

# A ‘fownde patrone and second father’ of the Marian Church: Antonio Buonvisi, religious exile and mid-Tudor Catholicism

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Despite receiving particular praise from a range of early modern commentators, from Nicholas Sander to Pedro de Ribadeneyra, most historians have seen the Italian merchant Antonio Buonvisi playing a fairly negligible role in the history of mid-Tudor Catholicism. This article challenges this interpretation. After reassessing some rather simplistic assessments of Buonvisi’s religious beliefs, this article explores his actions and activities following his self-imposed exile from England in 1549. Using research conducted in both the State Archives of Lucca and the Vatican City, it suggests that Buonvisi played a far more significant role in ensuring the survival of English Catholicism over the first decades of the Reformation than is usually acknowledged. Indeed, it argues that Buonvisi may have helped lay core foundations for the Catholic restoration of Mary I’s reign, the success of which has recently been highlighted by historians such as Eamon Duffy.

Keywords: Antonio Buonvisi, Mary I, English Catholicism, exile

In 1692, the Luccan playwright Giacomo Rossi published *Il Tomaso Moro*. This short ‘*opera scenica*’ narrated the life and martyrdom of Thomas More, the great English humanist.<sup>1</sup> However, More was not the only star of Rossi’s play. More’s co-hero was the Luccan-born merchant, Antonio Buonvisi. Towards the end of the first act, ‘Religion’ appeared to both More and Buonvisi in a providential vision, asking if they would lay down their lives in her name. Their subsequent responses reveal that, in Rossi’s imagining, Buonvisi was

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<sup>1</sup> Giacomo Rossi, *Il Tomaso Moro opera scenica dedicata all’eminentiss. sig. Francesco card. Buonvisi vescovo di Lucca recitata nel suo seminario* (Lucca, 1692).

of equal significance to the future saint for his sacrifices in defence of the faith:

*More [to Religion]:* To your dominion we subject our life

*Buonvisi:* To your divinity we offer our death

*More:* You order it

*Buonvisi:* You command it

*Religion:* You, Thomas, shed for me the blood from your veins. You, Buonvisi, open for me veins of precious metals; for two different enterprises the reward will be one, and for two different martyrdoms there will be one single crown.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the final act, after More's execution, the martyr appeared to Buonvisi in a dream, praising him for 'your acts of generosity towards the faithful' and assuring him of his place in heaven – 'My friend I am waiting for you. At my side you will sit, companion in my eternal peace'.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons behind Rossi's decision to award this merchant a leading role in his narrative of the English Reformation are not difficult to discern. The frontispiece of the Lucca edition of *Il Tomaso Moro* proudly bears a dedication 'to the most eminent Cardinal Francesco Buonvisi, bishop of Lucca'.<sup>4</sup> This is followed by an obsequious preface praising the Cardinal, whose 'valour of hand and mind' in all his dealings throughout Christendom was acknowledged by 'the whole world'.<sup>5</sup> Cardinal Buonvisi, a distant relative of Antonio, had taken over the bishopric of Lucca in 1690 and had moved from Rome to reside permanently in the diocese after the papal conclave of November 1691.<sup>6</sup> Rossi's play appears, therefore, to be an unremarkable example of a young and ambitious writer seeking to ingratiate himself with his new bishop through the exaggerated praise of a long-dead ancestor.

However, Rossi was not the only early modern commentator to single out Antonio Buonvisi for praise. In 1585, the *De origine ac progressu schismatis anglicani*, written by the English exile Nicholas Sanders and extended by another Catholic emigré, Edward Rishton, made particular

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-3 [N.B. all translations, unless otherwise indicated, are the author's own]: 'Mo. Al vostro impero soggettiamo la nostra vita./Buon. Al vostro Nume offeriamo la nostra morte./Mo. Disponete./Buon. Comandate./Rel. Voi, Tomaso, spargete per me dalle vene il sangue. Voi Buonviso, aprite per me vene di preciosi metalli: di due diverse imprese una sarà la mercede, e di due diversi martirii sarà un'istessa corona.'

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 161, 164 – 'Continue gli atti della vostra generosità a pro de fedeli'; 'Amico, io vi aspetto. Al mio fianco voi sederete Compagno della mia quiete inalterabile.'

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. † 1<sup>r</sup> – 'Dedicata all'eminentiss. Sig. Francesco Card. Buonvisi, Vescovo di Lucca'.

<sup>5</sup> Rossi compares the Cardinal's valour with that of Antonio, *Ibid.*, sig. † 2<sup>v</sup> – 'All'imprese di Antonio in favor della Cattolica Religione fu Teatro l'Inghilterra, all'imprese di V. E. in difesa della Fede è stato Teatro la Germania, & il Mondo tutto, che ha corrisposto con applausi al valore della sua mente, e della sua mano'.

<sup>6</sup> Gaspare De Caro, 'Buonvisi, Francesco', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (hereafter *DBI*), 90 vols. to date (Rome: Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960 –), 15 (1972) [[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-buonvisi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-buonvisi_(Dizionario-Biografico))]. Accessed 11 June 2018].

reference to ‘an Italian, Anthony Bonwise’, who suffered exile ‘on account of the Catholic faith’.<sup>7</sup> As the authors explained, Buonvisi, ‘seeing even the traces of the Catholic faith being removed from England, went to live in the University of Louvain, not indeed to carry on his business as a merchant of this world, but to attend to the business of the next.’<sup>8</sup> Buonvisi was to receive more laudatory treatment in the 1586 edition of this tract, expanded most likely by William Allen.<sup>9</sup> Buonvisi was presented as one who ‘on account of his singular piety’, would be ‘eternally held in the memory of the English’ – an assessment that would be repeated word-for-word in Girolamo Pollini’s 1591 *Storia ecclesiastica della Rivoluzione d’Inghilterra*.<sup>10</sup> Such praise was reiterated in the Spanish Jesuit, Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s 1588 *Historia eclesiástica del scisma del reyno de Inglaterra* (Madrid, 1588). Ribadeneyra explained how,

Antonio Buonvisi, an Italian by birth and a native of the city of Lucca. Having spent many years in England and conceived a love for the land – and, more importantly, as a god-fearing man – he was horrified at the calamities and miseries suffered by Catholics of that kingdom, and aided them...as long as he stayed there.<sup>11</sup>

However, in stark contrast to the importance awarded him by these commentators, modern historians have rarely seen Buonvisi playing anything more than a walk-on role in the early English Reformation. His close friendship with More is often cited, particularly the affectionate letter he received from the future saint just before his death in 1535. And yet, his role in the subsequent history of English Catholicism is often seen as fairly negligible, most historians simply highlighting the support he offered to some of More’s extended family after their exile on the continent under Edward VI.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Buonvisi’s principal interest to

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Sander, *De origine ac progressu schismatis anglicani* (Rome, 1585). References here are taken from the Victorian translation by David Lewis, *Rise and growth of the Anglican schism* (London, 1877), 200. For the complex history of this work, see Christopher Highley, “A Pestilent and Seditious Book”: Nicholas Sander’s *Schismatis Anglicani* and Catholic Histories of the Reformation’, in Paulina Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, CA.: University of California Press, 2006), 147–67.

<sup>8</sup> Sander, *Rise and Growth*, 202.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Sander, *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani, libri tres* (Ingolstadt, 1586). The author of these changes is a matter of some debate, however both Thomas Mayer and Joseph Simons suggest Allen as the most likely candidate. For an overview of the debate, see Highley, “A Pestilent and Seditious Book”, 149–150.

<sup>10</sup> Sander, *De origine...libri tres*, 229 – ‘...insignem poetatem aeterna erit illius apud Anglos memoria’; Girolamo Pollini, *Storia ecclesiastica della Rivoluzione d’Inghilterra* (Bologna, 1591), printed in Piero Rebora, *Civiltà Italiana e Civiltà Inglese: Studi e Ricerche* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1936), 71 – ‘Per la cui segnalata pietà e singulare amorevolezza, sarà la memoria sua appresso gl’Inglese eterna’.

<sup>11</sup> Spencer J. Weinreich trans., *Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England: A Spanish Jesuit’s History of the English Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 353.

<sup>12</sup> T. S. Graves, ‘The Heywood Circle and the Reformation’, *Modern Philology*, 10 (1913): 553–72, at 562–3; A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama: Medwall, the Rastells, Heywood, and the More Circle* (London: Methuen, 1926), 85; C. D. Ford, ‘Good Master Bonvisi’, *The Clergy*

historians of the early sixteenth century has been with regards to his economic activities as a key facilitator of the English wool trade.<sup>13</sup>

In light of the apparent discrepancy between the image of Buonvisi presented by modern historians, and that presented by their early modern counterparts, this article re-examines Buonvisi's importance for the development of English Catholicism during the early decades of the Reformation. It first explores the evidence that survives for Buonvisi's religious beliefs across the tumultuous decades of the 1530s and 1540s, asking how his faith compares to the heroic and rather hagiographic interpretations of Sanders, Ribadeneyra and Rossi. It then moves on to examine Buonvisi's actions and activities following his self-imposed exile from England in 1549. Although it imposes some important caveats, this article ultimately argues that Buonvisi played a far more significant role in ensuring the survival of English Catholicism over the first decades of the Reformation than is usually acknowledged by modern scholars.

