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THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION  
IN THE POST-TRIDENTINE CHURCH

The apostolic visitation frequently runs the risk of losing its specificity and being substantially considered as a version of the pastoral visitation ordered by the Roman center, with an overlapping of the fields, both in terms of the role of the visits and of the historical research.<sup>1</sup>

At times the fact that the Diocesan Ordinary has been submitted to visit by the Roman Delegate and the visitor's possibility to intervene, albeit not completely in the exempt places, have not been considered to be truly appreciable variants.

<sup>1</sup> If we can find a lot of tractations about the pastoral visitations, e.g. Lucio Croci, *Instructio visitationis dioecesium*, 1563 (see L. Fiorani, "Le visite apostoliche del Cinque-Seicento e la società religiosa romana", *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma. Studi, documenti, inventari*, 1980, 4, p. 53-148, p. 71), Paolo Fuschi, *De visitatione et regimine ecclesiarum libri duo*, Romae, ex typ. Accolti, 1581, Luca Antonio Resta, *Directorium visitatorum ac visitantium cum praxi et formula generalis visitationis omnium et quarumcumque ecclesiarum monasteriorum, regularium, monialium, piorum locorum et personarum*, Romae, ex typ. G. Facciotti, 1593, Giuseppe Crispino, *Trattato della visita pastorale*, Napoli: Salvatore Castaldo, 1682, (G. De Rosa, "Giuseppe Crispino e la trattatistica sul buon vescovo", in: *Idem, Chiesa e religione popolare nel Mezzogiorno*, Bari, 1978, p. 103-143), about the apostolic visitation we have only the *Tractatus visitationum sive declarationes R.D. Annibalis Rochi I.U.D. Veron. ad Breve Gregorii XIII Pont. Max*, Veronae, apud Hieronymum Discipulum impressorem episcopalem, 1590.

Giovan Battista De Luca wrote only about the apostolic visitation in Rome, see *Repertorium seu index generalis rerum notabilium quae continentur in Theatro Veritatis et Justitiae Cardinalis De Luca*, Venetiis, apud Paulum Balleonium, 1698, p. 654 and G.B. De Luca *Theatrum veritatis et Justitiae*, Venetiis, apud Paulum Balleonium, 1698, liber XII *De Beneficiis*, disc. XVI, sub. XIV, p. 78, and *Ibid.*, liber XV, pars II, *Relatio Romane Curiae Forensis*, disc IV, sub. 8, p. 15 and disc. XXIV, p. 69-70. See S. Pagano, "Le visite apostoliche a Roma nei secoli XVI-XIX. Repertorio delle fonti", *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma. Studi, documenti, inventari*, 1980, 4, p. 317-464.

A variety of aspects have conspired to this simplification, and to this assimilation of different realities.

Generally speaking, it seems that, at least up until recent times, a thorough analysis of the diverse essence of the two types of visitation – i.e. pastoral and apostolic – has not been particularly well developed.

Our feeling is that the lack of a precise delimitation is the result of an over-extensive use of the concept of Catholic reform that has aimed to assimilate, according to criteria that in this case are really apologetic and damaging for their exact collocation, two phenomena that are different between them, not only in juridical terms (such as the authority that possesses the right of visit) but also in theological, ecclesiological, and political terms.

As a first approximation we can rather assume as a working hypothesis<sup>2</sup> the prospect of an apostolic visitation that is not simply a “special edition” duplicate of the pastoral one but one that has its own objectives and limited choices, that are developed as a function not so much of a capillary inculcation of principles and laws, but also as the uptake of information, control, correction, and direction *vis-à-vis* the work of the local bishop, with the analyses relating to the function of intervention in the jurisdictions exempted by the bishop.<sup>3</sup> In that place it was underlined that it was the bishop’s task to oversee “very diligently” so that all the issued decrees should be enforced and implemented.<sup>4</sup> So the apostolic visitation finds in the test of the Diocesan Ordinary and in the dispositions that he is given, some of its peculiar characteristics, which differentiate it from the pastoral visitation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, a situation is often created that is characterized, in the best of cases, by

