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Elena Bonora

## Waiting for the Emperor

Italian Princes, the Pope and Charles V

In the 1540s, Italian princes, lords and cardinals wrote to each other using a secret, highly imaginative language. They were waiting for Emperor Charles V to descend on Italy to cut the papacy and Papal States down to size once and for all. Their letters, which have never before been used by historians, were not literary fantasies; behind the fictitious names, metaphors and the ferocious satire against Pope Paul III, there were weapons, money and power.

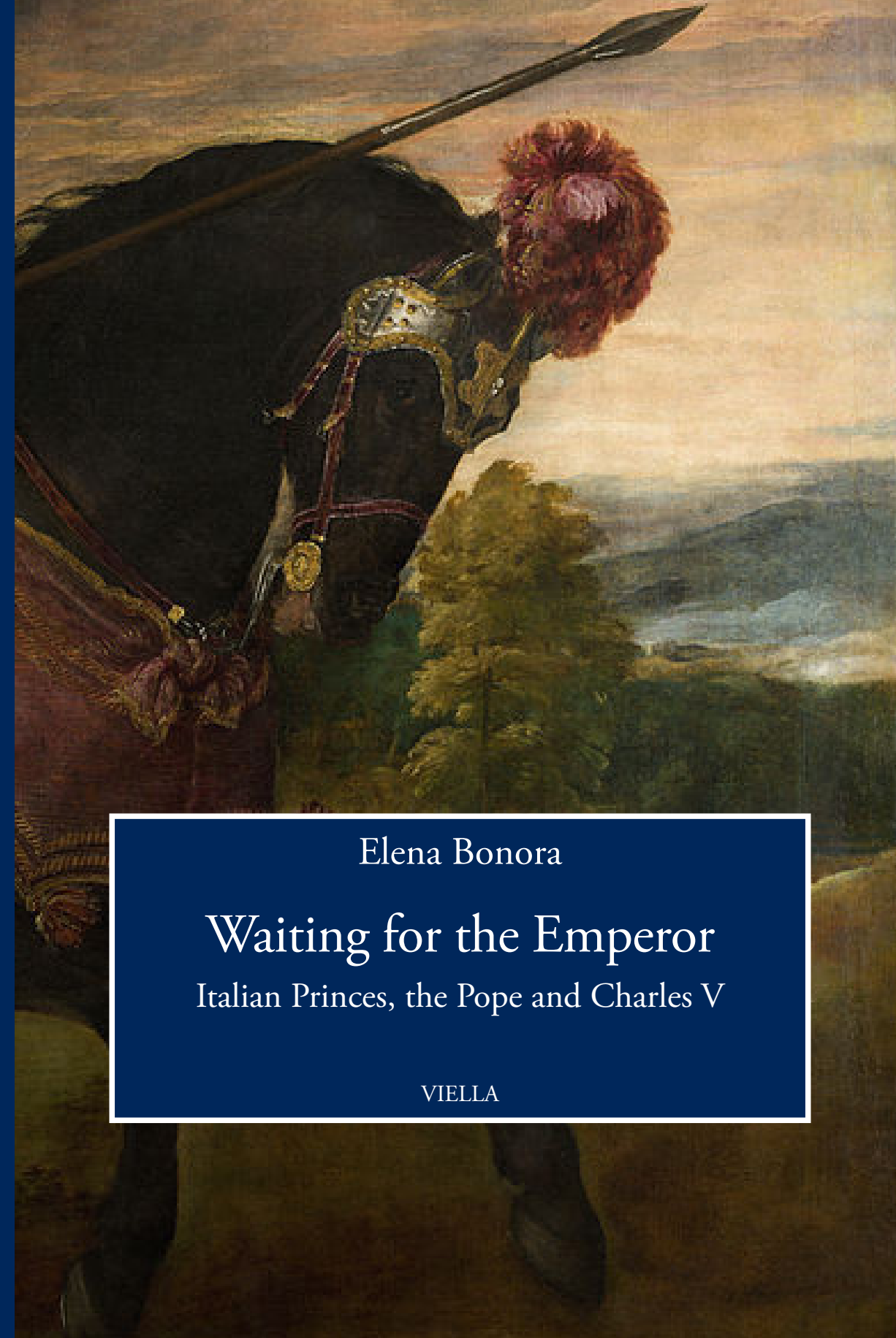
For years, against the background of the battle between the two giants – the pope and the emperor – the courts of Mantua, Florence, Milan and Ferrara pursued a grand plan of containing the pope's power by allying with men of Charles V.

This history of Italy differs greatly from the one we are usually taught. The epoch-making conflict between the 'Italy of the Emperor' and the 'Italy of the Pope' was not merely political: it was mixed with religious problems, it developed in the sphere of communication, and it left traces in Italian cultural life, on the frescoed walls of palaces and in the pages of books.

But the daring project drawn up by the Italian princes in the shade of the imperial eagle failed, and failed forever, as the Counter-Reformation advanced and the sun began to set on the Europe of Charles V.

**Elena Bonora** is Full Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Parma. Her most recent monographs include: *Giudicare i vescovi. La definizione dei poteri nella Chiesa posttridentina* (Laterza, 2007), 1564. *La congiura contro il papa* (Laterza, 2011), *Aspettando l'imperatore. Principi italiani tra il papa e Carlo V* (Einaudi, 2014) and *La Controriforma* (9th ed., Laterza, 2020).