### *Uncovering Buonvisi's beliefs*

Antonio Buonvisi was born on the 26 December 1487 in the Italian city of Lucca.<sup>14</sup> He was the son of a powerful merchant banker, Benedetto Buonvisi, whose financial empire stretched beyond his Tuscan homeland to Rome, Lyons, Louvain, Bruges, Antwerp, and London.<sup>15</sup> At the age of 17 Antonio moved to England where he was employed in the London branch of the family business. Over the subsequent forty years, he was to become head of that branch, and a non-resident partner in the Buonvisi firms in both Lyons and Antwerp.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the 1520s he imported goods on behalf of a number of individuals, including Cardinal Wolsey, as well as providing the English government and its agents with loans and foreign intelligence.<sup>17</sup> In these roles he seems to have developed a

*Review*, 27 (1947): 228–35; James Kelsey McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 271; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 420, 453.

<sup>13</sup> M. E. Bratchel, 'Italian Merchant Organization and Business Relationships in Early Tudor London', *Journal of European Economic History*, 7 (1978): 5–32, at 12–16, 21; *Idem.*, 'Alien Merchant Communities in London, 1500–1550' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1975), 168–96.

<sup>14</sup> C. T. Martin, rev. Basil Morgan, 'Bonvisi, Antonio (1470×75–1558), merchant', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*); online edn September 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2860>. Accessed 11 June 2017]. This is inaccurate on multiple points of Buonvisi's early life. A far more accurate portrait, based on extensive archival research, is sketched by Michele Luzzati, 'Buonvisi, Antonio', *DBI*, 15 (1972) [[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-buonvisi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-buonvisi_(Dizionario-Biografico)). Accessed 11 Jun 2018]. See also Elizabeth McCutcheon, "'The Apple of My Eye'" Thomas More to Antonio Bonvisi, a Reading and a Translation', *Moreana*, 18 (1981): 37–56.

<sup>15</sup> Bratchel, 'Italian Merchant Organization', 12–15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: Kew, The National Archives, State Papers (hereafter TNA, SP) 1/27, fo. 3r; TNA, SP 1/47, fos. 138r–139v, at fo. 138r; London, The British Library (hereafter BL), Cotton MS Vitellius B 11, fos. 94r–103v, at fo. 94r; TNA, SP 1/53, fos. 220r–221v, at fo. 221r; TNA, SP 1/55, fo. 9r.

reputation for honesty and efficiency, as a result of which he was shown great favour. In 1526 Henry VIII interceded on his behalf with Cardinal Campeggio regarding a lawsuit against Buonvisi in Rome, and by 1528 the Italian merchant was sure enough of his reputation with Cardinal Wolsey to write to him directly, requesting his assistance in what appears to be the same lawsuit.<sup>18</sup> Ten years later, Buonvisi was still held in high regard by the English government and its agents. In 1538, Thomas Thirlby, then serving as an English diplomat in France, noted that Buonvisi was 'a good money maker', and throughout the 1540s Buonvisi's help was sought by Henry VIII in providing guarantees on his behalf to financiers in Antwerp.<sup>19</sup>

However, whilst Buonvisi's financial dealings are well documented, his religious beliefs throughout this period are rather more difficult to pin down. The only surviving personal document which sheds any light on his religious beliefs is his will, written during his exile in Louvain on 23 October 1553.<sup>20</sup> Buonvisi prayed to the Virgin Mary 'to intercede for the remission of my sins', provided money for provision of a perpetual mass to be said each day of the year with prayers for both his own soul and that of his mother, father and brothers in the family chapel of San Frediano in Lucca, and he left money for various convents and monasteries in both Lucca and Louvain.<sup>21</sup> These bequests would appear to demonstrate a largely traditional Catholic belief in the intercessory power of the saints, a belief in the existence of purgatory, and a confidence in the sanctity of the monastic vocation. However, they tell us relatively little about his stance on some of the key religious issues raised by Henry VIII and Edward VI's reformations, particularly his opinions on the role of the papacy. Moreover, since this will was written in 1553, it disguises the ways in which Buonvisi's beliefs may have developed or changed over the preceding two decades.<sup>22</sup>

In the absence of any further personal documents outlining Buonvisi's beliefs over the 1520s, 30s and 40s, most historians have

<sup>18</sup> TNA, SP 1/51, fos. 70r-71v; *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 21 vols, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gardiner & R. H. Brodie (London, 1862-1910) (hereafter *L&PFD*), 4 (1), no. 1865.

<sup>19</sup> *L&PFD*, 12 (2), no. 1512; R. B. Outhwaite, 'The Trials of Foreign Borrowing: The English Crown and the Antwerp Money Market in the Mid-Sixteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 19 (1966): 289-305, at 290-1. For Buonvisi's role in securing loans for the English king, see the many letters of Stephen Vaughan in the mid-1540s: TNA, SP 1/188 fos. 174r-177v, 189r-190v; SP 1/189, fos. 123r-126v, 209r-211v; SP 1/190, fos. 31r-32v, 58r-59v, 81r-82v, 164r, 201r-202v, 214r-216r, 218r-219v; SP 1/191, fos. 12r-13v, 36r-38v, 227r.

<sup>20</sup> 'Copia del testamento di Antonio di Benedetto Buonvisi', 26 Oct 1553, Archivio di Stato di Lucca, Archivio Buonvisi, 1, n. 64, insert 5, fos. 1r-12v.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 3r-v - 'pregando di quore la sua glorissima madre li degni intercedere per la remissione dei miei peccati'.

<sup>22</sup> As a number of scholars have recently demonstrated, exile could have a transformative effect on religious beliefs. See, for example, Geert Janssen, 'The Exile Experience', in A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen & M. Laven eds, *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 73-90, esp. 81.

instead concentrated on the evidence of his contacts throughout this period. Foremost amongst these was the renowned English humanist, Thomas More. The pair's intimate friendship is revealed through a touching letter More sent to Buonvisi during his imprisonment in the Tower in or around June 1535.<sup>23</sup> More greeted Buonvisi as 'most trusty of all friends, and most beloved by me, and (as I am now long accustomed to call you) the apple of my eye'.<sup>24</sup> He explained how, 'for almost forty years now, I have been, not a guest, but a continual habitué of the Buonvisi household', suggesting that More had known the family before Antonio's arrival in London in 1505.<sup>25</sup> As Elizabeth McCutcheon has suggested, associations between More and Antonio likely began in a purely business sense, the Buonvisi family, with Antonio acting as their representative, perhaps providing loans in order to help finance More's early legal career.<sup>26</sup> However, this relationship quickly became more personal. In 1515, in a letter to Martin Dorp, More explained how both he and an Italian merchant 'no less learned than rich (and he was very rich)', had delighted in taunting the spiritual and moral corruption of a theologian-monk from the continent. After discussing a number of abuses in the Church, from usury and tithing to the use of the confessional, the merchant, so More recalls, poked fun at the monk's lack of learning in religious matters by inventing biblical quotations in an argument over the topic of mistresses.<sup>27</sup> It seems highly likely that this 'Italian merchant' was Buonvisi. Certainly, Cardinal Pole would later recall in a sermon of 1557 how More and Buonvisi often discussed 'the state of the commonwelthe of this realme' together, principally with regards to religious issues. In particular, he recounted a conversation in which Buonvisi had asked More, 'the more earnestlye of his opinion' touching the see of Rome. In response, More had, according to Pole, initially outlined his belief that the papacy was not 'a matter of so great a moment and importance, but rather ther as inventyd of men for a polytical ordre'. However, as Pole went on, More had dramatically changed his mind, returning several days later and exclaiming, 'Alas! Mr. Bonvyse, whither was I fawlinge, when I made you that answer of the prymacye of the chyrche? I assure you, that opinione alone was ynough to make me fawle from the rest, for that holdyth up all'.<sup>28</sup> During More's imprisonment in the Tower for upholding that same

<sup>23</sup> All quotes below are taken from the translation provided by Elizabeth McCutcheon, '“The Apple of My Eye”', 55–6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–1.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted and translated in *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> John Strype, *Ecclesiastical memorials; relating chiefly to religion, and the reformation of it, and the emergencies of the Church of England, under King Henry VIII. King Edward VI. and Queen Mary the First*, 3 vols. (London, 1721), 3 (2): 492–3.

belief in 1534 and 1535, Buonvisi provided him, along with John Fisher, with meat and wine.<sup>29</sup>

Another of Buonvisi's contacts often highlighted by historians is the Observant Franciscan friar of Greenwich, William Peto. Peto fled the realm in late 1532 or early 1533 after preaching a sermon in which he had condemned the English king's proposed divorce from Catherine of Aragon, predicting the loss of his throne if he were to go through with it.<sup>30</sup> Peto took refuge in Antwerp, where he continued to oppose the king, helping produce and print various tracts condemning the divorce over the following years.<sup>31</sup> In October 1533, a member of Buonvisi's household was suspected of giving £10 to a merchant to carry over the sea to help sustain Peto in his exile.<sup>32</sup>

Historians have tended to assume that Buonvisi's associations with these opponents of Henry's religious policies in the early 1530s provide proof that he too shared their 'aversion to the principles of the Reformation'.<sup>33</sup> However, such a conclusion is the product of an almost wilful tunnel vision. Alongside his friendship with More and Fisher, Buonvisi formed and maintained equally strong friendships with a number of other individuals throughout this period who took very different stances in the Reformation debates both in England and abroad. He was, for example, a frequent and friendly correspondent with the chief architect of the Henrician Reformation, Thomas Cromwell. Buonvisi is first noted as an associate of Cromwell in a letter of October 1522, and in 1528 he was supplying him with news from Italy via Stephen Vaughan.<sup>34</sup> By 1530 Buonvisi was described as one of Cromwell's 'friends', and this friendship can be traced across the following six years, continuing even after Cromwell had secured the execution of More.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, as Buonvisi expressed in a letter written to Cromwell in February 1536, just months after More's death, he was 'always desirous of being able to serve' the Vicegerent.<sup>36</sup> Later that year he wrote again, expressing his 'infinite thanks' to Cromwell

<sup>29</sup> *L&PFD*, 8, no. 856 (38, 39, 45, 47); TNA, SP 1/126, fo. 134r-v.

