

English Recusant Networks and the Early Defense of Cartesian Philosophy

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Abstract: Following the publication of Descartes’s mechanistic explanation of transubstantiation in 1641, proponents of Galileo’s cosmology and of mechanistic principles of philosophy found themselves vulnerable to a concerted attack by theological authorities. This article calls attention to an early written defense of Cartesian transubstantiation and argues that the “weak” ties of English Catholic networks played a key role in mounting a targeted defense, beyond Mersenne’s immediate circle, of the autonomy of natural philosophy.

Keywords: Antoine Le Grand, Blacklo, Cromwell; religious toleration, Christopher Davenport, Descartes: transubstantiation, Douay: English Recollects, Kenelm Digby, English Franciscan Province, Franciscus a Sancta Clara, Galileo: two magisteria, Granovetter: weak ties, Henry Holden, mechanistic philosophy, Mesland, Pascal; recusants, transubstantiation, Thomas White.

One of the more picturesque social networks disseminating ideas across Europe in the 1640’s was an informal affiliation of English Catholics who kept changing residence, crossed the English Channel back and forth, visited Rome, collected art, meddled in everything from politics to religious apologetics, and eagerly pursued connections on the continent while maintaining robust contact with Protestant friends and relatives in England.¹ Far from constituting a closed sect, English Catholics were distinctly cosmopolitan, often working at cross-purposes while cooperating, bound as much by

¹ For a vivid sense of English Catholic networks, see Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, 1550–1640*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006; see also Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983, pp. 3–37.

internal rivalry as by their shared fidelity to the Old Religion.² Ties of kinship sometimes combined with Romanism to form dense clumps within the greater coalition, but more often broke across confessional barriers to create vital connections to wider networks.³ Thrown together by fate, practiced in the art of multiple-belonging and self-invention, English Catholics mingled with remarkable ease across linguistic, class and confessional barriers.⁴ Two prominent members of this informal network were the privateer-chemist Sir Kenelm Digby and his gritty mentor Father Thomas White, alias “Blacklo.”⁵ As we will see, Digby and White’s *réseau* of English Catholics, fleetingly gathered in Paris during the Great Rebellion, played a surprising role in the early dissemination and defense of Descartes’s mechanistic explanation of the Host.

By the early 1640’s, Kenelm Digby had spent time with Descartes in Egmont and both White and Digby had joined Mersenne’s circle in Paris.⁶ Thomas White, a secular priest who bitterly fought Jesuit papalism, had for some time been engaged in a friendly debate with the Protestant Lord Falkland over Roman infallibility,⁷ but was equally keen to advance natural philosophy.⁸ In 1642, under the name “Thomas the Englishman,” *Thomas Anglicus*, White published *De mundo dialogi tres*, earning praise from Descartes.

² For the fierce rivalry between English secular missionaries and regular missionaries (missionaries belonging to religious Orders such as Benedictines and Jesuits), see Michael Questier, ed., *Newsletters from the Caroline Court, 1631–1638: Volume 26: Catholicism and the Politics of Personal Rule*, Camden Fifth Series, 2005, pp. 1–37.

³ See Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited,” *Sociological Theory*, 1 (1983), pp. 201–233. A particularly nice example is the scholarly friendship between William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Kenelm Digby. For Laud’s chagrin at Digby’s re-conversion to Roman Catholicism, see Laud’s letter to Digby of March 27, 1636, in *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1847–1860, Vol. VI, Part 2 (ed. James Bliss), pp. 447–455.

⁴ For insight into self-invention and complex role sets, see Rose Coser, “The Complexity of Roles as Seedbed of Individual Autonomy,” in L. Coser, ed., *The Idea of Social Structure: Essays in Honor of Robert Merton*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975, pp. 257–258.

⁵ See Beverly C. Southgate, *Covetous of Truth: The Life and Works of Thomas White, 1563–1676*, Dordrecht, London and Boston: Kluwer, 1993; and John Henry, “Atomism and Eschatology: Catholicism and Natural Philosophy in the Interregnum,” *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 15.3 (1982), pp. 211–239.

⁶ For a nice summary of sources documenting Digby’s interactions with Descartes, see David Cunning, *Argument and Persuasion in Descartes’s Meditations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 31, fn. 42. For Mersenne’s circle, see Jean-Pierre Maury, *A l’origine de la recherche scientifique: Mersenne*, Paris: Vuibert, 2003.

⁷ See White’s defense of Tradition in *Sir Lucius Cary, late Lord Viscount Falkland, his discourse of infallibility, with an answer to it, and his Lordships reply, never before published*, London, 1651. The answer is by Thomas White, as Falkland’s posthumous editor Thomas Triplet clarifies in the 2nd ed. (Falkland died in 1643.)

⁸ For some of the political dimensions of White’s natural philosophy, see Stefania Tutino, “The Catholic Church and the English Civil War: The Case of Thomas White,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58. 2. (2007), pp. 232–255.

White also earned a lengthy *critique* from Hobbes, which was composed at Mersenne's request and circulated privately among friends.⁹ White's close friend and patron Sir Kenelm Digby, in turn, who had returned to France in July 1643 after nearly a year's house arrest in England by order of Parliament, published his landmark *Two Treatises* in Paris in 1644.¹⁰ In 1645, White consolidated his contribution to natural philosophy with the publication of *Institutionum peripateticum*, explicitly indebted to Digby's principles: *ad mentem philosophi Kenelmi Digby*.¹¹ Both White and Digby drew closely on each other's ideas to develop a comprehensive mechanistic philosophy that sought to harmonize Aristotelian forms, atomism, heliocentric cosmology and experimental chemistry.¹²

Both Digby and White were active Catholic apologists and had long been engaged in politics, White on behalf of the English Catholic Chapter and Digby on behalf of Charles I and of his Catholic queen, Henriette-Marie. In 1645, Digby and White joined forces to travel to Rome in order to lobby Pope Innocent X for financial support for the English royalist cause against Parliament and also to request two new Roman bishops for England.¹³ Their recent fame as natural philosophers who championed Galileo and mechanistic principles of philosophy meant that issues of Faith and Reason were of critical importance to their identity as Roman Catholics, to their embassy to the Holy See, to their political clout as leaders of the fractious English Catholic community and to their prestige as natural philosophers. One of the many Roman doctrines that Digby and White were obliged to defend against Protestants was the philosophically vexing doctrine of transubstantiation. According to the Roman church, the substance of the communion bread is wholly changed into the substance of Christ's body following consecration, while the sensible

⁹ On White's mechanistic philosophy, see Beverly Southgate, *Covetous of truth: the life and work of Thomas White*, p. 346–403; and Jean Jacquot and H. W. Jones, *Critique du "De Mundo" de Thomas White*, Paris: Vrin, 1973, pp. 9–45.

¹⁰ See Michael Foster, "Digby, Sir Kenelm (1603–1665)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7629, accessed 8 April 2012]

¹¹ A second revised edition was published in London in 1647, with a theological appendix on the origin of the world: *Institutionum Peripateticarum ad mentem summi viri clarissimique Philosophi Kenelmi Equitis Digbaei, pars theoretica. Item appendix theologica de origine mundi. Authore Thoma Anglo, ex Albiis East-Saxonum. Editio secunda correctior. Londini, ex officina R. Whitakeri in Coemeterio D. Pauli, 1647.*

¹² See John Henry, "Atomism and Eschatology," pp. 213–215; and Dorothea Krook-Gilead, Dorothea Krook and Beverly Southgate, *John Sergeant and his circle: a study of three seventeenth-century English Aristotelians*, Leyden: Brill, 1993, pp. 3–35.