Elena Bonora  
Waiting for the Emperor



Elena Bonora

## Waiting for the Emperor

Italian Princes, the Pope and Charles V

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Elena Bonora

# Waiting for the Emperor

Italian Princes, the Pope and Charles V

*Translated by Richard Bates*

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## *List of Abbreviations*

AGS	Archivo General de Simancas
ASF	Archivio di Stato, Florence
ASF, <i>MP</i>	Archivio di Stato, Florence, <i>Mediceo del Principato</i>
<i>Accolti</i>	Archivio di Stato, Florence, <i>Fondo Accolti</i>
ASM	Archivio di Stato, Mantua
ASMassa	Archivio di Stato, Massa
ASMilano	Archivio di Stato, Milan
ASP	Archivio di Stato, Parma
ASR	Archivio di Stato, Rome
BA	Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BE	Biblioteca Estense, Modena
BMLF	Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence
BNF	Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence
BPP	Biblioteca Palatina, Parma
<i>CT</i>	<i>Concilium Tridentinum. Diariorum, Actorum, Epistularum, Tractatum. Nova collectio</i> , ed. by Societas Goerresiana, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Herder, 1901-2001
<i>DBI</i>	<i>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</i> , Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-
<i>ND</i> , 1, 10	<i>Nuntiatrberichte aus Deutschland. Abt. 1: Nuntiatrberichte aus Deutschland 1533-1559 nebst ergänzenden Aktenstücken. 10. Bd. Legation des Kardinals Sfondrato 1547-1548</i> , ed. by Walter Friedensburg, Berlin, A. Bath, 1907
<i>ND</i> , 1, 11	<i>Nuntiatrberichte aus Deutschland. Abt. 1: Nuntiatrberichte aus Deutschland 1533-1559. 11. Bd. Legation des Bischofs Pietro Bertano von Fano 1548-1549</i> , ed. by Walter Friedensburg, Berlin, A. Bath, 1910
Pastor	Ludwig von Pastor, <i>Storia dei papi dalla fine del Medioevo</i> , 16 vols, Rome, Desclée & C., 1910-1934
VADSLG	Vadianische Sammlung St. Gallen Kantonsbibliothek

## Preface to the English Edition

The English edition of this book appears more than six years after the Italian one (*Aspettando l'imperatore. Principi italiani tra il papa e Carlo V*, Turin, Einaudi, 2014). Here, I would like to briefly mention the main changes I considered appropriate to make to the text. They were driven by two factors: updating the text, due to the time gap between the two books, and bridging the linguistic and cultural leap from Italian to English.

As regards the first point, in this edition I have taken note of contributions published since 2014 that seemed to me to add the most to my reconstruction of the political and religious history of Italy in Charles V's Europe. What was certainly more demanding was to integrate the results of my own research on these topics in the intervening years into this new text. Chapter Seven in particular was significantly modified with respect to the Italian edition. There, I wanted to show more clearly and systematically how the secret language ("*gramuffo*") used by the pro-imperial side functioned in the correspondence. This coded language, which was metaphorical and highly imaginative, deeply conditioned by the classical tradition and not without references to the great art of the Italian 16<sup>th</sup> century, reflected the shared culture by which these protagonists of the political struggle interpreted their world – a world they were also trying to control and change with the vast means in their power.

As regards the translation from Italian into English, it required various stylistic and syntactic adjustments of passages that might otherwise seem laboured. Moreover, it has only been possible in part to render into English the many quotations from contemporary documents and texts that reflected the multi-lingualism of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italy, where Spanish and Latin rubbed shoulders with the various regional varieties of Italian. I therefore decided, for the benefit of the English reader, to translate these phrases into English, including them directly in the text. Only the particularly expressive and significant passages have been left in the original language, with the translations supplied in the notes.

I would like to thank the Board of the Società di Studi Valdesi in Torre Pellice and its President, Professor Dino Carpanetto, for agreeing to finance this publication. It is also a pleasure once again to thank Ottavia Niccoli and Massimo Firpo, who have followed this project from the start.

My hope is that this translation may contribute to furthering contacts between Italian and Anglophone historiography, bringing them into closer communication than they have been thus far.

E.B.

Piticchio di Arcevia, 15 March 2021



Anybody who saw our letters, honoured friend, and saw their diversity, would wonder greatly, because he would suppose now that we were grave men, wholly concerned with important matters, and that into our breasts no thought could fall that did not have in itself honour and greatness. But then, turning the page, he would judge that we, the very same persons, were light-minded, inconstant, lascivious, concerned with empty things. And this way of proceeding, if to some it may appear censurable, to me seems praiseworthy, because we are imitating Nature, who is variable; and he who imitates her cannot be rebuked.

Niccolò Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori, 31 January 1515



## Introduction

In the spring of 1543, the Italian cardinal Benedetto Accolti wrote a letter in Spanish to the Emperor Charles V. Without mincing his words, he stated that if the Turks and the King of France were the worst “public enemies” of the Habsburgs, “the most certain enemy, who most may and does damage Your Majesty under shows of friendship, is the Pope”. Speaking on behalf of his “servants” and “friends” in Italy, the cardinal suggested that Charles disembark not at Genoa, where he was expected along the road that was to take him to Germany, but at Gaeta, and invade the Papal States, “beginning from the head, which is Rome”. Once he had re-established his authority over “the whole temporal state” that the pontiff had “usurped from the Holy Empire”, Charles V, as the examples of the past demonstrated, would become “lord” of Italy and “of the whole world”.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, the Spaniard Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, imperial ambassador to the Republic of Venice, wrote to the Emperor, urging him to take up his sword to conquer Rome and the papal lands. Only at that point, when the papacy had been reduced “to its original principles”, would Charles V have restored “an Empire and a papacy as they were in olden times”.<sup>2</sup>

The argument in the Italian cardinal’s and the Spanish ambassador’s memos to justify armed intervention against the Pope derived from the many cultural, religious and political matrices that gave sinew to the imperial idea and the images of Charles V’s *monarchia universalis* at the time. These are ideas and images that historians have discussed at length in an attempt to unravel how they began, how they were connected and how they changed, distinguishing Charles V’s

1. Published in *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, ed. by Giuseppe Canestrini and Abel Desjardins, vol. III, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1865, pp. 25-30. The dating suggested by the editors (summer 1542) is wrong, as Carlo Capasso has already pointed out (*Paolo III*, 2 vols, Messina, Principato, 1923-1924, vol. II, pp. 285-286) and as we infer on internal grounds from the reference to Granvelle’s visit to Italy the previous year (1542). The document thus dates from 1543, and the draft of it can be found in *Accolti*, 16, fasc. 3, fols 72-73.