<sup>30</sup> *L&PFD*, 5, no. 941; *Calendar of State Papers Spain* (hereafter *CSPS*), 14 vols (London: H. M. S. O., 1862–1954), 4 (2), no. 934. The details surrounding Peto's flight are rather hazy. For a comprehensive survey of the evidence, see Keith Brown, 'The Franciscan Observants in England, 1482–1559' (Oxford, DPhil Thesis, 1986), 137–47; T. F. Mayer, 'Peto [Peyto], William (c. 1485–1558)', *ODNB*, online edn September 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22043>. Accessed 27 May 2018].

<sup>31</sup> *L&PFD*, 6, nos. 899, 900, 917.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, SP 1/80, fos. 5r–6v, at fo. 5v.

<sup>33</sup> Martin, 'Bonvisi, Antonio', *ODNB*.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, SP 1/26, fo. 108r; TNA, SP 1/47, fos. 138r–139v, at fo. 138r. See also TNA, SP 1/50, fo. 138r; TNA, SP 1/50, fo. 207r.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, SP 1/57, fo. 88r. The author of this letter asked Cromwell to recommend him to Buonvisi and 'to our other mutual friends' – '*ad gli altri nostri comuni amici*'. For other examples of this friendship see, TNA, SP 1/73, fo. 166r; TNA, SP 1/82 fo. 143r.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 106r–110v, at fo. 107v – '*rimanendo sempre desideroso di poterli fare servitio*'.

for his ‘innate kindness and benignity’ in having procured him the favour of Henry.<sup>37</sup> In 1536 alone, Buonvisi sent no fewer than seven letters to Cromwell, keeping him advised of occurrences in Italy, particularly the activities of the ‘bishop of Rome’, his cardinals and agents.<sup>38</sup>

Buonvisi’s friendship with Cromwell certainly complicates the prevailing view of him as an ardent papalist in the mould of Thomas More. If Buonvisi truly shared More’s aversion to the Royal Supremacy, why did he maintain such friendly relations with one of its chief protagonists, not to mention the man who had procured More’s execution? Perhaps it was simply a matter of pragmatism – after all, Cromwell was a useful ally to have in mid-1530s England. However, pragmatism does not explain a number of Buonvisi’s other close contacts throughout this period. For example, during the summer of 1535, Buonvisi appears to have allowed Thomas Starkey to take frequent breaks in his garden whilst writing his *Exhortation to the People instructing them to Unity and Obedience*.<sup>39</sup> In this tract, Starkey explained how his study of scripture had led him to perceive how far the contemporary Church ‘was slypped from that heavenly perfection... with whom in studies I was conuersant’, and thus convinced him of the need for religious reform.<sup>40</sup> Starkey went on to laud Henry’s usurpation of papal authority in England as a sign that ‘the reformynge of common religion, and of the purgyng of vayne superstition’ had truly begun.<sup>41</sup> Starkey’s reasons for supporting the Royal Supremacy were, as Thomas Mayer has demonstrated, a complex mix of political pragmatism and religious conviction.<sup>42</sup> However, whatever the reasons, the fact that Buonvisi appears to have been so close to Starkey at the exact time he was articulating this favourable interpretation of the Supremacy further complicates any straightforward view of the Italian merchant as an opponent of the Henrician Reformation. Such a complication is only compounded by exploring Buonvisi’s contacts outside the realm during this period.

Although he had lived in London from an early age, Buonvisi remained in contact with friends and members of his family in his hometown of Lucca throughout his life. He owned a collection of properties in and around the city, left to him by his father in 1520.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> TNA, SP 1/102, fo. 170r-171v, at fo. 170r – ‘innata humanita e benignita’.

<sup>38</sup> BL, Cotton Vitellius B 14, fos. 226r-227v; TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 106r-110v; TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 170r-172v, TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 174r-175v; BL, Cotton Vitellius B 14, fo. 158r; TNA, SP 1/103, fos. 156r-157v; TNA, SP 1/103, fos. 220r-223v.

<sup>39</sup> Florens Wilson to Starkey, 21 Nov 1535, BL, Cotton MS Nero B 6, fo. 20r; Thomas Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonwealth: Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 216.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Starkey, *A Preface to the kynges hyghnes* (London, 1536), fo. 44v.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 45v.

<sup>42</sup> Mayer, *Thomas Starkey*, 282.

<sup>43</sup> Luzzati, ‘Buonvisi, Antonio’, *DBI*.



In a letter of 28 February 1536, Antonio provided Cromwell with several articles of news from Lucca ‘derived from people who are well able to judge them’ – most likely his brothers.<sup>44</sup> It also seems that he travelled to visit his relatives on a number of occasions, bringing several of More’s writings and papers, likely including a copy of *Utopia*, to his brother Vincenzo at some point in the early 1530s.<sup>45</sup> Buonvisi’s will of October 1553 also illustrates his enduring sense of connection to his Luccan family. If he were to die in Italy, Buonvisi wished to be interred alongside his father’s tomb in the city, leaving money for prayers to be said for the souls of his ‘father, mother, brothers, sisters and all my kin’.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout this period, Buonvisi’s brothers appear to have been involved in an idiosyncratic Italian movement for religious reform which, as Richard Rex has explained, ‘sought to combine evangelical theology with ecclesiastical loyalty or at least conformity’.<sup>47</sup> During the 1520s, Lucca had become a key hub in the so-called ‘*trafila erasmiana*’ or ‘Erasmian network’. A growing number of well-educated Luccan merchants had taken a deep interest in the works of Erasmus, along with other Christian humanists, seeking reform of the Catholic Church’s abuses in line with the writings of the Dutch humanist, and advocating a religiosity inspired by the Pauline epistles.<sup>48</sup> Several of these Luccan humanists also took an interest in some of the ideas of early reformers such as Luther. As early as the mid-1520s, evangelical ideas had been circulating in the city thanks to the markedly tolerant attitude of the city’s magistrates.<sup>49</sup> Although they never challenged the ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church, Buonvisi’s brothers appear to have been amongst this reforming humanist milieu in the city. Indeed, as Simonetta Adorni-Braccesi has suggested, Vincenzo and Ludovico Buonvisi were

<sup>44</sup> Bratchel, ‘Italian Merchant Organization’, 14–15; Buonvisi to Cromwell, 28 Feb 1536, TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 106r–110v, at fo. 106v – ‘*diuersi chapitoli a nuoue havute da lucha retratte da persone possano bene intendere li*’.

<sup>45</sup> Eric Nelson, ‘Utopia through Italian Eyes: Thomas More and the Critics of Civic Humanism’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59 (2006): 1029–57, at 1041–2; Luigi Firpo, *Studi sull’Utopia: Raccolti da Luigi Firpo* (Florence, 1977), 52.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Copia del testamento di Antonio di Benedetto Buonvisi’, fo. 3v – ‘*pregare per le anime di mio Padre, Madre, l’anima di miei fratelli, sorelle, e tutte miei parenti*’.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Rex, ‘Humanism’, in Andrew Pettegree ed, *The Reformation World* (London: Routledge, 2000), 51–70, at 62. In Italian scholarship, this movement is often referred to as ‘*Evangelismo*’. For an English-language overview of this complex historiography see Adam Patrick Robinson, *The Career of Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509–1580): Between Council and Inquisition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 4–10.

<sup>48</sup> S. Adorni-Braccesi, ‘Religious Refugees from Lucca’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 88 (1997): 338–379, at 341–2; Adorni Braccesi, ‘*Una Città infetta: La repubblica di Lucca nella crisi religiosa del Cinquecento*’, (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 53–77, 84–7; Ole Peter Grell, *Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25. The phrase ‘*trafila erasmiana*’ was originally coined by Salvatore Caponetto, *Aonio Paleario (1503–1570) e la Riforma protestante in Toscana* (Turin: Claudiana, 1979), 81.