<sup>2</sup> C. Socol, *La visita apostolica del 1584–85 alla diocesi di Aquileia e la riforma dei regolari*, Udine, 1986, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> See A. G. Ghezzi, “Conflitti giurisdizionali nella Milano di Carlo Borromeo: la visita apostolica di Gerolamo Ragazzoni nel 1575–76”, *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 1984, p. 108-109, p. 193-237 and “Vita religiosa esente dalla giurisdizione dell’ordinario: i dati della visita apostolica di Gerolamo Ragazzoni a Milano (1575–76)”, *Studia Borromaica*, 1994, p. 8, p. 215-249.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>5</sup> See C. Socol, *La visita apostolica*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

reciprocal embarrassment. In Bologna even a leading representative of post-Tridentine Catholicism, Gabriele Cardinal Paleotti, did not particularly appreciate the fact that his diocese was submitted to the apostolic visitation by Ascanio Marchesini, who even tried to collaborate positively with the cardinal, and he showed his disappointment.<sup>6</sup> This is a further element that shows how, with the consolidation of the apostolic visitations, these took on a particular tone, and not a wholly pleasant one.<sup>7</sup> Also the difference in the institutional roles could pose problems, such as when the visitor was a bishop and the inspected had a cardinal rank, as was the case of Bologna.

The archbishop of Turin, Girolamo della Rovere, moreover like the Savoy Duke, did not welcome the visitation of Girolamo Scarampi, the Bishop of Campagna and Satriano.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, to finish off this brief review of some negative reactions to the visit, when the apostolic visitation of Bishop Angelo Peruzzi was announced to the diocese of Luni-Sarzana in 1584, a group of priests wrote to the general vicar of the diocese, Tiberio Grandi, delegating him to represent them before the visitor but above all asking him “in tutto ciò che potrà, difenderci”<sup>9</sup> [in all that you could, defend us].

The apostolic visitations in their specificity have a particular meaning in the reality of the ancient states<sup>10</sup>, and they become a

<sup>6</sup> P. Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, Roma, 1959–1967, II, p. 370. The documents of the visitation of Ascanio Marchesini are in *Archivio Arcivescovile* of Bologna, *Visite* 7, 8, 9.

See I. Cassoli, *La visita apostolica a Bologna di mons. Ascanio Marchesini del 1573–74 e l'opera del card. Gabriele Paleotti*, Bologna, 1973.

<sup>7</sup> P. Prodi, *Il cardinale*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 371.

<sup>8</sup> M. Grosso - M.F. Mellano, *La Controriforma nella Arcidiocesi di Torino (1558–1610)*, Città del Vaticano, 1957, I, p. 218.

<sup>9</sup> *La visita apostolica di Angelo Peruzzi nella Diocesi di Luni-Sarzana (1584)*, I. *Le visite a Sarzana e nella bassa Val di Magra*, a cura di E. Freggia, presentazione di E. Massa, Roma, 1986, p. LXVI.

<sup>10</sup> See C. Nubola, “Visite pastorali fra Chiesa e Stato nei secoli XVI e XVII”, in: *Il concilio di Trento e il moderno*, a cura di P. Prodi e W. Reinhard, Bologna, 1996, p. 383-413, p. 405.

privileged road to try to overcome the problems of a jurisdictional nature through direct agreements and negotiations between the Holy See and the political authorities, who actually exclude and marginalize the Diocesan Ordinaries. It seems evident that the bishops are not wholly urged to take on full responsibility for their own role but the choice is to intervene with an action promoted by the Roman curia; rather than reinforcing the bishopric's powers they prefer to resort to papal delegates endowed with "full powers" even when the bishops explicitly ask for aid and greater powers from Rome to overcome the difficulties that arise in the course of the visit.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, above all when the diocesan bishop had a strong reformist fiber, as in the case of Carlo Borromeo, it may have been the possibility that the very same Diocesan Ordinary urged the sending of an apostolic visitor thereby bending the visiting instrument in order to swiftly resolve situations that had been dragging on for too long, in order to have access to female and male monasteries, to the *loca pia* and to the confraternities run by secular persons, actually closed to the ordinaries and, above all, to allow at the end of the visit, for the faster and definitive execution of the decrees issued.<sup>12</sup>

On the powers towards the exempted places it is rightly remembered how even the single convents or monasteries enjoyed certain exemptions. Subject to visitations were only their churches and these only in regard to the care of the souls of the laymen or the secular people. Excluded from the visitation was the internal life of the community, except for those particular aspects that the Council of Trent or common law entrusted to the bishops as delegates of the Apostolic See or in any case that were not visited by their own religious superiors.<sup>13</sup> The powers granted to the visitor underline the immediate universal jurisdiction of the Roman See in the dioceses submitted to visitation and in general over all dioceses; at times, however, precisely because they could be used as a constraint on the existing power relations; instead of actually resolving the tension, they ended up making matters even worse.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>13</sup> C. Socol, *La visita apostolica, op. cit.* p. 61.