2. Federico Chabod, “Contrasti interni e dibattiti sulla politica generale di Carlo V”, now in *Carlo V e il suo impero*, Turin, Einaudi, 1985, pp. 225-242: 229. Mendoza’s memo was published in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in Prudencio de Sandoval, *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V* (I quote from the edition by Carlos Seco Serrano, 3 vols, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Madrid 1955-1956, vol. III, pp. 135-139). On these memos, see *infra*, pp. 107-112.

positions and his long-term perspectives from those of his retinue, showing how they evolved over time and the complexity of the idea of “imperial propaganda” associated with them.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of these two memos there is a palpable influence of the concepts deployed a quarter-century before by the Grand Chancellor Mercurino di Gattinara, when, in announcing the imperial election of Charles of Habsburg at Molins del Rey in 1519, he had indicated to the young sovereign the task that lay before him. He was to restore the ancient unity, lost after Charlemagne’s division; bring back, after seven whole centuries, peoples and kingdoms that differed in language, traditions and customs, under the jurisdiction of universal laws and the single supreme authority of the Emperor; and assume the role of *monarcha mundi*, guarantor of order and justice in the temporal sphere, while respecting the complex organisation of the particular contexts of his immense domains, including their specific institutional and juridical features, which the Piedmontese Gattinara had learned to bear in mind in his ten years as president of the Parliament of Burgundy.<sup>4</sup>

Centuries earlier, a famous jurist had described imperial sovereignty as the ultimate source from which all other jurisdictions flowed out and flowed back, as rivers flow down to the sea: “*Jurisdictiones [sunt] apud Cesarem tamquam apud fontem a quo fluunt et refluunt sicut flumina ad mare fluunt*”.<sup>5</sup> It was an effective way, even in Charles V’s Europe, to explain the Emperor’s political superiority over the particularism of princes, states and cities. In the early 1530s a great Italian poet used a metaphor from the Gospels to express more or less the same idea, colouring it with religious significance: “*Che sotto a questo imperatore |*

3. I mention only collective works from the vast bibliography on the subject that contain significant accounts: *Carlos V y la quiebra del humanismo político en Europa (1530-1558)*, ed. by José Martínez Millán, 4 vols, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la conmemoración de los centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2001; *Carlo V, Napoli e il Mediterraneo*, ed. by Giuseppe Galasso and Aurelio Musi, Naples, Società napoletana di storia patria, 2001; *L’Italia di Carlo V. Guerra, religione e politica nel primo Cinquecento*, ed. by Francesca Cantù and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, Rome, Viella, 2003. For an approach centred on Charles V’s and Philip II’s international strategy, completely unconditioned by ideology and religion, see Arturo Pacini, *Desde Rosas a Gaeta. La costruzione della rotta spagnola nel Mediterraneo occidentale nel secolo XVI*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2013 (with an initial historiographic discussion).

4. On the project for affirming the imperial monarchy in Italy developed in the Habsburg chancellery under Gattinara until 1530 and shared by the secretary Alfonso de Valdés, see Marcel Bataillon, *Érasme et l’Espagne*, 3 vols, Geneva, Droz, 1991, vol. I, pp. 243 ff.; John M. Headley, *The Emperor and his Chancellor: A Study of the Imperial Chancellery under Gattinara*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, “Italia, chiave della ‘Monarchia Universalis’: il progetto politico del gran cancelliere Gattinara”, in *Carlo V, Napoli*, pp. 275-288; Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, *Gattinara: Carlos V y el sueño del imperio*, Madrid, Sílex, 2005; José Martínez Millán, Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, “La coronación imperial de Bolonia y el final de la vía flamenca (1526-1530)”, in *Carlos V y la quiebra*, vol. I, pp. 131-150.

5. The quotation is taken from the *Opus aureum iuris utriusque lumiis domini [...] super feudis* by Baldo degli Ubaldi and is repeated in the *Pro divo Carolo [...] apologetici libri duo*, on which see *infra*, pp. 16-17. See Headley, *The Emperor and his Chancellor*, p. 103.



*solo un ovile sia, solo un pastore*” (“That under this Emperor / there may be only one sheepfold, only one shepherd”).<sup>6</sup>

In this perspective, the papacy would have to go back to its purely spiritual dimension, which had been lost and forgotten in the course of history: hence the urgency of Church reformation through the universal Council. “An Empire and a pontificate as in olden days”, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza wrote to Charles V, recalling the political metaphor of the *duo luminaria*, the two suns, with which Dante Alighieri and Marsilius of Padua had sustained the autonomy and separation of the secular and religious spheres. These were ideas formulated long ago, which might seem irrelevant in the Europe of the states, but since Charles of Habsburg had been elected Emperor, his unequalled power truly extended over a vast dominion. One can understand why in the 1520s the Grand Chancellor Mercurino di Gattinara had suggested Erasmus edit a new edition of Dante’s *Monarchia*.

And yet, Accolti’s and Mendoza’s memos were not theoretical treatises or literary works. The ideology and the great principles that were their natural perspective served to justify a project for invading the Papal States, set down in a precise analysis with concrete details. It meant, in 1543, bringing war back to Italy, in line with a plan that entailed the insurrection of some nerve centres subject to papal dominion and the mobilisation of princes, lords, vassals and cities in support of Charles’ military initiative. There were two plans for eliminating the Papal States, which were absolutely similar to each other and whose practicality rested on the existence of an “Italy of the Emperor” set against an “Italy of the Pope”. That these were neither a rhetorical exercise nor wishful thinking is shown not only by the identity of the recipient, but also by the role and rank of the two writers.

This “Italy of the Emperor” in the 1530s and 1540s is the subject of the present study. But, to understand what we are discussing, we need to go back in time for a moment, to an event of extraordinary significance for the relations between Pope and Emperor, as well as for the history of Italy.