<sup>49</sup> Grell, *Brethren in Christ*, 24–5.

amongst the keenest advocates of humanist writings in the early decades of the century.<sup>50</sup> Vincenzo in particular had encouraged the Milanese scholar, Ortensio Lando, to translate More's *Utopia* into Italian in the early 1530s. Moreover, in the summer of 1535, the Buonvisi family hosted Lando for a month whilst he composed his *Forcianaes Quaestiones*. This tract, which praised Lucca as the perfect example of the godly city-state, mixed humanist piety with 'a decidedly favourable attitude towards the Reformation', especially Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone.<sup>51</sup>

Of course, Antonio Buonvisi's connections with his Luccan family do not necessarily mean that he shared such beliefs. However, it is notable that he also retained contact throughout the 1530s and early 1540s with a similar group of evangelically-minded humanists in the French city of Lyons, a group also dominated by expatriate Luccan merchants. Buonvisi had resided intermittently in Lyons between November 1535 and at least July 1538, likely administering to the local branch of the family business, of which he had been a joint partner since the mid-1520s.<sup>52</sup> For much of this time he appears to have been host to the Scottish humanist, Florens Wilson. As Dominic Baker-Smith has revealed, Buonvisi and Wilson had been acquainted with one another since at least September 1526, and a series of letters throughout the late 1520s reinforce the idea of a growing friendship between the two.<sup>53</sup> In June 1535, the interrogation of Andrew, a servant of Buonvisi's, in relation to the trial of John Fisher, revealed that Wilson had been at his house for dinner where they had discussed the recent appointment of Fisher as cardinal.<sup>54</sup> Later that year, on 21 November, Wilson wrote to Thomas Starkey explaining that he was staying in the 'household of A. Buonvisi in Lyons'.<sup>55</sup> After a brief period in which he travelled between Carpentras, Paris and potentially Italy, Wilson resettled in Lyons in late 1537 where, it seems, Buonvisi was there to welcome him once again.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Adorni-Braccesi, 'Religious Refugees', 342; Adorni-Braccesi, '*Una Città Infetta*', 53–60. See also Caponetto, *Aonio Paleario*, 80–1.

<sup>51</sup> Ortensio Lando, *Forcianaes quaestiones, in quibus varia Itolorum ingenia explicantur, multaque alia scitu non indigna* (Naples [*sic* – Lyon], 1535); Adorni-Braccesi, 'Religious Refugees', 342; Adorni-Braccesi, '*Una Città infetta*', 107–8; Luigi Firpo, *Studi sull'Utopia* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1977), 52; Nelson, 'Utopia through Italian Eyes', 1042; S. Adorni-Braccesi & Simone Ragagli, 'Lando, Ortensio', in *DBI*, 63 (2004) [[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ortensio-lando\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ortensio-lando_(Dizionario-Biografico))]. Accessed 11 June 2018].

<sup>52</sup> BL, Cotton MS Nero B 6, fo. 20r; TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 106r–110r; TNA, SP 1/102, fos. 170r–172r; TNA, SP 1/102, fo. 174r–v; BL, Cotton MS, Vitellius B 14, fo. 158r; TNA, SP 1/103, fos. 156r–157v; *L&PPFD*, 13 (1), no. 1512. For Buonvisi's partnership in the Lyons firm, see Bratchel, 'Italian Merchant Organisation', 15.

<sup>53</sup> Dominic Baker Smith, 'Antonio Buonvisi and Florens Wilson: A European Friendship', *Moreana*, 43 (2006):82–108, at 83, 94–8.

<sup>54</sup> *L&PPFD*, 8, no. 856 (43).

<sup>55</sup> BL, Cotton MS, Nero B 6, fo. 20r – '*Lugduni in aedibus A. Bonuisii*'.

<sup>56</sup> Baker-Smith, 'Antonio Buonvisi', 98.

Around this time, Wilson was becoming an important member of a circle of humanist scholars that had gathered around the Lyonese presses of the Swabian printer, Sebastian Gryphius.<sup>57</sup> Gryphius's print shop served as a humanist hub in the city where 'scholarly and literary plans were discussed, and...unorthodox religious opinions might be expressed'.<sup>58</sup> By the mid-1530s, some of the works produced by this circle began to exhibit pronounced evangelical influences. In 1535, for example, Ortensio Lando's aforementioned *Forciana Quæstiones* was printed.<sup>59</sup> By the late 1530s, Wilson himself was contributing to this printing programme. His first tract, printed by Gryphius in 1539, was his *Commentatio quaedam theologica*.<sup>60</sup> This series of prayers with strong scriptural allusions has been defined as a 'consciously irenic work'.<sup>61</sup> It studiously avoided controversial issues, instead emphasising points of contact between traditional Catholic ecclesiology and reforming ideas. As John Durkan has suggested, in this way it echoed the style later characteristic of the famous irenicist, Sebastian Castellio.<sup>62</sup>

Wilson's next published tract, the *De animi tranquillitate dialogus* of 1543, consisted of a dialogue, set in the hills of Lucca, between Wilson and a group of Italians.<sup>63</sup> The complex web of references and influences within this work 'from both ends of the theological spectrum' has been examined in detail elsewhere, however, as Baker-Smith has suggested, 'the most coherent reading of Wilson's argument would seem to suggest that he is striving for a genuine compromise' between a Lutheran stress on the overwhelming importance of God's mercy for salvation and Catholic ecclesial tradition.<sup>64</sup> Significantly, both these tracts referenced Wilson's continuing friendship with Buonvisi and his family. The dedication of his *Commentatio* to another Luccan merchant, Francesco Turretini, ended by offering Wilson's greetings to 'all the Buonvisi family'.<sup>65</sup> His *De animi tranquillitate* expressed an even clearer debt to Antonio. At the end

<sup>57</sup> Dominic Baker-Smith, 'Florens Wilson and his circle: emigres in Lyons, 1539–1543', in Grahame Castor & Terence Cave eds, *Neo-Latin and the Vernacular in Renaissance France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 83–97.

<sup>58</sup> Hans R. Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio 1515–1563: Humanist and Defender of Religious Tolerance in a Confessional Age*. Translated by Bruce Gordon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), 15.

<sup>59</sup> Adorni-Braccesi, 'Religious Refugees', 342–3; Adorni-Braccesi & Ragagli, 'Lando, Ortensio'.

<sup>60</sup> Florens Wilson, *Commentatio quaedam theologica, quae eadem precatio est, de industria tanquam in aphorismos dissecta* (Lyon, 1539).

<sup>61</sup> Baker-Smith, 'Antonio Buonvisi', 100–2.

<sup>62</sup> John Durkan, 'Wilson, Florence (d. in or after 1551)', *ODNB*, online edn September 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28352. Accessed 27 May 2018].

<sup>63</sup> Florens Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus* (Lyons, 1543).

<sup>64</sup> Durkan, 'Wilson, Florence'; Baker-Smith, 'Antonio Buonvisi', 106. For a more detailed look at Wilson's *De animi tranquillitate* see Alasdair A. MacDonald, 'Florentius Volusenus and Tranquillity of Mind: Some Applications of an Ancient Ideal', in Arie Johan Vanderjagt, A. A. MacDonald, Z. R. W. M. von Martels & Jan R. Veenstra eds, *Christian Humanism: Essays in honour of Arjo Vanderjagt* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 119–38, esp. 128.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Baker-Smith, 'Antonio Buonvisi', 103 – 'tota familia Bonvisiana'.

of the twelfth chapter, Wilson referred to that ‘excellent and remarkable man, Antonio Buonvisi’, incorporating an encomiastic poem in honour of the Luccan merchant.<sup>66</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that an examination of Buonvisi’s contacts and associations across the first decade of the Reformation in England raises rather more questions than it answers. The fact that the majority of Buonvisi’s contacts during this period were humanist scholars deeply interested in questions of Church reform might warrant the conclusion that he himself belonged to this same intellectual milieu. However, despite their common Christian humanist background, Buonvisi’s associates took a whole range of different stances on both the Royal Supremacy, as well as wider reformation debates.<sup>67</sup> Historians have tended to foreground his relationship with More, no doubt because of the English humanist’s literary fame, and thereby see Buonvisi as an ardent papalist opposed to the principles of the Reformation. However, it is important to recognise that, by emphasising some of his other lesser-known but equally strong associations during these years, one could just as easily envisage Buonvisi as a supporter of the Henrician Reformation like Thomas Starkey, or indeed as an advocate of a distinctly irenic spirituality, incorporating certain evangelical doctrines with a reformed Catholic ecclesiology like Florens Wilson. Although we cannot know which, if any, of these interpretations is correct, the fact that Buonvisi remained friendly throughout the 1530s with individuals possessed of such a diverse range of religious beliefs is important for two reasons. First, it serves as a salutary reminder that ties of friendship and sociability could override religious affiliation, especially at this early stage in the English Reformation when religious identities remained fluid and malleable, and confessional battle-lines were yet to be drawn.<sup>68</sup> And secondly, the diversity of Buonvisi’s friendships and associations in this period illustrates the difficulty of using just one of these friendships, namely that with Thomas More, as unambiguous proof of his papalism and religious conservatism.

We are left, therefore, with Buonvisi’s actions alone as a guide to his religious beliefs. Buonvisi himself offered no resistance to the Henrician regime. Although there is no evidence of him ever having taken the oath of supremacy, he sustained the English king financially throughout his reign, both before and after his creation as supreme head of the English Church, and provided Henry with valuable foreign

<sup>66</sup> Florens Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus* (Frankfurt, 1760), 209–10 – ‘*egregii illius et singularis viri Antonii Bonvisii*’.

<sup>67</sup> A conclusion which enforces the point, made by a number of scholars, that humanists were not ‘guaranteed recruits’ for the Reformation: see Rex, ‘Humanism’, 62.