¹³ See Michael Foster, "Digby, Sir Kenelm (1603–1665)," [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7629, accessed 8 April 2012]

qualities of the bread remain unchanged.¹⁴ Digby's own one-time Church, the Church of England, in particular, explicitly rejected transubstantiation as "repugnant" to Scripture, destructive of God's holy sacrament and a source of superstition.¹⁵

As early as November 1630, while working on his *Dioptrics*, Descartes had stumbled on the need to explain transubstantiation in accordance with mechanistic principles. The problem stemmed from the fact that his new theory of Light denied that colors exist as real qualities, or "species," or "real accidents," suitable to be preserved supernaturally by God independently of the substance of bread or wine. Colors, on Descartes's mechanistic view, result simply from the way in which light is modified by the surfaces of the objects that it bathes.¹⁶ Thus the standard explanation of transubstantiation, based on Aristotle and formulated philosophically by Saint Thomas Aquinas, namely that the "whiteness" of the bread remains as a "real accident" by God's power after the substance of the bread has vanished, was jeopardized by the mechanistic theory of colors.¹⁷ As Descartes wrote to Mersenne,

"I think I will send you this Discourse on Light as soon as it is written, and before sending you the rest of the *Dioptrics* : for since in it I want to describe colors in my own way, and am therefore forced to explain as well how the whiteness of bread remains in the Holy Sacrament, I will be very glad to have it seen by friends before it is seen by the public at large."¹⁸

¹⁴ See Fourth Council of the Lateran, 1215, Canon I: Christ's "body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms (*sub speciebus*) of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been transubstantiated by God's power into his body and blood." See also Council of Trent, 1581, Session 13, Canon II, which confirms that "the species only of the bread and wine remain."

¹⁵ Citing Article XXVIII of the XXXIX English Articles of religion: "Transubstantiation (or the change of substance of bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." John of Gaunt's *protégé* Wycliffe, famously, had been condemned in 1418 for rejecting transubstantiation on the philosophical grounds that the "accidents" of the bread cannot subsist once the bread is gone.

¹⁶ See, e.g., *Dioptrics*, Discourse I, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris: Vrin, 1969 [henceforth AT], VI, 85: "Colors, in the bodies that we call colored, are nothing but the ways in which these bodies receive light and send it back against our eyes." Descartes's predecessor in Optics, Johannes Kepler, in contrast, thought that colors were autonomous radiations that were activated by sunlight. See J. Kepler, *Paralipomena ad Vitellionem*, V, 2; translated by A. Crombie, in *Mélanges Alexandre Koyré*, Paris: Hermann, 1964, I, pp. 149–150.

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas's Aristotelian formulation is found in *Summa Theologica*, Part III, Question 77, Article 1. See, in particular, Reply to Objection 4, in which Thomas explains that snow is "white" through whiteness. For a philosophical discussion of Thomas's defense of *accidentia sine subjecto* (the quality of whiteness remaining as a real "accident" after transubstantiation) see Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason. A Reassessment*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 217–218.

¹⁸ AT I, 179.

By February 1638, Descartes had framed a new mechanistic explanation of transubstantiation and wrote confidently to Father Vatier, S.J., at La Flèche:

“I dare boast that Faith has never been supported as powerfully by human reason as it is if my principles are followed; and particularly, Transubstantiation, which Calvinists refute on the grounds that it is impossible to explain according to ordinary philosophy, is very easy to explain according to mine.”¹⁹

In a letter to Mersenne dated January 28, 1641, Descartes again expressed his confidence that the new Cartesian explanation of transubstantiation would be well received by the Church:

“It seems to me that there will be no difficulty in accommodating Theology to my way of philosophizing. For I see nothing to be changed except Transubstantiation, which is extremely clear and easy according to my principles.”²⁰

In March, Descartes wrote again to Mersenne on the subject of Transubstantiation, in connection with objections raised by Arnauld.²¹ Finally, in August 1641, with the publication of *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, Descartes went public with his solution to the “whiteness” of the consecrated Host, prompted by Arnauld.²² The solution was elegant: God, according to Descartes, conserves the surface of the bread, construed as an ideal mathematical surface—a two-dimensional *separatrix* marking off the Host from the ambient air, but not constituting a finite part of either. Mersenne, concerned about Church precedents which could be used against Descartes, asked Father Jean Durel of the Lyon Minims to research the details of Wycliffe’s condemnation by the Council of Constance in 1418 and forwarded the response to Descartes in February 1642. Descartes protested that he, too, would have found Wycliffe heretical and that his own (Descartes’s) fidelity to the Roman Church was beyond question.²³

Were factions already emerging within the Roman church, for and against Descartes’s mechanistic model of the Host? Would mechanistic philosophy, as such, be crushed in the cradle if Descartes’s theory of the Blessed Sacrament were condemned? It is at this point, circa 1645, that the distinctive fabric of the English Catholic network, in turn close-knit and loosely-woven, proved useful. An

¹⁹ AT I, 564.

²⁰ AT III, 295–296.

²¹ AT III, 349.

²² *Meditationes de prima philosophia, Quartae Responsiones*, AT VII, 253. For Arnauld’s difficulties with Descartes’s views on transubstantiation, and for Descartes’s vulnerability to theological criticism, see Steven M. Nadler, “Arnauld, Descartes, and Transubstantiation: Reconciling Cartesian Metaphysics and Real Presence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49.2 (1988), pp. 229–246.

²³ AT III, 545 and 547–549.

old acquaintance and loyal friend of Thomas White, who had long cooperated with White across factional lines yet who moved in very different circles, sprang up seemingly out of nowhere to promote and defend the Cartesian theory. Descartes's surprise champion was a native from Coventry, a Catholic convert and English Recollect friar, known in religion as Franciscus à Sancta Clara.²⁴

Thomas White had known Sancta Clara in Douai, perhaps as early as 1616, when Sancta Clara had studied at the English College under the alias Lathroppe, masking his birth name of Christopher Davenport.²⁵ After joining the Franciscans in 1617 at Ypres, Sancta Clara had worked energetically to help John Gennings found the Franciscan College of St. Bonaventure in Douai and to restore the English Franciscan Province.²⁶ In 1632, Sancta Clara had returned to England and soon become integrated into Queen Henriette-Marie's religious retinue, living in a small friary abutting Somerset House, complete with a private garden and a Crucifixion by Rubens above the altar.²⁷ By 1640, Sancta Clara had twice received White's endorsement for his theology: first for *Deus, Natura, Gratia* (1634), a scandalous book aimed at proving that the 39 Articles of English religion are compatible with Roman doctrine and that Rome should therefore welcome the English church, married priests and all, back into its fold;²⁸ then for *Apologia Episcoporum* (1640), a defense of the divine right of bishops in close keeping with the views of the Protestant

²⁴ The basic biography is John B. Dockery, *Christopher Davenport, Friar and Diplomat*, London: Burnes and Oates, 1960. Three important studies have called attention to Sancta Clara's theology: Maurice Nédoncelle, "Trois Aspects du Problème Anglo-Catholique au XVII^e siècle", Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1951; George H. Tavard, *The Seventeenth-century Tradition. A Study in Recusant Thought*, Leiden: Brill, 1978, pp. 133–157; and Bruno Neveu, "A la recherche de l'Aptum théologique au XVII^e siècle: Davenport, White, Holden, Sergeant," in *République des Lettres, républiques des Arts; Mélanges en l'honneur de Marc Fumaroli*, eds. Christian Mouchel, Colette Nativel, Genève: Droz, 2008, pp. 581–600. More recently, see my own "Scotus as Father of Modernity. The Natural Philosophy of the English Franciscan Christopher Davenport in 1652," *Early Science and Medicine*, 12 (2007), pp. 55–99 and "Baroque Fire (A Note on Early-Modern Angelology)," *Early Science and Medicine*, 14 (2009), pp. 369–397. (I am currently preparing a book-length study of Sancta Clara's life and theology.)