In May 1527 Charles V’s troops had conquered and sacked the Pope’s city. Clement VII had just managed to save his skin by barricading himself in Castel Sant’Angelo with a dozen cardinals. Outside the walls of the castle, the city was looted and subject to the violence of the troops, including the Lutheran soldiery who regarded the Pope as the Antichrist incarnate and Rome as Babylon, thanks to the campaign of images and pamphlets that had spread Protestant doctrines in Germany over the preceding years. The demographic collapse of the population was an eloquent consequence of the long months of sacking and epidemics in the capital of Christendom, which had been reduced to a “corpse”.<sup>7</sup>

6. Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso* (15, 26), which draws on John (10,16). José Antonio Maravall, *Carlos V y el pensamiento político del Renacimiento*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios políticos y constitucionales, 1999 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1960) is still useful on these topics.

7. The expression “corpse of a city” was used by the imperial cardinal Pompeo Colonna, cited in André Chastel, *Il sacco di Roma: 1527*, Turin, Einaudi, 1983 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. Princeton, 1983), pp. 15-16.

The Pope's authority and prestige, both temporal and religious, were wiped out too. Thanks to an exceptional propaganda campaign, the imperial chancellery then set out powerful ideological justifications for such a serious act, perpetrated not by the Turks or by heretics, but by the Christian Emperor. In the summer of 1527 Alfonso de Valdés, Charles V's secretary, wrote the *Diálogo de las cosas ocurridas en Roma*. It had already circulated widely in manuscript before being republished in Venice in the early 1540s, just when Accolti and Mendoza were sending their memos to the Emperor.<sup>8</sup> The dialogue, written just after the sack, presents Charles as the defender of Christian values against a pontiff who was more of a wolf than a lamb and who had betrayed his duty as Vicar of Christ to satisfy his temporal ambitions. The sack of Rome was presented as divine punishment, and the Emperor assumed a supplementary function for the defaulting Pope.

But, however biting Alfonso de Valdés' pen might have been, we should not forget that those arguments, formulated so powerfully in 1527, had actually been fuelling the conflicts between Pope and Emperor for some time, and that, quite apart from contingencies, their conflict had inevitable underlying reasons.

Before 1527, manuscripts and printed works had already been circulating, some coming from the respective chancelleries, that summarised the terrible clash which would lead to the sack of Rome: a battle of books with an antique flavour, calling back to a centuries-old tradition – the exchange of polemical writings between Pope and Emperor during the struggle for investiture. They were official documents that had been made dramatically public – just how much we can see today from the number of copies to be found in libraries. As part of Charles V's propaganda campaign, which went ahead in parallel with the sack of Rome, they were collected and published from August 1527 on in various European cities with the title *Pro divo Carolo [...] apologetici libri duo*.<sup>9</sup> The anthology, which historians now attribute to Valdés and Gattinara, mirrored the state of political relations between Empire and Papacy in the months before the Habsburg army descended on Italy. It contained breves with which Clement VII had informed Charles of the Holy See's alliance with France in the League of Cognac, and his decision to mobilise the papal army to defend the "freedom of Italy" against an Emperor who had become a disturber of Christendom.<sup>10</sup> Those "*contumeliosae literae*" ("insulting letters") were followed in the *Pro divo Carolo* by Charles' replies to the Pope and his exhortation to the College of Cardinals. Their tone and content showed the influence of Erasmus, and in them the Emperor assumed the role of defender of the "peace of Italy" and protector of Christendom, intimating to the pontiff to think carefully before unsheathing

8. On the dialogue, see *infra*, pp. 39, 110, 115-116.

9. On *Pro divo Carolo [...] apologetici libri duo*, see Headley, *The Emperor and his Chancellor*, pp. 86-113. On their circulation, see Edward Bohemer, *Bibliotheca Wiffeniana: Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries from 1520*, vol. I, Strasbourg-London, Trübner, 1874, pp. 84 ff. These writings are discussed by Adriano Prosperi, "Carlo V e i papi del suo tempo", in *Carlo V, Napoli*, pp. 239-247.

10. See the first of the two papal breves in *Pro divo Carolo*, pp. 9-17 (I quote from the Mainz edition, Joannis Schoeffer, 5 September 1527).

his sword, and to ask himself if his choices were really in line with his role as shepherd and with the message of Christ:

Consideret an haec pastoralis congruant officio, an hic sit gladius per vestram Sanctitatem evaginandus, exercendusve, quem Christus in vaginam potius recondendum censuit, et qui etiam in hostes fidei ab ipso christiani gregis pastore regulariter exerceri prohibetur.<sup>11</sup>

The tone became lofty when Charles accused Clement of trying to usurp the authority of the head of the Holy Roman Empire and, in Italy, of wanting to subvert his domains, perturb the cities and alienate the potentates subject to his feudal authority.<sup>12</sup>

The *Pro divo Carolo* anthology is an exceptional document. The accusations the Emperor formulates here against the Pope are founded on a close examination of Roman policy, which, quite apart from Clement's contingent choices, dates back to the attribution of the imperial title to the Habsburgs in 1519, thus uniting the two Medici papacies of Leo X (1513-1521) and Clement VII (1523-1534), apart from the short parenthesis of Hadrian VI (1522-1523), Charles V's Flemish preceptor. The arguments put forward by the two contenders show that there was a structural conflict between the roles each of them covered – and the demands associated with them. The sack of Rome should be situated along the lines of this conflict. And I believe the radical break between Paul III Farnese and Charles V should be read as a moment in the same historical process that underlies the "Italy of the Emperor" in the 1540s, when the two sides continued to draw on the same arsenal of topics and arguments, linguistically and conceptually, that had already been established in the 1520s.