<sup>68</sup> On which see, for example, Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton eds, *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional relations in early modern England: Essays in Honour of Professor W. J. Sheils* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), *passim*.

intelligence through Thomas Cromwell.<sup>69</sup> Such support need not, of course, signify agreement with Henry's religious policies. Buonvisi may have conformed out of a sense of loyalty to the king, or he may simply have been loath to give up the royal favour he had accrued over the 1520s and early 1530s (favour which had proven extremely lucrative) by expressing his public opposition to the Reformation – a case of pragmatism prevailing over religious conviction.<sup>70</sup> However, it is worth stressing that Buonvisi had consciously chosen to remain in England. Buonvisi's position as the head of an international business empire meant that, had he wanted to, he could have moved abroad at any point throughout the 1530s and 1540s. He could easily, for example, have remained in Lyons where he had been residing intermittently across the late 1530s, and where he was a joint partner in the family firm. That he voted with his feet in favour of returning to a realm which remained defiantly separate from Rome, and in which several aspects of traditional devotion had been fatally undermined, at the very least suggests that he did not perceive Henrician religious policy to be wholly incompatible with his own faith. Indeed, it is possible that Buonvisi found himself able to interpret the Royal Supremacy as a fulfilment of the humanist imperative to reform the Church of abuses, especially given his clear interest in Church reform.<sup>71</sup>

Whatever his reasons for conforming during Henry's reign, however, Buonvisi's willingness to remain in England appears to have begun to wane following the accession of Edward VI and the subsequent radicalisation of religious policy in the realm. Shortly after Edward's accession, in September 1547, Buonvisi was implicated in a recognisance for Phillip Parys, a man charged with 'sitting afore the doore of Anthony Bonvise' and publically denouncing the 'heresy and treason in the Kinges Majestes Homelies'. It is unclear precisely which aspects of the homilies Parys objected to (and indeed if Buonvisi shared Parys's sentiments) since these homilies denounced a number of different aspects of traditional devotion, including relics, images, monasteries and purgatory, as 'papisticall supersticions', and affirmed the

<sup>69</sup> See above. N.B. It is unlikely that Buonvisi would ever have been offered an oath of supremacy since he was never appointed to any official governmental or ecclesiastical position, and therefore did not fall within the remit of the 1536 Act for Extinguishing the Authority of the Bishop of Rome: see Jonathan Gray, *Oaths and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 78–9.

<sup>70</sup> The varying motives, principled and pragmatic, that might have inspired conformity with the Royal Supremacy have been explored by Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44–51.

<sup>71</sup> As Aysha Pollnitz has recently demonstrated, Henrician polemicists deliberately exploited Erasmian humanist arguments in justifying the Royal Supremacy, claiming that Henry 'was acting to reform clerical ignorance and correct papal neglect of divine law on his subjects' behalf. However disingenuous, such arguments may well have appealed to an individual like Buonvisi. Aysha Pollnitz, *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 112–25, esp. 114.

doctrine of justification by faith alone.<sup>72</sup> However, two years later, on 25 September 1549, an Inquisition post mortem recorded that Buonvisi,

without licence from the King craftily and rebelliously took flight with all his family and went to parts beyond the seas, to wit, to Antwerp in Flanders, and lived under the power of the Emperor Charles.<sup>73</sup>

The exact reasons behind Buonvisi's flight are far from clear. Charles Wriothesley implied in his chronicle that it was due to the fact that Buonvisi was a 'ranke papiste'.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps, therefore, the religious changes that had occurred under Edward had brought Buonvisi to the realisation, like More almost fifteen years earlier, that the papacy was key to preserving the integrity of the Catholic faith. However, as Peter Marshall has explained, the term 'papist' was hardly a precise one at this time, being used to denote any individual who demonstrated aversion to any of the king's religious policies. Indeed, Thomas Cranmer described Stephen Gardiner as an 'English papist' largely on the basis of his belief in transubstantiation.<sup>75</sup> The date of Buonvisi's flight suggests that it was more likely Edwardian changes to the liturgy to which he truly objected, rather than any epiphany regarding the importance of papal supremacy. His flight came at the end of a tumultuous summer in which the government had brutally crushed a series of rebellions across the country which had, at least in part, been inspired by the abolition of the Latin mass, and in which a new English Prayer Book had been introduced nationwide.<sup>76</sup> That these liturgical innovations were the cause of Buonvisi's departure is also suggested by the fact that several of the emigrés who left around the same time as him, and who would come to reside in his house abroad, left for similar reasons. For example the MP, John Story, fled the realm around the same time as Buonvisi after having publically denounced the Act of Uniformity which had prescribed the new Prayer Book in the parliament of November 1548.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Acts of the Privy Council of England* (hereafter *APC*), 45 vols, ed. J. R. Dasent, E. G. Atkinson, J. V. Lyle, R. F. Monger, P. A. Penfold (London: H. M. S. O., 1890–1964), 2:129; Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 307–8. One might conjecture that the most likely cause of Parys's ire was Thomas Cranmer's homily 'of good woorkes annexed unto faithe', *Certaine sermons, or homelies appoynted by the kynges Maiestie, to be declared and redde, by all persones, vicars, or curates, euery Sondaye in their churches, where they haue cure* (London, 1547), sigs. h 1v-k 2v, esp. its denunciation of 'papistically supersticious' at sig. k 1r.

<sup>73</sup> G. S. Fry ed, *Abstracts of Inquisitiones Post Mortem For the City of London: Part 1* (London: British Record Society, 1896), 115.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England during the reigns of the Tudors, 1485–1559*, ed. W. H. Hamilton, 2 vols. (London: Camden Society, 1875–7), 2:34.

<sup>75</sup> Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 335.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 328–31.

<sup>77</sup> Roger Virgoe & R. J. W Swales, 'Story, John (c.1504–71)', in S. T. Bindorff ed, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509–1558*, 3 vols (London: Secker and Warburg, 1982), 3:387.

That religious issues were involved in Buonvisi's decision to leave England is therefore extremely likely, especially given his actions thereafter (discussed below). However, it is important to stress that other factors may also have influenced this decision. Michele Luzzati has suggested that his flight may also have been prompted by economic concerns. Following the accession of Edward VI, Buonvisi's business engagements on behalf of the English government dwindled rapidly. Whilst he had previously enjoyed the hard-earned favour of Henry VIII, his undeveloped relationship with Protector Somerset meant that he could no longer rely upon special treatment. Certainly, references to Buonvisi in government correspondence declined sharply following Edward's accession.<sup>78</sup> In such an economic climate, his decision to relocate to Louvain certainly made sense. From abroad he could more easily preside over his family firm in Antwerp. Moreover, his business seems to have benefitted as a result. A later report revealed that he was, by 1558, enjoying 'great credit on the exchange of this town of Antwerp among merchants and others'.<sup>79</sup>

Overall, the picture of Buonvisi's religious beliefs that emerges from analysing his associations and actions over the course of the 1530s and 1540s is one of slow development from conformist to conservative opponent of the English Reformation. By the time of his flight from the realm in September 1549, it seems justified to refer to Buonvisi as a religious conservative who recognised that his own beliefs were incompatible with those being espoused by the Church of England. However, this is a realisation which had developed only slowly over the preceding twenty years. For much of that period, Buonvisi had been willing to conform with, and tacitly sustain, the Henrician regime, consciously choosing to remain in a schismatic England and support the English king financially. The exact course of Buonvisi's personal religious trajectory throughout this period remains difficult to plot with any accuracy. However, combining his conformity with the admittedly ambiguous evidence of his contacts with a broad Christian humanist milieu, it is possible that he may have found himself able to interpret Henry's Reformation as a fulfilment of the humanist imperative to reform the Church of its abuses, only to be rapidly disabused of such a notion by the radicalisation of religious policy under Edward VI.

Such a reassessment of Buonvisi's religious beliefs across this period begs the question, why was he praised so highly by early modern commentators such as Sanders and Ribadeneyra? Even if he had opposed the Henrician Reformation in his heart, his conformity throughout these years hardly seems to warrant their assessment that he should be 'eternally held in the memory' of England's Catholics, let alone Rossi's

<sup>78</sup> Luzzati, 'Buonvisi, Antonio', 297–8.

<sup>79</sup> *CSPS*, 13, no. 357.

paralleling of Buonvisi with the martyred Thomas More. After all, rather than join More in publically defending the Catholic faith, he had actively served the man who had secured his execution. Instead of lauding his constancy, therefore, one might have expected these historians to include Buonvisi in their condemnations of those who, ‘held a middle course – though nothing of the kind is allowable in the service of God – hoping, it is true, for the triumph of the Catholic faith, but at the same time professing heresy, lest they should lose anything for the sake of Christ.’<sup>80</sup> It seems, therefore, that the reasons for Buonvisi’s fame must be sought in his actions and activities following his flight from the realm. It is to these activities that we now turn.

### *An English Catholic community in exile*

Following his flight from England to Antwerp in September 1549, Buonvisi appears to have quickly travelled on to the Netherlandish university town of Louvain. His household-in-exile subsequently became home to the extended family of Thomas More. By October 1549, Buonvisi had been joined by former royal physician John Clement, his wife Margaret (More’s adopted daughter), and their four children, Helen, Margaret Jnr., Dorothy and Thomas.<sup>81</sup> They were accompanied by More’s nephew and former treasurer of Lincoln’s Inn, William Rastell, together with his wife Winifred (another daughter of the Clement family). It also seems that Thomas Roper, More’s grandson, formed part of this group, although his father and mother appear to have remained behind in England.<sup>82</sup> Buonvisi’s support of the extended More family in exile is perhaps unsurprising. More’s final letter to the Italian seems to imply that Buonvisi may have agreed to take care of the martyr’s children following his death – an agreement which helped ‘assuage and lighten... a great part of that distress which the weight of fortune rushing headlong against me has brought upon me’.<sup>83</sup>

However, this circle around Buonvisi in Louvain was not limited to the familial relations of More. The Clement family had been accompanied into exile by the MP John Story and his wife, together

<sup>80</sup> Sander, *Rise and Growth*, 180.