It should always be remembered how it was undeniable that analogous measures had a different character and value because, if they were issued by the archbishop even in the solemn form of the decrees of a provincial council, they could be appealed in Rome, while if they were adopted by the apostolic visitor they were immediately enforced and could not be appealed.<sup>14</sup> It is in this difference that we should grasp all of the diffidence and the concern through which, perhaps with contrasting motivations, the diocesan institutions expressed their varying concerns regarding the apostolic visitation.

In order to further clarify some aspects of the complex theoretical and juridical system that supported the visitor's authority, we should say a few words on a formula that is often found in the apostolic visitations: that of the *delegatus Sedis apostolicae*, a theme dealt with by Hubert Jedin in the light of an instrument elegant on the canonistic level but not satisfactory on the theological one<sup>15</sup> and repeatedly used by the Council of Trent to reinforce some aspects of the Episcopal authority trying, at the same time, not to harm the papal prerogatives. A certain vagueness towards the Tridentine on the apostolic visitations should, however, be remembered.

“Nostrum et Apostolicae Sedis generalem et spetialem reformatorem et delegatum” is the usual definition of the apostolic visitor, we are reminded by Annibale Rocchi in his writing *Tractatus visitationum* (1590).<sup>16</sup> The chief intention seems, however, to be that of safeguarding the papal prerogatives towards political authorities and exempt places and a lot less to safeguard the bishopric's spaces. It thus seems like an instrument to pull in the opposite direction to that of the reinforcement of Episcopal jurisdiction. In any case for the episcopate this is certainly a double-edged weapon. In this case we have recorded two opposing uses

<sup>14</sup> A. G. Ghezzi, *Conflitti giurisdizionali*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>15</sup> “Die apostolische Delegation war eine kanonistisch elegante, theologisch aber unbefriedigende Lösung des Problems der bischöflichen Gewalt”, H. Jedin, “Delegatus Sedis Apostolicae und bischöfliche Gewalt auf dem Konzil von Trient”, in: *Kirche des Glaubens-Kirche der Geschichte*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1966, II, p. 414-428, p. 428.

<sup>16</sup> A. Rochi, *Tractatus visitationum*, *op. cit.*, p. 30 and S. Tramontin, “La visita apostolica del 1581 a Venezia”, in: *Studi veneziani*, 1967, 9, p. 453-533, p. 453.

and actually, if the apostolic visitor's powers were vast, an attempt had to be made in order not to make them appear in contradiction with those of the Diocesan Ordinary.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, again according to Annibale Rocchi "Summus Pontifex potest per se, vel per suos Legatos, Nuntios et Delegatos eas ad beneplacitum suum visitare, pro ut et potest visitare universum clerum et populum Christianum, in vim potestatem Clavium et mandati de pascendis omnibus, apud eum namque est suprema potestas, quam a Deo accepit"<sup>18</sup> and, furthermore, for the pope "totus mundus ... est una Dioecesis".<sup>19</sup> Again he recalled that "Nostrum et apostolicae Sedis generalem et spetialem visitatorem reformatorem et delegatum"<sup>20</sup> in various cities "constituimus et deputamus" and he points out that a difference is established between "our delegate" where "delegare est vice sua alium dare"<sup>21</sup> and the delegate of the apostolic See, where "our" (*Nostrum*) means the person of the pope and "apostolic See" (*apostolicae Sedis*) means the institution and so the charge of visitor preserves its fullness even after the death of the pope, because if a person dies the institution of the papacy certainly does not die with him. The figure of the apostolic visitor thus tends, in the work of Rocchi, even to become authorized in respect to the delegating pope, to become almost a permanent Church institution, while for the methods of the visit he refers to the decisions of the 24th Tridentine session.<sup>22</sup>

The apostolic visitation is like the pope's visitation, a visit the latter cannot perform in person: "Summus Pontifex tenetur ipse visitare" but as he cannot do it he delegates others, also the visit "facta per hunc delegatum dicetur facta per papam".<sup>23</sup> Rocchi then reiterates, towards

<sup>17</sup> A. G. Ghezzi, *Conflitti giurisdizionali*, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> A. Rochi, *Tractatus visitationum*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231. For the Council of Trent see *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, a cura di G. Alberigo et al., Bologna, 1991, p. 761s., *Decretum de reformatione, Canon III.*

<sup>23</sup> A. Rochi, *Tractatus visitationum*, op. cit., p. 37.

the regulars, the need for their strong reference with the convent or the monastery thereby condemning any form of itinerancy.<sup>24</sup>

As regards the method of the visit it has been underlined how by insisting on an assessment of the local situations, Rome intends to actively promote a Church model not to be discussed but to be applied according to particular criteria and needs for which the center, by taking on responsibility for the reform, becomes the promoter.<sup>25</sup>

The aims of this operation can be summarized as follows: a) to standardize the episcopacy and the canons decided in Rome; b) to homogenize the training, the preparation and the spirituality of the bishops; c) to bureaucratize the role of the bishop to make him very similar to a curial official; d) to spread conformism and formalism as prevalent values.

