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SPECIAL EDITION

In defense of
Monsignor Umberto Benigni

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Cover Illustration: Monsignor Umberto Benigni faithful to the line of Pope Pius X (contemporary painting).

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Editorial

Dear readers of *Sodalitium*, in the last issue of this magazine (No. 73) I announced that I would dedicate a separate book or special edition of the magazine to the “defense of Monsignor Benigni” (something on which I had previously spoken in No. 70-71, especially on pp. 5-6, and then in No. 72 on pp. 52-53). The “book” solution I had already chosen on two occasions: with the publication of “*Cristina Campo or the Ambiguity of Tradition*” (2005) and “*The Shame of Tradition*” (2018). Even on those two occasions, what were to be articles in *Sodalitium* eventually became their own volumes.

This time, I preferred publishing my response to a series of articles against Monsignor Benigni, and against the Integral Catholics who collaborated with Saint Pius X in their struggle against Modernism, in a single-subject issue of *Sodalitium* that could be read by everyone, on our website, in PDF form, or in a paper version via simple request (with a preferred free offering to offset the considerable expense incurred). You will not find within this No. 74 issue, then, the usual columns (like “Istituto Life”) or the many articles by both new and old collaborators of the magazine - they will be published, God willing, in our next issue.

Beyond the occasional reason that would prompt me to take up the pen in defense of Msgr. Benigni, and with him, Saint Pius X, this article is an opportunity to deepen the study, from a historical point of view, of the spread of the Modernist heresy in the Church (and against the Church) under three pontificates: Saint Pius X, Benedict XV and Pius XI. Taken together with a review of the symptoms of the crisis under Leo XIII (*Sodalitium* No. 72, pp 36-43), it can be said we will have given an overall assessment of the Modernist crisis from our Istituto’s point of view.

I realize that not all of our readers will be interested in the topics covered and might be disappointed in this special edition: a little patience and they will receive the next issue where everyone will find a topic more suited to their interests; but I also trust in the fact that for some, the consideration of these pages will be important, most of all for the members of our Istituto.

I therefore entrust this work to the patronage of Saint Pius X and the heavenly patrons of the old *Sodalitium Pianum*: Mary Help of Christians, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Pius V; whom we ask to bless it, and make us worthy heirs of those who preceded us in the same struggle for the triumph of Integral Roman Catholicism against all enemies of the Church - internal and external.

Father Francesco Ricossa

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Thanks to a panoramic history of the Church in the 20th century, this study will assist the reader to better understand the genesis and development, and above all, the persistence of the Modernist heresy, despite the condemnation by Saint Pius X, up to its provisional and tragic triumph at the Council of Vatican II, which brought the Church and souls to the present state of abandonment, dereliction and humiliation seemingly forgotten or underestimated by so many commentators regarding the events of those times.

In Defense of Msgr. Benigni

Father Francesco Ricossa

“Throughout this period no one in the Church, not even Loisy, was detested, execrated, or despised as much as he was. He still is today, abandoned only to God's mercy. Judged without trial, not even by a people's tribunal: but by the assembly of his peers, from which he had separated himself, and which overcame him”

(EMILE POULAT, Catholicisme..., p. 27, year 1977).

“And yet it was under Pius X, on the eve of the First World War, that everything that we had seen run rampant for ten years was played out” (E. POULAT, ibid, p. 481).

Introduction

The article you are about to read (hoping you manage to complete it), and which I had promised to publish in No. 72 of *Sodalitium*, is inspired by two works written by Father Curzio Nitoglia, one of our confreres and ex-collaborators of *Sodalitium*. The first dates back to July 2010, and was published in the “anti-Modernist fortnightly” *Sì Sì No No*; the second, much longer and much more articulated (with 15 episodes) was published on the author's website and taken up by the association “*Inter multiplices una vox*” of Turin and by the publisher Effedieffe. The two works have in common their intention of defending the persons and the work of two Supreme Pontiffs, Benedict XV and Pius XI, as well as their Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri. A praiseworthy intention (at least as regards the doctrine and the person of the two Pontiffs of happy and revered memory), especially when it comes to reacting against anti-Roman and anti-papal ways of thinking, which, unfortunately, is also quite widespread in ‘traditional’ circles. Much less praiseworthy, however, when the defense of the two Popes served as a tool for a persistent attack on those who were called and who called themselves “Integral Catholics” under the pontificate of Saint Pius X in general, and on the figure

of Msgr. Umberto Benigni in particular. Beyond these circumstances that gave occasion to this study, I hope the reader will find it helpful - thanks to an overview of the history of the Church in the 20th century - to better understand the genesis, development and, moreover, the persistence of the Modernist heresy, despite the condemnation by Saint Pius X, up to its provisional and tragic triumph at the Council of Vatican II, which brought the Church and souls to the present state of abandonment, dereliction and humiliation seemingly forgotten or underestimated by so many commentators regarding the events of those times.

Setting aside any easy - and sterile - controversy, I'd like to take inspiration from what has just been referred to in order to deal with some points of controversy concerning the last part of Msgr. Benigni's life and activity. The first part of his life, under the pontificate of Leo XIII, saw a young Benigni very faithful to the line of the Pontiff, who had been his bishop in Perugia: as a priest, as an historian, as a journalist (*Eco d'Italia*, 1893, *Voce della Verità*, 1900) and a Catholic militant in the *Opera dei Congressi* [Work of the Congresses] (vice-president of section II, 1895), as a teacher (from 1901) and member of the Historic-liturgical Commission (1902). The second part of his life, for which he is also best known, sees Msgr. Benigni as Undersecretary of State and, after 1911, working from outside it, very faithful to Saint Pius X and in the front line in the fight against Modernism. The third part of his life, under the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI, sees him rather marginalized by ecclesiastical circles, and poses, on the other hand, the problem of his relationship with Fascism, first a movement (1919-1923) and then a regime (from 1923 to 1933: Msgr. Benigni died in February 1934). We will see how, in the progression of his life at service to the Church and Christ the King, despite inevitable changes in the long course of human existence, Msgr. Benigni was always coherent and faithful, right up to his death. Unable to deal exhaustingly with the last twenty years of Msgr. Benigni's life within the limits of an article, I will limit myself to responding to the criticisms that have been leveled against him, of which I mentioned so far. This is the scope of the present article, and the line that I will follow. I realize, and the reader must also keep in mind, that dealing mainly with these last twenty years of his life, which were his most difficult, and moreover to limit myself to responding to these difficulties, e.g. responding to the accusations leveled against Msgr. Benigni, runs the risk, at least for some readers, of giving a negative impression of his person, of his character, and of his activities. Since Msgr. Benigni can no longer defend himself, as he did in his lifetime⁽¹⁾, our magazine willingly, and with great honor, takes up his defense today (and always); hence the title of our article.

