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Cardinal Henry Benedict

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Bonnie Prince Charlie Entering the Ballroom at Holyroodhouse before 30 Apr 1892. Royal Collection Trust/ ©Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018



IX., King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Cardinal, Bishop of Tuscan). By itself, this change would imply a growing seriousness of purpose vis-a-vis the sitter's royal as opposed to priestly responsibilities. Yet, both versions bore the motto '*Non desiderii hominum sed voluntate Dei*' (Not by the desires of men, but by the will of God): adopted, one suspects, to broadcast Henry Benedict's feelings that his priestly calling was no more escapable than his royal birth, and that the desirability and undesirability of either of these things in the eyes of man were equally irrelevant.^[8]

His angry response to being passed over as Duke of Albany in favour of his illegitimate niece in 1783 is likewise rich with ambiguity. In his Church career, certainly, Henry Benedict never seems to have turned down a promotion or a chance to augment his already large income,^[9] so the Albany controversy could easily have been motivated simply by his urge to preserve an impressive title he felt was his by right. But this could have been mingled with an equally powerful moral urge to deny it to a young woman he felt was unworthy of it, by dint of her mother's relatively low birth and the immoral circumstances of her own. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the present digitisation contains a 180-word memorandum in French detailing Henry Benedict's notorious decision to refuse to execute the Duchess of Albany's 1789 will in favour of her mother, Clementina Walkinshaw (referred to in the Stuart Papers after c.1770 by variously spelled versions of her Imperial title, Grafin Albestroff) unless the latter renounced, 'any right or pretention to the aforesaid inheritance and testament, no matter in what way it may present itself', in her own name and on behalf of her heirs.^[10]

In the 1745-6 rebellion that saw his brother lead a Jacobite army as far south as Derby, Henry Benedict - not yet a cardinal or priest - was placed in nominal command of a French fleet poised to invade England from the south; and this is the probable context of the portrait of him in armour, long misidentified as being of Charles Edward, by Maurice Quentin de la Tour.^[11] Some four years after he was ordained, moreover, Henry Benedict's enthusiasm for his brother's invasion attempt apparently remained undimmed, for it was at his behest that Giulio Cesare Cordara SJ penned *Expeditio in Scotiam*, the Latin account of it that was eventually printed in English translation by the Scottish History Society under the title *Commentary on the Expedition to Scotland Made by Charles Edward Stuart, Prince of Wales*.^[12] Yet this foray into Jacobite propaganda was uncharacteristic. After 1746, Henry Benedict never seems to have served as patron (financial or otherwise) or leader (however nominal) of any Jacobite military unit, and he continued to refer to himself as Duke of York long after he also began referring to himself as King.^[13] He 'was deeply hurt when, in 1789, against the background of the French Revolution, the pope decided to recognize George III as king of Britain',^[14] and six years later was still signing some of his correspondence 'Henry R'. However, by 1800 he had largely stopped doing so,^[15] and when Great Britain and Ireland became the United Kingdom on 1 January 1801, his household arrangements apparently made no effort either to mirror this development or overtly to reject it. In fairness, however, incursions into Italy by the armies of the French Republic, culminating in their abolition of the Papal States in February 1798, meant that Henry Benedict spent much of the period in question as an impoverished refugee, and he gladly accepted an annual pension of £4,000 from George III in

February 1800 - though this may only have offset the losses the Cardinal King had sustained in funding the allied war effort out of his personal fortune. Perhaps most significantly, Henry Benedict never sought to be released from his cardinalate or his priestly vows, unlike fellow royals who had found themselves in parallel situations, such as Henry the Chaste of Portugal (r. 1578-80) and John II Casimir of Poland (r. 1648-68).^[16] On the whole, one is tempted to conclude that his enthusiasm for the Stuart claim to the British throne waxed and waned over time - just as it did among rank-and-file Jacobites.

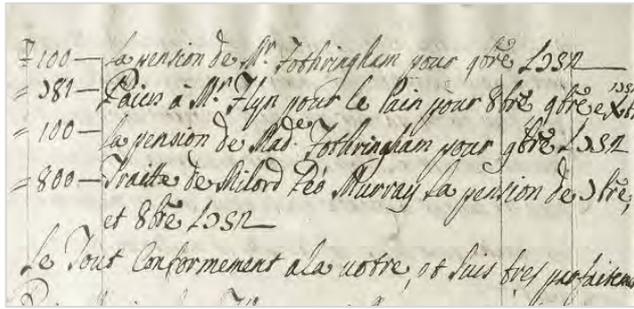


An interesting array of printed matter has been included in the digitisation, including this item (RA SP/BOX/9/17, detail), which may add fuel to controversies over Henry Benedict's use of a younger son's crescent-moon cadency mark at the centre of his arms.^[17]