<sup>81</sup> Mary C. Erler, *Reading and Writing during the Dissolution: Monks, Friars and Nuns 1530–1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 117–8.

<sup>82</sup> E. E. Reynolds, *Margaret Roper: Eldest Daughter of St. Thomas More* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), 126; Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26; Christian Coppens, ‘Introduction’, in Coppens ed, *Reading in Exile: the Libraries of John Ramridge* (d. 1568), *Thomas Harding* (d. 1572) and *Henry Joliffe* (d. 1573), *Recusants in Louvain* (Cambridge: LP Publications, 1993), 1–34, at 2–3. I have been unable to corroborate Eamon Duffy’s claim that William Roper also went into exile in Edward’s reign: Eamon Duffy, *Reformation Divided: Catholics, Protestants and the Conversion of England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 41. Cf. Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Roper, William (1495×8–1578)’, *ODNB*; online edn September 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24074>]. Accessed 27 May 2018].

<sup>83</sup> McCutcheon, “‘The Apple of My Eye’”, 56.



with their four children, while Nicholas Harpsfield, who had been an associate of More's son-in-law William Roper at Oxford, moved to Buonvisi's household in Louvain in 1550.<sup>84</sup> John Boxall, another Oxford graduate, was elected *consilarius* of the English nation in Padua in 1550, but according to Nicholas Sander, he later moved to Louvain where he found refuge with the More circle.<sup>85</sup> Balthasar Guercy, an Italian-English denizen who had been suspected of involvement in the so-called 'Prebendaries Plot' in 1543, left the realm in early 1551 and seems to have been another resident in Buonvisi's household, together with his wife and daughter.<sup>86</sup> It is also clear that Buonvisi's household retained strong links with English scholars studying at the university in the town. One of the only non-familial bequest made by John Story in his 1552 will, written in exile, was to those 'pore scholers and presties beyng inglishe men here taringe in these partes'.<sup>87</sup> Such scholars likely included John Christopherson, who was financially supported throughout his exile by Trinity College, Cambridge, James Basset, the former servant of Stephen Gardiner who went on to marry Mary Roper, and Richard Smyth, the Oxford theologian who spent a number of months in the Netherlandish town in 1550 before moving to Paris and later Scotland.<sup>88</sup>

Buonvisi commanded a position of considerable respect amongst these English Catholic emigrés in Louvain, being looked up to as a father-like figure. John Story's will appointed 'my especiall good ffrend mr anthonye bonevise' overseer of his affairs after his death, giving him considerable control over the inheritance of his daughter and wife.<sup>89</sup> Story outlined his firm desire that Buonvisi should 'be good instructor of my wiffe' and keep that promise he had made 'to god and me', to ensure that 'she at no tyme untill the land of ingland be restored to the unities off christes church, will returne thether or carye her dawghter and my into that land'.<sup>90</sup> Three years later,

<sup>84</sup> 'Will of John Story', 1552, Inner Temple Library, Petyt MS 538/47, fos. 66r-68r; Sander, *De Origine*, 200; 'Copia del testamento', fo. 6r; Roger Ascham to Edward Raven, 20 Jan 1551, in J. A. Giles (ed.), *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, 4 vols. (London, 1865), 1 (2):254; Jonathan Dean, 'Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitatem: Nicholas Harpsfield and English Reformation Catholicism' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Cambridge, 2004), 47.

<sup>85</sup> Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy 1485-1603* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1998), 213; Sander, *Rise and Growth*, 200.

<sup>86</sup> John Bennell, 'Guercy, Balthasar (d. 1557)', *ODNB* online edn September 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11711. Accessed 27 May 2018].

<sup>87</sup> 'Will of John Story', fo. 67v.

<sup>88</sup> McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics*, 271; Jonathan Wright, 'Christopherson, John (d. 1558)', *ODNB*; online edn September 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5373. Accessed 27 May 2018]; Reynolds, *Margaret Roper*, 130; 'Copia del testamento', fo. 5v; J. Andreas Löwe, *Richard Smyth and the Language of Orthodoxy: Re-imagining Tudor Catholic Polemicism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 43-51.

<sup>89</sup> 'Will of John Story', fo. 67v.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 68r.

following his return to England, Story would refer to the Buonvisi as 'my fownde patrone and second father'.<sup>91</sup> Nicholas Harpsfield also appears to have developed a deep respect for him, referring to the 'good and gracious right worshipful merchant' in the most favourable of terms in his manuscript 'Life of More', written following his return to England in Mary's reign.<sup>92</sup> Even the English government recognised Buonvisi's significance amongst the English Catholic emigrés on the continent, explicitly excluding him from the king's general pardon of March 1553.<sup>93</sup>

As suggested in the introduction, Buonvisi's importance for supporting this sizeable contingent of English Catholic emigrés in Louvain has often been acknowledged by modern historians, as well their early modern counterparts. However, what has largely gone unnoticed is the extent to which this circle was part of a much wider network of English Catholic emigrés on the continent, a network which Buonvisi appears to have been instrumental in developing across the late 1540s and early 1550s.<sup>94</sup> The number of English Catholic emigrés on the continent had been growing steadily throughout the reign of Henry VIII, with small communities of exiles clustering in St Andrews and Edinburgh in Scotland, Louvain, Paris and northern Italy. By the end of Henry VIII's reign there were at least 127 English and Welsh Catholics dispersed throughout Christendom, and this would rise to over 200 by the accession of Mary I.<sup>95</sup> Throughout the 1530s and 1540s, connections had begun to form amongst these individual emigré communities, thanks largely to the Franciscan friar, Henry Elston. Elston, who fled to Antwerp around 1533 together with his fellow friar William Peto (referred to above), seems to have operated as an information conduit, relaying messages between exiles in all the key European emigré hotspots, and with their friends and families who had remained behind in England. In the spring of 1538, for example, Elston helped organise the exchange of several letters between Thomas Goldwell in the English Hospice in Rome and his father in England.<sup>96</sup> Several years later,

<sup>91</sup> John Story to Edward Courtenay, 17 Jun 1555, Rawdon Brown *et al* eds, *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice* (hereafter *CSPV*), 38 vols. (London: H. M. S. O., 1864–1947) 6: no. 137.

<sup>92</sup> William Roper, Nicholas Harpsfield, *Lives of Saint Thomas More*, ed. E. E. Reynold (London: Dent, 1963), 129.

<sup>93</sup> *Anno septimo Eduuardi Sexti actes made in the Parlamente holden at Westminster...* (London, 1553), sig. H 3r.

<sup>94</sup> The one exception is Eamon Duffy's passing comments regarding Buonvisi in his *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 181.

<sup>95</sup> For a useful overview of the Catholic exiles from Henry's reign, see Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 227–76. The number of exiles under Edward has been calculated as part of my own ongoing research on this subject.

<sup>96</sup> TNA, SP 1/121, fos. 149r–150v; TNA, SP 1/131, fos. 171r–172v; TNA, SP 1/132, fos. 32r–33v.

Elston was orchestrating contact between Reginald Pole in Rome and Richard Hilliard, the former chaplain to Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall who had been sheltered by Cardinal Beaton in Scotland since 1540.<sup>97</sup> Elston's work seems to have been highly significant in forging initial connections between English Catholics dispersed throughout the continent. However, it is only after the arrival of Buonvisi in Louvain in 1549 and the subsequent proliferation of such connections that we might begin to speak of an international community of English exiles.

As already suggested above, the Buonvisi family business had long had branches and connections throughout Europe. As such, Antonio already had an established communications network stretching across the continent.<sup>98</sup> After his exile in 1549, he appears to have turned this pre-existing network to the task of connecting English Catholic emigrés dispersed throughout the European continent. It is clear, for instance, that Buonvisi facilitated contact between English exiles in Louvain and those in Paris. He himself had friendly contact with Ralph Baynes, Professor of Hebrew at the Sorbonne, who had left England at some point prior to June 1535 – Baynes would be a recipient of a ring 'as a sign of my benevolence' in Buonvisi's will of 1553.<sup>99</sup> Many other members of Buonvisi's household in Louvain also forged connections with emigres in the French capital. Thomas Martin, a young English Catholic lawyer studying in Bourges and later alongside Baynes in Paris, seems to have had contact in exile with William Rastell in the early 1550s.<sup>100</sup> Richard Smyth, already noted above for his time spent in Louvain with Buonvisi, relocated to Paris in the winter of 1550 where, according to the later examination of one William Seth, he became part of an English Catholic book smuggling operation involving both Martin and Baynes, as well as Robert Caly, an English 'bookbinder' in exile in Rouen.<sup>101</sup> Buonvisi's Louvain group may also have had connections with exiles in Antwerp, where the Italian's family business had another of its offices. In 1557, Nicholas Harpsfield would recall how he had personally heard the Franciscan friar, Henry Elston, describe the sermon William Peto had given denouncing the Boleyn marriage.<sup>102</sup> It may well be that this

<sup>97</sup> TNA, SP 1/197, fos. 53r-54v; TNA, SP 1/197, fos. 64r-65v; TNA, SP 1/200, fos. 174r-175v; TNA, SP 1/205, fo. 164v.

