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Special Edition: 10th Anniversary of "Sodalitium"

On the cover: Saint Peter receives the keys from Our Lord Jesus Christ (The Chair of St. Peter, painted by G. F. Barbieri, known as Guercino, in 1618: Pinacoteca civica di Cento, Ferrara). It is the wish of “*Sodalitium*” on the occasion of its tenth anniversary that Our Lord Jesus Christ will give us a Pope in act, to love, to follow, to serve.

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Editorial

It is said that when Saint Pius V declared Saint Thomas Aquinas to be a doctor of the Church, he stated that his brother in the Dominican order had performed as many miracles as there were articles in the Summa Theologica written by him. We would not dream of comparing “*Sodalitium*” to the Summa of Saint Thomas, or his sanctity and wisdom, with our misery and ignorance. However, in our small way, it can even be said of “*Sodalitium*”, in arriving at this tenth anniversary edition, that each time it is issued...yes, a miracle is realized! A “Miracle” for which we thank Our Lord with all our hearts, hoping that with the pen we continue for many years to serve Him, for His glory, for the triumph and enlargement of the Church and the salvation of souls.

It is not easy, in fact, to maintain the publication and diffusion of four issues of our magazine every year, not to mention an additional four translated into French. It is not easy financially, considering that the mailing is free and that “*Sodalitium*” lives solely on the offerings by its readers...and on what the editors lose from their own pockets. Neither it is easy to guarantee, with continuous study, the discrete cultural level that we wish to give to the magazine, and to

reconcile its study with the daily commitments of the four priests who collaborate on “*Sodalitium*”. In tendering his best wishes to the birth of the magazine, Archbishop Lefebvre wrote: “In this, the beginning of the year 1984 and upon the release of the first issue of “*Sodalitium*”, it is my hope that it will not be stillborn, but will last, for which I say: *ad multos annos*. Since it must be recognized, the drafting of a regular magazine that attracts the attention of readers is not an easy thing. In fact, today one prefers to see, rather than to read: all modern education tends toward this. May the editors not be discouraged, but may they have the gift of making it interesting to the reader, so as to educate him.”

We can say that the wager was won. “*Sodalitium*” was not stillborn, like many of its counterparts, but it lives on and wins over, little by little, space among readers.

Born on Christmas, 1983: eight skimpy pages (that then seemed like a masterpiece) representing the magazine of the *Priory of Saint Charles Borromeo* for the Society of Saint Pius X. Although present in Italy since 1974, the Society of Archbishop Lefebvre, after nine years, did not, in fact, yet have a

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The cover of the first issue of "Sodalitium"

true publication! Repairing this omission was one of the principal objectives of the two priests just recently ordained and sent to the *Priory of Saint Charles* in Montalenghe (Turin) in the summer of 1982. The name selected told the whole program: "Sodalitium", recalling the celebrated *Sodalitium Pianum*, the Saint Pius V Association founded by the illustrious historian and combative Catholic journalist, Monsignor Umberto Benigni. From 1910 to 1914, with the approval of Saint Pius X and under his direction, the members of *Sodalitium Pianum* battled along with others against the modernist heretics and their sympathizers; then officially disbanded in 1921, not finding the same support of the new Pontiff that his holy predecessor had shown them. Theoretically, by referring to *Sodalitium Pianum*, we were also making a specific battlefield choice within the Society of Saint Pius X, since a short time earlier, the official magazine of the French district of

the Society, *Fideliter*, had published a series of articles contrary to *Sodalitium Pianum* and contrary to so-called Integral Catholics... Naturally, controversies about the past reflected controversies about the present, and in particular the issue of adopting conciliatory or intransigent attitudes toward the neo-modernists who emerged victorious from Vatican II.

Despite the inevitable internal conflicts due to our position on this, "Sodalitium" was promoted on the field, and from a simple bulletin issued in October 1984 by a simple "priory" up to its sixth edition, it became the Society's periodical for the entire Italian district. It was, however, a short-lived "glory". The last issue, released in July 1985 in the face of the increasingly more serious conflicts, pitting the editors of "Sodalitium" against the new superior general of the Society, Franz Schmidberger, led to a final break. At that moment, "Sodalitium", about to die, with publication suspended in a dispute between the Society

The cover of No. 10 issue of "Sodalitium", before the founding of the Istituto Mater Boni Consilii



of Saint Pius X and the Istituto Mater Boni Consilii, “*Sodalitium*” was reborn as an official body of the latter association.

Since then, “*Sodalitium*” has made its contribution to the cause of Catholic tradition, in Italy as well as France, thanks to Bishop Guérard des Lauriers, to whom we owe the initiative for the French edition; a contribution that we believe, despite our shortcomings, is unique in its kind in Italy, as the “*Sodalitium*” reader, whatever his position, will be able to read about topics that never, or rarely, are addressed by other magazines. In short, “*Sodalitium*” has no equal.

We recall the critical studies on the Society of Saint Pius X, in the midst of so much courtiers and unanimity, and the continuous attention to the current affairs on the “traditionalist” movement. We also recall that it was “*Sodalitium*” that made the Italian reader aware of the problem that the rupture of doctrine within the Church brought about by Vatican II placed on the conscience of every Catholic. The only

The cover of No. 18 of “Sodalitium”



The cover of No. 13 of “Sodalitium”

theologian, a professor at the Lateran University and member of the pontifical academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, who stood up completely for the defense of the Catholic tradition was Monsignor Guérard des Lauriers (cf. n. 18). Yet Italian Catholics would not have even heard of him if “*Sodalitium*” had not made him known. His theological thesis on the See being formally vacant (n. 13), on the conferral of the episcopate without pontifical mandate (n. 16), on the visibility of the Church (n. 22), on the nature of the episcopate with the consequent rejection of *conclavist* adventures (nos. 27 and 29), have enlightened souls as much as his meditation on the passion of Jesus (from no. 28) makes them fervent. A series of articles on the “magisterium” of Vatican II (nos. 20, 23, 25, 27) and on its inspirers, all condemned under Pius XII, as well as constant attention to the statements of John Paul II and “cardinal” Ratzinger, are the motivation for the doctrinal opposition to the conciliar reform, while the life of John

XXIII, followed step by step from n. 22, explains how so much revolution could, historically, have taken place. The lives of the saints (Pius X, Pietro da Verona, Pietro d'Arbués, the Martyrs of Gorcum, Gregory VII, Pius V...) not only nurture the reader's devotion, but are the best argument in favor of the prerogatives of the Pope and the rights of the Church against royalist, secularist, Protestant or liberal errors. Studies on the inquisitors (saints) and the Inquisition make evident to the reader, in the life and daily practice of the Church, the irreconcilability between the "religious freedom" endorsed by Vatican II and Catholic doctrine. An irreconcilability that is confirmed by the lives of the "new saints" of the Council (A.G. Roncalli, K. Wojtyła, P.G. Frassati, de Lubac, Teilhard de Chardin, Blondel...) so different from their truly canonized predecessors.

At the heart of our Christian message one then finds the mystery of Israel: its divine election, its rejection of the Savior, its reprobation by God, the theological conflict that opposes it to the Church in the unfolding of history, both directly and through its exceptional instrument, Freemasonry. We have been interested in these topics since issue no. 9, then dealing with it systematically from n. 24 onwards. This conflict between the Synagogue and the Church illuminates the entire history of humanity, including the conciliar crisis, and without exception the political events of

modern history, which we do not hesitate to address from an entirely Catholic point of view. This point of view is nothing more than that of the Holy Roman Church founded on Peter and his legitimate successors. In the light of their teaching and the social doctrine of the Church we examine all problems concerning the common good, particularly the relations between Church and State. The series of articles on the Papal States (nos. 12, 14 and 19) and those on the relationships between the Papacy and the temporal Power (nos. 20 and 21) demonstrate our great love for the legitimate successors of Peter and expose inspiring principles for correct political doctrine. The writings of the saints (those less known, less quoted), the articles on spiritual life, on pedagogy or on the most current moral problems, finally give nourishment to the soul and heart of the reader, who forgets for a moment the controversies and intellectual

battles on the other pages, concretely helping him not only to think like a Christian, but also to live like a Christian (with the help, most clearly, of the grace of God). Finally, "Sodalitium" is the only means for many distant and isolated readers to follow the initiatives of our Institute: the apostolic ministry, the seminary for the formation of good priests, contacts with similar groups, charitable works, and now, also, editorial activity. Candidly, "Sodalitium" arouses passion in all of us who write for it. That might seem evident, while

The cover of No. 29 of "Sodalitium"



instead it is not: one doesn't always work with enthusiasm. "*Sodalitium*", rather, excites us. Perhaps to call it enthusiasm is too much, but surely "*Sodalitium*" interests an ever growing number of readers, many of whom, even most of whom, do not agree with our positions. We consider this interest, especially on the part of critical readers, to be a consoling success.