²⁵ See *Third Douai Diary*, published by *Catholic Record Society*, X, 132; cited by Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, 15.

²⁶ See Father Thaddeus, OFM, *The Franciscans in England, 1600–1850*, London: Art and Book Co., 1898, pp. 21–37.

²⁷ This Rubens is known mainly through its destruction by Puritan iconoclasts. See A.J. Loomie, "A Lost Crucifixion by Rubens," *Burlington Magazine* 140.1139 (1996), pp. 734–739.

²⁸ *Deus, Natura, Gratia, sive Tractatus de Praedestinatione, de meritis et peccatorum remissione, seu de Justificatione, et denique de sanctorum invocatione. Ubi ad trutinam Fidei catholicae examinatur Confessio Anglicana et ad singular puncta, quid teneat, qualiter differat, excutitur. Accepta paraphrastica Expositio reliquorum Articulorum Confessionis Anglicanae. Lugduni, 1634.* For evidence that White acted against his own secular clergy clique to approve Sancta Clara's *Deus, Natura et Gratia*, see John Southcot's letter to Peter Biddulph, dated 16 August, 1633, in M. Questier, *Newsletters from the Caroline Court*, 199: "Father Francis doth still prosecute his purpose of printing his book and would have the approbation of divers priests of severall orders

Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, and which English Jesuits resented all the more that their notorious opponent, “Blacklo” White, had approved it.²⁹

Sancta Clara was as ecumenical in his friendships as he was in his religious views, endearing himself, for example, to Laud’s young *protégé* Jeremy Taylor and raising funds for Franciscan nuns to start a school in London from Geoffrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester.³⁰ He was cherished by his English Franciscan brothers, who chose him by unanimous vote to be their Provincial from 1637 to 1640.³¹ As White knew, Sancta Clara was equally appreciated by English Benedictines (who endorsed *Deus, Natura et Gratia*) and by leading Protestant divines, with whom Sancta Clara had closely cooperated in the hope of bringing about a corporate reunion of the Roman and English churches.³² Lord Falkland, in refuting White’s defense of Catholic infallibility, had repeatedly cited Sancta Clara.³³ Sancta-Clara was well-known in Henriette-Marie’s entourage and had cooperated with Kenelm Digby’s effort, at Henriette-Marie’s request, to raise funds from English Roman Catholics in 1639 to support King Charles against the Scots.³⁴ Digby’s beloved wife Venetia, in turn, had been a Franciscan tertiary.³⁵ In Paris in the 1640’s, still officially counted among Henriette-Marie’s beadsmen, Sancta Clara brought succor to his old friend the exiled Secretary of State Francis Windebank and dined with Arthur Hopton, Charles’s ambassador to Spain.³⁶ Loathed by Puritans and

to it. Mr. Blacklo hath in some sort approved it (unawares) and the friar sent also to me before I went out of town.”

²⁹ *Apologia Episcoporum, seu Sacri Magistratus Propugnatio. Authore Reverendo admodum P. F. Francisco a S. Clara, Provinciae Angliae Fratrum Minorum ministro provinciali, et olim apud duacenses lectore Theologiae Primario, nunc vero Serenissimae Reginae Magnae Britanniae à sacris. Coloniae, 1640.*

³⁰ See Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, pp. 57–59.

³¹ See Dockery’s account of the Provincial Chapter, which was presided over by Sancta Clara’s teacher and friend Pierre Marchant, in *Christopher Davenport*, pp. 111–112.

³² See Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 250–251, and 345–370.

³³ See *Sir Lucius Cary, late Lord Viscount Falkland, his discourse of infallibility*, 1651, pp. 83 and 111.

³⁴ See Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, p. 46.

³⁵ See Digby’s letter to his sons, dated 18 May 1633, in Vittorio Gabrieli, “A New Digby Letter-Book: ‘In praise of Venetia,’” *The National Library of Wales Journal*, 9.2 (1955), pp. 125 and 132–133. See also Roy Digby Thomas, *Digby: The Gunpowder Plotter’s Legacy*, London: Janus, 2001, p. 123; and Anne Sumner, “Venetia Digby on her Deathbed,” *History Today*, October 1995, pp. 20–25.

³⁶ As reported by Sancta Clara himself, in the dedication of the Appendix of *Systema fidei* (1648) and in *Religio Philosophiae Peripatetici* (1662), where he states that he resided “for some years in France on account of our troubles” and “often dined with Mr. Walter Stuart. A noble Scotsman and a Protestant, recently returned from Spain, and with his excellency Mr. Hopton, ambassador to the King of Spain.” Citing Dockery’s translation, in *Christopher Davenport*, p. 106.

distrusted by Jesuits, Sancta Clara was everyone else's favorite *weak tie*—moving effortlessly through closed doors, happy to be of help when needed, invisible when not, *in the world but not of it*—much like Thomas White's interstellar ether, *nexus stellarum et planetarum*.³⁷

In October 1645, as civil war raged in England, Sancta Clara found himself in Evreux, Normandy, soliciting endorsements for his most recent and most ambitious work of theology, *Systema Fidei*. Aimed at defending the authority of Church Councils, *Systema fidei* had little to do, at first blush, with natural philosophy. Why should *Systema Fidei* include, as it does, a praise of Galileo and a defense of Cartesian philosophy?

Two Paris doctors, Father Louis Martel, prior of the Cistercian Monastery of Nea, and Father Jean-Baptiste Du Souchey, Moderator of the College of Evreux, had apparently agreed to read Sancta Clara's "serious and subtle" manuscript of over five-hundred pages and were now willing to attest in writing that the book was doctrinally sound and "useful."³⁸ Sancta Clara also secured the approval of Edmund Vinot, "doctor theologian of the Friars Minor of the Observance and Provincial of the French Province," who was visiting the nearby Franciscan convent of Vernon.³⁹ A year later, in December 1646, in Namur, the Flemish Franciscan theologian Matthias Hauzer would also approve Sancta Clara's book for publication, now augmented to include a discussion of the papacy, lavishly dedicated to Digby.⁴⁰ In June 1647, Valentine Randour, professor of theology at Douai, would again approve the augmented manuscript, praising its effectiveness against "pestilential heresies."⁴¹ Sancta Clara's old teacher and longtime friend Pierre Marchant would add his own official stamp in Spa on August 9, 1647. Finally, Sancta Clara's old schoolmate, English *confère* and Provincial Minister Jérôme Pickford, authorized the book for publication at the convent of St. Elizabeth in Newport, on September 16, 1647. By the time Sancta Clara's *Systema fidei* was published in Liège in 1648, its contents, in short, had already been examined and approved by a small network of fairly influential French and Flemish theologians, mainly Franciscan,

³⁷ Citing Sancta Clara's account of White's cosmology in *Systema fidei* (1648), Chapter 6, p. 39. On the possible advantages of "weak ties," especially as a means to disseminate information and as a means to avert cliques, see Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," *Sociological Theory*, 1 (1983), pp. 201–233.