Msgr. Benigni: Sign of contradiction (especially among the ranks of the clergy)

During his lifetime, and even after his death, Msgr. Umberto Benigni (1862-1934), the founder of the *Sodalitium Pianum* and the faithful collaborator of Saint Pius X in his struggle against Modernism, had more enemies than friends. What is most shocking, at first glance, is that among so many of Msgr. Benigni's enemies, many were priests. Emile Poulat, who with his accurate history⁽²⁾, contributed to a deeper and objective understanding of Msgr. Benigni and his work, highlighted this fact by recalling the testimony of Father Jules Saubat at the process for the canonization of Saint Pius X, in speaking of Msgr. Benigni's funeral service: "*What a funeral! A crowd of lay people...7 or 8 senators, from 12 to 15 deputies, and even twelve carabinieri in grand uniform who presented arms. As for*



Msgr. Benigni together with Father Jules Saubat
September 6, 1913 (Archive of Father Betharramiti)

members of the clergy, two priests”⁽³⁾. To his confreres of yesterday and today, and even to certain declared anti-Modernists, Msgr. Benigni could say, as Caesar said to Brutus: “*Tu quoque Brute, fili mi?*”

Msgr. Benigni: Historiography

The embarrassment provoked by the figure of Msgr. Benigni in ecclesiastic circles (who was called Maligni by his Modernist or pro-Modernist enemies) is revealed for example in the anomaly found in the entry dedicated to him in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, col. 1347, printed in Vatican City in 1949: the brief entry of dedication - completely anonymous - was unsigned, instead marked by an anonymous asterisk. Even in those circles that, in a certain sense, might be considered heirs to his work, or contiguous to his world, and even before the beatification of Saint Pius X, it was customary to ignore his figure or to distance oneself from him, just as they generally distanced themselves from what in France more than in Italy today is called, contemptuously, “Integralism”⁽⁴⁾. The historical opinion of Msgr.

Benigni and his work began to change, and in his favor, due to two factors. The first was the pontificate of Pius XII (who knew the Umbrian prelate personally and closely)⁽⁵⁾, especially when the Pontiff became aware of a rebirth of Modernism in the “*nouvelle théologie*” (his encyclical *Humani Generis*, 1950) and his strong desire for the beatification (1951) and canonization (1954) of Saint Pius X. During the processes (1923-1946) for the beatification of Pius X, in fact, some illustrious personages declared themselves contrary to Pope Sarto’s glorification, precisely because he supported Integral Catholics and the *Sodalitium Pianum* of Msgr. Benigni. The principal supporter of this thesis was Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (1852-1934): to whom Benigni was “*the sin of Pius X*”. One could not ignore such an objection by the Secretary of State of two Popes (from 1914 to 1930), whom Father Nitoglia defends, and because of this, Pius XII in 1949 ordered a supplementary investigation and entrusted it to the future Cardinal Ferdinando Antonelli o.f.m.; an investigation known as the famous *Disquisitio*⁽⁶⁾, which in 1950, concluded in favor of Saint Pius X but also, substantially, in favor of his collaborators, and rejected Gasparri’s objection (Father Enrico Rosa, the one-time director of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, who took up the same position as Gasparri, is also taken as a model by Father Nitoglia). The storm that was Vatican II swept away any promising devotion to Saint Pius X; however Emile Poulat (1920-2014), the historian of Modernism (and therefore of anti-Modernism), came to illustrate, completely unexpectedly, the life, thought and work of Msgr. Benigni and his associates. It

came as an undoubted surprise that the most passionate, fair-minded and objective study on Msgr. Benigni and Integral Catholicism would come from a priest (1945) involved with the experiences of worker-priests who had abandoned the priesthood (1955) and who was defined as an “apostle of secularism”, but nevertheless it is an undisputed truth that gives honor to this author. His publication, (Casterman, 1969) containing extensive comments from the documents of the *Sodalitium Pianum* which had been seized from the attorney Joncks during the First World War by the German authorities occupying Belgium, along with the reprinting of the [weekly magazine] “*Corrispondenza Romana*” by Feltrinelli (1971), and finally an intellectual biography of Msgr. Benigni (Casterman, 1977), all raised the figure of Msgr. Benigni and his school of thought from oblivion.

After the death of the Umbrian prelate, there was no lack of objective studies such as that of Emile Poulat and the *Disquisitio*; however there abounded critical if not outright insulting ones, certainly not in quality, but undoubtedly in quantity. In the current climate of philosemitism, Msgr. Benigni is condemned - like Giovanni Preziosi - as a fanatical fascist and antisemite, and even as an enthusiastic subscriber to the manifesto of race and racial laws, which is clearly impossible, if only because the said manifesto dates from July 1938, while our monsignor died, as mentioned, in 1934. Historians in praise of doctrinal and social Modernism (Murrism, Christian Democracy), such as Scoppola or Bedeschi, have attacked Msgr. Benigni as that sinister fundamentalist who, through the work of espionage and the foundation of a secret society, fought against the progress of the Church. More recently, the accredited historian of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Jesuit Father Giovanni Sale, through his documented studies (taken precisely from the vast archive of the *Civiltà Cattolica*), distinguished himself in defamation but not fair-mindedness ⁽⁷⁾, especially since the studies are openly rehabilitative of Modernism. There is nothing surprising in all this: it is normal for the more or less outright Modernists to oppose Msgr. Benigni; what is surprising is Poulat’s objectivity, since he was certainly not an Integral Catholic.

An historiographical turning-point: the opening of the “Benigni Files”

For years, then, Poulat’s studies were a fixed point in the story of Integral Catholicism and, truthfully, are still so today and in my opinion are destined to remain so in the future. In the meantime, however, it is necessary to point out some developments which do not overturn (or better: should not overturn) the findings of the *Disquisitio* and Poulat, but which, being complementary to them, could be a true enrichment. One such is the opening to scholars of two documentary “finds” which contain what remains of our monsignor’s archives, one which was sold to the Vatican Secret Archive (February 1935) by his brother, Federico Benigni, and the other sold by his nephew Pietro Mataloni to the Diplomatic Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (November, 1937). Bishop Sergio Pagano and Margherita Bettini Prospero presented an initial inventory of the two archives, later seized upon by scholars ⁽⁸⁾. While the archive appropriated from the lawyer Joncks opened up invaluable information on the activity of the *Sodalitium Pianum* at the time of Saint Pius X to historians, with particular reference to the region where the Flemish correspondent for the *Sodalitium Pianum* (henceforth we will shorten to SP) operated, the two archives opened to scholars since the 1990s extended our knowledge of Msgr. Benigni to other countries (among them, Italy) and other periods, even after the dissolution of the SP, and they also solved some historiographical problems left unsolved

by Emile Poulat, though still on a hypothetical basis, such as the reason for Msgr. Benigni's expulsion from the Curia in 1911 (while still under Pius X) or the closure of the Integral magazine *Fede e Ragione* in 1929: we will return to these.