All this means that the sack of Rome in 1527 was neither a caesura nor a periodising element in the history of Italy and of the papacy, although its political importance and tragic connotations left an indelible mark on people's consciousness at the time. The Emperor's descent on Italy in person, which so terrified the Roman curia after the sack of 1527, in the end became reality in the last weeks of 1529, and yet it was not a final reckoning between the two supreme political and spiritual authorities of the West. On 24 February 1530 Charles V was crowned in Bologna by the very Pope who had been his hostage. The solemn ceremony in San Petronio, with the power of its rituals and scenography, seemed to symbolically and politically ratify the conclusion of the "wars of Italy" and the Franco-imperial conflict for supremacy over the peninsula. It was the end of "Italy's freedom", which was at the centre of Machiavelli's and Guicciardini's thought. In 1530, Italian princes and aristocrats, exponents of noble houses and representatives of cities, lords of castles and dynastic states filed past the Emperor. The ceremonies of the Bologna celebrations depicted a political order that reflected the recently acquired status of individual potentates, but that, at the

11. "Consider if this is appropriate to the role of a shepherd, if this sword should be unsheathed, or used, by Your Holiness; a sword that Christ thought should rather be replaced in its scabbard, and that it is forbidden to be regularly used by the shepherd of the Christian flock against the enemies of the faith" (*ibid.*, p. 23).

12. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

same time, repeated in general terms the ancient architecture constituted by the bonds of feudal dependence between the Emperor and his Italian vassals.<sup>13</sup>

Some of these princes ruled states of regional dimensions; others possessed tiny jurisdictions, but had, or claimed to have, the right to mint coins, administer civil and criminal justice and enlist soldiers. Both governed their territories ready to take alarm at the “alteration of even the least little castle”, even though they were part of an international system, given their relation to the Emperor. They were lords at the centre of large and small courts, who, through their artists, men of letters, intermediaries and diplomatic agents – and even playing on the fabrication of “dynastic saints” – had carved out a position for themselves in the Italian political system. Political fragmentation went hand in hand here with an extraordinary concentration of culture in many small centres to a degree unimaginable beyond the Alps; after all, it was here that the Renaissance had developed – the rediscovery and redevelopment of the classical tradition, its images and languages, its gods, myths and values. And, because of these very characteristics of the political space in which they moved, the Emperor’s recognition was extremely important for the Italian princes in giving them political legitimacy in the neighbouring, rival territories, thus helping to create a hierarchy in the land.<sup>14</sup>

But once peace and order had been re-established in Bologna, and the accord between Pope and Emperor renewed in 1530, once the princes, vassals and exponents of the Italian aristocracies had returned to their palaces, castles and the city council-halls, how long did that peace and order last?

On the death of Clement VII in 1534, Paul III was elected Pope; he governed for fifteen years, his papacy being the longest of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Interpretations of it have had to reconcile two substantially divergent aspects of this period, which was dominated like few others by the combination of political and religious choices. On the one hand, he was a Pope with a humanist background and large-scale projects of reform, who had at last convoked the Council of Trent and made cardinals of men of letters and champions of Church renewal, like Contarini, Bembo, Cortese, Fregoso, Sadoletto, Pole, Badia and Morone.<sup>15</sup> On the other, in

13. Angelantonio Spagnoletti, *Le dinastie italiane nella prima età moderna*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003.

14. Francesco Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine dal 1378 al 1509*, ch. 9, p. 196 (I quote from the edition by Alessandro Monteverocchi, Milan, BUR, 1998). On dynastic sanctity in the Po courts, see Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500*, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990.

15. This evaluation of Paul III’s pontificate, widely repeated in the later historiography, is to be found in the pioneering works by Elisabeth G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome, and Reform*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, and Gigliola Fragnito, “Evangelismo e intransigenti nei difficili equilibri del pontificato farnesiano”, *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 25 (1989), pp. 20-47; Gigliola Fragnito, “Il nepotismo farnesiano tra ragioni di Stato e ragioni di Chiesa”, in *Continuità e discontinuità nella storia politica, economica e religiosa. Studi in onore di Aldo Stella*, ed. by Paolo Pecorari and Giovanni Silvano, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1993, pp. 117-125, now in Gigliola Fragnito, *Cinquecento italiano. Religione, cultura e potere dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma*, ed. by Elena Bonora and Miguel Gotor, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011, pp. 188-220 and 220-230 respectively.

1542 he created the Congregation of the Inquisition; and he was the nepotistic Pope who subordinated the choices, both temporal and spiritual, of the Holy See to dynastic and family interests, separating the cities of Parma and Piacenza from the Papal States in 1545 and making it a duchy for his son Pier Luigi Farnese.

Images so difficult to reconcile like those just cited can be integrated into a more organic vision if, following one great historian's suggestion, we move from factual analysis to considering the interpretations and projects of those like Cardinal Accolti and Mendoza who thought that in those years the relations between the two greatest authorities of the Papacy and Empire were being modified on the unstable Italian chessboard, and with them the future politico-territorial organisation of the peninsula.<sup>16</sup>

Let us begin with the first point. To give an idea of the dimensions of the ongoing clash between Paul III and Charles V in the 1540s, we need only recall the words of the latter. Let all know, the Emperor wrote in the midst of the war against the Protestant princes in Germany, that we have respected the authority of the Pope and the Holy See more than any other Christian sovereign, but "let all the world know" too that His Holiness abandoned us at the worst moment, when "*mas necesidad habia de las fuerças para reducir el punto de la religion*".<sup>17</sup> In another missive to Mendoza, Charles accused the Pope of scheming to create alliances with his enemies "*para turbar la quietud de Italia, y emprender la guerra contra nos, y hurtar tierras nuestras y que están debaxo del Imperio y protección dél, y que siguen nuestra parte y devoción*".<sup>18</sup> And he promised, if the Pope and his representative intended to pursue this line of conduct against his Italian subjects and vassals, that "*iremos de tal manera a la mano, y tan viva y caldamente, que [...] les pesará para siempre*".<sup>19</sup> "I know the way to Rome, let Pope Paul take care not to make me go and visit him" were his words to the papal nuncio.<sup>20</sup> On the other front, equally strong and impassioned voices of protest were raised. In a famous oration, the nuncio Giovanni Della Casa, author of *Il Galateo*, accused the Emperor of wanting to "bring Italy and the universe into his power".<sup>21</sup>

16. Chabod, *Contrasti interni*.

17. "When there was more need of help to resolve the religious problem": Charles V to Diego de Mendoza, 7 October 1547 (cited in Wilhelm Maurenbrecher, *Karl V und die deutschen Protestanten 1545-1555. Nebst einem Anhang von Aktenstücken aus dem spanischen Staatsarchiv von Simancas*, vol. I, Düsseldorf, Bubbeus, 1865, p. 123).

