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Anglican Liturgy as a Model for the Italian Church? The Italian Translation of the Book of Common Prayer by George Frederick Nott in 1831 and its Re-edition in 1850

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Three seventeenth-century translations: between propaganda and patronage

- ¹ The first Italian translation of the *Book of Common Prayer* was made in 1608 for Paolo Sarpi, the theological and canonistic consultant of the Republic of Venice. The translation, by William Bedell, chaplain to the English ambassador to Venice, Sir Henry Wotton, was clearly done for propaganda purposes. The Interdict — when the Republic of Venice was “excommunicated” in 1606 because of a jurisdictional conflict with Rome — had raised hopes of a possible Venetian schism in England. Both Wotton and Bedell did everything they could to encourage this, including distributing Italian translations of the Holy Scriptures and Latin propaganda writings among Venetian intellectuals who could influence the policy of the Republic in an anti-Roman direction. In their view the Church of England, an episcopal church which claimed apostolic continuity, could serve as a possible model for Venetian reformers. For obvious reasons, they saw Paolo Sarpi as a key, strategic figure in Venice. The translation of the Anglican liturgy into Italian was made with the idea of presenting the Church of England as an alternative model to Roman

Catholicism, yet distinct from other Protestant Churches. The translation evidently did not just want to show Venetian readers a vernacular liturgy that maintained the charm of the Catholic liturgy, but also as a theology conceived as a middle way between the extremes of Popery and Protestantism. This strategy, of course, ended in naught. Bedell returned to England, and then moved to Ireland where in 1629 he became Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh. His translation remained in manuscript form with no known copies; Sarpi's manuscripts burned in the fire of the Servite monastery in 1769 and Bedell's library was dispersed during the anti-English rebellion of 1641.¹

- 2 In 1661, in London, Alessandro Amidei made a new Italian translation. Amidei, an adventurer, though not devoid of talent, was an ambiguous figure. He was almost certainly a Tuscan Jew who converted to Catholicism and later went to England where he joined the Church of England, trying to make a living teaching Hebrew and Italian. But he was also involved in a murky poisoning incident. In all likelihood this translation was not conceived with the intention of being published. The manuscript, which is now preserved in the British Library, was written in elegant handwriting and the front-page carries a quotation in Hebrew from the *Pirkei Avot*. The translation was certainly done to gain the protection of a patron, probably Charles II, recently returned to his kingdom, and it is no coincidence that in the same years Amidei prepared another manuscript of *Avvisi politici* to be presented to the king, presumably for the same purpose.²
- 3 The first printed edition in Italian of the *Book of Common Prayer* was published in London in 1685.³ Since an Italian Protestant Church in England no longer existed when this translation was published, it was apparently not meant for use in worship locally. Moreover, the Italian Protestant Church in London, founded in 1550 and dissolved probably around 1663, had never adopted Anglican worship and both from the institutional and liturgical points of view had always been a Calvinist Church.⁴
- 4 While the translator of this last edition was Italian, its editor was an Anglican cleric, Edward Brown, a former Cambridge student, who served as a chaplain to the British ambassador at the Ottoman court for four years. On his return, Brown exercised his ministry as vicar of several parishes in southern England and devoted himself to scholarly pursuits. The foreword to the reader stated that when Brown was in Constantinople he often celebrated and preached in Italian (the Mediterranean *lingua franca*) for the benefit of some French Protestants. This experience induced him to prepare a full translation "in the nicest Italian language," also with the prospect of a new Italian Protestant congregation in London that may conform to Anglican worship.
- 5 Despite this explicit reference to possible liturgical use, it is clear that this translation, like Bedell and Sarpi's nearly eighty years before, was effected exclusively to serve propaganda purposes rather than worship. In the year of the publication of Brown's translation Charles II had died and an openly Catholic sovereign with an Italian wife, Mary of Modena, had come to the throne of England. Although it is possible that this text was intended for the Italians around the Queen, it seems more likely that it was a sort of poisoned gift to the new queen, to demonstrate the excellence and beauty of Church of England worship in a moment of danger. Brown was a militant Protestant scholar who collected anti-Catholic texts. It is therefore very significant that in the introduction to his translation he recalled Sarpi's version, whose *Lettere italiane scritte al signor dell'Isola Groslo*t he translated into English in 1693.⁵