Of course, we made mistakes, both in form and in substance: we even published a public apology in the 13th issue! Sometimes the controversy was an end in itself (this is in terms of form). At times we have grossly erred (and this is in substance) especially during our membership with the Society. Once again, we apologize. However, we assure you that if there was error, and there still can be (we are not infallible or omniscient!), it is never accompanied by the desire to deceive. Our only guide is the magisterium, both ordinary and solemn, of the Catholic Church and of the Supreme Pontiffs, and from now on we submit all our writings to the judgment of the Church, ready to sincerely retract anything that may be found to be in contrast with its teaching.

May the reader forgive this editorial, which is more verbose than usual and take pity: it's the birthday of "*Sodalitium*"! Help us, with your prayer, with your economic and moral help, with your advice, to make it ever better, to spread it more and more, as a useful and effective tool for spreading the Gospel and saving souls, for many, long years. *Ad multos annos, and...Deo gratias!*

“HERESY AT THE SUMMIT OF THE CHURCH” (M. Firpo)...in the 20th Century; the incredible story of Cardinal Morone.

Rev. Francesco Ricossa

A Lutheran Pope...The Catholic Church in the hands of heretics...A conspiracy of ecumenist Cardinals, supported by worldly power and “lobbies” of intellectuals to conquer the summit of the Church and reform it from within. An Ecumenical Council to obtain an historic conciliation between the Church and Martin Luther... And yet, we are not talking about John Paul II, or his visit to the Lutheran temple in Rome, or his “pilgrimage” (he said exactly that) to Germany “on the footsteps of Luther”. Our story is older by more than four centuries, yet at the same time most current. “*Historia Magistra vitae*”: history - as the proverb says - is life’s teacher. In fact, “what is it that has been? the same that shall be. And what is it that has been done? the same as what shall be done. Nothing under the sun is new, neither shall any man say: Behold this is new: for it hath already gone before in the ages that were before us” (Ecc. 1, 9-10). Since, across the centuries, human nature is always the same, men essentially tend to repeat the experiences of the past. The study of history would therefore help them to not repeat the same errors that, in similar circumstances, their ancestors committed, or at least to not be surprised by anything. Unfortunately, history is indeed life’s teacher, but an unheeded teacher. Yet, it holds many lessons for our age. An episode, little or poorly known, from the

16th century, therefore at the time of the Council of Trent, for example, will help us to better understand, despite inevitable and necessary distinctions, the situation of the Church in the 20th century at the time of the Second Vatican Council.

The Bull of Paul IV

The context of the crisis, both doctrinal and disciplinary, which arose in the Church after the Council, brought back into vogue studies, at least among the so-called “traditionalist” faithful, on a topic once dedicated to specialists: the theological hypothesis of a “heretic Pope”: one recalls the book dedicated to the topic by Arnaldo Vidigal Xavier da Silveira (“*La Nouvelle Messe de Paul VI: qu’en penser?*” [*The New Mass of Paul VI: What to think?*] Diffusion de la pensée français, Vouillé. 1975; the second part of the book deals specifically with this question), particularly important since it was commissioned by the then residential Bishop of Campos, Brazil, Antonio de Castro Mayer.

As a result of these studies, a Bull by Pope Paul IV (who reigned 1555-1559) was rediscovered: “*Cum ex apostolatus*” of February 15, 1559, the last year of the Pope’s life (this detail is not unimportant). The original Latin text is found in the *Bullarium Romanum* (for example in the “Taurinensis Editio” of 1860, vol. VI, pp. 551-556) or in Cardinal Gasparri’s work *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* (Vol. 1, pp. 163-166). From at least 1976 when it was first published in the French magazine *Fortis dan la Foi*, the translations of this Bull by Pope Carafa, with more or less accuracy,

multiplied. We at Sodalitium also published it (no. 14, September, 1987, pp 9-13), limiting ourselves to the first six paragraphs and with an introduction to which I refer the reader). The reason for such interest resides in the fact that Paul IV, in paragraph VI of this Bull, declared null the election to the Roman Pontiff of any subject who had fallen into heresy before the election, even in the case in which an election took place with the unanimous consent of the Cardinals, followed by the coronation of the said “pope”; and even though he obtained from everyone, for any period of time, the obedience due to a Roman Pontiff. ⁽¹⁾ However, as far as I know, none of these editions of the Bull of 1559, even those that claim to provide an accurate presentation, mention the historical context in which the papal document is placed, a context that explains the words of Paul VI and the extraordinary measures he took on that occasion. ⁽²⁾ Paul IV, in fact, in publishing his Bull against the possible papal election of a heretic, was not invoking a purely hypothetical case. He was 83 years old, he knew he would soon die, and he had imprisoned at Castel Sant'Angelo a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Giovanni Morone, accusing him of heresy. He knew that soon there would be a conclave to elect the new Pope and Morone, if free, would easily be elected. He needed to take remedial action. From this, came this Bull of February 15. He died later that year on August 18. Morone was freed. But thanks to the Bull, he was not elected Pope. Thanks to Paul IV, he had spared the **Church of his time** from having a heretic occupy the Apostolic seat.

To illustrate this historical episode, I will refer to the works of Massimo Firpo,

professor at the University of Torino and who undoubtedly is the “massimo” scholar of Cardinal Morone (excuse my word play). We owe to him, along with Dario Marcato, the critical edition of the documents of the trial to which the Milanese Cardinal was subjected (M. FIRPO, D. MARCATTO. *Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone. Edizione critica.* Vol 5, Rome, Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1981-1989) as well as numerous other writings on the subject (*Tra alumbados e spirituali. Studi su Juan de Valdés e il valdesianesimo nella crisi religiosa del '500 italiano*, Firenze, 1990. *Inquisizione romana e Controriforma. Studi sul cardinale Giovanni Morone e il suo processo di eresia*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1992. *Riforma protestante ed eresie nell'italia del Cinquecento*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1993). While we do not, however, agree with all his interpretations, we will follow his documented studies to illustrate what was a very serious internal crisis in the Catholic Church in the struggle against the Protestant heresy.

The Lutheran crisis and sleeping Shepherds

With the death of Pope Boniface VIII, and the insult at Anagni in 1303, the era of the apogee of the Roman Papacy ended, and there began a long period of tribulation. First, the Avignon captivity (1309-1378), then the great Eastern Schism (1378-1417 with its repercussions up to 1449), weakened the prestige and the strength of the Papacy. The decadence of scholastic philosophy undermined by Nominalism, the incipient secularization of States, and the

humanist culture of the so-called “Renaissance”, paved the way for the catastrophe. The Popes themselves became humanist: “*But while men were asleep, the enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way*” (Mt. XIII, 25). Humanists frequented the Papal Court, just as in the 18th Century, Illuminists will frequent those of the King. Erasmus of Rotterdam was, in the 16th Century, what Voltaire will be two centuries later. Francis I and Charles V bloodied the battlefields of Europe. And Luther was born.

Dogmatically solid, the reaction of the Medici Popes to the Lutheran heresy was, however, ineffective in practice. The Pontiffs of the Medici family were too attached then to the Humanist and Renaissance climate. There was a “historic delay” on the part of the Papal Curia in reacting to the Lutheran challenge. “It was the terrible experience of the sack of Rome in the spring of 1527, the aftermath of atrocious violence, the terrible cruelty, the impious profanations perpetrated by the German landsknecht troops that caused a religious and political turning point.”⁽³⁾ In Rome, Lutheran soldiers on the payroll of Charles V violated “the most sacred things they could find in the city symbolizing Western Christianity - churches, altars, consecrated hosts, vestments, objects of worship, cardinals, bishops, priests, nuns”⁽⁴⁾ which led to a radical change in the spiritual climate of the Roman court.”⁽⁵⁾ Reform came - not of the Church, or of dogma (“*sacra per homines*”), as the Lutherans wanted - but of the behavior of Churchmen (“*homines per sacra*”), and this “*in capite et in membris*”: not just in the

faithful, but also in the person at the visible Head of the Church itself, the Pope.

Given that there was an urgent need for true reform, the problem, then, consisted in the direction that the Church would have to take.

True and False Reform in the Church

Pope Clement VII died in 1534. His successor, Paul III, wanted to actualize this necessity by establishing, in 1537, a reform commission called the *Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia*, or the Council for the Reform of the Church. Among the signatories of this important document one finds the names of the protagonists of the story I am about to tell: still united in their zeal for reform, but already inclined, and they will be more and more, to have diametrically opposed solutions. Thus we can already identify “the gradual emergence of two different orientations, at first parallel and united, but then gradually divergent, one aimed at a reform of the Church directed above all at a more effective fight against heresy, the other willing to draw inspiration from the ongoing conflicts and religious practices of the time, wanting an open and **irenically flexible debate with the doctrines of the Reformation**”.⁽⁵⁾

The first group was represented symbolically by Gian Pietro Carafa, founder, along with Saint Gaetano Thiene, of the new religious order of the Theatines. Cardinal from 1536, he will later be elected Pope in the conclave of 1555 taking the name Paul IV. The second group, “strongly characterized by a Venetian imprint, matured within the halls of the University of Padua

and its humanist circles, gathered around a man of letters and prestige named Pietro **Bembo** (a Cardinal from 1539) as well as a figure of great stature and authority named Gasparo **Contarini**"⁽⁶⁾, who was named president of the *Consilium* of Reform.