<sup>98</sup> G. Mansi, *I Patrizi di Lucca. Le amiche famiglie lucchesi ed i loro stemmi* (Lucca: Titania, 1996), 118–28.

<sup>99</sup> 'Copia del testamento', fo. 6r. For Baynes's flight from England, TNA, SP 1/97, fos. 83r-84v, at fo. 84r.

<sup>100</sup> Evidence comes from John Bale's, *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles concerning the cleargye of Lo[n]don dyocese* (London, 1561), fo. 43r. See also, William Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality of Mary Tudor's Church* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 40.

<sup>101</sup> *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 1, 1306–1571* (London, 1883), nos. 346, 347, 348, 349, 350.

<sup>102</sup> Nicholas Harpsfield, *A treatise on the pretended divorce between Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon*, ed Nicolas Pocock (London: Camden Society, 1878), 205.

conversation occurred whilst the pair were both abroad since, as explained above, Buonvisi already had a relationship with Elston's fellow exile in Antwerp, William Peto, to whom he may have been sending money from 1533.

However, it is Buonvisi's connections with English exiles in Italy which are most striking. Buonvisi was, throughout his exile, a frequent correspondent with Reginald Pole. Although the first letter between the pair that survives is dated 12 August 1553, it is clear that their correspondence had been going on for many years. Pole explained how he was 'rather astonished' that although he had now had news of Mary's accession and the capture of the Duke of Northumberland confirmed by other sources, he had not received any letters from the Italian telling him as much. Such surprise arose from the 'loving diligence' Buonvisi had usually used in 'advising us of past occurrences'.<sup>103</sup> As well as providing intelligence from England, Buonvisi also appears to have acted as one of Pole's most trusted mediators in northern Europe. Letters to Pole from a number of his other agents, including Vincenzo Parpaglia, abbot of Santa Salute, Turin, and Antonio Fiordibello, appointed Pole's secretary for his 1553 legation to England, suggest that Buonvisi helped keep the English cardinal informed of events throughout Europe, forwarding his letters to and from the imperial court, and lodging his agents during their missions across the continent.<sup>104</sup>

Buonvisi also seems to have become one of Pole's close friends. Pole always addressed Buonvisi as 'my dearest' or as his 'dearest friend'.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, even when he was simply using Buonvisi to forward a letter, he always made sure to address the Italian personally, 'knowing your singular love towards me and mine'.<sup>106</sup> Even external observers noted the strong relationship between Buonvisi and the English Cardinal. Simon Renard, the Spanish ambassador to England, believed the pair to be cut from the same cloth, especially regarding their attitudes to the proposed marriage of Mary I to Philip II of Spain. As he explained to the Emperor in a number of reports written between January and March 1554, Buonvisi was 'entirely devoted' to the cardinal.<sup>107</sup> That Pole felt the same way is clear from a later sermon he delivered following his repatriation. On St Andrew's Day,

<sup>103</sup> Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter ASV), Fondo Bolognetti, 94, fo. 29r-v – '*mio carissimo*'; '*mi sono assai meravigliato, che non mi sia ancora comparsa alcuna lettera vostra*'; '*Ringrazioni dell'ammorevol diligenza usata in avvisarci dell'occorrenze passate, persuaderidomi ch'abbiate ciò fatto molto più*'.

<sup>104</sup> Parpaglia to Pole, 19 Aug 1553, calendared in Thomas F. Mayer ed., *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole* (hereafter *CRP*), 4 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002–2008), 2: no. 651; 2: no. 659; 2: no. 724; 2: no. 776.

<sup>105</sup> ASV, Fondo Bolognetti, 94, fo. 29r-v – '*mio carissimo*'; 94, fo. 212v – '*amico carissimo*'.

<sup>106</sup> ASV, Fondo Bolognetti, 94, fo. 212v – '*amico carissimo*'; '*sapendo la sua solita amorevolezza verso li miei*'.

<sup>107</sup> *CSPS*, 12: 20–36.

1557, Pole praised Buonvisi as ‘a specyal benefactor of all catholyk and good persons’, revealing his firm belief that ‘his name ys yn the booke of lyfe’.<sup>108</sup>

Buonvisi also seems to have developed friendships with other members of the community of English exiles around Pole in Italy. Pole had frequently sent his trusted agent, Michael Throckmorton, as his messenger to Buonvisi throughout the 1550s. However, it seems that the pair’s relationship was more than merely professional. Amongst the remaining papers in Throckmorton’s library in 1558 was a packet of ‘letters and bills of Mr Antonio Buonvisi’, suggesting that he may have been helping Throckmorton with his finances throughout his long exile.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, Throckmorton was to be another recipient of one of Buonvisi’s rings as a symbol of ‘benevolence’ in his will of October 1553.<sup>110</sup> So too was Henry Pynning, another of Pole’s close compatriots in Italy from 1538.<sup>111</sup> Pynning had lodged in the Buonvisi household *en route* to a covert mission to England in August 1553.<sup>112</sup> As Pynning later advised in a letter to Pole in September that year, after secretly meeting with the new queen to discuss the Cardinal’s hoped-for return to the realm, he had disguised himself as an Italian and hidden himself in Buonvisi’s house in London so as not to attract attention to himself.<sup>113</sup> Other English exiles in Italy who stopped off at Buonvisi’s Louvain household during legatine business in northern Europe include Richard Pate, appointed bishop of Worcester *in absentia* by the Pope in 1541, and Thomas Goldwell, who had been in Pole’s household since 1538.<sup>114</sup>

Through these personal connections, it seems, Buonvisi helped facilitate the development of further friendships between English emigrés in Italy and his own household of English exiles in Louvain. For example, Buonvisi was almost certainly responsible for introducing Nicholas Harpsfield to both Pole and Thomas Goldwell.<sup>115</sup> By June 1554, Pole, with Goldwell’s full support, had

<sup>108</sup> Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 3 (2): 491. For more on Pole’s preaching in Marian England, see Eamon Duffy, ‘Cardinal Pole preaching: St Andrew’s Day 1557’, in E. Duffy and D. Loades eds, *The Church of Mary Tudor* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 176–200.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Booklist of Michael Throckmorton’, Mantua, Archivio di Stato, Registrazioni notarili, 1558 vol. 1, fos. 96v–97r, at fo. 97r, printed in Anne Overell and James M. W. Willoughby, ‘Books from the Circle of Cardinal Pole: The Italian Library of Michael Throckmorton’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 75 (2012): 111–40 – ‘*Le Littere e Conti de mesir Antonio Bonvisi*’.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Copia del testamento’, fo. 11r.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 11r.

<sup>112</sup> ASV, Segr. Stat., Fiandra, 1, fos. 180r–185v, at fo. 180r.

<sup>113</sup> ASV, Segr. Stat., Inghilterra, 3, fos. 144r–145v – ‘*[Mary] commandadomi a star secreto senza lasciarmi cognoscere da alcuno se fosse possibile, et che a questo effetto io non mi partissi della casa del S. Buonvisi, ma che io stessi li come un Italiano*’. N.B. Buonvisi’s London property was returned to him by the new Queen, having been confiscated by the Edwardian government. See De Caro, ‘Buonvisi, Francesco’.

<sup>114</sup> CRP, 2, nos. 651, 659, 776.

<sup>115</sup> Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 181.

come to trust Harpsfield enough to appoint him archdeacon of Canterbury, awarding him unmatched powers to absolve Catholics in England of religious offences committed during the previous reigns.<sup>116</sup> John Clement also appears to have maintained a strong friendship with Pole throughout his Edwardian exile. Later in Mary's reign, after both men had returned to England, Pole wrote to one Marcantonio de Genova requesting that he favour Clement's son, Thomas, on account of Pole's 'old and dear friendship with his father'.<sup>117</sup> Although this friendship appears to have begun during the pair's earlier student days in pre-Reformation Padua, it seems highly likely that they remained in contact via Buonvisi during the intervening years.<sup>118</sup> Henry Pynning also had direct contact with many of the Louvain emigrés during his periodic sojourns at Buonvisi's house in the early 1550s – in August 1553 he sent an update to Pole on those 'most Catholic English families' who had been residing in Louvain 'for many years', as well as on the Cardinal's brother, Geoffrey, in Liege.<sup>119</sup>

This complex tapestry of international connections which Buonvisi helped to weave over the late 1540s and early 1550s highlights his role not only as a faithful friend to the family of Thomas More, but also as a key facilitator in the creation and sustenance of what we might begin to call an international English Catholic community in exile. Without his pre-existing web of international business connections, Catholic exiles from Henrician and Edwardian England, dispersed throughout Europe, would undeniably have found it more difficult to maintain such frequent and friendly contact with one another. Reginald Pole's protracted negotiations for returning to England and fulfilling his role as apostolic legate would also certainly have been hindered without the Italian's facilitating role, Buonvisi's properties in London and Louvain serving as indispensable northern bases of operation for the Cardinal and his agents. However, the true significance of Buonvisi's actions in helping to create and sustain this community only comes to light when we investigate the roles a number of its members would go on to play in the restoration of Catholicism under Mary I.

In reaction to the pessimistic assessments of an earlier generation of scholars, recent studies have emphasised the vibrancy, vigour and vitality of Catholicism under Mary.<sup>120</sup> Historians such as William Wizeman and

<sup>116</sup> John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011) [http://www.johnfoxe.org. Accessed 27 May 2018] 1570 edition, 1887.