The Book of Common Prayer as a teaching aid for learning Italian

- 6 The translation of the Book of Common Prayer edited by Brown was republished in 1708 by the Huguenot publisher Pierre de Varenne, and then, with some revisions, in 1733 by Alexander Gordon, a Scotsman. In his foreword, Gordon made a reference to the hope that this translation could be used by a restored Italian Protestant church in London — as a matter of fact in the late 1600s and early 1700s some attempts at such a restoration had been made. He added, however, that this version of the Anglican liturgy could be used as a teaching aid for Italian.⁶ Any good Englishman knew the words of the *Common Prayer Book* by heart and could easily follow the meaning of the Italian phrases and words even before acquiring a basic vocabulary. In fact, apparently, the Duke of Wellington had learned Spanish thanks to this method.⁷
- 7 It is very likely that a similar reason also motivated Antonio Montucci and Luigi Valetti to translate the *Book of Common Prayer* again at the end of the 18th century. Unlike Gordon's edition, this was a completely new translation of the text, different from the one edited by Brown. It was published in London in 1796. Significantly, in support of the hypothesis that the translation had been designed for "linguistic" rather than for liturgical reasons the two authors presented themselves on the title page as "teachers of the Italian language." Montucci, a prominent sinologist, had links with the *Bible Society*, suggesting some evangelical sensibility, although he apparently never left the Catholic Church and was eventually buried under the altar of a church in a Benedictine monastery in Siena.⁸
- 8 A revised edition of the Montucci-Valetti version was reprinted in London in 1820 by Giovanni Battista Rolandi.⁹ Rolandi, a Piedmontese already established as an engineer in Lombardy, settled in London after the Restoration, perhaps out of contempt for the Austrian regime. In England, he befriended the poet and exile Ugo Foscolo and started a publishing and book trade business focused on Italian texts, which was taken over by his brother Pietro after his death in 1825. The new edition of the *Prayer Book* in Italian, was prominent in a catalog that also included Italian editions of the Bible (1821), the Psalms (1822) and Diodati's Version of the New Testament (1819 and 1821), along with classics of Italian literature such as Guicciardini's *History of Italy*. As in Montucci's case, Rolandi's evangelical sensibility is evident; it seems clear that the linguistic and didactic intentions of the text were of particular import in the case of the publication of the Anglican liturgy. This was made further explicit by an appendix of verses by Metastasio that the author inserted at the end of the volume.¹⁰
- 9 In 1821, the publisher Samuel Bagster, who had built a successful publishing house based on the publication of inexpensive polyglot Bibles, decided also to publish polyglot editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*. An edition in eight languages (English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, ancient and modern Greek and Latin) was also published. Both the modern Greek and the Italian sections had been edited by Andreas Calbo, a writer born on the island of Zakynthos, who had accompanied Foscolo in England in 1816 as his secretary and later published some odes in modern Greek, which earned him a prominent place in the literary history of modern Greece.¹¹ The Italian version edited by Calbo was a revised version of the Montucci-Valetti translation, and was published by Bagster numerous times, both in multilingual editions and separately, or bound with the New

Testament. Once again the principal reason for publishing this translation was pedagogical rather than liturgical or political.

- 10 Rolandi and Calbo's ideas were reflections of the same cultural environment in which pre-Risorgimento national political sentiments and disdain for the Catholic Church probably met. That Church was perceived as the guarantor of the hierarchical order of the Restoration. However commercial and didactic reasons almost certainly motivated the publication of the translations. All eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Italian editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* were works of writers who, even when inspired by thoughts of religious reform, seem to have principally considered the commercial success that a text with such a large market among the many English who came to Italy for the Grand Tour might enjoy. With the exception of Gordon, these translators were Italians who had left their country in search of fortune and freedom.
- 11 A new chapter in the history of the Italian translations of the Anglican Liturgy was opened in 1831 with the publication of a new translation, this time by an Anglican clergyman (for the first time since the 1685 translation).

George Frederick Nott's translation

- 12 George Frederick Nott (1768-1841), an Anglican priest, published this new Italian version in 1831. Coming from a family of clergymen (both his father and grandfather were Anglican ministers), he studied at Oxford and garnered an initial reputation as a theologian and later as a scholar of English literature. Charged with the education of the Prince of Wales's daughter, he was involved in the feud that divided the royal family and, despite the support of King George III, was fired, for allegedly trying to persuade his pupil to secure him a bishopric. Thanks to his well-known Tory sympathies, the government compensated him by making him prebendary of Winchester. There he supervised the restoration of the cathedral, contributing to some unfortunate decisions, such as the removal of Inigo Jones's seventeenth-century rood screen, which was replaced by a neo-Gothic one, so ugly that it was demolished a few years later. Nott was an obstinate character. A disagreement with the dean of the cathedral about where to place an organ led him to apply for a leave of absence pleading plausible health reasons: he had been suffering from frequent migraines since he had fallen from a ladder during his supervision of the restoration of the cathedral. Free from the duties of his prebend, Nott settled in Italy in 1821, where he had served as the tutor of a young Irish nobleman, thirty years earlier during his Grand Tour.
- 13 Aside from a two-year hiatus beginning in the autumn of 1824, Nott remained in Italy until 1832, leading a busy social life in Pisa, Naples, Sicily, Rome and Florence. This brought him into the acquaintance of known Italian writers — such as Vincenzo Monti, Giovan Battista Niccolini, Giacomo Leopardi — and into friendship with the Prussian Ambassador Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen. In Italy he could devote himself to scholarly studies. He became editor of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (in 1828) and of Bosone da Gubbio's *Avventuroso Ciciliano*, a fourteenth-century novel (in 1832). He also delighted in archeology and art.¹²
- 14 Nott, who came from a wealthy family, financed his expensive scholarly and antiquarian interests by collecting the ecclesiastical revenues of two parishes as an absentee rector. At the time Great Britain was awash with polemics against the abuses of the traditional

Anglican clergy and the privileges of old England. These scandals were epitomized by non-resident clergy and in the late 1820s and 1830s Nott in particular was held up as a symbol of behavior not becoming to men of the cloth. He became the subject of media campaigns by radical liberals. Major English newspapers even published poisonous anonymous letters allegedly written by his parishioners, who sarcastically asked those who had information on him to come forward since they only had news of him during the collection of tithes. The letters did not fail to disdainfully point out that he had chosen the Pope's country as his place of residence.¹³