True reform was Carafa's precondition. A reform - passed down to history as the Catholic Counter Reformation, opposed to false Lutheran reform - which nurtured a holiness of life, intransigence of doctrine and the severe repression of heresies. One can surely call the future Pope Saint Pius V the model and patron of this reform, elevated to the dignity of "Cardinal Grand Inquisitor" by Pope Carafa and who was the successor of Pope Carafa's policy in the See of Saint Peter. Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa's concept was condensed into one statement that may scandalize those sensitive, cowardly souls of little faith, but which is clearly obvious: "**Li heretici se voleno trattare da heretici**", wrote Carafa, then the Bishop of Chieti, in his memorandum directed to Pope Clement VII *De lutheranorum haeresi repimenda et*

Gian Pietro Carafa, Pope Paul IV



Ecclesia reformanda (October 1532).⁽⁷⁾ Heretics must be treated like heretics! Something that should seem evident to anyone who preserved the slightest faith and who had any common sense. "If even my own son was a heretic, I myself would collect the wood to have him burned", Pope Carafa affirmed. "Frightening words" commented Church historian Lortz.⁽⁸⁾ No doubt. But even more frightening was heresy, which conducts souls to "*eternal fire*" (Mt. XXV, 41) because "*he who does not believe is condemned*" (Jn. III, 18). Rather, what should be admired in this Pope is the love towards Christ, greater than the strong one he had for his family: "*Whosoever loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whosoever loves his son and daughter more than me is not worthy of me*" (Mt. X, 37). All historians, and recently Firpo and Canosa, authors of the *Storia dell'inquisizione in Italia*⁽⁹⁾, declare that the spread of Lutheran heresy in Italy was blocked by Pope Paul III's institution of the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition, with his *Bull Licet ab initio* of 1542 strongly supported by Carafa and Saint Ignatius.⁽¹⁰⁾ And paradoxically, it was this same Cardinal Morone, imprisoned for heresy by Paul IV as we will see later, who unintentionally gave the greatest praise to the politics of his "adversary" in the apologia written to exculpate himself. "If I have affirmed heretical opinions", the Cardinal under investigation essentially wrote, "it was without malice, due to the confusion that reigned before the institution of the Inquisition in 1542. Many years ago religious things in Italy were going along with very little rule - he will write in June

1557 in the so-called *Apologia* drafted the day after his arrest in Castel Sant'Angelo - **because the Holy Office of the Inquisition had not yet been established or was not yet well founded and vigorous.** And yet in every corner there was talk of Ecclesiastical dogma and each one acted as a theologian, and here and there books were written and being sold without consideration in every place. And many places were without Inquisitors, and those with Inquisitors and many Inquisitors were of little ability, so much so that it was almost permitted or tolerated for anyone to do or say whatever he pleased.”⁽¹¹⁾

False reform of the Church, however, was advocated by Contarini and his group; men of letters, bishops and cardinals. What emerged from their ecumenist position towards the Lutherans was, in fact, and fatally, “a doctrinal orientation that was increasingly incompatible with official Orthodoxy”⁽¹²⁾, that is with the Catholic faith.

From Humanism to Ecumenism

What are the intellectual origins of the “false reform” movement in the Church about which we are interested, that which modern historians call “evangelism”? “The roots of evangelism - writes Eva Maria Jung in the *Enciclopedia Cattolica* - emerged on the one hand with the *devotio moderna* and Erasmus, and on the other from the neo-Platonism of Ficino, the mysticism of the Cross of Savonarola, in the ethics of the Compagnia del Divino Amore, and even in the heterodox Spanish system of the *alumbrados*”⁽¹³⁾. With Ficino and Erasmus, we are in full humanism.

Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536) is certainly a character that merits special attention in our day, not only as one of the fathers of evangelism, but more generally as an archetypical model of modernism and above all neo-modernism: i.e. a heresy that does not come from outside the Church, but rather from within it.⁽¹⁴⁾ He, like Luther, a monk without a vocation, also left his monastery like a fiery Saxon, but...with the Pope's permission. Erasmus' works, under the veil of satire, take aim at destroying scholastic theology, accusing Catholic devotion of ignorance and barbarism, accusing Ecclesiastical institutions themselves of superstition and formalism, ridiculing them with his barbs. The fathers of the Church were actually opposed to the scholastics; Scripture had to be freed from the interpretation of theologians... When Luther rebelled, Erasmus saw “that his own work undoubtedly had contributed to creating the right atmosphere for the rise and prospering of the Protestant movement”⁽¹⁴⁾. Frightened by the consequences of the Protestant movement, from its violence, from its own extremisms, by its denial of free will, Erasmus refused to take sides, trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. As late as 1553, in his *De sarcienda Ecclesiae concordia*, Erasmus blamed the “radicalism of the innovators on the one hand, and the excessive zeal of the theologians, who saw heresy in everything on the other” - he wanted to make them see that schism could still be remedied with a little good will. But he was wrong. (...) There was a moment when all of Europe seemed *Erasmist*, so much so that in 1527 Charles V greeted Erasmus as the star of Christianity and

placed him above popes, emperors, and princes. (...) The champions of the counter-reformation, however, judged him very harshly. In 1557 the Inquisition condemned his works to the fire, and in 1559 and again in 1590, Pope Paul IV and Pope Sixtus V purely and simply prohibited their being read”⁽¹⁶⁾.

In Erasmus’ intellectual plan of action one can see the path summarized in the title of this section: “from humanism to ecumenism”. Erasmus the humanist paved the way for Protestantism by ridiculing Catholicism, and then ecumenically, as we would say today, attempting conciliation and accord between faith and heresy - in the name of tolerance.

Now let’s examine the names of the many protagonists of evangelism, and recognize that they were, initially, humanists and Erasmists, as Firpo writes, “their common roots” can be briefly defined as “humanist or Erasmist animated by irenic inspirations, by anti-scholastic polemics, by the desire to recover a Christianity restored to its original purity and, above all, to the defense of uniting the Church to the bitter end: *De amabili ecclesiae concordia*, which Erasmus wrote in 1533; and a few years later we find Cardinal Pole writing *De unitate Ecclesiae*”⁽¹⁷⁾. “The expression of their spirit is the *Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia* (1537)⁽¹⁸⁾” of which we have already spoken, although not all the collaborators shared the same sentiments as Cardinal Contarini who was president of the Consilium. Let’s read the names of the signatories: except for Carafa and Aleandro, the others “were all tied to Contarini and either already had, or a little afterward were awarded, the red hat”: “Jacopo Sadoletto, companion and friend of

Bembo in the Secretariat of Pope Leo X, Reginald Pole, a cousin to the King of England whose schism he had condemned and with reputation of holiness, the Benedictine Gregorio Cortese, famous for his great culture and piety, the Dominican Tommaso Badia, the Genoan patrician Frederico Fregoso (...), as well as Gian Matteo Gilberti⁽¹⁹⁾ the Bishop of Verona.” Let’s take a moment to dwell on these names: they are prestigious figures, cardinals and intellectual Bishops. They are also pious and devout. Monsignor Gilberti is even considered to be “a true archetype of the exemplary, post-tridentine Bishop.”⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet, taking a closer look, of these “holy” reformers it could well be said that they passed from humanism to ecumenism and from ecumenism (or irenicism) to heresy, or to the suspicion of heresy. How inevitable.

The cultural origins of these men are to be found in the Venetian Republic, the jealous custodian “of the jurisdictional prerogative of the State, often in conflict with Rome” rightly called by Firpo the “door of the Reform” in Italy⁽²⁰⁾, using the expression of one the exponents of evangelism, the apostate Friar Ochino. “In March 1528, Luther himself had communicated to the Most Serene Governor (of Venice) his satisfaction for the welcome they accorded to the authentic word of God.”⁽²¹⁾ “Often tied to the humanist circle that gathered around Bembo in his residence in Treville (near Turin), were writers, professors and students like **Marcantonio Flaminio**, **Aonio Paleario**, Cosimo Gheri, **Alvise Priuli**, and **Reginald Pole** (the future Cardinal of England), their irenic orientation matured in the study of biblical and patristic texts and

the writings of Erasmus...”⁽²¹⁾ Keep these names in mind: Paleario, a heretic, who ended up at the stake by order of Saint Pius V; Pole, a Cardinal, who, by a whisper, will not be elected pope, but who, as we will see, along with his secretary, Flaminio, and Priuli, joined the Valdesian heresy. On the other hand, quite a number of Venetian Bishops were tried for heresy. It is enough to cite Giovanni Grimani Patriarch of Aquileia; Vittore Soranzo successor to Bembo as Bishop of Bergamo, once the secretary chamberlain to Pope Clement VII; Andrea Zantani bishop of Limassol (Cyprus), demoted and tried in 1559, then becoming a fugitive to Chiavenna among the Protestants; Pier Paolo Vergerio, Bishop of Capodistria. This latter, a widower of a Contarini, entered the Papal Curia, was Nuncio in Austria under Clement VII and in Germany under Paul III and was made Bishop in 1536; but once he fell into suspicion of heresy, he threw off the mask and fled to join the Protestants in 1549, among whom he became a leader, and with whom he died in 1565.

