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Luther and the Reformation as perceived in Rome: Methods of Spiritual Reform and Sustaining Catholic Orthodoxy

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Abstract: When the Roman Curia and the popes dealt with the Reformation in Northern Europe, this based on the specific circumstances in which the Italian situation differed from that of the Northern European countries. The essay on hand argues at first that the Roman theologians' perception of the Reformation in Northern Europe – especially with regard to ecclesiological questions – depended decisively from their experience of the Fifth Lateran Council. When they met with Luther's writings or with Luther in person, the friar from Wittenberg is often described in a disrespectful manner derived from common national stereotypes. Nevertheless, Luther's writings were published and translated in Italy as they appear to have found a certain audience. Italian "Philo-Lutherans" did not constitute a nationwide network but rather met secretly in smaller circles, which made prosecution quite a tricky matter. The prosecution of heresy was finally the task of the nearly almighty Roman Inquisition founded in 1542 after the Regensburg colloquy had failed.

Keywords: Papacy, Italy, inquisition, book market, reformatory networks, Fifth Lateran Council, Council of Trent

“The plague of heresy usually creeps in through sermons or heretical books – or through bad habits of a wicked and disordered life that easily leads to heresy.”¹

“If the Roman Church’s income was robbed of 10,000 ducats, excommunication would be pronounced, an army would be raised and the help of all Christians would be sought. But if 100,000 souls are wrecked by the devil’s cunning, the shepherd seeks advice from the man who has already tried to perish the sheep.”²

These are two rather different points of view; the first being from the Council of Trent, the second from a frustrated German duke. They downright provoke the question in how far Luther’s reception in Rome was positive as well as negative. This is linked to an enormous set of issues and questions, which will have to be addressed summarily: which prerequisites determined Luther’s reception in Rome? Who among the Roman theologians and cardinals sympathized with the Reformation? What is meant by the “Italian Reformation”? What was the impact of the inquisition’s measures of repression and the sentences of the Council of Trent on the reformatory scene in Rome? Therefore, this article aims at exploring the state of research for five topics in the field of Italian reformation history.³

1. Setting the course: The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17)

It is a well-known fact that the debate about Martin Luther soon shifted from justification and repentance to questions of church authority and ecclesiology as indicated by Cardinal Cajetan’s interrogation of Luther in Augsburg in 1518. Soon afterwards, the Master of the Sacred Palace, Silvestro Mazzolini, was to underscore the authority of the Pope, the Councils and the Holy

1 Gian Pietro Carafa, 4 october 1532: „[...] la peste della heresia si sol introdur o per le prediche e libri hereticali o per la lunga habituatione nella mala et dissoluta vita de la quale facilmente si vene alla heresia“ [...] (*Concilium Tridentinum*, vol. XII, 69).

2 Duke George of Saxony on the curia under Clement VII.: *Akten und Briefe*, vol. 3, 749-750; *Nuntiatuiberichte aus Deutschland*. Erste Abteilung, Vol. 1, 266, N.B. 1: „Si ecclesia Romana in redditibus decem milium ducatorum spoliaretur, ibi opus esset anathemate, exercitum parare et totam Christianitatem in auxilium vocare; modo cum centum mille animae diabolica fraude perdantur, pastor ipse illius utitur consilio, qui semper conatus est oves perdere et sibi subjicere.“

3 For an overview see Melloni, “Luther in der italienischen Geschichtsforschung des 20. Jahrhunderts.”

Scripture.⁴ This dispute indicates the initial schism. However, why did Roman authors work through questions of ecclesiology and church authority instead of addressing the essence of Luther's doctrine of justification?

Apart from the implications of Luther's writings, an answer can undoubtedly be found in the Fifth Lateran Council. It had been summoned by Julius II in 1511 after a group of cardinals had broken with the Pope under the protection of the French king in order to establish their own council in Pisa.⁵ Named "conciliabulum" because of the small number of members, the council aimed at deposing Pope Julius. They accused his policy and military ventures to be harmful to the church. In addition, when elected, Julius had promised a council, which he never summoned. Due to its French support, the Pisan "conciliabulum" became some kind of test case of Gallican ecclesiology that took the general superiority of the council over the pope for granted.

Anyhow, the council, which met during Julius' II reign in the Lateran basilica since the spring of 1512, became a powerful demonstration of papal authority. The Pisan "conciliabulum" and its members were ceremoniously sentenced and successively deprived of their political support. Besides, the ceremonial of the Fifth Lateran Council also reflected the central position of the Pope and the church.⁶ After his election in the spring of 1513, Pope Leo X pursued the council and could build on the policy of Julius II. He managed to reconcile with the members of the Pisan council as well as to reach a compromise with France.