- 15 It was almost certainly these attacks that brought Nott to undertake a new translation of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which, thanks to the money from the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (SPCK) was published in Livorno, though with false attribution to London, in 1831. It is likely that the translation, which is clearly indebted to Montucci and Valetti, was prepared with the help of a native speaker, but there is likewise no doubt that the initiative was Nott's, almost certainly serving as a justification for his long stay in Italy. Thanks to this translation he inverted the accusations that presented him as an emblematic, lax clergyman, indifferent to his religious duties. Nott managed to present himself as a champion of Anglicanism, who, just as Brown had done in 1685 with King James II, showed the excellence of the liturgy of the Church of England in the stronghold of Catholicism. A few months after the publication of the book, much to his regret, Nott returned to England.¹⁴
- 16 The book came out at the right time. For a set of political and religious reasons (primarily Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and the birth of the Oxford movement with the publication of the first *Tracts for the Time* in 1833), some sectors of the Church of England in the 1830s wanted to initiate some form of propaganda against Catholic countries. Malta, which had been occupied by British troops since 1800 and had formally become part of the British Empire in 1814, gradually came to serve as a springboard for propaganda targeting Italy. To this end a branch of the interdenominational *Bible Society* was established on the island in 1819.¹⁵
- 17 In this context Nott's translation could play a role. The SPCK was already planning its re-edition in 1834, since the copies of the 1831 edition had sold out. However, some theological objections had been made with respect to Nott's text. This led to the *Foreign Translation Committee* of the SPCK asking Gabriele Rossetti, professor of Italian language and literature at King's College, to examine the text carefully to identify any error and to suggest possible changes in 1834.¹⁶
- 18 One of the controversial issues was the way in which Nott had translated the fourth commandment rendering the word *Sabbath* with the phrase "il giorno di riposo" "day of rest," to avoid the ambiguity that would result from the use of the word *Sabbath* for an Italian ear.¹⁷ Another controversial issue was that the word "Minister" was translated as "Prete" ("Priest").¹⁸ Rossetti gave the *Foreign Translation Committee* of the SPCK a copy with all his comments and corrections, which was sent to Nott for his opinion. In March 1835 Nott answered that he would carefully examine the proposed amendments and would let them know what he thought. However, at the same time he told them that he had already personally reviewed the whole translation having in mind its possible second publication.¹⁹ Two months later – in May – Nott wrote to the SPCK to let them know that he could not accept all the corrections proposed by Rossetti and therefore he would speedily finalize a second edition of his version that he hoped would be considered positively by the Society.²⁰ In the following months he took some of the comments into consideration and accepted

at least two of the amendments proposed by Rossetti in the Catechism – though it had taken the intervention of the bishop of Winchester.²¹ In July, Nott asked if the committee objected to the use of the Diodati's version of the Bible for the Psalms and the quotations from Scriptures. Obviously, someone had objected to the way in which he had rendered scriptural passages and Nott wanted to deflect criticism by emphasizing that he was quoting from an ancient and approved translation.²²

- 19 All these exchanges seemed to indicate that the publication of the revised edition was imminent. In the early months of 1836 Nott apparently changed his mind and made it known that he would publish a new edition at his own expense. He did, however, consent to send the draft to the SPCK; in the event that the Society considered it satisfactory, a further printing could be published at their expense. The SPCK had no objections and waited.²³ In the summer of 1836 Nott sent the first proofs to the *Foreign Translation Committee*.²⁴ In April 1837, some newspapers wrote that this new edition was to be published shortly.²⁵ But nothing happened. It is very likely that this delay was due to Nott's health problems. Based on the testimony of Emiliano Sarti, an Italian philologist friend of his, Nott lost his mental faculties as he entered into his seventies.²⁶
- 20 Nott died at Winchester in October 1841.²⁷ The executors of his will got in touch with the SPCK to offer the new edition of the translation that Nott had already revised and printed, but that remained to be bound, at a price of £100.²⁸ The Society, however, declined the offer. There had been no news from Nott for some years and this had convinced them that the promised new edition would never come. For this reason, the *Foreign Translation Committee* had decided to entrust the revision of Nott's text, following Rossetti's suggested changes, to Giovan Battista Di Menna, an Abruzzese ex-Capuchin, who had joined the Church of England, and to George William David Evans, an Anglican minister. The work was completed in a satisfactory manner shortly before Nott's death, allowing the SPCK to publish their edition also in 1841.²⁹ The copyright and already printed copies of Nott's translation were purchased by Thomas Sims, an Anglican priest, then the minister of a parish in the area.³⁰
- 21 The new edition of Nott's translation, revised by Di Menna and Evans, was promoted by the SPCK almost certainly with the idea to distribute copies among Italian intellectuals and clerics who might be interested in working towards reform in the Catholic Church. Their audience was principally the Italian exiles who in England had grown fond of the Church of England and the former priests and monks, most of whom had come to England through Malta and Gibraltar to start a new life. Sims, however, almost certainly had a completely different project and audience in mind.

Thomas Sims and the Waldensian Church

- 22 Thomas Sims (1785-1864) was born in Wales and spent much of his youth in Bristol before beginning studies at Cambridge. Imbued with evangelical ideals, he was ordained as a priest in the Church of England in 1813. He was committed to the *Church Missionary Society* and linked to the so-called *Clapham Sect*, the most important evangelical group of those years. On a trip to Europe in 1814 his curiosity was stirred by the Waldenses. He decided to visit the Waldensian valleys in Piedmont, where he met Rodolphe Peyran, Moderator of the Venerable Table, and Pierre Bert, Adjunct Moderator. Sims was fascinated by the history of this people, mistakenly convinced of the apostolic origins of the Waldensian Church, which actually came into being in the twelfth century.