18. "To disturb the peace of Italy and take up war against us, and steal our lands, and those that are under the Empire, and those protected by it, and those that are on our side and are loyal to us": Charles V to Diego de Mendoza, Augsburg, 16 January 1548 (Ángel González Palencia, Eugenio Mele, *Vida y obras de don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza*, 3 vols, Madrid, Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, 1941-1943, vol. III, pp. 342-348).

19. "We will use force with such a heavy hand that it will weigh on them forever" (*ibid*).

20. Giuseppe De Leva, *Storia documentata di Carlo V in correlazione all'Italia*, vols I-V, Venice-Padua-Bologna, P. Naratovich-F. Sacchetto-N. Zanichelli, 1863-1895, vol. IV, p. 258.

21. "Orazione a Carlo V", in *Prose di Giovanni Della Casa e altri trattatisti cinquecenteschi del comportamento*, ed. by Arnaldo Di Benedetto, Turin, Utet, 1970, p. 270. On the speech, see *infra*, pp. 68-69.

We would do well to bear in mind that when Paul III's representatives, like Della Casa, accused Charles of pursuing a plan of universal hegemony, they were not looking at the shores of the Mediterranean, or to the eastern and western frontiers of Europe, and still less to the distant lands of the New World, but at Italy, the seat of the Pope's territorial state. It is no accident that the nuncio's speech was set down in 1547 or 1548, just at the most serious moment of the clash between Paul III and Charles V, immediately after the political assassination of the Pope's son, the Duke of Parma and Piacenza, was carried out on Habsburg orders. This was also when the clash over the transfer of the Council of Trent to Bologna was turning into a constitutional conflict between Pope and Emperor, which had the people of the day holding their breath, and it was treading the dangerous and irreparable path of religious schism. But, above all, after the victory of Mühlberg over the Protestants in April 1547, Charles V's universalist claims were now supported by an army that could at last be ordered to march on Italy.

These facts are well known, but they acquire a more pregnant meaning in the light of the existence of that political front that, under Paul II's pontificate, worked in the peninsula, and which some of those Italian princes and lords loyal to the Emperor took part in, and who in 1530 had paid him homage in Bologna during his coronation. This event in Bologna had great impact in the sphere of public information and, later, in the historiography.<sup>22</sup> But, as should now be clear, with it an order and a peace that were only apparent and transitory had been established in Italy.

So we are not here to recount yet another history of Charles V, analysing his existential parabola, his victories and defeats, his European ventures and the way he governed his vast domains.<sup>23</sup> Rather, we aim to reconstruct a crucial moment of Italian history, highlighting the expectations and hopes with which princes and exponents of the ruling classes of the peninsula looked at the Emperor. To consider the plans elaborated by Charles V's men in Italy and by pro-imperial power groups in the peninsula, partly through measures that did not always coincide with the programmes pursued by the Emperor's court, or with what would later effectively be Habsburg policy in Italy. The aim is to look closely at an "Italy of the Emperor" that was doggedly and absolutely opposed to the "Italy of the Pope" – an Italy that has been little studied so far in its overall physiognomy or in the political weight it carried in the 1530s and 1540s, in a context that was made more and more unstable and uncertain by the worsening of the conflict between Charles V and Paul III. This is the context in which the memo sent by Cardinal Benedetto Accolti, whose position and prestige enabled him to present his projects directly to Charles, acquires weight and historical importance.

22. On the prophetic expectations that accompanied him, see Ottavia Niccoli, "Astrologi e profeti a Bologna per Carlo V", in *Bologna nell'età di Guicciardini*, ed. by Emilio Pasquini and Paolo Prodi, Bologna, il Mulino, 2002, pp. 457-476.

23. These aspects are addressed in two recent biographies of Charles V: Geoffrey Parker, *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2019; Heinz Schilling, *Karl V. Der Kaiser, dem die Welt zerbrach*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 2020.

The radicalisation of the clash between Pope and Emperor in the 1540s forced these “enemies of the Pope” to make a drastic choice between sides that would exclude any compromise with the Farnese family, whether in making marriage alliances with them or, as bishops and cardinals, occupying positions in the curia and in diplomacy that would put them at the Pope’s service. In this respect, theirs was clearly a different choice from that of other men of the Church – cardinals Contarini, Pole and Morone – who are usually regarded as pro-Habsburg, on which we need to reflect. Some of these cardinals and bishops who were “servants of the Emperor”, as they defined themselves, would remain in wait far from Rome for the whole of Paul’s pontificate and would pay a high personal price for their prolonged physical distance from the work of the curia and papal favour.

The choice between Pope or Emperor, which all of them perceived as clear-cut and with no possibility of mediation, translated into the plan for an Italy tied by bonds of loyalty to the distant Emperor, for a papacy close to home confined to the spiritual dimension or at least with its political claims and territorial jurisdiction drastically reduced, and for an Italian geo-political settlement that was shared and controlled by the secular princes of the peninsula, but solidly included in the universal Empire of Charles V. Simplifying and generalising, we might define it as an imperial ideal that could not be translated into reality, but that in the 1540s directed the joint action of the fearsome political front of Italian princes who were inspired by it.

*Ai principi d’Italia* was the title of a pamphlet by Pier Paolo Vergerio published early in 1550.<sup>24</sup> But who were the “princes of Italy” being addressed by the former nuncio and bishop of Capodistria, now a Swiss exile fleeing the accusation of heresy and arrest by the Pope’s men? They were those who had “superiority and jurisdiction [...] in the cities, castles and in all [their] domains”; civil authorities to whom, after showing the pernicious social and political consequences of the presence in their small states of friars and priests dependent on Rome, Vergerio asked in the name of Christ that drastic measures be taken to protect the spiritual salvation of their subjects: “And you will have to account for yourselves to the Lord, if you do not. I declare it to you on His behalf”.