³⁸ See *Systema fidei*, statements by censors, unnumbered page: "*Videtur ergo utile ut Typis mandatur*." Note that Descartes sought, but failed to secure, official endorsements by theologians for *Meditationes de prima philosophia*.

³⁹ See *ibid.*: "*Datum in Conventu nostro Vernonensi, tempore visitationis nostrae*."

⁴⁰ See *Systema fidei*, 505: "*Vir illustrissime, liceat per compendium varios tuos Magnitudinis titulos, unico Epaminondas vocabulo exarare*." Sancta Clara describes himself, in turn, as "*obsequentissimo Famulo tuo*."

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; for an account of Valentine Randour's leadership role at the theology faculty of the University of Douai, see Herman Joseph Heuser, *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, 117 (1947), p. 482.

who had little or nothing to do with Mersenne's circle and who, therefore, could be cited, eventually, as unbiased and qualified judges. Sancta Clara thus served precisely as a *local bridge* connecting White's network of pioneer natural philosophers to a network of Franciscan doctors and professors.⁴²

What philosophical content from Mersenne's circle did Sancta Clara convey in *Systema fidei*? Throughout the book, Sancta Clara discusses White's ideas, describing White himself as a *doctissimus quidem Dialogista* and as personal friend (*amicus meus*).⁴³ The final chapter, in turn, on the papacy, added as a sort of appendix in 1646, praises Kenelm Digby, whose *Two Treatises* are also discussed in the main body of the work.⁴⁴ References are also made throughout *Systema fidei* to White's close associate Henry Holden, a Sorbonne theologian, also described as a personal friend.⁴⁵ Thus *Systema Fidei* not only disseminates ideas from one (relatively closed) community to another, it explicitly invokes personal ties in order to infuse controversial ideas with conviviality and trust—in keeping with Sancta Clara's goal of promoting a capacious, tolerant Catholicism. *Systema fidei*, Sancta Clara's *opus magnum*, was to serve as the keystone of Sancta Clara's inclusive theology by defending Ecumenical Councils against despotic Jesuit papalism on the one hand and against Protestant skepticism on the other, most especially against the subtle religious fallibilism developed by William Chillingworth and Lord Falkland at Great Tew. Sancta Clara's decision to include controversial philosophical speculations in *Systema fidei* was indeed partly motivated by his determination to show that Roman Catholicism is less rigid than Puritan Calvinism and thus more favorable, ultimately, to scientific research.

Chapter I opens *Systema fidei* by acknowledging that all humans beings without exception are intrinsically fallible. The whole problem of infallibility is reframed, in a distinctly Scotist way, into a single strategic question: "In what sense must theologians be understood when they investigate whether universal Councils are infallible?" Implicitly, the task is simply one of bold clarification. Chapter I also announces Sancta Clara's answer in advance: "I will show abundantly in the following chapters that when God directs Councils according to pre-appointed terms to deduce doctrines from revealed truths and previously-received doctrines, then the Councils are infallible."⁴⁶ After discussing the Church's authority to define truths (Chapter 2) and estab-

⁴² For a discussion of the notion of "local bridges," see Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," pp. 217–220.

⁴³ See e.g. *Systema fidei*, Chapter 5, p. 33.

⁴⁴ See, most especially, *Systema fidei*, Chapter 45, where Sancta Clara cites "Blaclous seu Thomas Anglus, *Institutiones Peripatecicis*, Bk. IV, lectio 10 (487), and Digby's treatise on bodies (491).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 2, 7. On Henry Holden, see Stefania Tutino, "The Catholic church and the English Civil War: The Case of Thomas White," pp. 233, 233 fn. 2, and 236.

⁴⁶ *Systema fidei*, Chapter 1, p. 4.

lishing that the Church does not rely on any new Revelations when it defines Catholic doctrine (Chapter 3), Sancta Clara defends the practice of distinguishing between necessary doctrines and doctrines that are not, citing Jewish Rabbis in favor of the distinction, notably Maimonides, Crescas and Joseph Albo (Chapter 4). Chapter 5, in turn, examines the category of necessary doctrines, arguing that some necessary doctrines are absolutely fundamental (*Fundamenta*) while others (*Fundamentalialia*) are necessary because they are analytically deduced from *Fundamenta*. Unlike Thomas White, however, whose views he presents in detail, Sancta Clara insists that deduced doctrines (*fundamentalialia*) are fully necessary for salvation, not just “very helpful.”⁴⁷ Thus Sancta Clara’s class of *fundamentalialia*, the reader suspects, will fall under the Church’s authority to define truths.⁴⁸ Sancta Clara concludes Chapter 5 by pointing out that nothing must be accounted fundamental that is not necessary for promoting God’s glory or for pursuing salvation. Even if a matter has been determined by Church Fathers in one way or another based on interpreting obscure passages of Scripture, it must not be included among *fundamentalialia*.⁴⁹ The reader is now nicely prepared for Sancta Clara’s strategy, which is to rule out whole classes of truths that fall outside the Church’s authority, until a final narrow class of church-definable truths remains. This brings us to Chapter 6, where Sancta Clara examines the question of “whether philosophical things, as such, are suited to be defined.”

In raising the question of “philosophical things, as such,” Chapter 6 whets the reader’s appetite by advertizing that many curious philosophical matters will be presented.⁵⁰ The context in which Sancta Clara conveys Descartes’s mechanistic model of transubstantiation is a remarkable plea for the separation of the two *magisteria*, religious and philosophical. Chapter 6 aims at protecting the Faith from philosophical speculations by protecting natural philosophy from religious authority. Scientific controversies, Sancta Clara argues, cannot, and must not, and should not, be decided on the basis of Scripture. Why not? God’s Church, Sancta Clara urges, has no privileged warrant regarding philosophical matters since there exists no divine promise of

⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, the doctrine legitimating religious orders is included in this category: it is deduced from Foundations and necessary for salvation according to Sancta Clara (a member of a religious order), merely “very useful” for salvation according to the secular priest White.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter 5, pp. 32–33. Sancta Clara contrasts his view to White’s as follows: “*Ego vero adhuc aliter et aliquanto strictius de fundamentalibus agendum censeo.*”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35: “*Addendum etiam ad priora illa inter fundamentalia non computari debere, quae necessaria non sunt ad gloriam Dei promovendam, nec ad salutem consequendam, licet ex Sacro Codice, hanc vel illam partem determinaverint Patres, nempè sic vel sic interpretando Scripturam forsitan subobscuram.*”