- 23 Since Oliver Cromwell, England had maintained close relations with the Waldenses, providing them with substantial economic aid and political support. The subsidies were ended, however, when the valleys passed under the rule of revolutionary France in 1797. Back home, Sims pledged to restore these funds by publishing a pamphlet that once more brought the story of the Waldenses to the attention of English intellectuals – a genuine pro-Waldensian mania soon erupted in England.
- 24 After this first trip Sims returned to the valleys twice, in 1821 and in 1828, and contributed to a number of important initiatives. He started a collection to build a hospital in Torre to remove the Waldenses from the care of Catholic institutions and to fund rural schools and schools for girls. Thanks to his advice a Waldensian Bible Society was established in the valleys and the New Testament was published in a French-*patois* bilingual edition (*patois* here refers to the dialect of the valleys) and in Piedmontese. In England, he published various writings on the history and the theology of the Waldensian Church.
- 25 In 1834 Pierre Bert died. For twenty years he had been Sims's point of reference in the valleys and Sims subsequently stopped dealing directly with the Waldenses. He instead directed his efforts towards the education and religious morals of the lower classes, missionary activity in Africa and the reform of the Church of England, as evidenced by a wide publishing activity.
- 26 Many of the projects that he had initiated were taken up by William Stephen Gilly, canon of Durham Cathedral since 1827, and by the retired colonel, John Charles Beckwith. In 1824, the former published the first edition of an account of his journey in the Waldensian valleys which soon became a best-seller. This stirred the Venerable Waldensian Committee of London to raise funds on the Waldenses' behalf in May 1825. The latter, inspired by Gilly's book, went to the valleys annually from 1828 until 1850 before settling there permanently. Beckwith organized the use of funds sent by British benefactors with military discipline. Among the most significant examples, it was thanks to him that a network of rural schools was established, that the Latin School of Torre was created, that the temples of Torre Pellice, Rorà, Roderetto, were built, and that the hospital was finished.³¹
- 27 Sims, Gilly and Beckwith shared the idea that the Waldensian Church could become the nucleus from which to launch a missionary offensive in Italy. This was rooted in the myth of the apostolic origins of the churches of the valleys and to the equally mythical vision that equated the Table Moderator to a bishop.³² It was for this reason that Sims, upon hearing of Nott's death, came forward to buy not only the copyright but also the already printed copies of his Italian translation of the Book of Common Prayer. The idea was to offer the Church of England as a model to the Waldenses, both in terms of organizational structure and liturgy. Sims, in his contacts with Italy, convinced himself that the Book of Common Prayer could be an important tool for evangelization, not only for the Waldenses, but also for Italian Catholics. Its liturgy "containing so much of the devotional language of the early Christian churches", cleansed from the "rubbish and superstition inserted during the medieval dark ages." So it was a text suited to revive "in corrupted churches and countries sentiments and practices of a truly evangelical character."³³ In essence, therefore, it was a similar to the Catholic liturgy but devoid of the superstitious elements of medieval scholasticism.

- 28 To deploy this ambitious project it was first necessary to convince the Waldensian pastors of the need to make changes that would prepare their churches to meet new tasks and demands. Both the governance of the churches of the valleys and their liturgy were too “Protestant” to appeal to a country like Italy which had built its cultural identity on the Catholic Church, since the Counter-Reformation. At a time when the intellectual classes and leaders of the Italian states were addressing the question of escaping foreign domination to overcome political fragmentation, the Anglican friends of the Waldenses thought it would be a tragic mistake to propose a Church model which, being Protestant, would be perceived as alien to the Italian tradition. Consequently, the Waldenses would have to eliminate the superstructures that religious conflicts had imposed on them when the original Christian church of the valleys of Piedmont adhered to the Reformation in 1532.
- 29 Sims, Gilly and Beckwith were convinced that the Church of England was closest to the apostolic model, both for its governing structure and liturgy, and could therefore serve as a model for a renewed Waldensian Church. As a *via media* between Counter-Reformation Catholicism and Protestantism, Anglicanism, not only represented the closest thing to the origins of Waldensianism, but could also be an attractive model for Italians and would contribute to infusing the nascent political “Risorgimento” with issues of moral and religious reform. With typical Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, rather than emphasizing or discussing theological issues which would be comprehensible only to a small elite, promoters of this idea believed that the most important things were those that all churchgoers would understand immediately, such as the organizational structure of the Church and the liturgy.
- 30 With respect to the liturgy, the Waldenses did not have their own but used that of the Reformed Churches in Switzerland and their pastors, depending on their preferences, could use that of Geneva, Lausanne or Neuchâtel. In 1824, Pierre Bert, who had become Moderator the year before, thought he would compose an indigenous one. The project was not carried out, but the fact that this proposal was made at that time, just after Sims’s second trip in the valleys and the meeting with Gilly, suggests that pressure by the Anglican friends on the Moderator probably had some effect. This conjecture is also based on the fact that it was Gilly who, some years later in 1829, was at pains to obtain the consent of the Waldenses to introduce a uniform liturgy for all the communities that, in his view, should conform to the Anglican rite.³⁴
- 31 A commission was appointed which, contrary to the wish of their British friends, decided not to use the *Book of Common Prayer* as a model, but the traditional Swiss Reformed liturgies. The final text was largely written by George Muston, who studied in Lausanne and was at the time *modérateur adjoint* of the Waldensian Church. Subjected to several rounds of revision, it was published in 1837. The Venerable Table asked the pastors to use this liturgy and no other in the celebration of public worship.³⁵ Despite the initial disappointment, the fact that the Waldenses finally had their own liturgy was interpreted by their British friends as a step towards a greater independence in relation to the Swiss Reformed.³⁶
- 32 In the autumn of 1837 Colonel Beckwith wrote to the Waldensian pastors inviting them to vest the Moderator with a life tenure.³⁷ He had discussed this extensively with the Moderator Jean-Pierre Bonjour, who probably shared his ideas. Beckwith had been in agreement in the past with Bonjour’s now deceased father-in-law Pierre Bert who,

according to Gilly, had once said that he would consider favorably the restoration of the ancient discipline of the Waldensian Church in its pure episcopal form.³⁸