“Reductio ad Hitlerum”⁽⁹⁾ and Integral thinking as a paranoid “phobia”

To reduce the person, the thinking, and the work of Msgr. Benigni and of Integral Catholicism (not to mention simple Catholicism) to Fascist antisemitism and (why not?) national-socialism is a (miserable) effort, not surprising in our times: one sees as an example the book by MARIA TERESA PICHETTO: *Alle Radici dell'Odio. Preziosi e Benigni Antisemiti* (1983) [*At the Roots of Hatred. Preziosi and Benigni, Antisemites*]. Of a very different intellectual caliber - but of similar politico-religious purpose - is the work of the “French historian” (as Father Nitoglia calls her) Nina Valbousquet. This young researcher - supported by scholarships - has been responsible for studying Integral Catholicism and Msgr. Benigni in the light of antisemitism since her doctoral thesis: *Les Réseaux transnationaux de l'antisémitisme catholique: France, Italie, 1914-1934. Umberto Benigni et les catholiques intransigeants* [*The Transnational Networks of Catholic Antisemitism: France, Italy, 1914-1934. Umberto Benigni and the Intransigent Catholics*]. This thesis, which she presented before professors Marc Lazar (Political Science, Paris)⁽¹⁰⁾ and Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci (Paris University), was intended to illustrate the passage of intransigent, anti-Modernist and Integral Catholicism from its old models of anti-judaism into a new clerico-fascist antisemitism, whose example, pointedly, was the path taken by Msgr. Benigni and his collaborators in the period between the two wars. After the presentation of her thesis, Valbousquet did not abandon this thematic, specializing on the topic and publishing numerous articles and essays included in other publications⁽¹¹⁾, up to her latest recent volume, from which we will often quote:

Catholique et antisémite : Le réseau de Mgr Benigni – Rome, Europe, Etats-Unis 1918-1934, [*Catholic and antisemitic: Bishop Benigni's Network – Rome, Europe, United States 1918-1934*], CNRS Éditions, Paris, 2019.

To summarize Valbousquet's focus, not only academic but also its practical consequences, I will use the concluding words from her book: “Therefore, another story remains to be written: that of the prolongation of Catholic antisemitism after the Shoah and its reactivation in traditionalist circles opposed to the Second Vatican Council” (p. 290): taking into account the laws in force in our Western countries, the thesis that Catholicism = antisemitism = Shoah = Traditionalist Catholics is something that should worry us all, and most of all Father Nitoglia, who, after having an



The cover of the book by Nina Valbousquet

‘infatuation’ for the Jesuit Father Sale, seems quite intellectually fascinated with this “*French historian*”.

Now, Valbousquet’s work is studious, serious and documented, certainly, but despite this, it is ideologically oriented. Indeed, as I said, the impression is as though she were “created” and destined for a very specific task supported by her brilliant career which, until now, had been dedicated to a specialized and, after all “minor” theme (not for us, of course, but for the general public). Here is the - published - list of scholarships and prizes obtained by the young researcher, even prior to presenting her doctoral thesis:

2014-2015: Scholarship from the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah (Paris)

2015-2016: Fellowship award from the Mobilité Alliance for program and doctoral exchange at Columbia University (New York)

2015: Fellowship award from the Ville de Paris, Research grant on xénophobia and antisemitism

2016-2018: Postdoctoral award from the Center for Jewish History and New York University

Automne 2018: Postdoctoral research grant from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington)

Spring 2019: Research grant for young studies by Fordham University et New York Public Library.

We don’t know if Nina Valbousquet - other than being a French writer - is also an Jewish writer. Certainly, she has been tasked, or been directed, to study anti-Modernism as antisemitic thanks to the constant support (financial, academic, political) of national and international associations tied to Judaism, and to the struggle against antisemitism and xenophobia. As far as “*reductio ad Hitlerum*” [playing the Nazi card] is concerned, for her: Integral or Traditionalist Catholics are at the same time the cause and continuers of the antisemitism that led to the Holocaust, and can be tied, if not to National Socialism, at least to its ally and accomplice: Fascism. And from the psychoanalyst's couch? Integralism (*in primis* Benigni) is the work of “*fanatics animated by a paranoid vision according to which the Hebrew is everywhere*” (p. 13 she quotes M. Marrus), an “*obsession with the infiltration of modernizing and corrupting elements in the Church*”, and a catastrophic and victimizing “*paranoia*” (p.37). “*This persecution complex and paranoia*” increases, becoming “*obsessively insistent*” and “*rancorous*”, with the increase in Msgr. Benigni’s failures (p. 60). Contrary to Bernard Lazare's thesis in which antisemitism is the effect of Jewish attitude itself (and he himself was Jewish), this current dogma postulates that “*antisemitism*” (including Christian anti-Judaism which, in Valbousquet's thesis, she fails to adequately distinguish) should not be given the dignity of an opinion even if it is not shared, but must instead be a mental illness: it can only be groundless, based on “*myths*” (pp. 42, 71-73). It follows then that the author denies to Msgr. Benigni, as a historian, a teacher, or a writer, any scientificity, or at most a “supposed” or “alleged” scientificity. A political (and religious?) opponent can only be “demonized” - and his thoughts reduced to a phobia.

Friendly fire

Nothing should surprise us about all this: it is normal that Modernists, more or less explicitly, or even “militant” historians, oppose Msgr. Benigni; surprising, if anything, as I said, is the objectivity of Poulat, who Valbousquet in her work programmatically attempts to discredit (pp. 16-19). What is striking and rather sad, are the uncharitable criticisms coming from the “anti-Modernist” camp. Our newsletter, as we have recalled many times, owes its name, the *Sodalitium*, to the older *Sodalitium Pianum*, but it was also in response to a series of articles on the pontificate of Saint Pius X authored by Father Didier Bonnetterre, published in *Fideliter*, the magazine of the Society of Saint Pius X; articles containing a fundamental critique of so-called “Integral Catholicism” and Msgr. Benigni’s *Sodalitium Pianum* ⁽¹²⁾.

Following this, in an avowedly “anti-Modernist” periodical, *Sì sì no no* (no. 13, July 2010), an attempt was made to defend Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State for Benedict XV and Pius XI, from various accusations made against him, writing that:

Cardinal Gasparri was not sympathetic to the methods of the Sodalitium Pianum, which, at certain times, after the death of Pius X (1914) became almost exaggerated. Among these “exaggerated” methods must be enumerated:

-Msgr. Benigni’s collaboration with OVRA (the political fascist secret police)

-his re-evaluation of the Risorgimento

-his disparagement of the Company of Jesus as “black international Freemasonry”.