For about six years, the popes and their entourage were engaged in a council whose tasks and issues were mainly of ecclesiological nature – apart from the questions of reform, which will be addressed later. The debates accompanying the council also reflect the ecclesiological dispute, which in the end revolved around the question of the superiority of the Pope or the council as well as around the character of the councils – a much discussed topic since the 15th century. In one of the most extensive debates the minister general of the Dominicans, Tommaso de Vio (Cajetan), was involved, who under the impression of the Pisan "conciliabulum" published his "De comparatione auctoritatis Papae et Concilii" (1511) defending papal authority against the

4 Tavuzzi, *Prierias*, 105-120.

5 Sandret, "Le concile de Pise"; Renaudet, *Le concile gallican*; Minnich, *The Fifth Lateran Council*.

6 Minnich, "Das Fünfte Laterankonzil als geistliches Spiel"; Schmidt, *Die Konzilien und der Papst*, 113-137.

superiority claimed by the council.⁷ The Parisian theologian Jacques Almain responded to this with a Gallican point of view to whom Cajetan replied in his “*Apologia de comparata auctoritate Papae et Concilii*” (1512).

To Cajetan, the question of church constitution was a genuinely theological problem, which theologians could not let to be solved by canonists. In his conception, the Pope had to stand as far above the church as possible in order not to be bothered by a council. Besides, this corresponded with the ideas of Pope Julius II and the pope’s staging within the council’s ceremonial. According to Cajetan, the pope is a shepherd for all bishops - in analogy with St Peter and the apostles. The function as universal shepherd and legislator results from his position as Christ’s representative, which from St Peter moved on to all future popes. That is because the pope’s office was initiated by Christ. Ever since St Peter, the papal authority will always be conferred to the respective successor. Consequently, neither the office nor its authority are imparted by the church. The papal election is therefore no proper election but rather a confirmation of the Holy Spirit’s choice already made.

Against this backdrop, Cajetan considers a council correcting the pope possible for only two scenarios: in the case of a heretically teaching pope and in the case of an uncertain papal election bringing forth a number of competing popes. In any other case, the council’s legitimacy depends on the pope currently in office who must summon and confirm it. For Cajetan, the monarchy within this rather organizational scope corresponds with papal monarchy regarding the doctrine: the infallibility Christ promised to the Church is being implemented by the Pope who, of course, is bound to the Holy Scripture and Divine Law.

Cajetan’s thoughts must be located in the context of the defense against conciliarism. It is striking, however, that his arguments against Luther about ten years later in his “*De divina institutione Romani Pontificis*” (1521) in general, hardly seem to have altered. Obviously, the debates about the Pisan “*conciliabulum*” and the Fifth Lateran Council have formed the views of Roman theologians to such an extent that the question on papal or church authority crucially coined their polemics against Luther, as can be seen from the writings by e.g. Silvestro Mazzolini (Prierias), Ambrogio Catarino Politi and Cristoforo Marcello. Especially Prierias held an extreme view of papal doctrinal power which did not represent a consensus of Luther’s

⁷ Klausnitzer, *Das Papstamt*, 180-190; Horst, *Juan de Torquemada und Thomas de Vio Cajetan*, 111-164.

northern opponents.

Yet, the Fifth Lateran Council had an impact on another realm, namely that of reform.

In 1515, Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote to Leo X: “ [...] most holy Father, you buttress and rebuild the religion of Christ's ordinary people, which has long been in decay in various ways and tends daily more and more towards collapse, with (as they tell me) most salutary synodical constitutions; and at the same time with constitutions of such a kind as have no taint of profit or of the lust of power or despotic rule, but breathe a truly apostolic spirit – such constitutions as anyone could recognize for the work of fathers and not masters, in which religious minds can reverence the voice, as it were of Christ himself.”⁸ In fact, the council's decrees of reform seem to approach serious problems: the legal status of the bishops toward the curia, secular clergy and congregations; the benefice system and the curia's fee system. It remained problematic that Leo X hollowed out the decrees of reform during his reign: as early as two weeks after the reform decree in question, he reserved the office of a canon to an eight-year-old child, later, he allowed the 15-year-old son of the King of Portugal to assume a diocese (which the boy could not administer, however, before reaching the canonical age); he repeatedly ignored the council's prohibition to accumulate benefices.⁹

Thus the council's decrees of reform were undermined by the Pope, however, the council had demonstrated that the issue of reform had reached the curia. Therefore, hope was particularly set on Pope Hadrian VI (1522/23) who was originally from Utrecht. This is revealed for instance by the treatise “De reformatione ecclesiae” (1522) by bishop Zaccaria Ferreri who had already promoted reform and supported the opposition against Julius II. Under Hadrian's successor, Clement VII (1523-34), a continuation of reform receded even farther into the distance also because of the political conflicts which the Pope was involved in. Reform-oriented forces such as the initially quoted Duke George of Saxony, became increasingly frustrated. It was not until 1534 that the question of reform was again set in motion with the election of Paul III and his

8 Erasmus to Leo X., 21 May 1515: „[...] tua pietas, pater beatissime, quae simul et Christianae plebis religionem iam olim multis collapsam modis et in dies magis ac magis collabentem saluberrimis, ut audio, synodi constitutionibus sarcit ac restituit; et huiusmodi constitutionibus non quae quaestum aut dominandi libidinem aut tyrannidem oleant, sed quae vere spiritum referant Apostolicum; quas quivis a patribus non a dominis profectas possit agnoscere, in quibus piaes mentes ipsum Christum veluti loquentem venerentur.“ (Allen, *Opus Epistolarum*, vol. II, 85) English translation: *Correspondence of Erasmus*, vol. 3, p. 105.