- 33 Beckwith's proposal was opposed both by the young, more directly influenced by the theology of the *Réveil*, as well as by the older generation, who feared change. This explains why the synod, held in April of 1839, did not even add Beckwith's proposal to the agenda.³⁹ The leaders of the Church probably also feared political consequences. The Savoy government interpreted the British efforts to influence the Waldenses as attempts to "induce those religionists to join the Anglican Church" and considered the proposed transformation of the office of Moderator "into a bishopric" according to the English model as a first step in adopting other changes. They manifested their strong opposition on the very same grounds which Beckwith had advocated – that it would strengthen the structure and appeal of the Waldensian Church.⁴⁰ The Synod of 1839 was delayed by a few months because the government of Savoy, before granting the necessary approval for it to gather, wanted to understand clearly what changes to ecclesiastical discipline were being proposed.⁴¹
- 34 The idea of spreading the Italian translation of the *Book of Common Prayer*, starting from the valleys, where very few actually spoke the language, was part of this intense debate that went on for years to come. Despite the disappointment of 1839 Beckwith did not give up. In 1848, when the King of Sardinia granted the Waldenses political emancipation, allowing them to build their own places of worship outside of the valley, Beckwith was very clear as to the Waldenses' duty towards Italy: "You will be missionaries or will be nothing," he wrote to his friends in the valleys. For this reason, in 1850, he proposed the adoption of a liturgy which he elaborated in close imitation of the Anglican rite, which he published anonymously, and, significantly, in Italian.⁴² However, again in this case his proposal fell on deaf ears. It was welcomed by an embarrassed silence and was not even discussed by the synod of 1851.⁴³

The new edition of Nott's translation (1850)

- 35 It is very likely that the previously printed copies of Nott's edition bought by Sims had been sent into the valleys as early as 1841. It was only in 1850 that the *Prayer-Book and Homily Society* – to which Sims had granted the copyright – finally decided to re-issue the volume. The edition included as an appendix the Latin text of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Nott had introduced numerous revisions about fifteen years earlier, but these were often purely linguistic and did not always improve the text, which in both editions completely lacks the beauty of the English original. Some translation mistakes were corrected and the Scriptural citations were consistent with the Diodati translation. Contrary to what the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* had once asked, the word "minister" continued to be translated as "prete."⁴⁴
- 36 It is likely that the almost ten years that separate Sims's purchase of the copyright and the publication are due to the fact that the new edition of the same translation revised by Di Menna and Evans appeared in 1841. Possibly Sims and the *Prayer-Book and Homily Society* simply thought that there was no market for another edition. In theory, a similar risk would have existed in 1850 because the SPCK had published two editions of the Di Menna-Evans edition shortly before – the first in 1848, with no changes from the 1841 version, and the second in 1849, after a further revision by a certain "Mr. Davies formerly of Caius College".⁴⁵ But by this time the Italian situation had changed radically compared

to a few years before. The Risorgimento turmoil gave the hope not only of a “political revolution” but also of a religious reform. What was happening in the valleys, both from the political point of view, with the emancipation of 1848, and from a religious point of view, with Beckwith’s previously discussed attempts, apparently re-launched Sims’s project.⁴⁶

- 37 In 1864 – three years after the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, which also marked the opportunity for the Waldenses to build churches outside the boundaries of the old Kingdom of Sardinia – Sims published a new book dedicated to the Waldenses: *Visits to the Valleys of Piedmont*. It was a sort of spiritual testament since Sims died in the same year and it contained his first work published in 1815 in favor of the Waldenses. The final pages of this volume are devoted to the dissemination of the Italian version of the *Book of Common Prayer* among the Waldenses.⁴⁷
- 38 Sims also published some letters written to the Secretary of the *Prayer-book and Homily Society* by Christian Lazarus Lauria and Christopher Webb Smith. Lauria was then a missionary in Italy for the *London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*.⁴⁸ In the letter written in Turin on May 7 1861, Lauria thanked the Secretary for the Italian copies of the *Prayer-Book* and *Homilies* that had been sent to him the previous year. He explained that among the “papists”, the words “Protestant” and “Atheist” were considered synonymous and that to destroy this prejudice there was nothing better than to show those texts. Christopher Webb Smith, an official of the *East India Company* who moved to Florence in his retirement in 1842, planned to print copies of the *Common Prayer Book* in Italian at the Waldenses’ publishing house – the Claudiana press – in Florence, though as far as we know this project did not go ahead.⁴⁹ Sims was enthused by these letters and other statements that described how some fifty missionaries were traveling up and down Italy to spread the pure gospel of the Waldenses. He ended his book expressing the hope that wealthy Britons would continue to support the cause of Italian evangelization. In his view the training of ministers and missionaries in Florence and the dissemination of Scripture and of the *Book of Common Prayer* in Italian could increase the number of the faithful.