Ten years later, this same author, Father Curzio Nitoglia, clarified and developed his earlier accusations in a series of articles (15, precisely) published on his own website and reprinted on the sites of the publisher *Effedieffe*, and the organization *Inter Multiplices Una vox*. The series began on April 16, 2020 with an article entitled *Monsignor Benigni, Benedict XV, Integral and Moderate Catholics* where the title already speaks to its treatment: Integral Catholics are not moderates, and Integral’s adversaries are neither more nor less accomplices in Modernism, but, pointedly, are “moderate” (and therefore the Integrals “exaggerated”). The fact is, furthermore, that the title “Moderate Catholics”, as far as I know, is Father Nitoglia’s invention - albeit inspired by Valbousquet (p. 15) - up to that time never used by anyone, and this is significant for understanding where the author wants to take the reader. If the title directs the reader down a false track, the *status quaestionis* [core of the problem] ends up being misleading, by falsifying the very question being debated. This method is a simple and well known one: grant to the adversary that you wish to refute opinions that he has never defended nor supported in order to easily triumph over this...imaginary...enemy. Monsignor Benigni, in this case, (who was a private man in the Church) is opposed by two Popes (and as such, Vicars of Christ, whatever Bergoglio says, for whom the term Vicar of Christ would be only a “historical title”) so it is evident that the “clash” was uneven, and what’s more: to yesterday’s Integrals and more importantly those of today (read: us) - a serious judgment is attributed to these two Pontiffs: “Some authors want to see in Benedict XV a liberal Pope in the strict sense, that is, modernizing if not exactly modernist. To determine if such an assertion corresponds to the truth, considering that liberalism is, at a minimum, a grave theological error and Modernism is “the synthesis of all heresies”, it is best to study the relationship that transpired between the Sodalitium Pianum of Monsignor Benigni (1862-1934), Pope Pius X and Pope Benedict XV”. Who these “authors” are, and exactly what they said, is not known

from this first article, so one might set off headlong against an imaginary enemy invented for its own use and consumption, whose only end is to defame real enemies who, however, are careful not to affirm what the author attributes to them ⁽¹³⁾.

Msgr. Benigni and the Integrals on Psychoanalyst's' (or psychologist's) couch

The framework in which Father Nitoglia finds the Church at the time of the death of Pius X is more or less this: outside of it, the Modernists had already been condemned, inside of it were only Catholics of varying sensibilities, integralists and moderates; and as for any hidden Modernists, or their accomplices, there was not even a shadow. Moderates are, by definition, well, moderate. Integralists, instead, may be right in theory, but are excessive in practice: “*Benedict XV moderated some of the perhaps excessive attitudes of Msgr. Benigni*”, indeed, without the “perhaps”, Benigni and his associates themselves were deplored in their “*excesses in the ways of fighting*”, the “*surges*”, and so on. In one Rossinian crescendo, his denunciation of Integralist psychology (which was not the moderate one!) rises in tone in his second article (*The vicissitudes of Integral Catholicism under Benedict XV and Pius XI*): “*an angular personality, perhaps excessively polemical*” where Benigni’s has a “*sharp, perhaps excessively polemical, personality*”, and then without the perhaps, “*among the Integrals, there were excesses*” and if “*some ‘moderate’ Catholics were abused from 1903 to 1914, others considered ‘Integral’ were not less so during the following years*”: all well and good then, admitting injustices against the moderates during the pontificate of Saint Pius X. Both were free from doctrinal errors (“*theological errors are not found in either camp*”), both were excessive in their mutual lack of charity (“*which, however, could lead to error by excess or by defect as to their practical way of operating*”). Let us ask then, for example, if the “moderate” Father Sturzo, who defended non-denominationalism, and the non-moderate Cardinal Boggiani, who condemned him, were the same thing with different sensibilities: or not? Maybe Father Sturzo, or whoever, used moderate tones, while it was Benigni “*who actually had a ‘bad temper’ which made him unlikeable to his confreres*”. And then from Valbousquet (and we know who she is) “*in her very well documented essay*”⁽¹⁴⁾ “*adds that Monsignor Benigni, who was ‘influential with Pius X, would not have hesitated to divulge malevolent voices against Della Chiesa and Gasparri, according to the latter’s retrospective testimony*”. If Valbousquet says so, then it is true (yet instead, it is false), for which Father Nitoglia approves and comments: “*his vehemence cost Benigni the support of Merry del Val and forced his resignation as undersecretary on March 7, 1911, replaced by Monsignor Eugenio Pacelli (ibid). Indeed, Benigni’s sometimes difficult and excessive character, a certain vehemence in polemics and a tendency towards the personal denigration of those who didn’t think like him, led to his clash not only with the ‘moderates’, but also to alienate the sympathies of some ‘traditionalists’ (we will see later the problems he also had with Merry del Val in 1911 and even with De Lai in 1922)*”. We too will see how things really went... His next chapter outlines the entire program, right from the title: “*Benigni against Benedict XV*”. While he was still under Pius X “*there was a certainly harsh, biting and even irreverent zeal in the way Benigni and his close collaborators behaved, wrote, and expressed themselves*”, not to mention afterwards! ⁽¹⁵⁾ “*Frankly, one can’t fail to notice an excessively critical attitude towards all those who deviated, even minimally, from his way of thinking and acting*” writes Father Nitoglia again. But as he gets older...Benigni gets worse: he shows “*a radical pessimism and a sense of frustration that led him*

to become more and more embittered from 1914 until his death (1934) and increased his excessively caustic polemics". And finally, Father Nitoglia reveals whom he meant when he alluded to those people who accused Benedict XV of being a liberal and a modernist: "Valbousquet quotes EMILE POULAT (*Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme. Le mouvement catholique et Mgr Benigni, Tournai, Casterman, 1977, p. 358*) according to which after Pius X, Benigni and the integralists were increasingly convinced not only of modernist and liberal infiltration in Catholic circles, something already determined and denounced by Saint Pius X, but that it had even reached the 'heights of the Church', that is, up to Benedict XV himself and his closest collaborators. Now it is difficult to accuse Benedict XV of modernism or liberalism, even if his way of governing the Church had deviated from the practice followed under Pius X, becoming more moderate, but not, for this, liberal or modernist". If Valbousquet says so! (certainly Poulat who wrote nothing like that on the page cited)... "Therefore, it cannot be denied that after the death of Pius X there was a "Benigni case", characterized by ever increasing **frustration** and rancorous despondency, which led to his excessive and uncharitable criticisms", indeed Benigni's illness was contagious since "one should also not believe that Benigni was a 'loner' in his critical opposition to the more moderate governing orientation of Benedict XV. Many of his collaborators thought just like him. Emile Poulat, followed by Nina Valbousquet, cites the case of Abbé Paul Boulain, who surpassed even Benigni in terms of political ardor (N. VALBOUSQUET, *op. cit.*, p. 453)"; and yet he was supported by Cardinal Boggiani (did he have this illness too?).