9 De la Brosse, *Lateran V*, 119.

appointment of cardinals. However, the question of reform remained at least in parts separate from the question of the council.¹⁰ Against this background, a commission of cardinals conceived a program of reform in 1536, partly covering the issues of complaint from north of the Alps and partly also addressing Roman and curial problems. However, the fact that, according to the commission, the accumulation of episcopal seats was to be avoided and that bishops as well as cardinals were urged to carry out pastoral care, was hardly met with approval by the curia beyond this party of reform.¹¹ Nevertheless, Rome most likely agreed that a workable policy of reform was playing an essential role in the fight against Protestantism. Here, Italian reformation and reform policy remarkably overlap.

Unfortunately, current accounts of reformation history pay not more than little attention to the impact of the Fifth Lateran Council and its surroundings on Luther's reception in Rome.¹² For Italian scholarship, in addition, a renowned contemporary of the Lateran Council and historian used to play a major role: Francesco Guicciardini. His anti-papal attitude let him see Luther as punisher for the clergymen's vices rather than as a theologian. In this perspective, which became influential in risorgimental and historicist historiography, Luther could be compared to Savonarola and fit in various concepts of Italian history.¹³

2. The Papacy and the Germans

From a Roman viewpoint, the German territories were positioned in the periphery – not in terms of papal diplomacy but certainly regarding business operations within the curia.¹⁴ During the papacy of Leo X, the total amount of offices and benefices entrusted to Germans was about eight per cent. This includes only the south of Germany, though, as the north was only taken into account if, for example, Albrecht of Brandenburg spent a great amount of money on procurators and fees in order to receive the dispensation desired and to take over the archdiocese of Mainz. Ever since the “Gravamina of the German nation” in the mid-15th century, the great financial burden on the German church caused by the fees paid to the Roman

10 Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent*, vol. 1, 410-455.

11 Schmidt, *Die Konzilien und der Papst*, 155.

12 An exception is Minnich, “Luther, Cajetan and Pastor aeternus (1516) of Lateran V”.

13 Melloni, “Luther in der italienischen Geschichtsforschung des 20. Jahrhunderts”, 209-210.

14 Reinhardt, *Luther der Ketzer*, 56.

curia became a part of the *topoi* in the debate of reform. Recent research has proven, though, that this image is not correct compared to European standards as particularly France had significantly heavier burdens to carry. However, Luther's criticism of indulgences must have been noticed in Germany also for its financial and anti-Roman dimension along with nationalist nuances permeating his tracts and letters.¹⁵ It is therefore not surprising that the first Roman reactions to Luther's 95 theses – in particular by Silvestro Mazzolini, named Prierias – mainly aimed at the position of the papacy: during the Fifth Lateran Council, Prierias was appointed professor of theology in Rome (1514) before he occupied the office of Master of the Sacred Palace (1515). As the major advisor of the Pope, he had watched the council's debates and thus he was also entrusted with the censorship of books in the city of Rome and the Papal States. In his first writing against Luther, the "Dialogus in praesumptuosas Martini Lutheri conclusiones de potestate papae" (1518), Prierias claims to have unwillingly broken away from his work on a florilegium of Thomas Aquinas in order to present some of Luther's theses with a counter-thesis as Luther had not yet revealed the basis of his theology. Besides the issue of indulgences, that of ecclesiology and papacy played the major role, which can be attributed not only to the open flank left by Luther but also and foremost to the impact the debates of the Fifth Lateran Council had on Prierias. As indicated by Remigius Bäumer, Prierias' council theology corresponds with that of the Fifth Lateran Council, which had largely been coined by his fellow friar Cajetan.¹⁶ This latter was sent by Leo X to the Diet of Augsburg (1518) where he was supposed to interrogate Luther and make him revoke his theses. While Luther published his way of looking at things only a month after the talks, Cajetan must have produced only personal notes that were most likely included in the necrology of his secretary, Giambattista Flavio Aquilano (1535).¹⁷ Besides Cajetan's notes, the *topoi* of Luther-criticism and the discourse on heresy must have also had influence on Aquilano's account. Nevertheless, according to Volker Reinhardt, this text shows paradigmatically, how the members of the curia portrayed their encounters with Luther: whereas Cajetan lectured the friar from Wittenberg extensively on theological issues and offered him to reconcile with the church, Luther was at best able to express ambivalent phrases. Thus, Cajetan found proof that Luther's fallacies were not based on malignity but on