Vergerio’s appeal reflected his perception of the existence of a compact front opposing the papacy, to which he could turn with some hope. Along with doctrinal grounds, there were also his close relations with some exponents of this front that explain why the Pope wanted to capture him and have him interrogated and put on trial. Controversially, Vergerio had received protection from that very group of Italian princes, in open challenge to the Pope, as is shown by the long months he spent at the court of Mantua, which, under the regency of Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga had become a refuge for “all those gorged on by the Pope” – or, in other words, for those who, figuratively, had had their faces *sgriffate* (scarred) by Paul III.<sup>25</sup>

24. [Pier Paolo Vergerio], *Ai principi d’Italia*, [Basle], in the month of April 1550: it was printed immediately after the election of Julius III del Monte.

25. *Accolti*, 4, fasc. 3, fols 90-94, *Paolo della Cicogna* [Card. Gonzaga] to *Marco of Mantua* [Card. Accolti], 2 October 1544. For the sense of *sgriffare*, see Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, vol. XVIII, Turin, Utet, 1996, vol. XVIII, p. 1019.

The existence of this political faction in Italy therefore also casts light on the choices and perspectives of those who had fled across the Alps under Paul III, persecuted for their religious convictions, but who still looked to the future of the peninsula as open to modification, aware that in Italy there were not only Nicodemites, dissimulators and “*spirituali*”.<sup>26</sup>

The varied front of the “princes of Italy” had the fluidity of a complex and unstable grouping that had its own strength, power and material resources, and which is well enough documented to encourage us to study it further. Nor should we ignore, in addition to the connections and shared political interests between courts, princely families and Italian vassals, all those belonging to that anti-papal opposition front who were nevertheless holding high positions in the Church: bishops and cardinals from important dioceses, who formed a dense network of spiritual and temporal powers extending over central and north-eastern Italy.

But there was more to the “Italy of the Emperor”, as it was also marked by the exceptional interweaving of the Burgundy, Castilian and Italian elements. Charles V’s most powerful ministers, like Perrenot de Granvelle, father and son, and his most authoritative representatives in Italy, like Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, acted in unison with lords and princes of the peninsula following shared political perspectives and weaving relations that might not be between equals, but that were certainly not divided into dominant and dominated. With their activity as informants, their institutional roles and the resources they could draw on, they all helped influence and carry out Charles V’s policy in Italy. It was a dimension in which the integration of the Italian and Castilian elites was played out on various planes, manifesting itself in the consolidation of ties of kindred, like those between the House of Medici in Florence and the Toledo family in Naples; in the cultural exchanges between Mendoza and Cardinal Accolti; and even in the multilingual communications between them. They were relations and affinities between those who looked to the political and cultural centrality of Italy as part of a higher, greater order; ties in the light of which the concept of the “freedom of Italy” against the foreigner proves inadequate historiographically to interpret the history of the peninsula in this period.

In a famous essay of 1950, evaluating the research on 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian history, Federico Chabod emphasised the persistence and hegemony of criteria of judgment that had come down from the great Florentine tradition of Machiavelli and Guicciardini. He noted that the theme of the “freedom of Italy”

26. On Italian heretics across the Alps, see Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1939), now in Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento e altri scritti*, ed. by Adriano Prosperi, Turin, Einaudi, 1992. For the Nicodemitic implications of Juan de Valdés’ religious message, on which the experience of the *spirituali* was based, see Massimo Firpo, *Tra alumbados e “spirituali”*. *Studi su Juan de Valdés e il valdesianesimo nella crisi religiosa dell’Italia del ‘500*, Florence, Olschki, 1991, and Massimo Firpo, *Juan de Valdés and the Italian Reformation*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014. On Vergerio’s point of view: Silvano Cavazza, “Quei che vogliono Cristo senza croce”: Vergerio e i prelati riformatori italiani (1549-1555)”, in *Pier Paolo Vergerio il Giovane, un polemista attraverso l’Europa del Cinquecento*, ed. by Ugo Rozzo, Udine, Forum, 2002.



as outlined by Machiavelli had been used improperly by historians well outside the specific context in which it had been formulated. Research on the “faults and responsibilities” of the Italian princes in paving the way for the foreign powers had become, in Chabod’s view, a sort of historiographic canon on the basis of which too much time had been spent measuring the “*italianità*” of the individual protagonists of the country’s history, from the 16<sup>th</sup>-century crisis down to Unification.<sup>27</sup> In the course of time, different political subjects had thus been able to present themselves as defenders of the “freedom of Italy” against foreign invaders. Chabod indicated the Piedmont of the Risorgimento and the Savoys as a recent example of the ability of Italian potentates to place themselves in this centuries-long tradition. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, however – as we can see from the arguments set out by Clement VII’s chancellery referred to above – that historical role had been claimed by the papacy.

In this perspective we can understand why Carlo Capasso in *Paolo III* – published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – presented his subject as a bulwark of Italian independence against the hegemonic claims of Charles V and set him against the “anti-Italian” Ferrante Gonzaga, general of the Habsburg army, governor of Milan and prominent figure in the imperial front during the 1540s.<sup>28</sup> At this point in time, however, the problem of defending the “freedom of Italy” at the centre of Machiavelli’s thought was now closed, leaving the need to choose between two different hegemonies, that of the Pope and that of the Emperor. In this epoch-making clash, with all its future religious, cultural and political implications, the Italian princes now had to make a move.

The explanation for the fact that this “Italy of the Emperor” has had little historiographic recognition and that there has been little study of its physiognomy as an opposition group goes back a long way, then, but there are other more banal reasons. Not the physical distance, but the conflict between Paul III and Charles V obliged the men who were involved to rely on letters rather than oral communication. This was partly so as not to arouse the suspicions of the Roman curia with their meetings, and so keep the existence of friendly relations with each other secret, and partly due to their situation as exiles and fugitives from the Pope’s justice. On other occasions, it was because of the delicate position of those who disobeyed the Pope’s convocations to Rome, though they had important roles in the Church.