For three main reasons, we should probably reject arguments that Henry Benedict's ordination as a Catholic priest in 1748, fourteen months after he became a cardinal,^[18] 'dealt the final wound to the Stuart cause'.^[19] First, if the core of this issue was mistrust of the Stuart claimants among the Protestant majority of British Jacobites, then the fatal turning point would surely have been the 1719 marriage of the Old Pretender to Maria Sobieska: 'notably pious ... granddaughter of the Church's champion against the

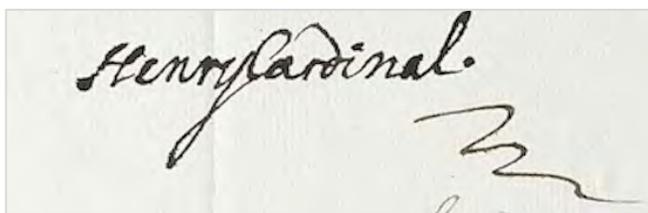
Infidel and the god-daughter of Pope Clement XI.'^[20] Second, Catholic Jacobites (and Scottish Episcopalian ones) who had looked to the Stuarts as the monopoly of their hopes for toleration under George II would, in any case, have become conflicted in their loyalty due to the increasingly tolerant religious policies of George III, which stemmed in part from his surprise acquisition of thousands of new Catholic subjects in Quebec in 1763.^[21] And third, the real knockout punch to Jacobitism as a threat to the House of Hanover was dealt by Pope Clement XIII in 1766, when he refused to recognise Charles Edward as King Charles III of Great Britain - on the specific grounds that doing so would jeopardise the new policy of toleration towards Catholicism that was operating both in Britain and in British North America.^[22] This withdrawal of papal support may also have been influenced by Bonnie Prince Charlie's adult conversion to Anglicanism,^[23] but in no case by his younger brother's status as a cardinal-priest. Henry Benedict's efforts down to 1775 to overturn the Pope's decision and have his brother recognised as king were so ham-fisted that this writer wonders if they were sincere;^[24] and if they were, whether the Cardinal Duke of York was as dimwitted as Amy Cochrane-Baillie, Marchesa Nobili-Vitelleschi, once claimed.^[25] The newly digitised letter registers RA SP/M/23-26, written in a bold and clear French hand, are packed with detail of the financial circumstances and dealings of the Stuarts and their supporters in the wilderness years of 1752-61. Based on their contents, it is hard to disagree that in the aftermath of the Jacobites' defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the financial boost to the Stuart cause that derived directly from Henry Benedict's cardinalate was a 'triumph' and the family's, 'only hope of permanent security' (even if the 'E' in the Stuart Papers often refers to livres

tournois, which were valued at just 91/2d to 20d sterling during Henry Benedict's lifetime).^[26] In this regard, RA SP/M/26, with its numerous, apparently complete transcripts of letters written by Henry Benedict to the Jacobite banker Jean Waters between 1757 and 1760, may prove particularly valuable, as will the cardinal's cash book for the years 1760-1781 (RA SP/M/40).



Detail of RA SP/M/23/6-7

Our understanding of the life and character of Henry Benedict Stuart has suffered, perhaps disproportionately, from poor scholarship - both during the period of intense interest in Jacobitism in the quarter-century prior to the First World War, and subsequently, amid the 'ebbing tide of academic seriousness' with which the Jacobites were treated until fairly recently.^[27] Gale's digitisation of the Stuart and Cumberland Papers represents an exciting new opportunity for more extensive and rigorous work on this remarkable, enigmatic, epoch-spanning figure.



Detail of RA SP/M/23/6-7

NOTES

^[1] RA SP/Main/50/138. A list of people invited to Clementina's labour, 1720.

^[2] RA SP/Main/80/120. 'Persons Invited in March 1724 to the Queen's Labour', 1725.

^[3] Neil Guthrie, 'The Memorial of the Chevalier de St. George (1726): Ambiguity and Intrigue in the Jacobite Propaganda War', *Review of English Studies*, 55 (2004) 545-564, p. 546.

^[4] Edward Gregg, 'The Financial Vicissitudes of James III in Rome', in Edward Corp (ed.), *The Stuart Court in Rome: the Legacy of Exile* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 65-84, p. 75.

^[5] Lawrence Lipking, 'The Jacobite Plot', *ELH*, 64 (1997) 843-855, p. 843.

^[6] W. D. Haggard, 'Medals of the Pretender (continued)', *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 3 (1840-41) 149-152, p. 151.