In any case, the apostolic visitation will almost always be felt as an odious instrument<sup>26</sup>, concentrating in itself the moment of control with that of the reassertion of a distant and hostile power. As early as 1570 the visitation of Bartolomeo da Porcia, conducted from Aquileia to Caporetto, recorded strong opposition from the curia of Udine and in particular from the general vicar Iacopo Maracco, who considered the visit as an offence, a demonstration of mistrust *vis-à-vis* the ordinary government of the dioceses and an insulting attempt to put in a state of accusation.<sup>27</sup> Perceiving that this judgment might be highly widespread among the clergy and the faithful, on the occasion of the visit of Gerolamo Ragazzoni even Carlo Borromeo himself had tried to de-dramatize the visitation by presenting it as a normal Church practice.<sup>28</sup> An exemplary case is that of the Valtellina, in the land of the Grisons where Giovanni Francesco Bonomi, Bishop of

<sup>24</sup> “Sicut piscis sine aqua caret vita, ita Monachus et monacha sine monasterio” *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>25</sup> C. Socol, *La visita apostolica, op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> G. Paolin, “La visita apostolica di Bartolomeo da Porcia nel goriziano nel 1570”, in: *Riforma cattolica e controriforma nell’Austria Interna 1564–1628*, Klagenfurt, 1994, p. 133-142, p. 135.

<sup>28</sup> A. G. Ghezzi, *Conflitti giurisdizionali, op. cit.*, p. 205.

Vercelli<sup>29</sup> in 1578 made a short as well as risky mission. Bonomi was appointed on April 15, 1578 with a brief of pope Gregory XIII as visitor, reformer, and delegate of the apostolic See for the cities and the dioceses of Novara and Como<sup>30</sup>, while the following day, on April 16, another brief of the pope completed the definition of the powers given over to Bonomi.<sup>31</sup>

On 2 July he expresses his fear to Carlo Borromeo that he might be forbidden (this being most feared) from entering the Valley as an apostolic visitor<sup>32</sup> and again he writes to Cardinal Borromeo on July 14, 1578 to inform him that in the case of difficulties he should use the title of delegate of the bishop of Como, rather than that of apostolic visitor “perché qui è troppo odioso questo nome” and in the end he must abandon the valley thereby avoiding “uno terribile affronto”.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the crisis of the late 17th century episcopate<sup>34</sup> can also be traced back to the dark and tense atmosphere that was created in the great season of apostolic visitations.

A season that had started with Pius V and Gregory XIII<sup>35</sup>, even if it appears to us that Paul IV prepared in March 1558 for the visitation to Istria, Friuli and Dalmatia<sup>36</sup> and the issuing of powers to the ordinaries to visit the exempt places date back to as early as the start of the 1550's “nostra et dicte Sedis auctoritate.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See *Nuntiaturberichte aus der Schweiz seit dem Concil von Trient. I. Abteilung. Die Nuntiatur von Giovanni Francesco Bonhomini 1578–1581. Documente*, bearbeitet von F. Steffens-H. Reinhardt, Solothurn, 1906, I, p. 118-180, abbrev.: NBS.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118, doc. 93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119, doc. 94.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157, “because here that name is too odious” and “a terrible affront”.

<sup>34</sup> See C. Donati, “Vescovi e diocesi d'Italia dall'età post-tridentina alla caduta dell'antico regime”, in: *Clero e società nell'Italia moderna*, a cura di M. Rosa, Roma-Bari, 1992, p. 321-389, p. 350.

<sup>35</sup> See S. Tramontin, *La visita apostolica*, op. cit., p. 453.

<sup>36</sup> I. Vitezic, *La prima visita apostolica postridentina in Dalmazia (nell'anno 1579)*, Roma, 1957, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> H. Jedin, *Delegatus*, op. cit., p. 425.