15 Reinhardt, *Luther der Ketzer*, 160-161; Roper, *Luther*, 431-432.

16 Bäumer, "Silvester Prierias".

17 *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, vol. 2, 80-81.

insufficient theological education. The question arose whether a diabolic seducer could truly make such a poor appearance in his way of expression and his theological arguments. And, could a stuttering and slurring savage really be the author of such highly contagious texts?¹⁸ The next day, however, Luther revealed a different face: he was no longer submissive and abashed but rather “boasting with pride and barbarian rage”. In addition, he was supported by several accomplices who kept him from revoking and incited him to resist the papal legates. The fact that Luther could not remain true to himself, his inconsistency, his unsteadiness and impenitence – all that, was to contribute to the arsenal of Luther-images used by Roman authors.¹⁹ Against this backdrop, another topos soon became part of the Roman reception of Luther: Luther exorbitantly overestimating and overrating himself – and therefore ignoring the teaching office of the pope and the councils as well as that of the theological experts.

A fresco by Francesco Salviati in the Palazzo Farnese (1552), has been interpreted as an image of Luther corresponding to Cajetan’s account: a stout and sinister figure remaining totally barred and untouched by his opposite’s arguments which he might not even understand. Yet, severe objections about this interpretation have been put forward as well, since a representation room in the palace of a papal family is unlikely to present what was thought of as a heresiarch.²⁰

When reading the reports by Girolamo Aleandro, the papal legate at the Diet of Worms (1521), which he compiled only a few years afterwards, Cajetan’s image of Luther is again being confirmed.²¹ Furthermore, Aleandro names some factors favouring the spread of Luther’s ideas: the garish appearance of the bishops had fostered an anti-clerical and anti-Roman attitude among the population; the Germans only claimed to cultivate the sciences but did not carry out profound studies; questions of belief were too easily combined with personal preferences and aversions. Without a doubt, Aleandro considered Germany to be an antagonistic and barbaric foreign country.²² Thus, the stereotypes were strengthened even among intellectual Romans and in controversial theology north of the Alps. However, sympathies for Luther and his

18 Reinhardt, *Luther der Ketzer*, 97.

19 The result can be found in Johannes Cochlaeus’ *Commentaria de actis et scriptis Martini Lutheri* (1549), see Herte, *Lutherkommentare*, 2 & 68.

20 Puaux, *Introduction au Palais Farnèse*, 82.

21 Reinhardt, *Luther der Ketzer*, S. 149-161.

22 In general on the superior attitude of some Italians toward Germans (and vice versa): Stadtwald, *Roman Popes and German Patriots*.

Reformation also existed in Italy and even Rome, which we will turn to in the following.

3. Publishing Luther in Italy

With the success of the counter-reformation in mind, it is hard to imagine that Luther's works were reprinted and even translated in Italy. In fact, Luther's writings must have been available especially in northern Italy since the early 1520s; the earliest proof can be traced to Pavia in 1519 where a book dealer sold at least some of Luther's writings.²³ In particular, the role of the commercial center and city state Venice, must not be underestimated regarding the distribution of reformatory theology in Italy. Venice can also be seen as a channel transporting reformatory ideas from Italy into the Balkans. The publisher Nicolo Zoppino who launched an Italian translation of Luther's "Brief Comment on the Ten Commandments" seems paradigmatic as he thus opened the door for a number of Italian Luther translations.²⁴ Yet, the vast majority of reformatory writings were imported from Germany and Switzerland into Italy. A booming market existed in particular in northern Italy. Several aspects of Zoppino's translation of Luther's "Ten Commandments" ("Dechiaratione de li dieci comandamenti") are remarkable: Firstly, the initial edition from 1525 was published in a very small sixteenmo format without any reference to the author which speaks for a clandestine use. Secondly, in later editions from 1526 onward, Erasmus of Rotterdam was declared as the author. In Italy, Erasmus was in fact perceived as Luther's partisan and thus as another reformer, their severe differences being of no importance in Italy.²⁵ In any case, Luther's works fell on fertile soil in Italy during the 1520s and 1530s. Thirdly, the translation was part of a movement of emancipation from the clergy that had suffered a great loss of credibility. According to Macchiavelli, the Italians owed "to the church and priests the fact that they had become irreligious and wicked" – an expression of a conspicuous anticlericalism.²⁶

One of the most striking differences between Italy and the German-speaking countries was, however, a "time shift": North of the Alps, Martin Luther had become a very popular author by the first half of the 1520s, whose writings were in mass circulation and printed in lots of

23 Firpo, "The Italian Reformation", 170.

24 Text: WA 1, 247-256; Luther, *Uno libretto volgare*. See Seidel Menchi, "Le traduzioni italiane", 31-82.

25 Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus als Ketzer*, 33-66

26 Firpo, "The Italian Reformation", 170.

editions. Italy though, did not witness the climax of Luther-productions until the 1540s and 1550s.²⁷ In order to fully understand this phenomenon, we must further immerse ourselves in the complex of the “Italian Reformation.”