<sup>117</sup> *CRP*, 3, no. 1522.

<sup>118</sup> *CRP*, 1, nos. 2, 18.

<sup>119</sup> ASV, Segr. Stat., Fiandra, 1, fos. 180r-185v, at fo. 180r – '...a lovanio, dove stanno redutte da molti anni in qui alcune familglie intiere d'Anglesi catholicissime'.

<sup>120</sup> John Edwards ed, *Reforming Catholicism in the England of Mary Tudor: The achievement of Friar Barolome Carranza* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), passim; Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman eds. *Mary Tudor: old and new perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), passim; Elizabeth Evenden and Vivienne Westbrook eds, *Catholic Renewal and Protestant Resistance in Marian England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), passim. For older

Eamon Duffy have gone so far as to see Mary's Church having 'invented' the Counter Reformation, detailing how Mary presided over a remarkably successful and proto-Tridentine restoration of the Roman faith.<sup>121</sup> Looking through a list of the individuals cited by such historians as key facilitators in this success, it is striking how many were former exile dependents or associates of Buonvisi. John Christopherson, Ralph Baynes, Thomas Goldwell and Richard Pate all became bishops in Mary's Church, whilst Pole would become papal legate and archbishop of Canterbury, positions which rendered him 'the single most influential figure in the Marian restoration'.<sup>122</sup> Five more of Buonvisi's exile friends and associates would be appointed to important prebendaries or governing positions (archdeacons, deans, chancellors) within English cathedrals.<sup>123</sup> Nicholas Harpsfield proved especially influential in his role as archdeacon of Canterbury, performing one of the most thorough visitations of the sixteenth century in 1557.<sup>124</sup> Virtually all Buonvisi's former associates played some role in the campaign against heresy, whilst John Boxall, Richard Smyth, Thomas Martin, William Rastell, Harpsfield and Christopherson each wrote or compiled tracts in support of the Catholic queen.<sup>125</sup> Four former exiles with links to Buonvisi would hold seats in the Commons, and John Boxall would go on to become general secretary to the Privy Council – one of the most powerful secular positions in the realm.<sup>126</sup> Several would also wield power more informally through their proximity to Mary. Pole was said to have such authority over her that 'one might say that he truly is the king and prince himself', while Richard Smyth was noted as 'chaplain extraordinary' to the royal

interpretations, see A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (2nd edn, London: B.T. Batsford, 1989), 311 and ch. 12; David Loades, *The reign of Mary Tudor: politics, government, and religion in England, 1553–1558* (2nd edn, London: Longman, 1991), 96–128.

<sup>121</sup> Wizeman, *Theology and Spirituality*, 251–4; Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, ch. 9.

<sup>122</sup> Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 33.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas Clement, Nicholas Harpsfield, John Boxall, James Basset and Richard Smyth – see Joyce M. Horn, David M. Smith & William H. Campbell eds, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1541–1857* (hereafter *FEA*), 13 vols. (London, 1969–2014), 3 (1974): 15–17; 4 (1975): 22–3, 28–30; 7 (1992): 13–14; 8 (1996): 105–7, 118–22.

<sup>124</sup> L.E. Whatmore ed, *Archdeacon Harpsfield's Visitation 1557*, 2 vols. (London, 1950–51); Thomas Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 290.

<sup>125</sup> John Boxall, 'Oration in the presence of the King of Spaine', BL, Royal MS 12.A.XLIX; John Boxall, *Oratio longe elegantissima, eadē[m]q[ue] doctissima* (London, 1555); Richard Smyth, *A Bouclier of the Catholike Fayth* (London, 1554); Richard Smyth, *The seconde parte of the booke called a Buklar* (London, 1555); Thomas Martin, *Traictise Declaryng...that the Pretensed Marriage of Priests...is No Marriage* (London, 1554); William Rastell, *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght* (London, 1557); Harpsfield *Lives of Saint Thomas More*; Harpsfield, *Treatise on the Pretended Divorce*; John Christopherson, *An Exhortation to all menne to take hede and beware of rebellion* (London, 1554). Those involved in some way in heresy trials include: John Story, William Rastell, Nicholas Harpsfield, John Boxall, John Christopherson, Richard Smyth, Ralph Baynes, Thomas Martin, Reginald Pole, Richard Pate, Thomas Goldwell. See Foxe, *Acts and Monuments Online*, 1563 edition, *passim*.

<sup>126</sup> MPs include John Story, William Rastell, James Basset and Thomas Martin – see Bindorff ed, *History of Parliament*, 1:392; 2:278; 3:179, 386.

household in 1554.<sup>127</sup> James Basset would become a gentleman of both Philip and Mary's Privy Chambers, even being trusted to bring the first news of the queen's phantom pregnancy to her husband according to a letter of the Venetian ambassador in January 1558.<sup>128</sup>

Individually, therefore, many of these former associates of Buonvisi performed integral roles in directing the Marian restoration. However, as a number of historians have suggested, it was the notable unity of vision and purpose bonding these activists together which really helps explain the success of the Marian Church. William Wizeman has stressed that part of the strength of Mary's religious programme stemmed from the 'predominantly uniform theology and spirituality' expounded by its apologists – a uniformity which existed in spite of differences in age and experience.<sup>129</sup> Eamon Duffy too has suggested that the remarkable degree of 'clerical unanimity' evinced by the Marian clergy following Elizabeth's accession in rallying in defence of the faith further demonstrates the concord which drove the brief restoration of Catholicism under England's first queen.<sup>130</sup> Buonvisi's role in connecting many of these Marian activists with one another during their earlier exile under Edward therefore takes on a heightened significance. By facilitating the formation of friendships and associations amongst these individuals long before they returned to English shores, he helped lay the groundwork for their effective collaboration and apparent unanimity in Marian England. Indeed, Buonvisi's activities in this respect might help explain quite how these activists managed to form and articulate such a coherent vision of their Church within the space of just five years.

### Conclusion

At the end of the play with which we began this article, Giacomo Rossi appropriated the voice of More to give his final assessment of Antonio Buonvisi. Appearing to the Italian merchant in a dream, More explained how, thanks to his 'heroic virtue and holy undertakings' in service of the Catholic faith, Buonvisi's name would be commemorated for generations to come.<sup>131</sup> This article has suggested that, for a number of reasons, Buonvisi does indeed deserve to be remembered by historians.

<sup>127</sup> Eugenio Alberi ed, *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, 3 series, 14 vols. (Florence: Tipografia e calcografia all'insegna di Clío, 1839–1863), series 1, 2:325, 351; Brigden, *London*, 576.

<sup>128</sup> *CSPV*, 6, no. 1146.

<sup>129</sup> Wizeman, *Theology and Spirituality*, 2, 253.

<sup>130</sup> Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 195–9.

<sup>131</sup> Rossi, *Il Tomaso Moro*, 163 – 'voi lasciate essempli così chiari di Heroiche virtu, e di sante imprese'.



First of all, Buonvisi serves as an important reminder of the fluidity of religious identities during the first half of the sixteenth century in England. His winding religious journey from humanist and reformist religious conservative to confessionally Roman Catholic is emblematic of the trajectory taken by many individuals often classed as ‘opponents’ of the English Reformation. For example, before becoming an outspoken critic of the Henrician schism, Buonvisi’s friend Reginald Pole supported Henry’s attempt to collect favourable decisions for his divorce from Catherine of Aragon in the early 1530s.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Stephen Gardiner publically supported the break with Rome throughout the 1530s and 1540s, only beginning to oppose the reformation in England following the accession of Edward VI. Even then his position on the issue of papal primacy appears to have remained rather uncertain, crystallising only during the reign of Mary I.<sup>133</sup> Alongside such well known figures, we should add many of the exiles who joined Buonvisi in fleeing the realm over the 1530s and 1540s – individuals such as John Story who came to repent for ‘thacknowleging of any other persone head [of the Church] than our saveyor Jesu Christ did depute here in earthe to remayne’ only after over fifteen years of conformity to the Royal Supremacy.<sup>134</sup> The example of Buonvisi therefore serves as an illustrative case study into the slow and fitful process by which religious identities were negotiated and forged over the early decades of the Reformation in England.

However, above all, this article has suggested that Buonvisi deserves to be remembered by historians for his role in the history of English Catholicism more broadly. Thanks to his position as ‘fownde patron and second father’ to a large number of English Catholic emigrés on the continent, he contributed in a tangible way to the successful restoration of Catholicism under Mary I. The friendships and connections which he helped forge amongst these Catholic emigrés subsequently became the foundations for their remarkable unity of purpose and vision in the ‘invention of the Counter Reformation’ in Marian England. In terms of securing the immediate survival of Catholicism in mid-Tudor England, therefore, we might join Rossi in concluding that Buonvisi was as significant as More himself.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Thomas Mayer, ‘A Fate Worse than Death: Reginald Pole and the Parisian Theologians’, *English Historical Review*, 103 (1988): 870–891.

<sup>133</sup> Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 40–1.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Will of John Story’, fo. 66v.

<sup>135</sup> More’s posthumous influence does, of course, far outweigh that of the Italian – see for example James K. McConica, ‘The Recusant Reputation of Thomas More’, in R. S. Sylvester & G. P. Marc’Hadour eds, *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books 1977), 136–49.