"In the last years of Benedict XV's pontificate, Benigni's invectives against the Pope and his entourage amplified. [...]. Benigni would have even rejoiced in the fact that Benedict XV's precarious health could be a good omen for a speedy return to the integral line" (N. VALBOUSQUET, *op. cit.*, p. 454). Later, we will examine what the underlying causes were for these accusations against Benigni and the Integralists. For now I quote Father Nitoglia in his, one might say, psychological analysis of Benigni (and company, or comrades) following Valbousquet (for whom they are - let's not forget - paranoid): his is "a spirit exacerbad and ulcerated" "driven by unsuccess". Thus: the ideas and choices of Msgr. Benigni, and those like him, have none of their own intellectual dignity, but, in large part, are the result of their disordered passions, if not a sort of interior imbalance ⁽¹⁶⁾ .

The psychoanalytic interpretation of the "Integralists" brought out by Valbousquet ⁽¹⁷⁾ and Father Nitoglia is, at the very least, a psychoanalytic interpretation, not a new innovation. Emile Poulat, in tracing the history of the term "Integralism" in 1969, recalls that this term was raised by Cardinal Suhard in his pastoral letter "*Essor ou déclin de l'Eglise?*" to indicate "the inverse error of modernism". Since then, writes Poulat, "literature has appropriated it: history, psychology, even psychoanalysis has been made of it. An undeniable anal-sadistic component." Thus the neo-modernist priest Marc Oraison in the magazine *La Vie spirituelle* (!): "the affective reaction of a neurotic nature... An undeniable anal-sadistic component... An element of true masochistic voluptuousness...". ⁽¹⁸⁾ These words which, if they actually tell us nothing about Integral Catholics, are perhaps revelations of the mind and psyche of its author, Marc Oraison.

Part One: Saint Pius X and the Integral Catholics

I won't delve too much into this topic, not only because it was amply treated by the *Disquisitio* on the occasion of the canonization of Pope Sarto, but also because there seemed to be, and there is, evident harmony among Msgr. Benigni, integral Catholics and Saint Pope Pius X, without prejudice to the obvious differences in their persons and roles (a Pope, a Secretary of State, a member of the Curia - Msgr. Benigni until 1911 - and a private person - as he was from 1911 to 1914, all playing different roles with different competences and obligations. I will limit myself to treating a few themes, partly raised by Father Nitoglia.

1911: Msgr. Benigni leaves the Secretariat of State. Did Cardinal Merry del Val (and Saint Pius X) lose faith in Msgr. Benigni?

“His vehemence cost Benigni the support of Merry del Val and forced him to resign as undersecretary on 7 March 1911, replaced by Monsignor Eugenio Pacelli (ibid). In fact, Benigni's character, at times difficult and excessive, as well as a certain vehemence for controversy, and a tendency towards the personal denigration of those who did not share his way of thinking, led him to clash not only with the 'moderates', but also to alienate the sympathies of some 'traditionalists' (we will see later on the problems he also had with Merry del Val in 1911 and even with De Lai in 1922)”. I earlier alluded to this quotation from Valbousquet-Father Nitoglia. Returning to this theme in an obsessive way, Father Nitoglia writes, for example, in his ninth article: *“Even Cardinal Merry del Val, Pius X's Secretary of State and protector of the Integral movement, was convinced that he had to somewhat relax the climate that had arisen in the Church due to the objectively excessive ways of some personalities in the anti-modernist struggle (Y. CHIRON, op. cit., p. 283) and had Msgr. Benigni removed from the Secretariat of State in 1911”* (...) *“already in 1911 under Pius X, Cardinal Merry had Msgr. Benigni removed from the Vatican Secretariat of State”* (...) *“Now once again Cardinal Merry del Val in 1911 had to intervene to stop these abuses of power of the S.P.”*; and again, *“Valbousquet explains, therefore, that Monsignor Benigni was ‘a member of the Curia of Pius X until 1911 [i.e. only for 3 years, ed.] (actually 5 years, ed. Father Ricossa), when his progressive marginalization began’ (op. cit., p. 160), “which, as we will see later, was requested, not by the modernizers, but in the midst of the pontificate of Pope Sarto, by the ‘Integralist’ Cardinal Raffaele Merry del Val, Pius X's faithful Secretary of State, who in 1911 disapproved of the methods of the Monsignor from Perugia and requested his removal from the Curia”*: we could go on, but to what end? To continuously repeat a meaningless concept in order to render it true...

Father Nitoglia's problem is that he believes Valbousquet (or Yves Chiron) without exactly knowing the sources. Even in 1911, when Msgr. Benigni was named Apostolic Protonotary, and with it the simultaneous abandonment of his post as Undersecretary of State, it made for much talk and discussion. Was this the proverbial *promoveatur ut amoveatur* [promote him so as to remove him]? According to the *Correspondance de Rome* (and therefore, Benigni) he himself had requested for over a year to be removed from that post...for reasons of health: a half-truth, as we shall see. On the other hand, the versions given by both friends and enemies of Msgr. Benigni were opposed to each other, and



Pope Saint Pius X

so it remained a puzzle for Emile Poulat as well, who dedicated an entire chapter to it in his biography of Msgr. Benigni, *“Catholicisme, Démocratie et Socialisme: le mouvement catholique et Mgr Benigni de la naissance du socialisme à la victoire du Fascisme”* (1977) (chapitre X. *Un complexe de trahison. L’énigme du 7 mars 1911*). Based on the documentation then available to historians, Poulat could only admit to hypotheses.⁽¹⁹⁾ But Father Nitoglia, and with him Valbousquet, seems to ignore what was found in the Secret Vatican Archives by Bishop Sergio Pagano after the opening of the “Benigni Files”. That which was once hidden, now is clear, very clear, both regarding the origins of the *Sodalitium Pianum*, and the events surrounding 1911. Pagano, a declared pro-Modernist, wrote: *“Until now, in absence of the documentation, it had remained vague: everyone thus read his 1911 promotion as being Benigni’s dismissal, as decided from on high. New documents can now shed a bit more light, even if in truth the Curial scenario that emerges from them is even more ambiguous and unscrupulous than*

previously thought.” Leaving to Bishop Pagano his own thoughts on the unscrupulous behavior of the Curia of Saint Pius X, let’s now look at the principal document that clarifies the entire affair: *“A long letter by Msgr. Benigni dated June 21, 1910 to Cardinal Secretary of State, Merry del Val, his superior, is able to clarify some circumstances that certainly were destined to remain hidden. Here is the text:*