Of these Venetians exposed to Lutheran influence, without doubt the most interesting figure is Cardinal Contarini (1483-1542). A member of a noble Venetian family, after his studies at the University of Padua he began his career of service to the Republic of Venice. Traditionally, these men of government provided their own prelates to the Venetian Church. A simple layman, he was called by Paul III to the Cardinalate in 1535, and to the episcopate in 1536. If we scroll through his *cursus honorum* there is



Pope Clement VII and Emperor Charles V

nothing that does not speak to his honor: collaborator of the Pope in the reform of the Church, papal legate to Bologna, legate to Spain (although he died before departing). And yet...And yet there was no shortage of doubt about his orthodoxy.⁽²²⁾ And regarding his irenicism (today one would say pacifism or ecumenism) with the Protestants, there are only certainties. That his purity of faith would be suspect is not too surprising, seeing that he wrote to his friend, Cardinal Pole, with regard to the Lutheran doctrine of justification: **“The foundation of the Lutheran case is most true, nor do we have anything to say contrary to it, but only to accept it as true and catholic, and as a fundamental to the Christian religion.”**⁽²³⁾ It was, essentially, this thesis that Contarini

argued at the Imperial Diet of Regensburg convoked by Charles V in 1541. The theory of double justification that Contarini proposed on that occasion to the Protestants as his personal opinion was a half-measure between the Catholic faith and the doctrine of Luther, but between the two he leaned toward the latter, since, in the last analysis, justification, extrinsic to man, was, through faith alone, attributed to the merits of Christ. Naturally, this being the case: “On this subject, it seemed that an agreement⁽²⁴⁾ was possible” with the Protestants, who, in Contarini’s doctrine, recognized their own! But characteristic of Contarini and his followers was that they did not want to draw from Lutheran “rationale” the same conclusions that the apostate monk drew: abandoning the Church, the Papacy, the Mass, and the Sacraments. Thus, Cardinal Contarini’s ecumenism was, as were all subsequent ecumenisms, a solemn fiasco, and he achieved only the result of being accused of concealing his adherence to Protestantism both by Lutherans and by Catholics (the Holy Office secretly opened a process against him⁽²⁵⁾). Recalled to Italy, Contarini was found recidivist, answering positively to the invitation of Cardinal Morone to dialogue with the Protestants of Modena, to whom he proposed again his half measure, obtaining the same result as in Germany. On the other hand, while he seemed to have arrived at the point of losing his patience with these devious Modenese heretics⁽²⁶⁾, there was no lack of collusion with them, since moved to him “Filippo Valentini, the formerly papal legate in Bologna, one of the recognized leaders of the heterodox Modenese, husband to Sadoletto’s niece and Contarini’s former

servant, named *civil auditor* by the Cardinal in the hope, among other things, of being able to *produce no little fruit from him in the affairs of Modena*, as he had earlier written to Tommaso Badia on April 1.”⁽²⁷⁾ In the times preceding his death, Contarini had been making somewhat of a comeback after the disgrace he incurred for his behavior at the Diet of Regensburg. He wanted to bring with him to Spain many of his friends who had lived with Cardinal Pole, including Soranzo and Carnesecchi.⁽²⁸⁾ Both would end up condemned as heretics...

The imperial party

But the group of Cardinals and the other prelates who leaned towards Protestantism while wanting to remain in the Church, was not made up of just humanists and Erasmists. There were also political influences, then as now, that encouraged this group. On the eve of the Lutheran Revolt, two Renaissance princes (chivalrous, valiant, and Catholic) vied for military dominance in Europe: Francis I and Charles V. Today we would be happy to have them at the helm of our countries. Unfortunately, they were not up to the task to which their position called them. Both condemned Protestantism. Both, however, fostered it. Francis I, the King of France, continued the struggle of his national monarchy against imperial ideas. To break the Hapsburg hegemony, he did not hesitate to ally with the Turks and the German Protestant princes who rebelled against their emperor. The consequence of this policy were the terrible wars of religion that, under his successors, bloodied France and in which, without the miracles of faith of

so many French people, not just the monarchy, but also the Catholic religion would have collapsed in the country. Charles V, who, as we have seen, was also fascinated by Erasmus (who was one of his subjects) had the objective of putting an end to the fighting in Germany that threatened his power by finding an agreement between Catholics and Protestants. Hence, his continuous practical concessions to heresy: the safe conduct of Luther (already excommunicated) to the Diet of Worms (1521), followed by continuous procrastinations and concessions at the Diet of Spira (1526-1528) and that of Augusta (1530) in which he conceded to the marriage of priests and to communion under both species; the religious Peace of Nuremberg, which postponed any solution until the ecumenical council (1532) began at the behest of Charles V in Trento in 1545; the “religious talks” between Catholics and Protestants (Morone and Contarini), in Hagenau (1540) and Regensburg (1542), and finally the Diet of Augusta which sealed, in 1555, the legality of Protestants in Germany (the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 will conclude this tragic decision on an international level). Of course, Charles V had the excuse of the almost continuous wars that he had to confront: with France, with the Ottoman Empire, and with the rebelling German princes; but his responsibility remains serious and he did well to take the advice of his cousin, Saint Francis Borgia, to retire to a monastery (1556) to, “or at least try to die well” (1558). This policy was also continued by his brother and successor to the Imperial crown, Ferdinand, and even initially by his son Philip II, King of Spain and

champion of Catholicism. ^(28b) Now, within the sacred college of Cardinals, there were many who were linked for various reasons to the Hapsburg dynasty. They formed the so-called “imperial party”, which supported the interests of the Hapsburgs in Church matters. It was normal that these cardinals would share the principal concern of their political referent (and, more often than not, their temporal sovereign) and tried in every way to promote an accommodating and conciliatory policy toward the Protestants to heal the religious and political wound that Luther had opened in Germany. Cardinal Contarini himself was in this group (when he was a secular, he had been made Venetian Ambassador under Charles V), as was Cardinal Gonzaga, and Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, the Bishop of Trento. But the principal exponent of this party was without doubt Cardinal **Giovanni Morone** (born in Milan in 1509, and died in 1580). If one only takes into account the many offices he held in the Church, one would not be surprised at the judgment of Monsignor Paschini, then the prestigious Rector Magnificus of the Pontifical University Lateranense, in the *Enciclopedia Cattolica*: “**one of the purest and most clairvoyant churchmen of his age**”. ⁽²⁹⁾ It is impressive to note that he was made Bishop of Modena at age 20 (1529), then Bishop of Novara (1552-60) and again at Modena (1564-1571), Nuncio to Germany from 1536 (succeeded by Vergerio, a future apostate) to 1542, when he became Cardinal and Pontifical Legate (with Pole) to the Council of Trento; Legate to Bologna (1544-48); member of the Inquisition (from 1550); Legate to Ferdinand of Hapsburg

(1555); Bishop Suburbicarian of Albano (1560); again Legate to the Council of Trento, brought to a happy conclusion in 1563; newly Legate to Germany in 1576, to then die as Bishop of Ostia and Deacon of the Sacred College. If one adds that he was a candidate for the papacy, with a serious possibility of election, in the conclaves of 1555, 1559 and 1566 (when he was supported by none other than Saint Charles Borromeo), one really has to wonder with what courage and nerve anyone can accuse such an illustrious prelate of heresy. Yet, Pope Paul IV was thinking of him when he wrote the Bull *Cum ex apostolatus* (1559) on the invalidity of the election of a heretic to the supreme pontificate. Yet, it was Marone who was first secretly investigated and then officially tried (1555) and imprisoned (1557-1559) on the orders of Paul IV himself. Yet, two popes, Paul IV and Saint Pius V were convinced that Cardinal Morone (like Pole and Bertano) was a very dangerous heretic. And yet, Monsignor Paschini himself, who exalts our *pure and clairvoyant churchman*, had to admit “the particular friendship that linked him with Cardinal Pole and with that spiritual circle that gathered around him, first in Capranica and then in Viterbo (1541-1545), where with Vittoria Colonna, Marco Antonio Flaminio, Alvise Priuli, Pietro Carnesecchi, Donato Rullo, Vittore Soranzo, Apollonio Merenda [chaplain to Pole, who was not a priest at the time, ed.] and others who were not very sure in their faith (an euphemism by Pio Paschini: Didn't Carnesecchi end up at the stake? ed.). (...) So then Marone, like them, inclined towards the Lutheran principle of justification through faith alone,

thanks to the merits of the Savior, without however undermining the mystery of the real presence (and what then? Whoever loses faith in a single truth has lost it completely, ed.); he admitted the duty of good works and the Church's authority (which he wanted to infiltrate from within, ed.). He was wrong, like many Catholics, to contribute to the spread of the heretical treatise the *Beneficio di Cristo* (1541-43), later condemned”⁽³⁰⁾. Does this seem like a small thing? Does this seem like a man who could be defined as “one of the purest and most clairvoyant churchmen of his age”? In truth, and in this case Firpo is right, ecclesiastical historians were conditioned by aims that he defines as “apologetic” but which I would call falsely apologetic. They thought it was their duty to describe to the reader men of the Church who were solidly and unanimously united in facing the heretics. In this way, characters ended up being presented as if they belonged to the same group and the same current of thought, which, in many cases, was opposite to the way they really thought, depending on their official rupture with the Church: and so Morone, Pole, Contarini, the infamous Ochino, Vergerio or Carnesecchi were very pure... A disservice was thus rendered to the truth and to the Church as well, since the more the error is subtle and has risen to the top of the institution, the more serious it is.

