, *The Italian Reformation*, pp. 436–441, as well as the recent *Introduzione* by Adriano Prosperi to the first Italian translation of the work by R. Bainton, *Vita e morte di Michele Serveto*, Rome 2012, pp. VII–XXVIII. For references to Servetus in Cheynell's work, see J. Jacquot, *Acontius*, p. 200.
24. Lelio Sozzini, a Siennese exile, uncle of Fausto, on whom see the bibliographical entry by J. Tedeschi, *The Italian Reformation*, pp. 457–461.
25. Sabellius, a third-century Libyan theologian who was considered a heretic for his doctrines about the person of Christ.
26. *Stratagemmi di Satana*, Book III, pp. 198–199.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 200–201.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 208–209.
30. Thomas Erastus, on whom see now C. D. Gunnoe, *Thomas Erastus and the Palatinate: a Renaissance physician in the Second Reformation*, Leiden and Boston, MA 2011.
31. There is an immense bibliography on Hugo Grotius. For an initial approach, see *Hugo Grotius, theologian: essays in honour of G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes*, edited by H. J. M. Nellen and E. Rabbie, Leiden-New York 1994. On his relationship with Socinianism, see the essay by H. W. Blom, *Grotius and socinianism*, in M. Mulso and J. Rohls (eds.), *Socinianism and Arminianism. Antitrinitarians, Calvinists, and cultural exchange in seventeenth-century Europe*, Leiden and Boston, MA 2005, pp. 121–148. On his influence on seventeenth-century English religious and political culture, see M. Barducci, *Grozio ed il pensiero politico e religioso inglese, 1632–1678: potere, resistenza, riforma*, preface by Glenn Burgess, Florence 2010.
32. George Cassander, 1513–1566, a Flemish theologian and defender of religious tolerance.

33. Giovanni Paolo Alciati, an Antitrinitarian from Piedmont, on whom see the bibliographical entry by J. Tedeschi, *The Italian Reformation*, p. 116; on Giovanni Giorgio Biandrata, an Italian Antitrinitarian originally from Saluzzo, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 129–131, and on Matteo Gribaldi, another Antitrinitarian as well as a jurist, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 321–323.
34. On Johannes Peltius cf. note 6.
35. Videliuſ, a professor of theology at the University of Franeker.
36. Gisbertus Voetius, 1589–1676, a Dutch Calvinist theologian, on whom see A. J. Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676). Sein Theologieverständnis und seine Gotteslehre*, Göttingen 2007. Great prominence is given to observations made by Voetius and Guilielmus Saldenus, a minister from The Hague, in the bibliographical entry dedicated to Acontius in *Histoire du Socinianisme, divisée en deux parties, ou l'on voit son origine, et le progrès que le Sociniens ont faits dans differens Royaume de la Chrétienté. Avec les caracteres, les adventures, les erreurs, et le livres de ceux qui se son distinguez dans la secte des Sociniens*. Paris 1723, pp. 261–264.
37. On the French philosopher Pierre de la Ramée, who addressed Acontius with esteem in his *Proemium Mathematicum* (1567) cf. W. J. Ong, *Ramus. Method, and the decay of dialogue: from the art of discourse to the art of reason*, with a foreword by Adrian Johns, Chicago 2004 (original edition Cambridge, MA 1958). Cheynell focused on de la Ramée's appreciation for Acontius in point 3 of his list in the 'report' drawn up for the Assembly.
38. See J. Aconcio, *Trattato sulle fortificazioni*, ed. P. Giacomoni, with the collaboration of Giovanni Maria Fara and Renato Giacomelli, edn and trans. Omar Khalaf, Florence 2011.
39. John Dury, on whom cf. ch. 3, sect. 4, 5, and 7.
40. Voetius, *De necessitate et utilitate dogmatis SS. Trinitatae*, Amsterdam 1639, pp. 494–495; cf. also ch. 3, sect. 7.
41. Another reference to Voetius.
42. Cf. note 1.
43. Cf. note 2.
44. Cf. note 2.
45. The reference is to the Synod of Lublin (1612), which put forward a proposed agreement between Socinians and Reformed Christians that was rejected by the latter.
46. The reference is naturally to the leading figures in the first phase of the Protestant Reformation Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and Martin Bucer (1491–1551).
47. Photinus, Bishop of Sirmium in Pannonia, who lived in the III century (he died in 376), claimed that Christ was not God and was consequently accused of heresy.

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