*Most Eminent Prince, I make a heartfelt appeal to Your Excellency’s well-known goodness to deign to take kind attention and answer my prayer. (...) Now that I am in the fifth year of my under-secretariat, accordingly I think it is appropriate to draw the practical consequences of the experience gained. My official assignment, while it never made me do much, today is reduced to almost zero, not by anyone’s will, but by the natural evolution of things. Instead, my official task in the ‘information service’ has been increasing in work imperceptibly, but continuously, so that today it is materially worth the work of an entire office. At the same time, from this spontaneous antithesis, arose the fact that I, who in the early years was very punctual at office hours, today have made it my duty to no longer be so, knowing that, nine times out of ten, I would have nothing to do in office as under-secretary, while my other work is pressing”. So, Msgr. Benigni had an official position in the Curia (which would have paved the way for him to become a Cardinal), and an unofficial position, known to the Secretary of State: that of the information services. Let’s continue reading, and we will discover the description of the *Sodalitium Pianum*, or what it would become: *“If your Venerable Excellence would like to know briefly at what stage the ‘information services’ staff is, I will offer in a few words (excepting of course to give to Your Excellency verbally the last details that you wanted to know) what it includes: a) the daily service of the correspondents, especially of the liberal press (newspapers and agencies) to put ‘injections’ in their papers b) the ‘Correspondance de Rome’ [his**

newspaper] c) a weekly correspondence in which I summarize and discuss the events affecting Rome, correspondence that I pass *brevi manu* [by hand] to various trusted correspondents of foreign newspapers and which they send off as their own. Such correspondence is printed in Spanish (Barcelona), French (Ghent), German (Salsburg) and Polish (Częstochowa). It is “picked up” by other newspapers: for instance I noticed that the *El Pueblo* in Buenos Aires steals from the Barcelona newspaper. Equally, the Polish newspapers of Europe and America pick up the Polish correspondence. Thus, the weekly correspondence (sometimes even bi-weekly) runs around a good part of the world without suspecting its source d) the secret information and password service. It is already organized in Rome, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, with a supplementary service in Germany, Austria, Spain, the United States and Canada, as well as my own, I would say unorganized, relationships that serve elsewhere, as in the Balkans. The service is organized simply: every ‘group-leader’ with his friends make up a ‘line’, and they only know him, regardless of who is at the center. Not even the leaders know who the other leaders are: everyone deals directly with me. In this way there is no fear that by undoing one link in the net, the others would be compromised; each net is a hub unto itself. Of course the service is performed with due caution: cipher, jargon, changing postal addresses, different handwriting, etc. The service works like this: every team-leader sends me news that I collect directly, or through his line. I directly communicate with any team-leader by letter on a case-by-case basis and through ‘Geneva letters’ for information and common directions. These are letters stamped from Geneva by which I communicate with all the team-leaders: 1) news given to me by other team-leaders or received by me directly, or that might serve the team-leaders as a personal rule, or as an occasion to complete or rectify information, etc. 2) passwords so as to deny anti-Roman calumnies, to confidentially indicate what needs to be said or kept silent, done or omitted in such case as being in the interest of the Holy See of the Church. Thus, the team-leader works and makes people work in the Roman sense, each on his behalf, here and there, without their being able to see a central code word. This service being in its early stages, it lacks many links in its international network, but by now the network is woven and it is enough to widen it, nor does a month go by without having at least one more link”.

After the description of the ‘information services’ (not, therefore, a secret society as his enemies portray it, including Cardinal Gasparri, but rather a secret service, which is quite another thing) we continue the letter to discover its origins: “Here then, Most Eminent Prince, in the briefest of lines, is the ‘information services’ born on that September 1906 in which at my first proposing it to your excellency, was deigned to answer, let us try it.” From this we see that the proposal made by our Monsignor was welcomed by Cardinal Merry del Val (and certainly by Saint Pius X, adds Bishop Pagano) in September 1906, and therefore on the occasion of Begnini’s being named the Undersecretary of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. Gasparri thought that it was him who granted the Under Secretary of State position to Benigni and later regretted it, but he knew nothing of the reason why Merry del Val and Benigni had agreed on the appointment. And now we get to his decision for his leaving the Roman Curia: was it Cardinal Merry del Val who forced him to resign, as Father Nitoglia-Valbousquet claims? Let’s continue reading this extraordinary letter: “It is still immensely little compared to the immense more that would be needed: but it is something and it is worth dedicating oneself to increasing it. Having said that, to bore your most holy eminence as little, I hasten to present to you my humble request: **that your most holy eminence deigns to obtain from the Holy Father permission to leave my post of Under-Secretary under the following conditions...**” So this is how Merry

del Val imposed his dismissal upon Benigni! It was Benigni who asked the Pope and the Cardinal to leave his position! Not in disgrace! Not as punishment! Let's look at the conditions: "*which by assuring a suitable settlement, will materially and morally facilitate my work: that by **leaving the aforesaid post I have a decent title, which prevents me from seriously and honestly being suspected of being removed in disgrace...***" And that is exactly what happened in 1911, as Msgr. Benigni was promoted to a participant to the Apostolic Protonotary! The letter continues with the hope of being able to attend to the Secretariat of State even later, of dealing with Benigni's economic condition, and ends "*in the confidence of obtaining the most signal grace*". In his commentary on this "foundational document", Bishop Pagano points out how "*his assumption to the high post of Under Secretary of State (practically fifth in the internal hierarchy) was to some extent dictated by projects that both the prelate, as well as the Cardinal Secretary of State, and perhaps the Pontiff himself, had secretly discussed, the implementation of which would have been 'covered' by the official appointment, perfectly functional, moreover, to the purposes of unofficial designs*". If Cardinal Gasparri was unaware of it, and limited himself to disapproving the subsidies to Benigni's *Correspondenza Romana*, created by Pius X, this "*demonstrates how (Benigni) managed to completely conceal his intentions and movements, and could hide, even to his protectors, his real personal aspirations and projects.*" That which was "*the point of departure for the Sodalitium Pianum*" is described in another document of the Benigni Files as a "*Stable and active understanding of the elements scattered throughout the world devoted to the cause of the Integral Order, thus, in fact, to Roman Catholicism and the Integral's Counter-Revolution. By Integral Roman Catholicism is meant Roman Catholicism in its full application and efficiency to public and private life, of individuals and of the community, always, everywhere, at any cost...*". In the struggle against Modernism, "*which is the betrayer of the Church, and against Liberalism, doctrinal and practical, which is an accomplice in the Revolution*" was constituted a "*free and fraternal understanding of the friends of the Integral Order...*" "The foundations had been laid" - comments Pagano - "*for an organism that seemed to function, and was considered with benevolence (if we wouldn't say supported) by Vatican leadership, which lacked however the explicit approval of the pontiff. To obtain it, it was necessary that the arrangement take on a more religious role and make some ecclesial purpose appear, at least externally. Benigni skillfully guided this delicate phase of the transition: in 1909, as it seems, the association of 'friends', up to that point, anonymously, was set up as the Sodalitium Pianum, or 'The Society of Saint Pius V' (...).*" Sodalitium was no bluff: and Pagano, grinding his teeth, then lists the principal malefactions (from his point of view): "*Among the 'merit worthy work' that the new association could boast the first year of its foundation under the eyes of Pius X was certainly that of the denunciation and espionage surrounding Antonino De Stefano of Geneva through Pietro Perciballi (...)* To Sodalitium certainly belongs the campaign of accusation against Father Anizan, the Superior General of Saint Vincent de Paul, accused of social Modernism and dismissed after an Apostolic visitation by Father Saubat, Secretary of the Diet of the same Sodalitium Pianum. Also organized by Benigni was the surveillance of the movements of Father Giovanni Semeria and the denouncement of his Modernist ideas by the Pontiff. Certainly it was the intervention of Sodalitium in the well-known 'Sillon' affair, the movements of Marc Sangnier who was condemned August of 1910, just as in the case of the Action Française, of Charles Maurras, targeted by Pius X. The immoral practices (sic) of this Intergalist organization allowed for yet another example, of secretly obtaining a letter written by Luigi Piastrelli to Father Federici on July 11, 1909; the text came