Conclusion

- 39 Nott was a conservative both in politics and religion. A Tory and a high-church man he published his translation in 1831 almost certainly to justify his absence from England and to defend himself against allegations of dereliction of pastoral duties. But, verifying the classic aphorism that says that books have a life and will of their own – *habent sua fata libelli* – in the hands of an evangelical like Sims, his translation became an instrument of proselytism. While this is not the place to discuss in detail the goals of the other revisions, made by Di Menna and Evans, Davies and Camilleri,⁵⁰ they certainly testify to illusions cultivated by some in the English religious and political establishment. They wished to present the Anglican Church to Italian liberal and anti-curial clerics as a model challenging the primacy of Rome, and to strengthen a Church of Italy where the bishop of Rome did not have universal ambitions. It was a perspective that can perhaps be defined as neo-Sarpian.
- 40 This was, as we have seen, also an illusion under which Sims operated. What distinguished Sims’s attempt from those of the SPCK, that promoted and disseminated

the other revisions in Italy, was his belief that the Waldensian Church could be used to launch the Reformation of Italy. The attempt to offer the Anglican liturgy as a model to the Waldenses proved unsuccessful. There is, however, no doubt that the delusion about being able to bring some Anglican influence to bear on the ancient Waldensian church ignited tremendous interest in Britain, bringing a flood of money into the valleys and prompting the Waldenses to turn into a national church.

NOTES

1. Stefano Villani, "La prima edizione in italiano del Book of Common Prayer (1685) tra propaganda protestante e memoria sarpiana", in *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, XLIV (2008), 24-45; ID., "Italian Translations of the Book of Common Prayer," in *Travels and Translations. Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, edited by Alison Yarrington, Stefano Villani, Julia Kelly (Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2013), 303-319; ID., "Uno scisma mancato: Paolo Sarpi, William Bedell e la prima traduzione in italiano del Book of Common Prayer", forthcoming in *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*. On the links between Sarpi and the British embassy see Michaela Valente, "Le campane della propaganda: rapporti di reciprocità e conflitto giurisdizionale a Venezia tra Cinque e Seicento", *Laboratoire italien* [Online], 3 | 2002, Online since 16 March 2010, connection on 24 July 2014. URL: <http://laboratoireitalien.revues.org/369>; DOI: 10.4000/laboratoireitalien.369.
2. Stefano Villani, "Un'identità mascherata nell'Inghilterra del Seicento: la vicenda dell'ebraista Alessandro Amidei", in *Quaderni Storici*, XLIII (2008), 455-470. On the Avvisi politici see Stefano Villani, "Raccolte di aforismi. Gli Avvertimenti di Alessandro Amidei come plagio e riscrittura di alcune massime di Francesco Guicciardini, Giovan Francesco Lottini e Francesco Sansovino", forthcoming in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore - Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*.
3. *Il libro delle preghiere pubbliche ed amministrazione de sacramenti ed altri riti e cerimonie della chiesa, secondo l'uso della Chiesa Anglicana insieme col Salter over i salmi di David, come hanno da esser recitati nelle chiese: e la forma e modo di fare, ordinare e consacrare vescovi, presbiteri e diaconi* (Londra: Moses Pitt, 1685); see Stefano Villani, "La prima edizione in italiano del Book of Common Prayer (1685) tra propaganda protestante e memoria sarpiana," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, XLIV (2008), 24-45; ID., "Libri pubblicati in italiano in Inghilterra nel XVII secolo: il caso della traduzione del Book of Common Prayer del 1685," in *Le livre italien hors d'Italie au XVIIe siècle*, Actes du colloque du 23-25 avril 2009 réunis par Delphine Montolieu, Collection de l'Écrit, 12 (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse II, 2010), 91-120.
4. Stefano Villani, *The Italian Protestant Church of London in the Seventeenth Century*, in Barbara Schaff (ed.), *Exiles, Emigrés and Intermediaries Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions* (Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2010), Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 139, 217-236.
5. Stefano Villani, *La prima edizione in italiano del Book of Common Prayer (1685)*, cit.
6. On the attempts to revive the Italian chapel see Stefano Villani, "La chiesa protestante italiana di Londra nel Seicento," in E. Valeri, M.A. Visceglia, P. Volpini, *Figure e spazi della mediazione culturale nella prima età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 263-285.
7. Philip Henry, 5TH Earl of Stanhope, *Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington, 1831-1851* (London: J. Murray, 1888), 291.