4. The “Italian Reformation”

Since there was no Reformation in Italy like in Central or Northern Europe, the term “Italian Reformation has to be clarified.”²⁸ The reformatory tendencies in Italy were rather heterogeneous and diverse because they were mainly organized in independent and partly clandestine circles which could be numerous in larger cities. Their centre could be found in the cities of Northern Italy. Those cities were often involved in political conflicts in the course of the first half of the 16th century and feared to lose municipal autonomy in favour of the integration into a new regional state.²⁹ In the end, the fears hardly came true, as most of the small and middle states were preserved. Yet, reformatory sympathies could reach very political dimensions in such contexts. Apart from that, the reformatory movements in Italy resulted mainly from the crisis of pastoral care and the people’s need to encounter God independently from the clergy. Thus, desires for church reform and piety in Italy were similar to those in Germany and therefore intimately related. With that said, it becomes understandable why the keyword “justification by faith” was far more than Pauline theology: it combines the reception of Luther with the heritage or rediscovery of a mystical piety and the criticism of the contemporary clergy. The great success of Antonio Brucioli’s translation of the Bible, which was printed in Venice in 1532, is an outcome of this combination. Reproductions of Holbein’s illustrations were used for the Apocalypse that had already been published in the Basle edition of Luther’s New Testament of 1523.³⁰ However, the Italian Reformation was no mere lay movement even though laymen had a large share. To a greater degree, it was joined by priests, bishops and cardinals. Silvana Seidel Menchi and Andrea del Col have distinguished four phases in the development of the Italian Reformation.³¹ At the very beginning, until the early 1540s,

27 Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 278.

28 The following rough outline is guided by Massimo Firpo’s research whose most recent book is also available in English: Firpo, *Juan de Valdès*.

29 Ambrosini, “I reticolati del dissenso”.

30 http://bibbia.filosofia.sns.it/DescB07.corpus_photo.php.

31 Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 274-280.

there is the phase of preachers that is determined by the formation of a philo-Protestant network; its central medium being the sermon.³² Protestant elements were only audible for initiates as topics like God's mercy, free will or predestination could be approached without any ulterior motives in mind. The doctrine of justification by faith was theologically accepted regardless of Luther. This ambiguity was a strength, yet, at the same time a weakness as one was neither officially heterodox, nor in possession of a "brand identity". The second phase began around 1540, when the disciples of Juan de Valdés intensified the preaching. Apart from the sermon, the distribution and reading of books played an increasing role during the 1540s and 1550s. Those books were not of basically systematical-theological nature but contained rather biblically oriented and practical-theological instructions for Christian spirituality and conduct. Geographically, especially Venice and Lucca stood out as Protestant centers. Temporarily, Venice politically approached the Schmalkaldic League. The central figure of the Italian Reformation was, as already mentioned, the Spaniard Juan de Valdés (1490-1541). He fled from an inquisitorial trial in his home country to Italy in 1531. There, he pursued humanist-theological interests until he died and greatly influenced Italian "dissidents." Valdés stood in the tradition of the Spanish Alumbradismo. This mystic movement firmly believed that God's secrets could not be granted by the authority of the church but only attained through an inner revelation of the Holy Spirit. Alumbrados rejected theological and ecclesiastically-institutional norms as well as the teaching function of the clergy and the possibility of salvation for all mankind. Valdés, however, does not show a pure form of "Alumbradismo", yet a mixture with Erasmian and Lutheran ideas as becomes particularly evident in his "Diálogo de doctrina cristiana", in which he quotes extensively from Luther, Melanchthon, Oecolampad and Erasmus.³³ The church authority was still granted at least an external leading function. And because Valdés' procedure was eclectic and put emphasis on the spiritual experience instead of a certain doctrine, it could not be denigrated as heresy. Thus, it could be well-integrated into the already existing ideas of the Italian Reformation. The "valdesianismo" developed into an influential spiritualistic movement of its own. Justification by faith could be promoted without risking a breakaway from the church, in particular, if the heritage of alumbradismo insofar as it