⁵⁰ See the title of Chapter 6, p. 37: “*An philosophica quæ talia possint definiri; ubi multa abstrusiora in Philosophicis exponuntur.*”

supernatural assistance with regard to philosophy.⁵¹ Most doctors, therefore, wisely follow Augustine's authority in distinguishing sharply between purely philosophical truths and divinely-revealed truths. The more common opinion of doctors thus coincides with Augustine's conclusion in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Bk. II, c. 9, that "The Holy Spirit does not want to teach us about the shape of the Heavens, as it has nothing to do with salvation."⁵² What, Sancta Clara asks, could be clearer? *Quid clarius?* Augustine explicitly carves out a sphere of divinely revealed truths, aimed exclusively at salvation, which he carefully divorces from philosophical truths. The Holy Spirit teaches nothing about philosophical matters since they have no bearing on gaining heaven. Again in the same place, Augustine testifies that he has no duty to pass judgment on celestial motions since "we desire Holy Church to inform us only of what is necessary for salvation."⁵³ Augustine's authority suffices, in short, to separate a religious *magisterium* aimed at supernatural beatitude from a philosophical *magisterium* aimed at advancing natural knowledge. Sancta Clara concludes the section by praising Galileo for "accumulating these passages of Augustine, if indeed it was he who did so, as it appears in the edition defending his doctrines."⁵⁴

Like Galileo, Descartes, Thomas White and Kenelm Digby, Sancta Clara thus considers Judeo-Christian Scripture to put forth a practical science of how to win heaven, not a theoretical physics.⁵⁵ Consequently, questions of natural philosophy, as such, belong safely to the human realm of rational speculation, error, hypothesis, debate. Sancta Clara is eager to prove the point by giving examples of such questions. Cosmology, for one, as we saw in Augustine, has no relevance to Holy Church. The problem is that some doctors

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 6, 37: "Nullibi enim extat promissum de speciali Spiritus Sancti illustratione in expositione Scripturae in ordine ad Philosophica."

⁵² *Ibid.*, Chapter 6, 37. Citing *De Genesi ad lit.*, Bk. II, c. 9: "Spiritum Dei, qui per ipsos loquebatur noluisse ista docere homines, nulli ad salutem profutura."

⁵³ *Ibid.*, citing *De genesis ad lit.*, Bk. II, c. 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; "Haec Augustinus loca non ineptè conguessit Galileus, si Opus eius fuerit." Sancta Clara is clearly referring to Galileo's *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*, published in both Italian and Latin in Strasbourg in 1636. For a discussion, see Ernan McMullin, "Galileo on Science and Scripture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Galileo*, ed. Peter Machamer, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 271–347. Sancta Clara seems to have interpreted Galileo in the same way as Annibale Fantoli in *Galileo: for Copernicanism and for the Church*, Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, p. 198, namely that Galileo cites Augustine in order to promote "the principle of the autonomy of scientific research."

⁵⁵ For Galileo, see "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina," translated by Stillman Drake in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, New York: Doubleday, 1957, pp. 175–216; for Descartes, see *Discours de la Méthode*, Part I, AT VI, 8; For Thomas White, see his Answer in *Sir Lucius Cary, late Lord Viscount of Falkland, his Discourse of infallibility: with an answer to it, and His Lordships reply, never before published*, London, 1651, Chapter 3, 10; For Kenelm Digby, see *A Conference with a Lady about Choice of Religion*, Paris, 1638, Conclusion 14, pp. 77–78: "The doctrine of Christ is practical."

are so used to Aristotle's crystalline spheres and so impressed by the wide consensus that affirms Aristotle's physics or by its venerable antiquity that they forget that Aristotle's geocentric model is merely a human opinion, not a certainty.⁵⁶ Shrewd and qualified opponents, however, have recently emerged, who "make fun of Aristotle's view and reject it as repugnant to truth and to the nature of bodies."⁵⁷ These new philosophers invoke "manifest experiments conducted by the messengers, as they say, of the stars, i.e., mathematical observations" to overthrow Aristotle's cosmos.⁵⁸ Thus the new Galilean theory, as *Dialogista White* explains in *De mundo*, denies that there are crystalline spheres and posits instead "an interstellar fluid, similar to our air, in which planets and the earth move."⁵⁹ What are theologians to do? Both sides, Sancta Clara remarks, invoke Scripture, hoping to prevail: but as the "Dialogist Lord White" correctly explains further in *De mundo*, it is entirely inappropriate to appeal to Scripture against the motion of the Earth. As White argues, to judge the physical world without science and mathematics is as idiotic as judging written propositions without grammar. Indeed, according to White, "it is criminal" for someone to try and impose his own incompetent and ignorant fantasy upon the faithful as though it were the rule of Faith and Christian Doctrine.⁶⁰ To the extent that Sancta Clara defends Galileo's and White's call to liberate cosmology from Scripture in a theological work aimed at protecting the Faith and defending the infallibility of Church Councils, it no longer presents itself as a hostile, external threat but, instead, as a valuable cornerstone of Catholic wisdom.

Sancta Clara's second example is the question of the music of the spheres, which remains fully open for debate, despite Aristotle's conviction that he had ruled it out.⁶¹ The third example, Sancta Clara warns, is all at once closer

⁵⁶ *Systema fidei*, Chapter 6, p. 39: "Tandem ex consequio horum, terram mundi centrum astruunt, et illa immota, omnia alia circumvolui putant. Haec dico sententia, si vel prosequacium multitudine, vel primae inventionis antiquitate expendi debeat, diceres rem esse certam, et jam penitus actam. Omnes enim Scriptores libros hac opinione reserferunt."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: "Non desunt verò alii [...] qui haec omnia rident, et veritati atque mundanorum Corporum naturis repugnare judicant."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: "Demum per manifestas experientias à nuntiis ut vocant Syderiis, seu perspicillis Mathematicis, prorsus convelli asserunt."

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40: "Dicunt igitur per universum esse diffusam fluidissimam, tenuissimamque substantiam, quae est ad instar aëris nostri, et est nexus Corporum illorum solidorum, scilicet Stellarum et Planetarum, et illa superiora ambit, sicut aër noster corpora nostra et terram." The passage concludes: "Et consequenter terram ad numerum Planetarum evehunt."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40: "Tandem immanis est sceleris, quod tuâ inscitia vel barbaria hallucinaris, id velle in Fidei regulam et legem Doctrinae Christianae super verticem omnium fidelium erigere." For a detailed discussion of Thomas White's defense of the autonomy of philosophy and debates with Rome, see Bruno Neveu, *L'Erreur et son juge*, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1993, pp. 372–381. White will dedicate his 1652 *Institutionum sacrarum peripateticis inaedificatarum* to Sancta Clara.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

to home and far more serious: *in re magis obvia, et tamen gravissima*.⁶² Until recently, philosophers and theologians have defended the idea of “real accidents,” based on Aristotelian principles.⁶³ But a new philosophy has emerged, which denies that it is possible for accidents to remain in existence independently of substance, as separate, sensible qualities.⁶⁴ The new philosophy focuses wholly on surface contact to explain sensations.⁶⁵ Sancta Clara points out that there is overlap in this regard with Peripatetic philosophy, implying that there may be room for accommodation and that Aristotelian philosophy is less dogmatic than widely assumed.⁶⁶