8. *La liturgia, ovvero formola delle preghiere pubbliche secondo l'uso della chiesa anglicana, col Satterio di Davide. Nuovamente tradotta dall'Inglese nel Tosco idioma da A. Montucci e L. Valetti*, Si vende appresso di Vernor ed Hood, Birch Lane, Cornhill e S. Herbert, Great Russel Street Bloomsbury, 1796. On Montucci see Stefano Villani, *Montucci, Antonio*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (2012).
9. *Liturgia ovvero formola delle preghiere pubbliche secondo l'uso della Chiesa Anglicana; col salterio di Davide. Traduzione italiana corretta, ed aumentata da Giambattista Rolandi con aggiunta di rime sacre*, Londra, Si vende da Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor e Lepard, Finsbury square; G. e W.B. Whittaker, Ave-Maria-lane; J. Collingwood, Strand; T. Boosey e Figli, Broad-street; R. Priestley, High Holborn; e B. Dulau e Co. Soho square, 1820.
10. Villani, *Italian Translations of the Book of Common Prayer*, op. cit.
11. J. Robert Wright, *Early translations*, in Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (eds), *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer. A Worldwide Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 57; Samuel Bagster, *Samuel Bagster of London, 1772-1851: An Autobiography* (London: Bagster, 1972).
12. *Libro delle Preghiere Comuni e dell'amministrazione dei Sacramenti e degli altri riti e ceremonie ecclesiastiche secondo l'uso della Chiesa Unita d'Inghilterra e d'Irlanda, insieme col Salterio o Salmi di David, colle pause da osservarsi nel cantarli, o recitarli in Chiesa*, Londra 1831. London was certainly a false imprint because, very probably, the book was published in Livorno by the printing press of Giulio Sardi. See STEFANO VILLANI, *George Frederick Nott (1768-1841). Un ecclesiastico anglicano tra teologia, letteratura, arte, archeologia, bibliofilia e collezionismo* (Roma: Accademia dei Lincei, 2012), 855-858.
13. Villani, *George Frederick Nott (1768-1841)*, op. cit.
14. Villani, *George Frederick Nott (1768-1841)*, op. cit.
15. See Giorgio Spini, *Risorgimento e protestanti* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1989), 204-205.
16. Cambridge University Library (from now on referred to as Cambridge UL), SPCK.MS A16/1, *Foreign Translation Committee, 1834-1844*, c. 15. Involved in the revolutionary attempts of 1820, Rossetti fled first to Malta and then in England where he married the Protestant Frances Polidori. Even if he did not join formally the Church of England, he was always a passionate – even if confused – supporter of Italian Evangelism in London. On him see G. Rossetti, *La vita mia – Il testamento, con scritti e documenti inediti di William Michael Rossetti*, edited by Gianni Oliva (Lanciano: Carabba, 2004).
17. We get this information from a note by Edward Craven Hawtrey, in “Notes and Queries” 1st Series, vol. 12 (21st July 1855), 64; this note is used in R. Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question* (MacLachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh 1865), 354.
18. Frances Eleanor Trollope, *Frances Trollope: Her life and Literary Work from George III. to Victoria* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1895), vol. 1, 195.
19. No copy of Rossetti's remark is extant. There are many references to it in the minutes the *Foreign Translation Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*: Cambridge UL, SPCK.MS A16/1, *Foreign Translation Committee, 1834-1844*, c. 18 (Monday February 8 1835), *Ibid.*, c. 20 (Monday March 9th 1835).
20. *Ibid.*, c. 24 (Monday May 11th 1835).
21. *Ibid.*, c. 26 (Monday June 8th 1835).
22. *Ibid.*, cc. 29-30 (Monday July 13th 1835).
23. *Ibid.*, c. 51 (Monday January 11th 1836); *Ibid.*, c. 61 (Monday April 11th 1836). Cf. also *Ibid.*, c. 40 (Monday November 9th 1835).
24. *Ibid.*, c. 68 (Monday July 11th 1836).
25. ““Dorset County Chronicle”, March 1837; “The Aberdeen Journal” (1 March 1837), Issue 4651.
26. G. Pelliccioni, *Un archeologo romano della prima metà del secolo (Emiliano Sarti)*, “Nuova Antologia” vol. 30, Serie II (15 novembre 1881), 173-202 (republished also in A. Viti, *Vite di romani illustri*, Nuova Tipografia dell'Orfanotrofio Comunale, Roma 1890, vol. 3, 59-109).

27. Cambridge UL, SPCK.MS A16/1, *Foreign Translation Committee, 1834-1844*, c. 205, 13 Dec. 1841.
28. Cf. SPINI, *Risorgimento e protestanti*, op. cit., 205.
29. *Libro delle Preghiere Comuni, e dell'amministrazione dei Sacramenti, e degli altri riti e cerimonie ecclesiastiche, secondo l'uso della Chiesa unita d'Inghilterra e d'Irlanda: insieme col Salterio o Salmi di David, colla forma e modo di fare, ordinare, e consacrare vescovi, sacerdoti, e diaconi*, Londra, G. M'Dowall, stampatore, 1841. For the vicissitudes of this revision see Cambridge UL, SPCK.MS A16/1, *Foreign Translation Committee, 1834-1844*, c. 205, 13 Dec. 1841, see David N. Griffiths, *The Bibliography of the Book of Common Prayer, 1549-1999* (London, British Library, 2002), particularly, for the Italian versions see 513-515 (num. 66.8).
30. In a sheet inserted between the pages 124 e 125 of the copy of the sale catalogue of Nott's library kept in the archives of the Cathedral of Winchester (DC/L/3/1) there is a note that says that Sims acquired the copyright and 500 copies of the *Libro delle Preghiere Comuni* for 13 Sterling pounds ("Copyright Italian Liturgy by D^r. Nott & 500 copies"), see a similar note in the catalogue kept in the Hampshire Record Office, 11M70/B7/91.
31. For a complete biographical study of Thomas Sims see Stefano Villani, "Dal Galles alle Valli: Thomas Sims (1785-1864) e la riscoperta britannica dei valdesi", in *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi* 215 (2014): 103-171. Il Nuovo Testamento in piemontese – 'L Liber d'i Salm dë David tradout ën lingua Piemounteisa = *Il libro de' Salmi di David*, [London], W. M'Dowall, 1840 ["Published by the British and Foreign Bible Society"] – was published by the same press of the Di Menna-Evans revision.
32. W. S. Gilly 1824, *Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of Piemont, and Researches Among the Vaudois, or Waldenses* (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1824), 74.
33. T. Sims, *Visits to the Valleys of Piedmont; Including a Brief Memoir Respecting the Waldenses* (London: 1864), 63-72.
34. See Viviana Genre, *William Stephen Gilly e i viaggi nelle valli valdesi*, tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Torino, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, corso di laurea in Lingue e Letterature moderne, a. a. 2003-2004, relatore prof.ssa Giuliana Ferreccio, 57, 82-84; Bruno Bellion, *Il rinnovamento delle chiese valdesi nella prima metà del secolo XIX*, Tesi discussa alla Facoltà Valdese di teologia (Rome, 1964-65), 54, 102-103.
35. *La liturgie ou la manière de célébrer le service divin, comme elle est établie dans les Eglises Evangéliques des Vallées du Piémont. Par ordre du Synode* (Edimbourg : 1837); *Liturgie Vaudois, ou la manière de célébrer le service divin comme elle est établie dans l'Eglise Evangélique des Vallées Vaudoises du Piémont. Par ordre du Synode* (Lausanne: 1842, another reprint Pinerolo: 1872). See Viviana Genre, *William Stephen Gilly*, op. cit., 82-84, 106-107.
36. A new edition was published in 1842 with some changes, including a formula for the Burial service, composed by Jean Pierre Bonjour – Pierre Bert's son in law – largely influenced by the Anglican one.
37. F. Giampiccoli, *J. Charles Beckwith. Il Generale dei valdesi (1789-1862)* (Torino: Claudiana, 2012), 83.
38. Viviana Genre, *William Stephen Gilly*, op. cit., 208.
39. See Spini, *Risorgimento e protestanti*, op. cit., 311-312; Giampiccoli, *J. Charles Beckwith*, op. cit.
40. Archivio di Stato di Torino, *Materie Ecclesiastiche*, Cat. XXXVIII, mazzo 4 "Carteggio relativo all'autorizzazione per il Sinodo delle Chiese valdesi" quoted in Giampiccoli, *J. Charles Beckwith*, 98-104.
41. Cambridge UL, Lettera di Gilly a Robert Pott, 10 giu, 1839, cit. in Genre, *William Stephen Gilly*, op. cit., 105; Vinay, *Facoltà Valdese di Teologia 1855-1955* (Torre Pellice: Claudiana, 1955).
42. [Beckwith], *Saggio di liturgia secondo le dottrine della sacra scriptura ad uso dei semplici* (Pinerolo: Tipografia di G. Chiantore, 1850).
43. Genre, *William Stephen Gilly*, cit., 137-138.