The plan to generalize the apostolic visitations was very successful and these thus became an ordinary instrument, instead of being an exceptional one, of intervention.<sup>38</sup> On October 24, 1566 Pius V ordered Tommaso Orfini<sup>39</sup>, who was preparing to enter his bishopric of Strongoli, in the Kingdom of Naples, to visit, as his own delegate and that of the apostolic See, some of the locations that he would have met during his journey. His mission in the kingdom aroused a broad and far-reaching jurisdictional controversy.

Already starting from this first post-Tridentine visitation we can appreciate what would later become an almost constant element in the apostolic visitations, that is the jurisdictional clash with the civil and political authorities.<sup>40</sup> Orfini immediately violated age-old traditions and clashed with the viceroy by refusing to submit his right to visit to the royal *exequatur*.

The viceroy went so far as to order Orfini to suspend the visit because he wanted to consult the pope and beg him not to bring any changes to the Kingdom<sup>41</sup>, being in his turn dramatically and personally involved in the clash between the king of Spain Philip II and Pope Pius V<sup>42</sup>, which seemed to be concluded with just a tacit, and at that point pragmatically appreciated by all, consent to continuing with the visit.<sup>43</sup>

A striking case, which by positioning itself chronologically towards the end of the great season of visits confirming that the problem had always been left unsolved, is that of the apostolic visitation to the Savoy, planned and never done, when in 1604 the Bishop of Geneva François

<sup>38</sup> C. Socol, *La visita apostolica*, p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> P. Villani, "La visita apostolica di Tommaso Orfini nel Regno di Napoli (1566-1568)", in: *Annuario dell' Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea*, 1956, 8, p. 5-79, L. Fiorani, *Le visite apostoliche*, *op. cit.* p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> See R. Bizzocchi, "Conflitti di giurisdizione negli antichi stati italiani", in: *Fonti ecclesiastiche per la storia sociale e religiosa d' Europa: XV-XVIII secolo*, a cura di C. Nubola e A. Turchini, Bologna, 1999, p. 267-275.

<sup>41</sup> P. Villani, *La visita apostolica*, *op. cit.* p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

de Sales saw his application for *placet* advanced to the Duke rejected.<sup>44</sup> In the course of the project of Gregory XIII to extend the apostolic visitation to the greatest number of dioceses ever new problems could not fail to arise. Of particular interest there seems to be that which arose at the time when the wish was expressed to visit the *Levante* (East) islands of the Venetian Republic.<sup>45</sup> There arose significant opposition from the Signoria of Venice due partly to political reasons such as the lack of information given by the pope of his intentions, which thus interfered with the delicate sphere of Venetian interests in the East with no concertation whatever, and in part also to reasons of cohabitation with the Orthodox Church. Indeed, it was thus feared that in the presence of an over-rigorous apostolic visitation the Catholic priests would decide to pass over to the Orthodox Church and again that the same Orthodox Church, before the display of Roman power, might decide in turn to start up visits or other strong reassertions of its presence such as to disturb the delicate confessional balance that had been established in the course of time in the East Venetian territories. The pope accepted the Venetian objection and the brief of the nomination on January 25, 1581 of the Bishop of Parenzo Cesare de Nores as visitor was never published.<sup>46</sup> If we pause on what is contained in the nomination briefs of the apostolic visitors we cannot miss the repetitiveness of the formulas that we find therein.

The construction of a brief for a visitor, by means of the use of the powers attributed to others, is effected with various levels of merging of texts.

The text of the powers for the visitation of Aquileia is almost the same as that issued to Agostino Valier for the apostolic visitation to Padua and Vicenza.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See A. Erba, *La chiesa sabauda tra Cinque e Settecento. Ortodossia tridentina, gallicanesimo savoiaro e assolutismo ducale (1580–1630)*, Roma, 1979, p. 68. See Luoghi, *chiese e chierici del Salento meridionale in età moderna: la visita apostolica della città e della Diocesi di Alessano nel 1628*, a cura di A. Jacob e A. Caloro, Galatina, 1999.

<sup>45</sup> C. Socol, *La visita apostolica*, *op. cit.* p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

The powers of Angelo Peruzzi, who had just visited the diocese of Luni-Sarzana<sup>48</sup>, as a visitor of the dioceses of Turin (1584–1585) referred to the same powers already granted for the visits to the dioceses and cities of Pistoia, Arezzo, Cortona, Montepulciano, San Sepolcro, which were part of the Great Duchy of Tuscany.

There thus appears to be a disconcerting geographical and temporal continuity between the guidelines traced out for the different visits.