In reality, Morone was initially a political man on loan to the Church, a diplomat uninitiated in theology or canonical rights as he himself admitted.⁽³¹⁾ In a certain sense, he was also unlucky. The Pope had promised to his father, the powerful Chancellor to the Duke of Milan, the bishopric of Modena for his young son. A deplorable practice, but

current in that late-renaissance period. The Lutheran revolution came to upset everything and, at the height of the misfortune, Modena became, as did Venice, the center for the spread of this new heresy. The most important figures of the city, gathering at the local Academy, gave barely disguised signs of their adhesion to Lutheranism. Everything lent itself to the spread of heresy in this city. Located in the Duchy of Ferrara, its Duchess, Renata of France, the daughter of King Louis XII, barely concealed her Protestantism and eventually went into hiding at the city of the arch-heretic Calvin. From Modena then came Cardinals Badia, Cortese and Sadoletto, all more or less of the Contarini circle and linked by friendship or kinship with the Academicians. Furthermore, Morone was often outside the diocese, occupied with things in Germany. It was in Germany, in close contact with the Protestants and... with Cardinal Contarini, that a significant evolution took place in Morone. "Morone, who in 1540 called for the sending of Inquisitors to Modena, returned there two years later, convinced that the best method *to extirpate the heresy* was to work with *those lost souls...to act with kindness and confidence.*" In short, heretics were not to be treated as heretics, as he wrote in 1537 to Sadoletto, "*it would be much better to proceed with these modern heretics with meekness rather than wanting to irritate them with insults, and if from the beginning it had proceeded in this way, perhaps it would be less difficult at present to unite the Church.*"

Even in the future, the young Nuncio will continue to believe that *the means needed to reduce the Lutherans* was essentially a

prompt convocation of a Council, the concession to allow distribution of Communion *sub utraque* (Communion under both species), the marriage of priests, *the reformation of Rome, its court, and all the Bishops in Italy*"⁽³²⁾. All these would have pleased his political counterpart Charles V who asked for nothing more than a *modus vivendi* with the Protestants! But Moronian irenicism passed very quickly from a political aspect to a religious one: little by little he absorbed the very ideas of the Lutherans, and therefore he returned from Germany, as a Dominican preacher said in 1541 "off the path, dusted in Lutheran things"⁽³²⁾. It was in this period, in fact, that the political irenicism of the young Nuncio seemed to be enriched and complicated with a truly religious dimension, especially from 1542 onward (precisely starting with the events in Modena that summer), which would profoundly influence his experience in later years, during which he would become one of the most prestigious leaders of the *spiritualists*. (...) It is probable, however, that one major turning point was the signing of the Diet of Regensburg, in which he participated as Nuncio to the Roman King, not only for the doctrinal discussions that took place there, or the illusions that were aflame there, but above all for the meeting with Gasparo Contarini, for the bond that immediately formed between the two men, despite representing two different generations. It is in this meeting where he finds the ideal conditions for the essential role that the Venetian Cardinal would soon assume in the affairs of Modena at the explicit request of Morone, involving the latter in a new religious and more complex

sensitivity which would lead him to confront the great problems of the Reformation on a theological level, to experience them firsthand, and to seek possible solutions within the Ecclesiastical institution.”⁽³³⁾ From the Imperial party to ecumenism, therefore, and from ecumenism to heresy...all while inside the Ecclesiastical institution; this will be Morone’s path. Now, we come to the ‘prophet’ of heresy **within** the Ecclesiastical institution, the undisputed *leader* of the *spiritualists*, the mystic of the Italian *evangelicals*, of which Morone will become a part: the Spaniard **Juan de Valdés**.

Valdés and the Valdesians

Juan de Valdés came from Castile at the time of Charles V, where his brother Alfonso was Imperial Secretary. He arrived in Rome and had no difficulty becoming the *camerarius* (chamberlain) to Pope Clement VII (1530) despite having already been tried in Spain for a suspicious book. From Rome, he established himself in Naples, where he died in 1541. What were his doctrinal origins? “On the one hand, the influence of Erasmus from Rotterdam, and on the other the *alumbrados*.”⁽³⁴⁾ We have already talked about Erasmus: Valdés thought highly of him, yet Erasmus served also as a screen under which he could hide a “dense web of Lutheran quotations”⁽³⁵⁾. And the *alumbrados*? He had absorbed the false mysticism of the “teachings of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz”⁽³⁵⁾, often visiting the palace of the Marchese of Villena in Escalona. These false mystics pretended to receive the fundamentals of their doctrine, not from the personal interpretation of Scripture, like the

Protestants, but from an illumination (from which the name, *alumbrados*: meaning illumination) of the Holy Spirit. They taught that even while still on earth, man can arrive at the vision of the very essence of God which, once reached, can no longer be lost; and renders useless all external means of sanctification, such as vocal prayer, the use of the sacraments, the practice of charity towards others, or any corporeal sacrifice, etc. The perfect ones (as the *alumbrados* esteemed themselves, and before them the Cathars, and after them the Quietists) “became impeccable, in the sense that no guilt could be imputed to them, not even venial, for those same actions which in the imperfect ones would give very grave offense to God. In full consequence to this last principle, the *alumbrados* often abandoned themselves to the most unbridled debauchery”.⁽³⁶⁾ Now, according to Firpo, even more than Erasmus and Luther, Valdés and his disciples were indebted to the *alumbrados* for their doctrine which, although differing from the Protestants as to their point of departure (mysticism as opposed to Scripture), they agreed with them on many practical conclusions; not only that good works were useless, but that faith alone was necessary for salvation, in spite of our most sinful acts. Firpo then highlights some points on Valdesianism. First of all, “religious subjectivism” which “programmatically excludes every normative authority and any orthodox constraint since there are different levels of knowledge and experience granted to each believer by the unfathomable decrees of God. As a visible and hierarchical institution, in fact, **the Church can only judge the exterior and so**

demands a formal obedience in relation to ceremonial practices and behavior, without however arrogating to itself the right to coerce consciences with arbitrary dogmatic impositions"⁽³⁷⁾. From these varying grades of illumination, other consequences are derived: the esoteric and initiatory character of doctrine ('occult, covert secrets' wrote Valdés), "Nicodemian implications" i.e. hiding one's own thoughts both to disciples 'weak in the faith' and from the authority of the Church, pretending to actually be Catholic in front of them; and the possibility of salvation outside of the Church because "those who are only looking at it from the outside are still not strangers in the Divine Palace" (Valdés).⁽³⁷⁾ If this was the occult doctrine of Valdés, who were the Waldesians? It is here that one must shudder.

The first nucleus, in Naples, brings together the humanist Marc'Antonio Flaminio, Bernardino Ochino the Superior General of the Capuchin Friars, the Lateran canon Pietro Martire Vermiglio, and the "beloved Giulia Gonzaga", the widow of Vespasiano Colonna and cousin of Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga. (We disclose here for the reader that Ochino and Vermiglio both threw off their masks in 1542, miserably apostatizing and fleeing to the Lutherans). Around 1540, this circle attracts other notable characters: the Florentine Pietro Carnesecchi, Pope Clement VII's protonotary later condemned by Saint Pius V; don Benedetto Fontanini, the first author of the little Valdessian book *Il Beneficio di Christo*, printed by Cardinals Pole and Morone and put on the Index by the Church⁽³⁸⁾; the Venetian patrician Vittore Soranzo, Bishop of Bergamo, later deposed for heresy;

and the archbishop of Otranto Pietro Antonio Di Capua, brother-in-law of don Ferrante Gonzaga. Father Ochino preached "Christo mascarato in gergo" [Christ cloaked in doubletalk], in other words Valdés' doctrine spread in half of Italy from the pulpits, among whom, shortly before his apostatizing, were those of Bishop Giberti of Verona, and of Morone of Modena (who instead drove away the Jesuit Salmeron). Flaminio moved up then to become the "big shot". As heir, with the blessing of Giulia Gonzaga, to the writings of Valdés, "he achieved spectacular success with the accession of Cardinal Reginald Pole of England, and his closest friend and collaborator Alvisè Priuli".⁽³⁹⁾ From Naples, the center of the sect then became Viterbo, where Cardinal Pole was Papal Legate, and which was called *Ecclesia viterbiensis*,

Cardinal Pole



church of Viterbo, just as Vermiglio's group in Lucca called themselves *Ecclesia lucensis*, the Luccan church. These circles of intellectuals and mystics then gathered together many influential ladies: in addition to Giulia Gonzaga, the poetess Vittoria Colonna, Eleonora Gonzaga, sister of the Cardinal and Duchess of Urbino, Caterina Cibo, Duchess of Camerino, etc. All tied to Italian Courts, including the Pontifical one, and all rich, cultured, powerful, made into mouthpieces for the Valdesian sect.