44. *Il Libro delle preghiere pubbliche, e dell'amministrazione de' sacramenti, ed altri riti e cerimonie ecclesiastiche, secondo l'uso della Chiesa Unita d'Inghilterra e d'Irlanda, coi Salmi di David. In fine, in lingua latina, i XXXIX articoli della religione* (London, Prayer-Book and Homily Society, 1850).
45. Cambridge UL, SPCK.MS A16/2, *Foreign Translation Committee, 1844-1853*, c. 141 Monday April 19 1847; *Ibid.*, c. 149 Monday June 7 1847.
- Cambridge UL, SPCK.MS A16/2, *Foreign Translation Committee, 1844-1853*, c. 155 (Saturday July 3 1847).
46. See Alberto Revel, "Il Culto Cristiano", in *Rivista Cristiana* III (1875), 82-89, 121-129, 159-169, in part. 163-167.
47. Sims, *Visits to the Valleys of Piedmont*, cit., 52, 63-72.
48. On Lauria see Stefano Villani, "Christianus Lazarus Lauria e l'attività della London Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Jews in Italia", forthcoming in *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* XXXIV/1(2017).
49. SIMS, *Visits to the Valleys of Piedmont*, cit., 64-67.
50. When Sims published his last book, a further revision of Nott's translation made by the SPCK had already appeared. Its author was Michel Angelo Camilleri, a former Roman Catholic Maltese priest, who had joined the Church of England (it was published in 1861 and reissued in 1863, 1870, 1880, 1882, 1888, 1915, and, perhaps, in 1929). *Ibid.*, 63-72.

ABSTRACTS

The first manuscript Italian translation of the *Book of Common Prayer* was made in 1608 by the chaplain to James I's ambassador in Venice with the help of Paolo Sarpi. This translation was part of an English propaganda plan to instigate a schism in the Church of Venice. A completely different translation was printed in London in 1685, for propaganda reasons, as a sort of poisoned gift to the Catholic King, James II. A significant number of Italian translations of the *Book of Common Prayer* were made in the 18th and 19th centuries. They served purposes that often had nothing to do with worship, including providing a convenient way for English people to learn Italian. In 1831 George Frederick Nott prepared a new translation of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was published in Livorno, though with false attribution to London. The *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (SPCK) used this Italian version to promote the Church of England as a possible model for a reformation of the Roman Catholic Church. In the 19th century, a number of Anglicans vainly engaged in attempts to convince the Waldensian Church to become the instrument of the conversion of Italy to Protestantism thanks to its adoption of episcopacy and the *Book of Common Prayer*.

En 1608, le chapelain de l'ambassadeur de Venise à la cour de Jacques Ier, aidé de Paolo Scarpi produisit une traduction manuscrite du *Book of Common Prayer* en italien. Cette traduction avait une fonction de propagande et était destinée à encourager l'Eglise de Venise au schisme. En 1685, une nouvelle traduction en italien, complètement différente, fut publiée à Londres. Elle aussi faisait partie d'un dispositif de propagande, tout en constituant, par la même occasion, un cadeau empoisonné au nouveau souverain, catholique, Jacques II. Au cours des XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles, de nombreuses autres traductions furent publiées, à des fins très variées et souvent non liturgiques, par exemple pour servir d'outil dans l'apprentissage de l'italien. En 1831, George Frederick Nott prépara une nouvelle traduction du *Book of Common Prayer*, publiée à Livourne mais avec une page

de titre indiquant Londres comme lieu de publication. Avec cette traduction, la *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (SPCK) voulut promouvoir une réforme de l'Eglise catholique sur le modèle de l'Eglise anglicane. Enfin, au XIX^e siècle, plusieurs anglicans cherchèrent en vain à faire de l'Eglise vaudoise un instrument de conversion de l'Italie au protestantisme, en l'encourageant à adopter le *Book of Common Prayer* et un gouvernement épiscopal.

INDEX

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