The new philosophers, moreover, “deny that the surface of a thing is a circumjacent entity. They say that it is the terminus of the sensible body, or that it can be conceived as the medium between separate corpuscular particles, which have diverse shapes and motions, and cannot coalesce into a body without tiny intervals of air, as we see in the case of bread.”⁶⁷ Furthermore,

“they believe that their doctrine is much truer and more consistent with Faith. Citing Trent, Session 13, they interpret “species of bread” to be the surface that we have previously discussed. It follows from this view that the Body of Christ is necessarily contained precisely under the same species under which the bread would be contained if it were present. And since this is easily conceived, it validates the antecedent. They believe that it is much more difficult to conceive real accidents existing outside of substances: indeed since nothing real can be conceived to subsist unless it is conceived as subsistent, the so-called “accidents” of the bread are really conceived to be substances despite the name.”⁶⁸

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶³ *Ibid.*: “*Hactenus ex principiis Peripateticis per totum Philosophantium et Theologizantium mundum obtinuit, et ipsum mundum opplevit, Dari accidentia realia et realiter distincta à substantiis, etiam in quibus subiectantur.*”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: “*Nunc verò invaluit alius planè diversus Philosophandi modus: Accidentia realia realiter à substantiâ distincta non agnoscunt.*”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: “*Contactum quidem omnium sensuum ad superficiem seu superficies variè scilicet dispositas fieri concedunt: v.g. colorem, saporem, gravitatem et reliqua omnia quae sensus movent à sola extima corporum superficie dependere volunt, sicut omnem actionem corporis ad corpus, et etiam passionem.*”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42: “*Quoad affectionem sensuum, ferè omnes Peripatetici concedunt fieri vel per immediatum contactum superficiei ab ipso Organo, vel mediante aëre, aliisque corporibus, vel, ut alii, speciebus intentionalibus: undè hic non differtur.*”

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42: “*Superficiem verò esse quantitatem corporis vel corporum circumiacentium negant, sed esse terminum dimensionum corporis quod sentitur, seu qui concipitur esse medius inter singulas corporis particulas, quae plerumque sunt diversae, et diversas habent figuras et motus, nec sic junguntur, quin multa interjaceant spatia repleta aëre, vel alia materia, ut in pane videmus; et idèò superficies panis respondet illis diversis particulis diversarum substantiarum.*”

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43: “*Imò putant hanc doctrinam multò veriùs et faciliùs consistere cum fide, quam positionem accidentium realium, etc. Et idèò quod dicitur in Trid. Sess. 13. Transsubstantiationem*

Sancta Clara's synopsis faithfully paraphrases Descartes's published answer to Arnauld, which, as we saw, had prompted negative reactions.⁶⁹ Letters exchanged between Descartes and Father Mesland between 1644 and 1646 further attest to the *malaise* occasioned by Descartes's innovative model of the Catholic Host.⁷⁰ Thus in a letter to Mesland of February 9 1645, Descartes had to clarify the ontological status of the "surfaces" which God supernaturally preserves in the Eucharist:

"The surface intermediate between the air and the bread does not differ in reality from the surface of the bread, nor from the surface of the air touching the bread; these three surfaces are in fact a single thing and differ only in relation to our thought. That is to say: when we call it the surface of the bread, we mean that although the air which surrounds the bread is changed, the surface remains always *eadem numero*, provided that the bread does not change, but changes with it if it does. And when we call it the surface of the air surrounding the bread, we mean that it changes with the air and not with the bread. Finally, when we call it the surface intermediate between the air and the bread, we mean that it does not change with either, but only with the shape of the dimensions which separate one from the other; so that in this sense it is simply by that shape that it exists, and by that alone that it can change."⁷¹

While Father Mesland's letters to Descartes suggest an emerging resistance to Descartes's mechanistic principles on theological grounds, Sancta Clara's *Systema fidei* suggests, in turn, that a group of philosophers had already coalesced to defend Descartes's mechanistic explanation of the Host, along with the "Augustinian" axiom that religious authority stops where natural philosophy begins. By publicizing the support that Descartes's theory had already received, Sancta Clara likely hoped to mobilize further support through the contagion of prestige: "I see men of no mean condition embrace this doctrine and even celebrate it above others."⁷² By "men of no mean condition," does Sancta Clara mean the

feri, manente duntaxat specie panis, per speciem intelligunt superficiem de qua ante. Addunt ex hac positione sequi, Corpus Christi necessariò contineri accurate sub eadem specie, sub qua contineretur panis si adesset: quòd quidem facile potest concipi, posito Antecedente. Putant denique difficulter (si omnino) concipi posse, Accidentia realia existere pereuntibus substantiis: Quia nihil reale potest intelligi remanere nisi quod subsistat, et quamvis verbo vocetur accidens, concipiatur ut substantia."

⁶⁹ Sancta Clara appears to have been familiar with Descartes's longer answer, published in the 2nd Amsterdam edition of 1642. See AT VII, pp. v–vi and 252–256.

⁷⁰ Was Sancta Clara privy to these letters, which apparently were already being circulated in Paris among some groups? I thank Vlad Alexandrescu for raising the possibility, which indeed seems likely to me, considering Sancta Clara's emphasis on defining "surface," which is not emphasized in Descartes's published answer to Arnauld.

⁷¹ AT IV, 164. Citing Anthony Kenny's translation in *Descartes: Philosophical Letters*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 154–159.

⁷² *Systema fidei*, Chapter 6, p. 43: "Video viros non infimae conditionis hanc doctrinam amplecti, imò à plerisque celebrari."

famous Kenelm Digby and the notorious Thomas White? Does he mean the young Augustinian theologian Arnauld at the Sorbonne, who prompted Descartes to publish his views in the first place? Does he mean the Sorbonne doctor Henry Holden? Was Sancta Clara perhaps *encouraged* to convey a defense of Descartes's theory to a broader network of Franciscan theologians by one of these respected men? Did White, or Digby, or Holden, pick the roving Sancta Clara as a suitable means to garner support among theologians for a mechanistic model of transubstantiation, without ever citing Descartes's name?

At the very least, *Systema fidei* attests to the fact that mechanistic philosophy was perceived in 1645 as vulnerable theologically, on a par with Galileo's Copernican cosmology. Over and beyond transmitting White's Galilean plea for separating the religious and philosophical *magisteria*, Sancta Clara, like Galileo, emphasized the wisdom of insulating religious dogma from philosophical theories. Since Scripture, Sancta Clara insists, is by its very essence neutral regarding philosophical speculation, Christian Faith must not be made hostage to the vacillating speculations of human reason.⁷³ Most importantly, philosophical doctrines that seem to be tied to religious beliefs must not be *confused* with the Revealed doctrines that they explain and become assimilated to Faith.⁷⁴ Sancta Clara concludes the discussion of Cartesian transubstantiation by pointing out that the new mechanistic philosophers, no less than Aristotelian philosophers, claim that their doctrine of supernatural "surface conservation" is more conform to Scripture and to truth than the alternative.⁷⁵