The fact that a visitor went to Bologna, Bergamo, Turin or in Friuli or Dalmatia does not seem to very significant. There are, of course, some differences but they are the fruit of adaptations tied to very particular situations.

In the documents we can find a list of general priorities that the visitor had to pay attention to: buildings of cult, ecclesiastic personnel, state of the life of the parish community, monasteries and convents both male and female, hospital, lay confraternities, behavior of the laypeople, inventories of goods, parish registers.<sup>49</sup> Particular attention was aroused by the tending to the souls exercised by the religious orders, even if care was taken to avoid the risk that particularly vigorous incursions into the domestic lives of the orders might arouse reactions on the part of the regulars. In this context the theme of the role of the papal nuncio as visitor is decisive.

The fact that the apostolic nuncio was one of the main elements for the enforcement of the Council of Trent has for some time been recognized.<sup>50</sup> So the nuncio in Venice had to inculcate in the bishops the loyalty to the decrees of Trent and had to insist especially on the obligation of residence: that the bishops establish their residence, ordering to each one separately the execution of the Tridentine Council

<sup>48</sup> See *La visita apostolica di Angelo Peruzzi, op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> C. Socol, *La visita apostolica, op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>50</sup> P. Blet, "Pio V e la riforma tridentina per mezzo dei nunzi apostolici", in: *San Pio V e la problematica del suo tempo*, a cura della Cassa di Risparmio di Alessandria, Cinisello Balsamo, 1972, p. 33-46, p. 35: "una prova ci è fornita dagli inviati di Pio V. Senza dubbio il successore di Pio V, Gregorio XIII, darà alle nunziature una estensione più vasta ed una struttura più organica ma già ... i nunzi di Pio V furono degli agenti molto attivi della riforma tridentina".

and the violators be immediately punished; similarly the curates for all of the states do the same.<sup>51</sup>

In this phase it is extremely important to evaluate the overlap of the figure of the apostolic nuncio with that of the visitor as a testimony of the fact that the apostolic visitations are inserted into the broader frame of the new set-up of the Catholic Church and its relations with the states and their specific religious situations.

Girolamo Federici, bishop of Lodi, nuncio in Turin from 1575, in 1577 published in the Savoy States a collection of decrees at the end of his apostolic visitation made with the powers of legate *a latere* and apostolic visitor<sup>52</sup> and from his visit, albeit still conducted along general lines, the first complete picture emerges of the religious situation in the territory of the Italian Piemonte. Starting from this general definition a few years later the apostolic visitation of Girolamo Scarampi took shape. Of particular interest then is the application of Scarampi's dispositions enforced in the dioceses of Mondovì by Bishop Giovanni Antonio Castruccio, of whom an important visitation questionnaire also remains.<sup>53</sup>

Exemplary of this path is the episode of the Bishop of Vercelli Giovanni Francesco Bonomi. The latter had been educated by a rigidly Borromaic pastoral practice, having for a long time collaborated with Carlo Borromeo and having followed him in numerous visits also in Swiss territories, which he thus came to know deeply, also dealing with the welcoming of the Swiss students at Italian seminaries.

As early as in 1576 Bonomi was collaborating with the nuncio Girolamo Federici visiting Savoy. As a visitor in Valtellina in 1578 he drew his conviction of the need to set up for the Swiss territories a nunciature with full visiting powers. The task, and the title of nuncio, were attributed to him, also due to the intercession of Carlo Cardinal Borromeo. In particular, Bonomi insisted on receiving the title of nuncio,

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> M. F. Mellano, *La Controriforma nella Diocesi di Mondovì*, *op. cit.*, p. 137 and H. Federici, *Generalia Decreta in Visitatione edita*, Taurini, 1577.

<sup>53</sup> M. F. Mellano, *La controriforma nella Diocesi di Mondovì*, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

in that he believed that only with it could he overcome the resistance, both of the clergy and the political power. The brief of nomination by Gregory XIII of Bonomi to nuncio in Switzerland “cum facultate visitandi et reformandi” is dated May 2, 1579.<sup>54</sup> In the brief, in which reference is made to the powers and the missions of Bonomi for the dioceses of Novara and Como<sup>55</sup>, as further clarification of the spirit with which the visits were conducted in the zones where the Protestant Reformation could be successful, Bonomi is also given the power to receive public abjures of the reformed.<sup>56</sup> This was a very delicate point and obviously very unwelcome to those who saw with concern a possible breakaway, as a result of this activity of Catholic re-conquest, of equilibriums that were already believed to be consolidated.