32 Caravale, *Preaching and Inquisition*.

33 Crews, *Twilight*, 29; Firpo, "The Italian Reformation", 177.

was critical of authorities was not being overemphasized. The most important evidence of valdesianismo was the booklet “Del beneficio di Cristo”, published in Venice in 1543 and translated into most European (and even Asian languages).³⁴ The text was drafted by the Benedictine monk Benedetto Fontanini from Mantua quoting extensively from Calvin’s “Institutions.” It was prepared for printing by Marcantonio Flaminio who was part of Cardinal Reginald Pole’s household. According to the booklet’s quintessence, the possibility to become holy, to cure free will and to defeat sin, exists for every soul and derives from the Cross of Christ. Predestination is considered as a doctrine of universal salvation. Among Valdés’ recipients were church men, among whom the capuchin friar Bernardino Ochino and the Lateran regular canon Peter Martyr Vermigli must be mentioned in the first place; both had argued in favour of justification by faith. Ochino’s sermons were also printed.³⁵ In Venice and Lucca, they had been active in the headquarters of Italy’s supporters of the Reformation. After hopes for an agreement with the Reformatory party had waned in the course of the Regensburg colloquy (1541) and the establishment of the Roman Inquisition (1542), they fled from Italy to Switzerland and then to England where they stayed until Queen Mary ascended to the throne (1553). Nevertheless, Vermigli was to gain influence in the formation of the English church system in the Elizabethan age because of his theological alignment with the doctrine of Royal Supremacy.³⁶

Returning to Rome: among the College of Cardinals was also a party inclined to Reformation, among others, Ercole Gonzaga, Cristoforo Madruzzo (the bishop of Trent), Reginald Pole and Giovanni Morone. Gonzaga, for instance, maintained a library comprising about 8,500 volumes including 140 Protestant books.³⁷ In his residence in Viterbo, Pole gathered a group of people influenced by valdesian ideas to which Giovanni Morone, the prothonotary apostolic Pietro Carnesecchi, the noble women Giulia Gonzaga and Vittoria Colonna, as well as Michelangelo.³⁸ The so-called *ecclesia Viterbiensis* was responsible for the distribution and translation of

34 *Benefit of Christ’s Death*, XIII-XXX. As early as 1544, Ambrogio Catarino Politi published his fundamental criticism of the „Beneficio“: Caravale, *Beyond the Inquisition*, chapter 2.

35 On Ochino see Camaioni, “Non c’è altra vera religione”.

36 Overell, *Italian Reforms*, 41-60, 103-124; Jenkins, “Peter Martyr and the Church of England”.

37 The information was given by Laura Madella in her paper on Ercole Gonzaga during the conference “Luther in Italy” at the Casanatense Library in Rome, 22-24 February 2017.

38 Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna*, 69-71.

Valdés' writings.³⁹ In his diocese Modena, Morone attempted to draft a common creed with the philo-reformatory dissidents.⁴⁰

All of the aforementioned cardinals played a significant role in the Council of Trent – either as bishop of Trent and spokesman for emperor Charles V (Madruzzo) or as papal legates who were in charge of conducting the Council. Significantly, Pole retired from the Council in 1546, officially because he was ill, but possibly because he did not support the decree on justification.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it becomes evident that the reformatory circles in Italian cities were dependent on patronage or complicity with the aristocracy, the patriciate or the high clergy. At this point, I can only hint at the radical reformation that took place within anabaptism. The Italian anabaptist movement developed separately from northern European forms, though, and since 1550 moved from anabaptist ideas towards anti-Trinitarianism.

5. Organizing the Counter-Reformation

The foundation of the Roman Inquisition in 1542 marks a break in the history of the Italian Reformation and the beginning of the third phase mentioned by del Col und Seidel Menchi.⁴² Of course, there had been trials of heresy before. However, they had been carried out in a rather medieval fashion before a nuncio, a bishop or an inquisitor. Regarding the appeals to Rome, the Master of the Sacred Palace could step in and revoke sentences as in the case of the members of the Augustinian Hermits.⁴³ In a certain sense, the establishment of a central inquisition was made possible by the aforementioned “Consilium de emendanda ecclesia”. There, the cardinals in favour of reform met for the first time for a common action. Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa (1476-1559) became the leading figure of the inquisition whose establishment had been authorized by Paul III's bull “Licet ab initio” (21 July 1542).⁴⁴ The Neapolitan Carafa may well be called an intransigent hardliner who used his position in the conclave to keep the philo-Protestant cardinals Pole (1549) and Morone (1555) from being elected as pope: he suspected both car-

39 Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 116-120.

40 Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 94-103.

41 Schmidt, “Repräsentanten des Papstes”.

42 Fundamental research has been done by Brambilla, *Alle origini*.

43 Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 288.