^[7] For a review of these debates and inconsistencies, see Daniel MacCannell, 'King Henry IX, or Cardinal Called York? Henry Benedict Stuart and the Reality of Kingship', *Innes Review*, 58 (2007) 196-209.

^[8] By rearranging the clauses and substituting 'populi' for 'hominum', a contributor to the *Glasgow Herald* was able to derive 'King by Divine Right, but not by the will of the people', i.e., a statement of abdication. See James Pagan (ed.), *Glasgow Past and Present: Illustrated in Dean of Guild Court Reports*, (2 vols, Glasgow, 1851), i. 68. The newly digitised manuscript volume of Henry Benedict's orders and mandates from the period 1751-1794 (RA SP/M/27), their contents recorded variously in French and Italian, promises to shed additional light on such matters.

^[9] Though he cannot have been Cardinal Camerlengo of the Church as a whole, despite the majority of his biographers having claimed that he was: see MacCannell, 'King Henry IX', p. 200.

^[10] RA SP/M/27/104 (item 576). 26 April 1791. I am grateful to Prof. Juliet MacCannell of the Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London, for her kind assistance with this and other translations.

^[11] MacCannell, 'King Henry IX', pp. 196-199.

^[12] Sir Bruce Seton (ed.), 'Commentary on the Expedition to Scotland made by Charles Edward Stuart, Prince of Wales, by Padre Giulio Cesare Cordara', in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, 3rd ser., 9 (Edinburgh, 1926), pp. 4-155. Cordara also wrote 'a pastoral drama on the death of [Maria] Clementina Sobieska ... which was well received and played all over Italy, and which increased his literary reputation': Sir Bruce Seton, Bt., editor's notes, pp. 5-10, quotation at p. 6.

^[13] MacCannell, 'King Henry IX', pp. 204-207.

^[14] Marshall, R. (2004-09-23). Henry Benedict [Henry Benedict Stuart; styled Henry; known as Cardinal York] (1725-1807), cardinal and Jacobite claimant to the English, Scottish, and Irish thrones. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 6 Jan. 2018, from

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/manchester.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12964>.

^[15] See John Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of the Pretenders and Their Adherents*, (2 vols, Philadelphia, 1846), ii. 195-199; Bernard W. Kelly, *Life of Henry Benedict Stuart, Cardinal Duke of York* (London, 1899), pp. 94, 105-108.

^[16] The inverse path was taken by Charles de Bourbon, who remained a cardinal in preference to being crowned King Charles X of France in 1589. Henry Benedict's Franco-Polish great-grandmother, Marie Casimire Louise de La Grange d'Arquien, had been a lady in waiting to John II's queen consort.

^[17] See MacCannell, 'King Henry IX', p. 201.

^[18] Cardinals were not required to be priests until 1918, and Reginald Pole, for example, held the former status for nearly two decades before acquiring the latter.

^[19] Lipking, 'Jacobite Plot', p. 844, who is tentative about it.

^[20] Guthrie, 'Memorial of the Chevalier', p. 548. For a letter from Pope Clement XI to Clementina, see RA SP/Main/41/54, 13 Jan. 1719, in which he promises to help her during her imprisonment in Innsbruck.

^[21] See for instance F. C. Mather, 'Church, Parliament and Penal Laws: Some Anglo-Scottish Interactions in the Eighteenth Century', *English Historical Review*, 92 (1977) 540-572, esp. pp. 549-540.

^[22] See esp. Frank McLynn, *Bonnie Prince Charlie: Charles Edward Stuart* (London, 2003), chapter 33.

^[23] See esp. Nobili-Vitelleschi, *A Court in Exile: Charles Edward Stuart and the Romance of the Countess d'Albanie* (2 vols, London, 1903), ii. 37: John Farquharson to Bishop Robert Forbes, 31 August 1752.

^[24] See Brian Fothergill, *The Cardinal King* (London, 1958), pp. 98-99.

^[25] Nobili-Vitelleschi, *A Court in Exile*, pp. 432-433.

^[26] Edward Corp, 'Introduction', in *The Stuart Court in Rome*, pp. 1-25, p. 13. Rosalind K. Marshall notes that in the 1760s, Charles Edward's, 'wandering incognito through Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland [was] sustained by Henry's own pension of 12,000 crowns from the apostolic chamber': 'Henry Benedict', *ODNB*.

^[27] J. C. D. Clark, 'The Many Restorations of King James: A Short History of Scholarship on Jacobitism, 1688-2006', in Paul Monod, Murray Pittock and Daniel Szechi (eds), *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 9-56, p. 34.

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