Sancta Clara's special access to Franciscan networks, it seems, together with his outsider status with regard to scientific research, made him a useful advocate of the theological *safety* of the new mechanistic philosophy beyond Mersenne's circle of natural philosophers. The key is that Sancta Clara does not endorse Descartes's mechanistic explanation of the Host, rather he defends the right of philosophers generally to frame new theories without the Church's authority precisely because God's revealed truths transcend natural philosophy absolutely. Thus it is not without interest to note that in October 1647, when Sancta Clara had already secured final permission to publish *Systema fidei* and was back in Douai as Director of Studies at the College of Saint Bonaventure,⁷⁶ another member of Mersenne's network, Blaise Pascal, in Paris, was accused by the Jesuit Noël of introducing novelties into natural philosophy regarding the possibility of a vacuum. Pascal responded with an open letter to Father Noël affirming that Catholics are not required to submit to authority except with regard to

⁷³ See *Systema fidei*, Chapter 6, p. 38, where Sancta Clara cites the same passage from Ecclesiastes (3:11) that is cited by Galileo in *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* to argue that natural philosophy is inherently inconclusive, open-ended. See Stillman Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, p. 187.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43: "*Tam hi quam illi suas opiniones Scripturis et veritati conformiores iactitant.*"

⁷⁶ See Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, p. 116.

the mysteries that the Holy Ghost has revealed for the purpose of salvation, precisely because these revealed mysteries are hidden from reason and sense.⁷⁷ In the realm of philosophy, Pascal insisted, arguments by authority hold no sway.⁷⁸ Pascal's "principle of submission," in effect, elegantly summarizes the chief *practical* conclusion that derives from Sancta Clara's "Augustinian" distinction between philosophy and Faith: namely, that Catholics must indeed submit to the Church's authority, but only with regard to the truths that God has revealed for the sake of winning heaven. In philosophical matters, which by definition cannot ever attain the certainty of Faith, Catholics are free to think freely. To the extent that Sancta Clara and Pascal were both familiar with Jansen's *Augustinus* Book II and were both aware of Jansenist controversies, we may have scratched only the surface of a complex Augustinian network calling for the separation of natural philosophy and Faith for the benefit of both.⁷⁹

Indeed like Pascal, Descartes and "Blacklo," Sancta Clara wished to defend the Church's authority with regard to Revealed truths every bit as much as he wished to defend free philosophical speculation. In Sancta Clara's view, philosophy is inherently "problematical" and uncertain.⁸⁰ Catholic Faith, in contrast, is absolutely indubitable, precisely because it is not the product of human reason but is divinely revealed and transmitted by the authority of God's universal church. In 1654, writing now under the quaintly medieval name of "Francis Coventry," Sancta Clara published an English-language synopsis of *Systema fidei*, entitled *Enchyridion* of Faith.⁸¹ Composed as a "Catechetical" dialogue be-

⁷⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Lettre au très bon Révérend Père Noël*, dated from Paris 29 octobre 1647: "Et nous réservons pour les mystères de la foi, que le Saint-Esprit a lui-même révélés, cette soumission d'esprit qui porte notre croyance à des mystères cachés aux sens et à la raison." Cited from Pascal, *Traité Scientifiques*, ed. S. Le Start, Paris: Nathan, 1990, p. 44. Again, I thank Vlad Alexandrescu for calling my attention to the convergence in time and content of Sancta Clara's and Pascal's views.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43: Pascal explains that, in philosophy, whatever is not proved by strict axiomatic logic is basically open to speculation: "Tout ce qui a une de ces deux conditions est certain et véritable, et tout ce qui n'en a aucune passe pour douteux et incertain."

⁷⁹ Let us note that Peter Marchant had approved Jansen's *Augustinus* in 1641 and thus was familiar with the prologue of Bk. II, in which theology and natural philosophy are distinguished on the basis of method. Let us note as well that Pierre Marchant ratified Sancta Clara's discussion of whether Paul and Peter had both been Popes in *Systema fidei* (Chapter 48, pp. 516–534.) Saint-Cyran's nephew Abbé de Barcos had slipped the "two-popes" thesis into Arnauld's *De la fréquente communion* and the thesis was condemned in Rome in 1645 (see Cognet, *Le Jansénisme*, p. 45.) Let us note, finally, that Pierre Marchant will be accused of Jansenism (see Lucien Ceysens, *Pierre Marchant, OFM, son attitude devant le jansénisme*, Franciscana, XX, 1965, pp. 26–65) and that Sancta Clara's friend and supporter Luke Wadding will defend Jansenius in Rome in 1652 (Cognet, *Le Jansénisme*, p. 60.)

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: "Ex quibus apparet quam fluida et incerta est Philosophia nostra."

⁸¹ See *An Enchyridion of faith presented in a catechetical dialogue, declaring the truth of Christian religion in general: distinguishing also points of faith controverted, from other doctrines*, composed by Fran. Coventry. Printed at Douay anno Domini 1654, with Permission and

tween a Roman Catholic “Master” and his Protestant disciple, Sancta Clara’s *Enchiridion* is dedicated to “Lady Willoughby” but also addressed to “my fellow Christian students,” implying a new pool of patrons and school-age English youths during the upheaval of the Commonwealth.⁸² Bizarrely, the “Master” repeatedly refers his Protestant disciple to Sancta Clara’s *Systema Fidei*, citing himself in the third person. Sancta Clara’s vernacular discussion of Transubstantiation nicely illustrates his commitment to disentangling Faith from philosophy. Catholics, the “Master” explains, are required to believe in the Eucharistic mystery, but they are not required to believe in the *term* “transubstantiation,” which the Church simply declares to be the “most fit” term for describing the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.⁸³ Much less are Catholics required to interpret the Host *ad mentem Aristotelis*. Indeed it is downright blasphemous, the “Master” argues, to “examine the Truth of Christ’s doctrine, which is Truth itself, by Aristotle’s problematicall principles.”⁸⁴ As long as Catholics, based on apostolic authority, believe that nothing remains of the bread after consecration except its “form and figure,” nothing more is required *de fide*.⁸⁵ Did Sancta Clara, *alias* Francis

approbation. A second edition, “much augmented with most grave matters,” was published in 1655. As “Francis Coventry” explains “to the Reader,” the *Enchiridion* is meant as a pendant to his Latin work of natural philosophy, *Paralipomena de mundo peripatetico*, published in 1652.

⁸² A few examples illustrate Sancta Clara’s expanding network: Sancta Clara dedicated his work of philosophy, *Paralipomena de mundo peripatetico*, published in Douay in 1652, to Sir Francis Englefield, son of John Englefield of Wootton Bassett, created baronet in 1612 (according to Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, 101, fn. 1) and thus great-great-nephew of the famously recusant Sir Francis Englefield (see A. J. Loomie, “Englefield, Sir Francis (1522–1596)”, *Oxford DNB* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8811>, accessed 7 June 2012]; Lady Willoughby, who apparently urged Sancta Clara to write *Enchiridion of Faith*, needs to be investigated: was she Bridget, second wife of Montague Bertie, second earl of Lindsey and Lord Willoughby of Eresby, famously loyal to Charles I? Was she Elizabeth, wife of Francis Willoughby of Parham, sister of Elizabeth Noel, benefactor of the English Franciscans in 1619? Was she Cassandra Ridgeway, wife of Sir Francis Willoughby and mother of the future naturalist Francis Willoughby? Finally, Sancta Clara’s *Result of a Dialogue on the middle state of souls*, printed in Paris in 1660, is dedicated to Henry Arundell of Wardour, Master of the Horse to Henriette-Marie (1663) and a chief architect of the secret Treaty of Dover (1670).