Hence their use of a very specific form of communication – letters written in a metaphorical language (Ercole Gonzaga called it “our *gramuffo*”),<sup>29</sup> often

27. Federico Chabod, “Studi di storia del Rinascimento”, now in Federico Chabod, *Scritti sul Rinascimento*, Turin, Einaudi, 1974, pp. 208-216.

28. On the historiographic interpretations of Gonzaga, see Gianvittorio Signorotto, *Ferrante tra storia e storiografia*, in *Ferrante Gonzaga. Il Mediterraneo, l'impero (1507-1557)*, ed. by Gianvittorio Signorotto, Milan, Bulzoni, 2009, pp. 13-35. Ferrante Gonzaga’s *anti-italianità* is discussed in Capasso, *Paolo III*, also author of the “Charles V” entry in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1931). For a critique of this interpretation of Gonzaga’s political programme, see Federico Chabod, *Storia di Milano*, IX. *L'epoca di Carlo V (1535-1559)*, Milan, Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri, 1961, p. 147.

29. *Accolti*, 1, fasc. 3, fols 40-41, Endimio Calandra [i.e. Card. Ercole Gonzaga] to Card. Accolti, 20 March 1544. To speak in *gramuffa* “is a jocular form of *to speak grammatically*,

light and jocular, where any extra-textual reference to men and women was made through pseudonyms taken from books, and where the writer was frequently named in the third person. These letters contained information, agreements and plans that, had they been discovered or intercepted by the Pope's men, would have brought upon the writers the accusation of *lèse majesté*. And so, apart from the precautions that usually accompanied this type of correspondence, and the use of trusted messengers, codes and recognition signals to know if the missives had been opened, the writers pretended to play, and carried out their politics under the semblance of literature.

It was a game that might mislead anyone reading these letters much later, who might not grasp that behind those extravagant phrases there were real powers, armies and states. And that may be why these letters were ignored for centuries. But, once we have ascertained that it was no game, we need to ask when the joint project of those Italian princes came to grief.

In 1549, on Paul III's death and on the occasion of the conclave to elect his successor, the Italian cardinals and princes were unable to march in unison. It was the end of their plan for Italy, as the horizon so rich in potential and opportunity, in which they had acted in recent years under the Emperor's protection, would never again be reconstituted. That conclave – during which the Inquisition showed it was now able to condition the papal election, and so impose its intransigent attitudes lastingly on the leaders of the Church – closed one religious prospect.<sup>30</sup> The pages that follow bring out how, apart from the religious prospects, the political prospects also closed at that point.

On the historiographic plane, political and religious aspects of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italy mainly developed along two parallel, non-communicating lines: on the one hand, research into the Italian dynasties and Charles V's policies in Italy by Angelantonio Spagnoletti and Arturo Pacini; and, on the other, the reconstruction of the conflicts at the head of the Church and the articulations of religious dissent in Italy by Massimo Firpo. The pages that follow try to tie these two perspectives together – the political and the religious – in the conviction that we cannot understand one without the other, since they were actually two sides of the

almost so as not to be understood" (*Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca*, Florence, Domenico Maria Manni, 1731, vol. II, p. 653).

30. This is what the historiography on the 16<sup>th</sup>-century crisis in Italy has shown long since. See, in particular, the volume by Massimo Firpo, *La presa di potere dell'Inquisizione romana. 1550-1553*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2014, which begins with the conclave of 1549. As we know, this periodisation has shifted forward the one advanced in the last century by Delio Cantimori, who, in the light of the failure of the religious discussions in Regensburg, the flight of Ochino, and the creation of the Roman Inquisition, had placed the turning-point and the decisive crisis in religious dissent in Italy in 1542. See Delio Cantimori, "Prospettive di storia ereticale italiana del Cinquecento", now in Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento e altri scritti*, pp. 434-439, and Massimo Firpo, *Inquisizione romana e Controriforma. Studi sul cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509-1580) e il suo processo d'eresia*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2005 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1992), pp. 24 ff. On Cardinal Giovanni Morone, a key figure in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century turning-point of the Roman Church, see Massimo Firpo, Germano Maifreda, *L'eretico che salvò la Chiesa. Il cardinale Giovanni Morone e le origini della Controriforma*, Turin, Einaudi, 2019.

same coin. But, to do this, we need to emerge from the confines of the cardinals' College and the clash between "*spiritual*" and hard-liners, while never forgetting the religious and cultural repercussions of choices that seemed to be based only on political strategies and on logics of dynastic consolidation. In short, we must keep a richer, more complex human dimension in the background, like that which emerges in the letters in "*gramuffo*" by cardinals Gonzaga and Accolti, and in the quotation from Machiavelli placed at the outset of this book.

The victory of the "Italy of the Pope" emerges above all as a defeat of the Italian princes and cardinals. It was a defeat of their project to contain the Pope's temporal power, which they had developed in the shadow of the imperial eagle; a defeat of the demand of Italy's elite to be able to escape, by the mere fact of their rank, the new pervasiveness of the strengthened powers of the Church, which included, ever more incisively, the judicial powers of the Inquisition, which had increased during the clash between Pope and Emperor; and a defeat for that solidarity between the Castilian and Italian elements whose short-lived, shared plan had assigned Italy a pre-eminent role in Charles V's vast system of universal monarchy. The victory of the Counter-Reformation in Italy was the victory of a political, as well as religious, project.

Clearly, quite apart from the Italian situation, the reasons for this failure were connected to the changes in European history marked by the collapse of Charles V's universal dream, by the dynastic carving-up of his territorial legacy between his son and his brother, and by the installation of a different imperial idea, linked more to the global dominion of the Spanish monarchy: developments and processes that, in just a few years, would lead to Philip II's Spanish hegemony, but in the "Italy of the Pope".