44 Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 316f. betont, dass die Kongregation nicht von vornherein auf Dauer angelegt war.

dinals of heresy based on his own investigations, which not even Pope Julius III was aware of.⁴⁵ In 1555, Carafa, and not Morone, was elected Pope.⁴⁶ He named himself Paul IV and went down in church history as the pope who did not continue the Council of Trent but preferred to rule the church with the inquisition. The fact that the inquisition's buildings and the Dominican convent S. Maria sopra Minerva that housed several bureaus were stormed after his death in 1559 shows how unpopular this inquisitor-pope was. The events of the 1550 thus indicate the enormous tensions and fractions between the parties in Rome, as Massimo Firpo has pointed out: a reform party on the one hand and a counter-reformatory one on the other.⁴⁷

In its early stage, the Roman inquisition was in particular an instrument of effective control and means to discipline the clergy. This was also true for the local inquisitions in the diocesan towns. Protestant sympathies among preachers and the higher clergy were to be wiped out quickly and thoroughly.⁴⁸ Not only Ochino and Vermigli could tell as they were immediately summoned to Rome in 1542. Remarkably, a significant group of bishops, too, was called to account during the 1540s and 1550s. The best known of them are Pier Paolo Vergerio (Capodistria) who like Ochino and Vermigli fled to Switzerland, as well as the bishops Nacchianti (Chioggia) and Soranzo (Bergamo). Under the reign of Paul IV, even Giovanni Morone was accused by the inquisition and sent to the Castel Sant'Angelo before being rehabilitated by the next pope, Pius IV (1559-1565). Shortly before the election of Paul IV, Reginald Pole had gone to England in order to support Mary Tudor's recatholization. Finally, the archbishop of Toledo, Bartolomé Carranza, was put on a lengthy trial in order to expand the inquisition's reach beyond Italy's frontiers. However, these measures remained mere attempts, as the inquisitions established in France (particularly in Avignon) and Germany (Cologne) had no lasting impact. One can only speculate in how far there was an air of repression under the reign of Paul IV, particularly in regions without an institutionalized inquisition (as in Lucca for example).

45 Firpo, *Presa di potere*, 3-51.

46 Similarly, Morone was blocked for a second time by Michele Ghislieri in 1565, who was elected pope and named himself Pius V. See Firpo, *Presa di potere*, 42; Robinson, *Career*, chapter 8.

47 Firpo, "Rethinking 'Catholic Reform' and 'Counter-Reformation'".

48 The archival evidence related to a campaign against "protestant" preachers is missing since the Vatican Archives were transferred to Paris by Napoleon Bonaparte: Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 313-315; Tedeschi, *Prosecution of Heresy*, 3-21.

Regarding the inquisition's structures, one must differentiate between center and periphery. The organization in the individual cities and territories was strongly dependent on the respective political situation. While in some cities inquisitions subsisted until 1542,⁴⁹ they had to be reestablished in most cases. A parallel developed between the bishops and the inquisitors, which led to quarrels over responsibilities. Yet, the inquisitions increasingly emancipated from the bishops. Thus, a more or less dense network of inquisitions that was under Roman command was established all over Italy. Also, the inquisitors were increasingly responsible for the prosecution of religious deviance. In any case, their protocols are the most important source regarding the Italian Reformation.

In the early phase, bishops like Gian Matteo Giberti (Verona) or Giovanni Morone (Modena) could well become actively involved in legislation. For instance, they commanded the priests to monitor the confessions and to denounce those who refused to do sacramental penance. The connection between sacramental penance and inquisitorial practice also becomes evident in Paul IV's regulations for confession. However, those regulations were soon to be modified so that the confession could no longer be exploited for gathering information for inquisitorial proceedings. Anyway, this practice was hardly consistent with the seal of confession. Therefore, the inquisition's search had to be rather based on the testimony of the accused or on self-denunciation, as in the case of the priest Pietro Manolfi. His self-denunciation drew the inquisitors' attention to an entire Anabaptist network in the Republic of Venice.⁵⁰ Regarding the inquisition in Rome, we can detect a process of professionalization and of differentiation of tasks during the 1550s. Originally, the congregation had consisted of the cardinals appointed by the pope and of several consultors, among them the Master of the Sacred Palace and the *Governatore di Roma*. Throughout 1551 and 1553, further offices such as the assessor and the commissioners were added.⁵¹ The latter were authorized to initiate legal proceedings on the spot on the behalf of Rome. Soon, the inquisition charged them with censorship as well.⁵² An earlier example would be the prohibition of Ochino's sermons.⁵³ The probably most famous example

49 Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 289, offers a list of those inquisitions.

50 Del Col, *Inquisizione in Italia*, 338-341.

51 Schwedt, "Die römischen Kongregationen", 96.

52 Frajese, *Nascita dell'Indice*, 58-87.

53 See also Caravale, *Preaching and Inquisition*, 104.

for the early inquisitorial activity is the “Index of forbidden books” from 1559, which is also known as the “Pauline Index.” However, the extremely strict prohibition of this index turned out to be problematic. On the one hand, its compliance could hardly be overseen comprehensively. On the other hand, the index included books that were frequently used for teaching at Jesuit colleges. The Index by Pius IV published after the Council of Trent was far more lenient. Finally, in 1571, Pius V founded an independent congregation for the Index of Forbidden Books. Thus, two congregations were – sometimes competing – in charge of censorship throughout the following centuries. As confirmed again by Sixtus V in 1588, the Inquisition headed the other congregations.