to be copied by oratorian Arturo Colletti (an associate of Sodalitium) and sent to Benigni who at the time forwarded it to the Pontiff. The press campaign against Cardinal Maffi of Pisa and Cardinal Ferrari of Milan is certainly favored to be Benigni's, if not coordinated by himself, because it was he that furnished news and controversial polemics to 'La Riscossa' of Breganze and to the 'Unità Cattolica' of Florence who created those disgraceful cases (sic). This is to limit ourselves only to some aspects, among the best known, of the daily struggle carried out by the Sodalitium Pianum, and personally by Benigni, to whom neither Pius X nor his Cardinal Secretary of State can be considered extraneous. Too many elements now lead to the assumption of a mutual understanding between the pope and the Umbrian prelate, whose organization (Benigni's unofficial work) was able to offer the Vatican leadership timely and detailed information on people, facts, circles, ideas, trends and initiatives. It constitutes a serious historical problem (...) the use that the Pope and the Vatican Dicastery made of this information, and of the trust with which they solicited and received it. (...)."



Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val

The "excesses" that Father Nitoglia attributes to Msgr. Benigni while under Saint Pius X were, then, "excesses" of Saint Pius X himself; not surprising then that Cardinal Gasparri, Father Rosa and, so it seems, the same Bishop Pagano (who was critical of the *Disquisitio*) denied his sanctity. It is true that - when, in fact, Msgr. Benigni left the Secretariat of State - the relationship with Cardinal Merry del Val had become not as good, and even Pagano mentions it; and we will speak to that again. However, the same Pagano notes that Pius X continued to avail himself of the services of the S.P.: "clear proof of this is the letter that Pius X addressed to the members of the same Sodalitium on July 5, 1911, just four months after Benigni's departure from the Vatican, and with such words as to leave no doubt as to the constant papal attention given to that initiative: 'Dilectos filios socios Sodalitii Piani in Domino exhortamur ut bene inceptum opus pergant, certantes bonum certamen fidei, praesertim contra multiformis modernismi errors et versutias; eisdem fausta quaeque a Domino adprecantes Apostolicam benedictionem permanentem impertimus'. [We exhort the beloved children of the Sodalitium Pianum to continue their well-begun work in the Lord, ensuring the good struggle of faith, especially against the many errors and confusions of modernism; To these auspicious things them we continuously impart Our Apostolic blessing]. The long-awaited pontifical recognition that Benigni wanted for his organization had finally arrived, clear and significant: no one could now doubt (not even the bishops or cardinals) that the opus conceived and organized in the shadows by the powerful monsignor was, in the pope's opinion, 'bene inceptum'; just as no one could ignore that the apostolic blessing descended not only upon the noble ideals of the Sodalitium, but also upon its action, upon the mesh and network of which Pius X

was aware, an unfortunate necessity perhaps at other times but not in this fatal one of the 'Modernist beast', ensuring that the struggle in a true and proper war was dealt with" 'certantes bonum certamen'. More than a simple "greeting card ad personam" as Father Nitoglia called it (in his part nine).

That the Pope (Pius X) did not withdraw his support to Msgr. Benigni and the Sodalitium Pianum even after March 1911, confirms the attitudes of some important prelates who, later, became most important. Msgr. Benigni, in fact, enjoyed not only the support of the powerful "Secretariat" of Pius X (Archbishop Bressan, Msgr. Pescini, etc) by which the Pontiff was often able to get around the Roman Curia ⁽²⁰⁾: "*among the Vatican prelates of whom Benigni enjoyed friendship and confidence (difficult to say up to what point these were colloquial confidences or truly confidential information), especially after his 'abandonment' of the Secretariat of State, and to which he was sending documents and opinions on burning issues on ecclesial politics, there figured two Cardinals, Gaetano Cicognani and Monsignor Eugenio Pacelli...*" (p. 249). As proof of this, Pagano published various of his documents, from 5 to 9 (p. 259: "*Informatori di Mons. Benigni in Vaticano*"): Benigni was informed by Cicognani in 1915 (already under Benedict XV); and by Pacelli especially in 1912, after the pseudo-fall in disgrace of our prelate, whom Pacelli called "*Most dear and most venerated*". Msgr. Pacelli, on behalf of Cardinal Merry del Val, communicated a reserved letter to Msgr. Benigni, asking (of him!) what response was needed (June 8, 1912); he asked for information on a foreign prelate (March 15, 1912); and he wrote on German matters using a code name for the Cardinal of Cologne (August 7, 1912).

After 1911, then, Msgr. Benigni did not fall in disgrace, he was not disavowed by Pius X; he simply changed his role, releasing himself - and only in part, as we shall see - from the Secretariat of State (Merry del Val) to the S.P., and entrusting himself to the Consistory (De Lai), always by order of and at service to the Pope (Pius X).