⁸³ *Enchiridion of faith (A Catechetical Dialogue)*, 1654 ed., 184: “As for Transubstantiation, names and words, speaking in rigour, are not objects of faith”; and 186: “The Council (Trent) doth not define it as faith, but saith it is a *most fit* expression, as surely it is.” (Images 106–107 of 186, eebo online.)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 201: “There are excellent delights in the schools from all those Quiddities and Modalities, which are of great use for explanation of difficulties. But some are so fixt in them that they seem to desire the holy Gospel to be interpreted *ad mentem Aristotelis non Christi*, according to Aristotle not to the sense of Christ. Which how blasphemous it is to commensurate Christs power by Aristotles Rules, or examine the Truth of his doctrine, which is Truth itself by Aristotles Problematical principles, let any Christian judge.” (Image 115 of 186, eebo online.)

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207: “In the Eucharist (there remaining nothing after consecration but the body and blood of Christ,) there do remain the figure and form of bread and wine.” (Image 118 of 186, eebo online.)

Coventry, find a subtle way to imply that Descartes's mechanistic explanation, based on "figure," is easily harmonized with the Aristotelian explanation, based on "form"? Whatever philosophical framework is invoked, all that matters for salvation is that "fellow Christian students" see beyond sense and reason to believe in the miraculous real presence of God in the consecrated host. Implicitly, Sancta Clara defends the right to *remain respectfully silent* regarding the offensive term "transubstantiation" and the "Problematical" ways in which it is conceptualized.⁸⁶

Was Sancta Clara's *Enchyridion* designed in part for a clandestine Franciscan-run school in London? As we know, one of Sancta Clara's more talented students, Antonius à Sancto Francisco, professed at St. Bonaventure's in 1648 and known outside the Franciscan Order as Antoine Le Grand, will eventually play a prominent role in the dissemination and reception of Cartesian ideas in England, especially at Cambridge.⁸⁷ Le Grand started on his philosophical career by being sent in 1657 to teach philosophy in London—presumably *ad mentem Sanctae Clarae*.⁸⁸ English Franciscans seem to have been involved at the time in an initiative to obtain religious toleration for Roman Catholics, since Sancta Clara in 1656 composed a brief *Explanation of Catholic belief* that doubles up as an oath of civil loyalty for Catholics, hoping to convince Cromwell and Parliament that Roman Catholics are safely Christian and safely patriotic.⁸⁹ In *Explanation of Catholic belief*, Sancta Clara avoids any mention of transubstantiation: with regard to the Eucharistic, Catholics need assert publicly only that they do not "worship the form of the bread" but worship instead God's invisible presence in the consecrated Host.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ For the key importance of "the right of respectful silence" in Arnauld's response to Rome's condemnation of 5 propositions claimed to be found in Jansenius (1653), see Louis Cognet, *Le Jansénisme*, p. 73: "Il refusait sur ce point (i.e., sur le "fait") toute adhésion intérieure à une telle affirmation, et ne s'engageait qu'à un silence respectueux commandé par sa déférence envers le chef de l'Eglise."

⁸⁷ See Richard Acworth, "Le Grand, Antoine (1627/8–1699)", *Oxford DNB*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16364. Accessed 7 June 2012] See also *Philosophia Veterum e Mente Renati Descartes More Scholastico breviter Digesta. Ab Antonio Le Grand. Londini, Apud J. Martyn, Regalis Societatis Typographum, ab insigne Campanae in Coemeterio Divi Pauli. 1671.*

⁸⁸ See Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, p. 122, based on records of the 1657 Chapter.

⁸⁹ In 1656, Sancta Clara wrote a brief *Explanation of the Roman Catholic Belief*, which was presented "to my Ld. Protector and some eminent members of the House," as Sancta Clara himself wrote on the copy that he gave to Thomas Barlow, Librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. See Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, pp. 102–103. Note that in 1654–1655, Kenelm Digby "enjoyed Cromwell's favor and friendship," as reported by R.T. Petersson, *Sir Kenelm Digby*, London, 1956, pp. 234–236.

⁹⁰ See *An explanation of the Roman Catholic's belief concerning their church, worship, justification, and civil government and their other tenets: as it was presented to some persons of quality, for their particular satisfaction*, London?: 1656. I thank my anonymous reviewer for suggesting that Sancta Clara's English-language publications imply further dissemination of the key test-case that transubstantiation represents for disentangling natural philosophy and Faith.

More investigation is needed to evaluate the immediate and long-term impact of Sancta Clara's defense of Cartesian theory and call to insulate Faith from evolving scientific theories. Later in the century, by reaching out across confessional lines to Protestant members of the Royal Society such as Robert Boyle, Antoine Le Grand, encouraged by Sancta Clara, will attempt to raise the philosophical profile and legitimacy of English Franciscans after the Restoration.⁹¹ Meanwhile, from 1660 to his death in 1680, Sancta Clara, appointed theologian to Queen Catherine of Braganza and living once again at Somerset House under the new alias of "Father Hunt," will defend Prayers for the dead against Thomas White's philosophical objections and invoke a variety of philosophical schools to test the validity of miracles. Sancta Clara's interest in miracles had sprung from his many "weak links" on the Continent in the 1640's and gave him new reason in the 1660's to cultivate friends and acquaintances, in Parliament and at Court, at Oxford and within the English Church, at home and abroad.⁹² Two seemingly innocuous facts, in conclusion, invite further exploration of Sancta Clara's evolving networks. First, thanks to his friendship with Thomas Barlow and later with Anthony à Wood, Sancta Clara seems to have enjoyed continuous access to the Bodleian Library of Oxford, where his collected works and many of his monographs found a safe resting place. What ties did Sancta Clara forge at Oxford in the second half of the century and with what results? Secondly, Sancta Clara died peacefully of old age in his apartment in Somerset House in 1680, despite new rigor against Roman Catholics in 1675 and the disastrous Oates Plot of 1678: why did he receive such unwavering protection and from whom? Finally, there is the question of the hidden context of his *Explanation of Catholic belief*, which, as we said, is really a disguised oath of allegiance, and which was republished in improved form in 1670, the year of the secret Treaty of Dover. Did "Father Hunt," who secretly received Ann Hyde, Duchess of York, into the Roman Church in 1671, play any part in Charles II's project of religious toleration? The strength of Sancta Clara's "weak links," ultimately, may be attested most vividly by what remains inscrutable.

⁹¹ See A. Davenport, "Baroque Fire (A Note on Early-Modern Angelology)," pp. 389–397.

⁹² See Dockery, *Christopher Davenport*, p. 128, citing the secret papal envoy Claudio Agretti's Report of December 14, 1669, in *Archives of the Congregation de propaganda Fide*. In his 1662 *Religio Philosophiae peripatetici*, dedicated to Henry Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and aimed chiefly at discussing the case of Michael John Pellicero, whose tibia was miraculously restored in Saragoza on March 31, 1640, Sancta Clara cites, among others, Doctor Thomas Willis of Oxford and Charleton. He also cites the "miracle of the thorn" that occurred at Port-Royal on November 11, 1656. Sancta Clara had already cited Pellicero's miraculous tibia in *Paralipomena de mundo peripatetico* (1652) and in *Enchiridion of faith* (1653), which indeed ends, at the request of the "disciple," with an official account of the miracle.

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