Reformatory circles, no matter how, either integrated themselves into the church or underwent a process of confessionalization, which finally bound them more closely to the Reformation of Geneva. Often, Italian dissidents experienced suppression or emigration, which they had in common with French Huguenots. By the 1570s and 1580s, Protestantism was no longer an issue in Italy. The dissent sought itself different and particularly eclectic forms of expression.

6. Conclusion

The reformatory movements all over Europe challenged the papacy in many different ways. The Fifth Lateran Council had focused the curial theologians’ attention on the conception of papal authority, which Cajetan sees as significantly exceeding the church. Those conceptions were not only fundamental to Cajetan but also had an impact on the Leipzig Debate and its dissemination.⁵⁴ In addition, they were a major pillar for anti-Lutheran controversial theology. At the same time, the council dealt with some questions of reform. However, its resolutions were hardly put into practice, and did not correspond with the requirements and needs articulated north of the Alps.

The Luther-images, which the papal legates conveyed to the Roman curia, contained mainly the topoi of the ignorant, lunatic and stubborn heretic. The first Roman formulation of this Luther-image can be found with Cajetan (1518). Yet, also Pier Paolo Vergerio, who met Luther as a papal legate in Wittenberg in 1535, made use of those topoi. Certainly, a web of personal

⁵⁴ The author is preparing a more detailed study on papalism in the Leipzig Debate, which will be published (2019) in *Luther at Leipzig: Martin Luther, the Leipzig Debate, and the Sixteenth-Century Reformations*, edited by Mickey L. Mattox and others.

impressions, humanists' national stereotypes and descriptions of heretics was woven that cannot easily be differentiated. The positive reception of Luther currently presents itself as amply complex as, unlike north of the Alps, there was no Reformation pillared by politics with a social majority appeal. The Italian Reformation drew from multiple sources: the fundamental approval of the Augustinian doctrine of justification by faith, the demand for a reform of the clergy and pastoral care and thus, a more or less explicit anticlericalism, the reading of reformatory texts from the north, and, with Valdés' appearance, increasingly the theology of mysticism. In the medium term, the Reformation of Geneva became more influential than the Reformation of Wittenberg because of its geographical position. No uniform reformatory movement came into being and the circles that developed did not count too many members. However, they were patronized by influential figures of the nobility, the aristocracy and – most importantly for the Roman perspective, the high clergy. Thus, the Roman Inquisition established in 1542, was not so much directed against the Lutheran or Calvinist Reformation but rather against the reformatory movements in Italy, their multipliers and patrons.

Undoubtedly, the failure of the Regensburg colloquy (1541) marks a turning point in the history of the Italian Reformation, which shows e.g. in the building up of the Roman Inquisition, the increasing polemics against Gasparo Contarini or the fact that Reginald Pole turned to more and more anti-protestant positions in the 1540s and 1550s.

With the council and the inquisition, the curial programme embraced two institutions and methods between 1540 and 1570 that in the end shared the same goal: church reform, disciplining the clergy and the believers, and homogenising of the church. On the one hand, it was all about the suppression of religious movements, on the other hand about the encouragement of reform and the definition of the doctrine.⁵⁵ While the council determined the canon of doctrine and the church discipline, the inquisition was in charge of keeping it uncorrupted by initiating trials against people and books. In this context, the adequate term for designating and characterizing the epoch is being discussed in current research. While American scholars seem to prefer the wide-ranging term “early modern catholicism” which covers any ecclesiastical form of expression from the reform of the 15th century to the

⁵⁵ In this respect, the development in Italy can be described in terms of “confessionalization” according to Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling.

“confessionalized” Roman catholicism of the 17th century, especially Massimo Firpo has put forward severe doubts about its explanatory power. According to him, the counter-reformation was neither a uniform process nor did it form a uniform catholicism. Instead, Firpo emphasizes that counter-reformation in Rome was shaped by eminently differing persons, groups and positions with the Council of Trent and the Inquisition representing different and sometimes conflicting concepts on their parts.⁵⁶

Thus, we can nearly reach the confessional age, a time when doctrine and discipline were dealt with by the inquisition and the Congregation for the interpretation of the Council of Trent. The presence of the Reformation in Italy was practically erased by 1580. The Reformation and Protestantism were increasingly seen as northern phenomena, which no longer had an impact on the church in Italy.

Translation: Corinna Gannon

⁵⁶ Firpo, “Rethinking ‘Catholic Reform’ and ‘Counter-Reformation’”. For a general survey of the discussion see Al Kalak, “The Tridentine Age and the Reformation Age”.

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