Thus it was that Morone, already "prepared" by Contarini, ended up together with Pole, Cardinal Seripando the superior general of the Augustinians, Cardinals Madruzzo, Cortese, Gonzaga, Badia, Fregoso, Bembo, Bertano⁽⁴⁰⁾ and even more, into the network of the Valdesians. By now, 1544-1548, Morone reached public fame as a heretic, both among Catholics⁽⁴¹⁾, and Protestants who thanked God that their Bishop had become one of theirs, and who went to visit him, openly declaring themselves to be Lutherans, encouraged by Flaminio. And Morone, on this occasion, "had shown them great, loving kindness and apologized to them, and almost asked them to forgive him for having troubled them on other occasions in the matters of faith."⁽⁴²⁾

Victories and Defeats of the Valdesians

When the Council of Trent had finally concluded in 1566, the Modena heretics still hoped that "one day the evangelical truth, which for so long had been persecuted and hidden, should be preached".⁽⁴³⁾ So great and for so long had the hopes of gaining

power within the Church, and of making the papacy endorse the Protestant reformation.

This seemingly absurd dream was close to being realized. The Italian crypto-protestants were well nested, as we have seen, in the Pontifical Renaissance court of Popes Leo X and Clement VII. Paul III's pontificate was reformatory, but Pope Farnese elevated to the purple both the heads of Contarini's irenics, as well Carafa's intransigents. Many historians see 1542 as the date that marks the end of all hope for our "evangelicals"; after the failure of religious talks with the Protestants, Contarini and Valdés die, the Roman Inquisition is established, and consequently, throwing off their masks, Ochino and Vermigli flee. However, as Firpo also points out⁽⁴⁴⁾, 1542 was the year in which *Il Beneficio di Cristo* was written, which Pole and Morone, the Pontifical legates at Trento, had printed in secret, and of the co-opting in the Sacred College by spiritualist Cardinals such as Morone, Badia, and Cortese. But Cardinal Carafa is keeping watch. He was Neapolitan and knew well the evil that Valdés had done in his city. Already under Paul III, the Inquisition, which was directed and animated by him, had secretly opened processes against Cardinals, among them Pole and Morone⁽⁴⁵⁾. When Paul III died in 1549, the election of Pole at the conclave seemed sure, but Carafa and the other Cardinal inquisitors, bringing the texts of the trials into the conclave, narrowly avoided it (by only one vote).⁽⁴⁶⁾ Julius III (1550-1555) was elected, who did not want to believe in the guilt of the two authoritative Cardinals. When brother Bernardo de Bartoli, a confessed heretic, being

interrogated by the “Alessandrino” (the future Saint Pius V) admitted the heresy of Cardinals Pole, Morone, Contarini, Badia, etc (the entire Viterbo group), the Pope did not want to believe him. In vain, the Master of the Sacred Palace, a man well trusted by him, confirmed that the witness was reliable: **“This is impossible,”** replied Julius III, **“he is nothing but a lazy friar!”** He then ordered the Master of the Sacred Palace to bring the investigation to him, and to have the witness retract his statement - as is what indeed happened. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ In 1555, Julius III died. *“When I recall the past conclave,”* Morone wrote to Pole on the 28th of March, 1555 from Augusta, preparing to return to Rome after the death of Julius III - *“totus horreo, sed fiat voluntas Domini in cuius manu sunt omnia [I dread it all, let the will of the Lord be done, in whose hand, all things are done].”* He was right to worry, because this time Carafa, in order to avoid any surprises, chose to prepare himself by bringing with him *“a folder of the trial proceedings against (...) all eligible papal candidates”*. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Carafa himself was elected, taking the name Paul IV. In this conclave Pole and Morone were still the candidates supported by Charles V, but it was due to the defection of two influential “Imperial” Cardinals, Juan Alvarez of Toledo and Rodolfo Pio da Carpi that his plan failed. “It was Cardinal da Carpi himself in May 1555, who brought to the conclave grave and documented accusations of heresy against Pole, Morone and Bertano, which served to exclude them from possible election - without the fear of clearly stating (to Charles V) that they could not vote for them because their *consciences prevented them* - in this circumstance acting in full agreement not

only with Carafa, but also with Alvarez.” ⁽⁴⁹⁾ The Spanish ambassadors tried in vain to convince Carpi and Santiago (Alvarez) to vote for Pole and Morone alleging that “it cannot be believed that Pope Julius would have sent Pole to England to lead her back to the Church, and Morone to Germany for the same effect” if they had been heretics. Slavishly, Cardinal Madruzzo wrote to Charles V complaining about his colleagues who had preferred the Church...to the Emperor: “With tears in my eyes I write to your Majesty that this election could not be carried out in the way your service requested, which was the same as for God himself. And for me, I did not rest from the most extreme fatigue of my soul to make every effort to keep your service. And so it was for others as well, who like me are obliged to shed our blood in your service.” ⁽⁵⁰⁾

The election of Pope Paul IV was a hard blow to the “evangelists”. If Cardinal Pole could not be arrested (he was in England under Queen Mary Tudor), he was denied his legacy, and, invited to exonerate himself, he died in 1558. His secretary and testamentary executor, Alvise Priuli was denied accession to the Bishopric of Brescia (1556) which Julius III had granted him. Cardinal Morone and the Bishop of Cava de' Tirreni, Giovanni Tommaso Sanfelice, were arrested. Carnesecchi was condemned in absentia (1558). The future Saint Pius V, Cardinal Michele Ghislieri, on the other hand, was placed in charge of the Inquisition. Pope Carafa wanted to finish the Morone trial before he died, but he was unable. Realizing this impossibility, he promulgated the Bull *Cum ex apostolatus* to prevent



*Pietro Carnesecci, the heretic
condemned under Saint Pius V*

Morone's probable election. Upon the death of Paul IV, the palace of the Holy Office was set on fire; "The Holy Inquisition," Carnesecci wrote to his beloved Giulia Gonzaga, "is dead by the same death intended solely for others, that is, by fire."⁽⁵¹⁾ As the late Pope Paul IV feared, Cardinal Morone entered the conclave in 1559, in which Pius IV was elected. "The latter (...) did not limit himself to simply acquitting the Milanese Cardinal and canceling his trial, but wanted to send him as papal legate shortly thereafter to preside over the Council of Trent, where there was unanimous judgment that he was able to conclude the assembly's work with miracles of diplomatic skill. Casting aside the role of treacherous heresiarch that Pope Carafa had sewn on

him, Morone could now assume the more reassuring one of providential defender of the Holy See, to the point of seeming to many to be the surest candidate for the tiara."⁽⁵²⁾ Forced to sign Morone's absolution, Cardinal Alessandrino (Ghislieri) was removed from Rome (made Bishop of Mondovì), while Papa Carafa's nephews were executed. Carnesecci and Sanfelice, however, were acquitted. Was evangelism unexpectedly about to win? Would old Cardinal Morone, who survived his best friends, ascend the throne of St. Peter? "To avoid such an eventuality, Michele Ghislieri, after the death of Pius IV (in 1565, ed.), did not hesitate to once again use the documents of his trial, jealously guarded and kept *in his bag* for years".⁽⁵²⁾ The candidate of the unsuspected Philip II and of Saint Charles Borromeo (nephew of the deceased Pope Pius IV), Cardinal Morone, for the umpteenth time, was not elected. And not only that, but Saint Charles, truly holy and concerned for the good of the Church, then had his votes flow towards Cardinal Alessandrino, the very one who had "fallen into disgrace" under his uncle's pontificate.