From 1579 to 1581 he was a visiting nuncio in Switzerland, with a specific scope of intervention in the dioceses of Konstanz, Chur, Lausanne, Sion, and Basel. His work also aroused reactions of strong opposition, both from the political authorities, first and foremost the Archduke of Tyrol, Ferdinand, and even the population of Bern. However, he did manage to make stable the presence of the order of Jesuits in Freiburg. In 1582 he was already in Hungary, then in Austria, then in Augsburg. In 1583 he was in Rhineland to resolve the very delicate matter of the Archbishop of Köln Gebhard Truchsess, apostate of the Catholic Church. In 1586 he was again in Köln as nuncio and he visited the city, the diocese and performed diocesan synods. He died in Liege in 1587. We have paused on the activity of Bonomi, but the examples could be multiplied, suffice to think to Feliciano Ninguarda<sup>57</sup>, to show how the figure of the nuncio and that of the visitor are almost inextricably interwoven in the age of Counter-reformation and how the

<sup>54</sup> *NBS*, I, p. 325, doc. 282.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

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

<sup>57</sup> See K. Schellhass, *Der Domenikaner Felician Ninguarda und die Gegenreformation in Süddeutschland und Österreich (1560–1583)*, Rom, 1930–1939, and *NBS*, I, p. 327. He was apostolic visitor of the Dominican Order (1573), bishop (1577), from 1578 till 1583 apostolic nuncio in Germany, nuncio in Switzerland (1586), bishop of Como (1588).

ineluctable link between the two role constitutes the strong point of the proposal of control that comes from the Roman Church.<sup>58</sup>

Another aspect of that Sarpian “totato”, of that new universalism of the pope which later, as is well-known, would be exhausted in the crossed confrontation between confessionalization and secularization, in the bitter and irresolvable encounter with modernity.

Suffice to think of the diffusion in the Germanic area of the diplomatic missions, the apostolic visitations, such as those of Ninguarda and Bonomi, then find fresh confirmation the statements that it is probably due to the weakness of the Empire that the papacy manages to handle directly through the work of the nuncios and the religious orders the Catholic restoration in the countries to the north of the Alps.<sup>59</sup> Unlike what had happened in France where the few initiatives of apostolic visitations in 1569 in Avignon and in 1584 in the three bishoprics of the Lorraine all failed.<sup>60</sup>

The growth of the importance of the figure of the nuncio, on the one hand, results to be the effect of the new political order that finds its legitimation in the existence of the new modern state, such as the papal one inserted fully in the concerto of European powers, while on the other hand on the ecclesiological plane, there occurs a radical change in the relationship between Rome and local churches, with the entrance of this Roman representative continuously in relation to and mindful of the political world and contemporaneously active, also in the disciplinary subject, in the questions strictly of religious competence, with all the possible overlaps of fields and evaluations that could be born from it.

The diffidence towards solutions that would have reassessed the episcopate in respect to the papal primacy and the fact of no longer needing to cast doubt over the new political-ecclesiastical set-up that

<sup>58</sup> For some problems see the note of the nuncio in Turin Vincenzo Lauro (1582), M. Grosso-M. F. Mellano, *La Controriforma nella Arcidiocesi di Torino*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 215 s.

<sup>59</sup> P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, Bologna 1982, p. 329.

<sup>60</sup> M. Venard, “Le visite pastorali francesi dal XVI al XVIII secolo”, in: *Le visite pastorali*, a cura di U. Mazzone e A. Turchini, Bologna, 1985, p. 13-55, p. 30 s.

had developed mid-way through the 15th century<sup>61</sup> mean that the apostolic visitors become the completion, in the spiritual, of the nuncio or the legate, as a consequence if the charges are concentrated in the same person, in the new pontifical perspective, only a positive synergic relationship can be gleaned from it.

Moreover, it needs to be recognized that the activity of the nuncios often appears to be religiously inspired and dominated by the concern of implementing the Tridentine reform, even if in a centralized Roman perspective; the same figures are at times of very different extraction from those of the traditional bureaucratic career.<sup>62</sup>

We are interested in recognizing in the figure of the apostolic visitor the fruit of a new relationship between the episcopate and the papacy, with the desire to limit the space of episcopal autonomy using an expression, such as that of *delegatus Sedis Apostolicae*, that at the Council of Trent had been formulated with different meanings and identify in the figure of the visitor/nuncio or nuncio/visitor, albeit in the last part of the 16th century very frequent, genuinely infused with a religious spirit, a further aspect of the process with which the papacy tries to deal with the new modernity of politics. In this also in Bonomi, just to cite an example, the primacy of politics remains decisive. Suffice to recall how he leads the visit to the Grisonais Valtellina.<sup>63</sup>

An attempt in which the attribution of the title *delegatum nostrum* takes on value both in the religious, and in the mixed, and directly in the civil.