Saint Pius V rehabilitated the nephews of Pope Carafa, gave new vigor to the inquisition, managed, thanks to the compromising documents of the deceased Giulia Gonzaga, to reopen Carnesecci's case and thought "seriously about taking up Morone's case as well, against whom new documents were collected and the machinery of the Holy Office was mobilized (...) in the unshakable certainty of the serious heresies of which Morone had been guilty".⁽⁵²⁾

In the end, the new Morone trial did not take place (it would have cast unjust

shadows on the popes who had given him their trust and on the council over which he had presided). Rather, it was accomplished through a third party. Citing documents from the long trial against Carnesecchi, who was now no longer protected by Cosimo de' Medici, Firpo proves that the Florentine Protonotary, whose guilt was amply demonstrated by the documents found at the home of the dead Giulia Gonzaga, was more a witness than an accused. He was prosecution witness for his very judges: Morone, Bertano, Pole, Seripando, Contarini, Bembo, all of whom were Cardinals, then also against Gonzaga, Vittoria Colonna the duchess of Pescara, Priuli, and Flaminio... It comes as no surprise therefore that Morone remained "confused and half-dead" upon Carnesecchi's arrival in Rome in 1566, or

Giulia Gonzaga



having no desire to attend the condemnation of the Florentine Protonotary at the Santa Maria della Minerva, at which there was clearly enough evidence to allude to Morone as his accomplice. ⁽⁵³⁾ "On the first of October, 1567, the very day of Carnesecchi's execution at Ponte Sant'Angelo, Pope Pius V decreed the rehabilitation of Pope Paul IV's nephews, sealing the historical and political meaning of that trial". ⁽⁵⁴⁾ Carnesecchi was followed, in his sad fate, by Paleario, Franco, and Pallantieri. "As for Morone, Pius V certainly thought about and prepared for a sensational opening of a trial against him, as is indicated not only from an analysis of the Carnesecchi interrogations, but also from other documents and testimonies from the years of his pontificate". But "that step was not taken, because perhaps after all it was preferred to keep him in the rank of a heretical Cardinal Dean rather than implying any connivance of the supreme Pontiff who had acquitted him and who had sent him as Legate to the Council of Trent. In fact, beyond the obvious inappropriateness of such a move, there was no longer a need. Substantially marginalized, Morone could be confined to the role of a diplomat of unparalleled ability and experience, a man of *eminent value around the things of the world, but not much esteemed about religion*, as Cardinal Santoro will feel justified to define him upon his death". ⁽⁵⁵⁾

Conclusions on Recent Events

We thus come to the end of our labor. We saw, at the beginning of this article, that the story of Cardinal Morone still deserves our attention today, and still has something

to tell us. Let's try to draw some conclusions.

1. Firpo is correct regarding Catholic historiography, which absolves Morone, passing in silence over his contradictions. But Firpo, who is *laic*, is mistaken in presenting his basic thesis. For him, Morone and his associates are treated as victims of the inquisitorial rigor of the Carafas and Ghislieris. These, through the Inquisition, imposed their resultant winning line, the Counter-Reformation, which put an end to what could have been a different epoch for the Catholic Church. Since a reader, even the reader of *Sodalitium*, is a modern man, deeply impregnated by the Masonic "dogmas" of tolerance and "liberty" canonized by Vatican II, there is a risk that my exposition might render sympathy to Morone and animus toward Paul IV and Saint Pius V. But, between the heretic and the Inquisitor, who is victim, and who is executioner? Are those who defend the faith of simple people, the salvation of their souls, even with the rigor of justice, like these two Popes did, guilty? Is the heretic, rather, innocent, the betrayer of the faith and to the Holy See, the adulterator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Absolutely not. In fact, neither Pole nor Morone were canonized by the Church, which is assisted by the Holy Spirit, but Saint Pius V was.

2. Was Cardinal Morone a heretic? It seems to me that Firpo's studies definitively closed that question. Yes, at least in the sense that the doctrine of Morone, Pole and others, were truly heterodox. In any case, Pope Paul IV thought so, and not just he, but Pope Pius V as well.

3. If, in the context of the terrible religious crisis that shook the Church at the time of the Lutheran "reformation", so many qualified prelates fell into heresy, is it so surprising that this is being repeated in our day? The modernist and neo-modernist crisis of today is nothing other than the imitator to the one begun by Luther... And if, then, these heretics were at the point of rising, in fact, to the summit of the pontificate, how can we be surprised that it happened with Roncalli and Montini? Just a single vote separated the heretic Pole from becoming Pope - and that vote was by Carafa. Only one man separated Morone from the pontifical triumph - and that was Ghislieri. From the 16th to the 22nd century the religious, political and social situation only worsened. The various Roncallis, Montinis, and Wojtylas certainly surpass the Poles and Morones, just as the Carafas and Ghislieris, for their part seem far superior against the weak defenders of orthodoxy of our times. And if the mighty Inquisition of that time was able to stop those heretics from their climb to the heights of the Church, what could the far weakened and debilitated Holy Office of Cardinal Ottaviani have done?

4. The thesis we support, therefore, (that Wojtyla has no pontifical authority), is not only not impossible, but not even far-fetched. We understand the bewilderment of many: this is what happened to Julius III and Pius IV; for them, the betrayal of so many Cardinals was "**impossible**". But it was not impossible for Paul IV and Saint Pius V. What is impossible, is that Christ would abandon his Church, or for her to change. It is not impossible for a heretic to be elected Pope, in which case by the Bull of Paul IV he

wouldn't really have been the Pope. It might be objected that God prevented the election of Pole and Morone. That is true. But Paul IV believed it possible that God would not prevent it, without thereby failing to fulfill His promises regarding the immutability of the Divine Institution of the Church. And for this reason, God was able to allow the election of Montini without failing (absit!) to keep His word.

5. But this story also has something to say to those shallow people who brandish Paul IV's Bull like an imprecise weapon, without even knowing its history. Paul IV and Saint Pius V were convinced that Pole and Morone were heretics. I agree with their opinion. And yet, Pope Julius II's incredulous astonishment can also be understood. Morone a heretic? The man who was merited for having concluded the Council of Trent? The man that Saint Charles would have elected Pope, even after the trial brought about by Paul IV? And Pole? Pole a heretic? The man that Henry VIII wanted killed by assassins, after Henry had martyred his brother and his mother whom Pope Leo XIII later declared blessed? The man who was counselor to Queen Mary whom we call "Catholic" but who was called, with hatred, by the Protestants "Bloody Mary"? Pole and Morone heretics? They, who always had reaffirmed their fealty to the Roman Church? And, on the other hand, the only official and legal declaration of the Church regarding Morone, signed by a Pope, Pius IV, and by a future Pope, Saint Pius V, declared him innocent! Sometimes, establishing with certainty that some person has fallen formally and culpably into heresy is not easy; being able to declare it *in facie Ecclesiae* so

as to draw all the canonical consequences from it, is even more difficult. Not even Paul IV succeeded with Pole and Morone.

6. The story of Cardinal Morone, therefore, even with the unavoidable differences in the current situation in the Church, is enlightening and comforting to our position. No, it is not impossible, as our objectors would say, that we formally affirm that the seat is vacant (indeed, in our case, this is not only possible, but also certain - and this certainty does not rest on the weak basis of theories about the "heretic pope"). On the other hand, the affair concerning these "evangelicals" does not provide decisive arguments to the supporters of the thesis of a totally vacant seat. If Pole or Morone had been elected to the Supreme pontificate, despite the Bull of Paul IV, it would not have been easy to prove what was, nevertheless, probably true: that they were materially **and** formally heretics. And today, everything is even more difficult...in absence of men like Gian Pietro Carafa and Saints like Michele Ghislieri. May the Lord raise up similar men to liberate his Church, as he liberated it then, from heresy's assault.

7. To conclude, I would like to share the considerations of Paul IV and Cardinal Zaccaria Delfino. Pope Carafa said: "The principal aim of the Holy Office is that the popes must counter the great stains of heresy, because the health of the people depends upon their punishment."⁽⁵⁶⁾ And Cardinal Delfino wrote in his time to Cardinal Carlo Carafa: "God wants (...) that things concerning the holy faith are always treated with that reverence for God and with the deep faith in which today they are treated by His Holiness (Paul IV); **and may**

God want that the heretical spirit of reaching an accord between Catholics and heretics had no reign, and today does not reign in so many; because from this, I believe, is the whole foundation of the evil that befalls the Christian republic today; and even worse are those who are a mixture, more damaging are these mediators of concord, than are the manifest heretics.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ Were Morone, Pole and Contarini heretics? Was their being the “mediators of concord” between Catholics and Protestants heretical? Much worse, Cardinal Delfino seems to say to us, much worse: they were ecumenists.

Footnotes

1) “Adiicientes quod si ullo unquam tempore apparuerit aliquem episcopum, etiam pro archiepiscopo seu patriarcha vel primate se gerentem, aut praedictae Romanae Ecclesiae cardinalem, etiam, ut praefertur, legatum, seu etiam **Romanum Pontificem, ante ejus promotionem vel in cardinalem seu Romanum Pontificem assumptionem, a fide catholica deviasse aut in aliquam haeresim incidisse, promotio seu assumptio de eo, etiam in concordiam et de unanimitate omnium cardinalium assensu facta, nulla, irrita et inanis existat, nec per susceptionem muneris, consecrationis, aut subsequendam regiminis et administrationis, possessionem, seu quasi, vel ipsius Romani Pontificis inthronizationem aut adorationem, seu ei praestita ab omnibus oboedientiam, et cuiusvis temporis in praemissis cursum, convaluisse dici aut convallescere possit, nec pro legitima in aliqua sua parte habeatur, nullamque talibus in episcopos seu archiepiscopos vel patriarchas vel primates promotis, seu in cardinales vel Romanum Pontificem assumptis, in spiritualibus vel temporalibus administrandi facultatem tribuisse aut tribuere censeatur, sed omnia et singula per eos quomodolibet dicta, facta, gesta et administrata ac inde secuta quaecumque viribus**

careant, et nullam prorsus firmitatem nec ius alicui tribuant; sintque ipsi sic promoti et assumpti eo ipso, absque aliqua desuper facienda declaratione, omni dignitate, loco, honore, titulo, auctoritate, officio et potestate privati; liceatque omnibus et singulis sic promotis et assumptis, si a fide antea non deviasent nec haeretici fuissent, neque schisma incurrissent aut excitassent aut commisissent.”

[Latin to English translation]

“In addition, if ever at any time it shall appear that any Bishop, even an Archbishop, Patriarch or Primate; or any Cardinal of the aforesaid Roman Church, or, as has already been mentioned, any legate, or even the **Roman Pontiff, prior to his promotion or his elevation as Cardinal or Roman Pontiff, has deviated from the Catholic Faith or fallen into some heresy, the promotion or elevation, even if it shall have been uncontested and by the unanimous consent of all the Cardinals, it shall be null, void, and worthless: neither shall it be possible for it to acquire validity** (nor for it to be said that it has thus acquired validity) **nor to be held legitimate in any part nor way** through the acceptance of the office, or consecration, or subsequent authority, nor through possession of administration, **nor through the enthronement as Roman Pontiff, or Veneration, or obedience accorded to such by all, nor through the lapse of any period of time in the foregoing situation;** to any so promoted to be Bishops, or Archbishops, or Patriarchs, or Primates or elevated as Cardinals, or as **Roman Pontiff, no authority shall have been granted, nor shall it be considered to have been so granted either in the spiritual or the temporal domain; each and all of their words, deeds, actions and enactments, howsoever made, and anything whatsoever to which these may give rise, shall be without force and shall grant no stability whatsoever** and any right to anyone those thus promoted or elevated shall be deprived automatically, and without need for any further declaration, of all dignity, position, honour, title, authority, office and power.”

Unfortunately, the decisions of the Bull that were not specifically retained in the Code of Canon Law are no longer in effect (can. 6 of the C.J.C)

and thus the Bull of Paul IV cannot be used to **prove** that the apostolic Seat is actually vacant, but only to prove the **possibility** that this happens, and in fact has happened (see BERNARD LUCIEN. *La situation actuelle de l'autorité dans l'Église. La thèse de Cassiciacum.* Documents de catholicité. Editions Association Saint Hermenegilde. Nice 1985. pp 93-96 and 107-111).

2) To my knowledge only the Belgian periodical *Mysterium Fidei* (pub. M. Alfred Denoyelle. Av. Brigade Piron, 84-2, B-1080 Brussels) connected the Bull of Paul IV to the figure of Cardinal Morone, who was its object, in a historical article on Paul IV (n. 97, May 1993, pp 3-7). The author of the article, however, following Von Pastor and ignoring the more recent writings of Firpo, thought that "Paul IV was mistaken", even if in good faith, in doubting the orthodoxy of Pole and Morone (page 5). We do not share this opinion as demonstrated in the present article.

3) M. FIRPO, *Riforma protestante ed eresie nell'Italia del Cinquecento.* Laterza. Rome-Bari. 1993. pag. 101.

4) *Loc. cit.* page 102.

5) *Loc. cit.* page 106.

6) *Loc. cit.* page 107.

7) *Loc. cit.* page 16.

8) JOSEPH LORTZ. *Storia della Chiesa,* Paoline, Rome, 1980. vol. II; 91, 1, b. pag 232. Others say father rather than son. It is more likely, since the Pope did not have children. Paul IV spoke these words to the Venetian ambassador Navagero who interceded for a heretical Sicilian bishop.

9) Ed. Sapere 2000 1986-1990. 5 voll.

10) LORTZ. *op.cit.*, 1.c. pg 231. This can only shock (or scandalize) the dreamers and the naive. Of course, supernatural faith should not be and cannot be imposed by force (by its being supernatural it cannot be obtained by natural means). However, natural obstacles that oppose the faith can and should be repressed by law. In the same way that the police cannot make people honest, but they can prevent the spread of crime. If you try to suppress the police in a society, having faith only in the good will of the people, you will only be doing the thieves, the dishonest, and the assassins a favor. This is what we see in permissive societies and, in the religious field,

after the absurd proclamation of the right to "religious liberty"!

11) FIRPO. *op.cit.* page 50.

12) FIRPO. *op.cit.* page 109.

13) *Loc.cit.*, article *Evangelismo*, col 886.

14) Thereby, we do not support, anachronistically, that Erasmus was...a modernist!

15) FRANCO POLGIANI, *Enciclopedia cattolica*, article *Erasmus di Rotterdam*, col 474

16) *Ibidem.* col. 475.

17) M. FIRPO. *Inquisizione romana e controriforma, op.cit.* page 308.

18) E.M. JUNG, *op.cit.*, col 886. But in his diocese, heretics preached with impunity, among whom was the famous Ochino.

19) FIRPO. *Riforma Protestante...*, *op.cit.* pg 107-108.

20) FIRPO. *Riforma Protestante...*, *op.cit.* pg 11-12.

21) FIRPO. *Riforma Protestante...*, *op.cit.* pg 15-16.

22) "Astiosi sospetti" (vindictive suspicions) on the part of the future popes Paul IV and Saint Pius V, wrote Firpo in his *Inquisizione romana e controriforma op.cit.* page 22.

23) In his writing *De Poenitentia.* See FIRPO. *ibidem*, pp 63-64.

24) PAOLO BREZZI. *Enciclopedia cattolica op.cit.* quote is from Contarini, col 434.

25) FIRPO. *Inquisizione romana e controriforma, op.cit.* p. 376. Cardinals Bembo and Fregoso adhered to his thesis of "double justification", but not Cardinal Pole, because by then he supported...even more radical theses! Firpo. *loc.cit.* pg 67.

26) FIRPO. *Riforma Protestante...op.cit.* pg 59.

27) FIRPO. *Inquisizione romana...*, *op.cit.* page 55.

28) FIRPO. *ibidem*, page 73.

28b) The politics of Philip II changed only after the election of Saint Pius V, whom he had opposed in favor of Morone. The more significant fact of this change was the long trial of the "Spanish Morone", Fra Bartolomeo Carranza, the Archbishop of Toledo.

29) *op.cit.* article Morone, Giovanni, col 1421.

30) *op.cit.*, *ibidem*, col 1422.

31) *op.cit.*, *ibidem.* col 1419.

32) FIRPO. *Inquisizione romana...*, *op.cit.* pages 49 and 47.

33) FIRPO. *ibidem*, p 48. It was Cardinal Contarini who gave the Cardinal's hat to Morone. Of the three Cardinals: Morone, Badia, and Cortese, all from his "group", Contarini weaves dithyrambic praise and makes passionate declarations of affection; FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 61, notes 80, 81 and 123 .

34) PIO PASCHINI. *Enciclopedia cattolica, op.cit.*, article on *Valdés*, col 965. "Excellent Doctor and truest theologian" wrote Valdés about Erasmus in his book *Dialogo de doctrina cristiana* of 1529, for which he had to flee from Spain...chased by the Inquisition! (FIRPO. *Riforma protestante...*, *op.cit.* pg 115.

35) FIRPO. *ibidem* pg 115-116.

36) EMANUELE CHIETTINI. in *Enciclopedia cattolica, op. cit.* article *Alumbrados*, col 945-946.

37) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pgs 117-118.

38) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 98.

39) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 119.

40) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 130.

41) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 63.

42) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 126.

43) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 61.

44) FIRPO. *Inquisizione romana...*, *op.cit.* pg 30.

45) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 196.

46) ALBERTO PINCHERLE. *Enciclopedia Cattolica, op.cit.* Article *Pole, Reginald* col. 1665.

47) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pgs 221-222.

48) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 197.

49) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 312.

50) FIRPO. *ibidem*, pg 313. Much different was the letter from Cardinal Da Carpi to Charles V, which explained that he didn't vote for Morone because he was a heretic, even though there was no ongoing public trial against him, "so as not to disgrace the cardinals". The text of the letter is given in its entirety on p. 320.

51) ADELAIDE MURGIA. *I Gonzaga*, Collana *Le grandi famiglie europee*, Mondadori, Milan 1972, p. 85.

52) FIRPO. *Inquisizione romana...*, *op.cit.*, pg 358.

53) FIRPO. *ibidem*. pg 374.

54) FIRPO. *ibidem*. pg 375.

55) FIRPO. *ibidem*. pg 379.

56) FIRPO. *ibidem*. pg 377.

57) FIRPO. *ibidem* pg. 380 Letter of January 1559.