Some documentary evidence allows us to confirm the validity of these conclusions also for the Polish-Lithuanian *Respublica*.

Only by way of pure exemplification we should recall how the Croatian Alexander Komulovic (Comuleo) was extraordinary Apostolic Nuncio in Transylvania, Moldova, Poland and Muscovy from 1593 till

<sup>61</sup> P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice, op. cit.*, p. 310.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>63</sup> See U. Mazzone, "Visitatori in Valtellina tra 500 e 600", in: *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 1991, 27, p. 27-54, p. 29 s.

1597 as well as apostolic visitor of the dioceses of Vilnius in 1596.<sup>64</sup>

Some apostolic nuncios in Poland had had prior experiences as apostolic visitors or were request to make visitations during the their mission<sup>65</sup> and the relationship between temporal and spiritual activity of the nuncios is often testified, e.g. on 27 August 1671 the Congregation of the Holy Office granted broad-ranging powers on the issue of the repression of the heresy the nuncio in Poland Angelo Maria Ranuzzi.<sup>66</sup>

We can also find the figure of the apostolic missionary, as is testified by the documentation of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide for Lithuania, Samogitia, Curland and Russia in 1639.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, a point that goes beyond the modern era to directly refer to the contemporary one. Here we have dealt with the question of the apostolic visitation as an element for taking up information, controlling, correcting and directing. In such a light, the apostolic visits are certainly not limited to the start of the modern era. It is well-known how, in a particularly bitter moment of the contemporary Church and in which there emerges yet another confrontation with modernity, in the years of the papacy of Pius X, ample recourse has been made to the apostolic visits to investigate above all the questions of Modernism.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*, auctore H. D. Wojtyska, I, Roma 1990, p. 239s., *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*, ed. L. Jarminski, XVI(1), Cracoviae 2000, p. LXV-LXVI, *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens' VIII. für die Nuntien und Legaten an den Europäischen Fürstenhöfen 1592–1605*, ed. K. Jainter, I, Tübingen, 1984, p. CCVs.

<sup>65</sup> Onorato Visconti, nuncio from 1624 till 1627, was inquisitor and apostolic visitor, *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 254, the *consilia* for the nuncio (1599) assert that “esso Nuncio visita alle volte in persona alcune Chiese Cathedrali, al meno le più vicine alla residenza” *ibidem*, p. 358, doc. 7 and the instructions for Cosimo de Torres, nuncio in Poland (1621), remind that “non son rimasti i nuntii, mentre andavano ne' viaggi e talhora nelle città, di mettersi a visitare in persona delle chiese, e specialmente de' monasterii”, *Die Hauptinstruktionen Gregors XV für die Nuntien und Gesandten an den Europäischen Fürstenhöfen 1621–1623*, ed. K. Jainter, Tübingen, 1997, II, p. 707, doc. 10.

<sup>66</sup> *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 376 s., doc. 14.

<sup>67</sup> *Relationes Status Dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae*, a cura di P. Rabikauskas, *Fontes Historiae Lituaniae*, I, Roma, 1971, p. 259 s.

<sup>68</sup> Vedi L. Bedeschi, *La curia romana durante la crisi modernista. Episodi e metodi di governo*, Parma 1968, p. 74-82, *Idem*, “Relazione della visita apostolica compiuta

UMBERTO MAZZONE. THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION  
IN THE POST-TRIDENTINE CHURCH

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nel 1911 ai seminari beneventani”, in: *Il contributo dell’ archidiocesi di Capua alla vita religiosa e culturale del Meridione. Atti del convegno nazionale di Studi Storici promosso dalla Società di Storia Patria di Terra di Lavoro, 26-31 ottobre 1966*, Roma, 1967, p. 25-42, *Idem*, “Radiografia dell’ Umbria Sud nelle relazioni dei visitatori apostolici”, *Fonti e documenti. Centro studi per la storia del modernismo*, 1991-92, 20/21, p. 343 s. But now see G. Vian, *La riforma della Chiesa per la restaurazione cristiana della società: le visite apostoliche delle diocesi e dei seminari d’ Italia promosse durante il pontificato di Pio X (1903-1914)*, Roma, 1998.