Appendix: Msgr. Benigni criticizes two Cardinal friends. The psychology of an unrepresentable

We conclude this initial examination of Msgr. Benigni (and of the Integrals) during the friendly pontificate of Saint Pius X, by offering a clarification of what was said about the relationship between Benigni on the one hand, and the two Cardinals most favorable to him at that time: Merry del Val and De Lai. This clarification will take us to the threshold of pontificate of Pius XI, relating to Cardinal De Lai. Father Nitoglia finds real proof of the "excesses" of Msgr. Benigni in the criticisms that the Umbrian prelate addressed, not only to modernists and modernizers, but in fact even of two such champions of anti-modernism as the Secretary of State for Pius X, Cardinal Merry del Val, and Consistorial Prefect Cardinal De Lai. Let's listen to Father Nitoglia: "*Meanwhile, with the new pontificate of Benedict XV, Cardinal De Lai and Cardinal Merry del Val had lost their great influence in the Roman Curia. Unfortunately, Monsignor Benigni, going too far and a bit resentfully, also took it out on De Lai, who according to him in the Conclave of 1922 'in order to keep his job, had showed himself to be yielding'* (ASV, Benigni Files, 59, f. 71)" (First part). "*Benigni, after the death of Pope Sarto, saw himself 'betrayed' by almost all those who had protected him. In 1922 he even went so far as to take it out on Cardinal De lai, who had always been his friend and protector, even under the pontificate of Benedict XV, about whom he wrote bitterly: "Gaetano De Lai: under Pius X, very combative in the anti-Modernist struggle, then yielding to preserve his post. Lacking foundation,*

impressionable, violent, mutable, very ambitious to the point of intrigue..." (ASV, Fondo Benigni, b. 59, Benigni's letter to his French collaborators in February, 1922). Now, if it can be admitted that after 1914 Benigni was opposed by some more moderate-minded prelates regarding the way to govern the Church, it is difficult to follow him in his accusations against Merry del Val (since 1911) and De Lai (1922). It cannot, therefore, be denied that after the death of Pius X, there was a "Benigni case", characterized by an ever greater frustration and a rancorous depression which led him to excessive and uncharitable criticism, but this does not permit us to completely condemn the work of the S.P., the anti-Modernist struggle or Monsignor Benigni's academic production.

Nor does one need to believe that Benigni was "isolated" in his critical opposition to Benedict XV's more moderate governing orientation. Many of his collaborators thought like him. Emile Poulat, followed by Nina Valbousquet, cite the case of the Abbé Paul Boulin, who surpassed even Benigni in terms of polemic ardor (N. VALBOUSQUET, *op. cit.* p. 453). Even Cardinal Pio Boggiani, fiery anti-Modernist and enemy of the Partito Popolare, supported Benigni during the pontificate of Benedict XV (*ibid.*).

Regarding the relationship between Msgr. Benigni and Cardinal Merry del Val (especially during the pontificate of Pius X), we have already discussed Msgr. Benigni's estrangement from the Secretariat of State in 1911 which, for Father Nitoglia, was proof of Merry del Val's (and Saint Pius X's) negative judgment of Msgr. Benigni even from that early date, while instead we demonstrated that this conclusion is completely unfounded. It is true that there were differing evaluations between Pius X's Secretary of State and Msgr. Benigni, who considered Merry del Val too shy and fearful (*La Peur*, the Fear) as in the case of the Beilis trial (in this case he was fearful of the London Jewish community)⁽²¹⁾; or in German matters (of which we've already spoken). Emile Poulat examines in depth⁽²²⁾ the convergences and divergences of the two men: "*It is not in the evaluation of the events, but in the conduct of affairs that they opposed each other, and strongly.*" But Poulat did not date these difficulties in 1911 (when Benigni left the Secretariat of State) but rather 1912 (when Benigni wanted to close the *Correspondance de Rome*, and will postpone this decision until January of 1913 at the request of Merry del Val and Pius X himself). Merry del Val, also a diplomat of the Rampolla school, of an English family, close to the Jesuits, wasn't decisive enough, according to Benigni, in applying the policies of Saint Pius X. The benevolent judgment that Benigni brought to the Anglo-Spanish Cardinal in the coming conclave of 1922, (as opposed to his judgements on De Lai), demonstrates that his basic opinion seemed not to have changed very much, given that the collaboration and understanding between the two continued: [Benigni writes:] "*Hypothetically, a papal candidacy in his case would mean the elevation of a foreign Pope. He might resume the*

The "secretariat" of Pope Saint Pius X



policies of Pius X, but with much attenuation.” In these few words we can summarize all the consonant (“*He might resume the politics of Pius X*”) and the dissonant (“*but with much attenuation*”) between Merry and Benigni. With regard to Cardinal De Lai, the much more severe opinion he expressed, again within the framework of the usual list of electors for the next conclave, is undoubtedly an expression of the disappointment in the Venetian Cardinal, on whom Msgr. Benigni had relied more than anyone after the close of pontificate of Pius X and during the beginning of Benedict XV’s. In the judgment he made in view of the upcoming 1922 conclave (he referred to it only to a few of his correspondents, and not publicly) Benigni praised De Lai’s activity under Pius X: “*under Pius X, very reactionary in the anti-Modernist struggle*”. Following that came the criticism: “*then, yielding to preserve his post*”; is that so surprising for a man in the Curia? Benigni continues with his judgment of the character and personality of the next Papal elector: “*lacking foundation, impressionable, violent, changeable*” as Father Nitoglia wrote. Benigni wrote in French: “*peu de fond*” [lacking foundation]: and actually De Lai’s cultural preparation was not exceptional: of Cardinal Billot, rather, he will write: “*great theologian*”. “*Impressionable, violent, changeable*” are character traits; and he will say similar things about his friend, Billot: “*very nervous and impressionable*”. Was that a fitting judgment? It is not up to me to say; I can neither affirm it nor deny it: Father Nitoglia himself wrote (on Benigni): “*No one is without blemish!*” and yet he takes liberty in judging him severely. Benigni concluded: “*little esteemed as a man of governance, very hard working, very ambitious to the point of intrigue. Not papal material*”; Of these four judgments, Father Nitoglia quotes only one (“*very ambitious*”) without even pointing out to the reader that he had omitted the others (among them a praise: “*very hard working*”) ⁽²³⁾. A number of other criticisms were waged at Cardinal De Lai by faithful who were close to Padre Pio (Brunatto), as well as traditionalists (Pagnossin) due to his friendship with Archbishop Gagliardi, Bishop of Manfredonia, an early persecutor of Padre Pio (which does not demonstrate that the Venetian Cardinal, whom we esteem and venerate, was aware of the shortcomings of the Prelate of Manfredonia).

Thus Father Nitoglia himself admits that Msgr. Benigni, even then, was not isolated from the Sacred College: and he mentions the case of Cardinal Boggiani. Was he rancorous and pharisaical as well? We’d like to know. But since we seem to have left doctrine to return to psychology, I would like to continue with some observations on Msgr. Benigni. Emile Poulat studies it carefully in his intellectual biography of Benigni (e.g. pp. 25-55 and 469-479, at the beginning and at the end of his account). That man whom Gramsci judged “*of great theological and practical capacity and incredible activity*” (p. 44) is nevertheless one of those people about whom “*anyone believes himself authorized to say anything*” (p. 42). The memory that Buonaiuti, one of his students, had of Msgr. Benigni is well known: of how he [Buonaiuti] was an idealist and Benigni, dry, and cynical to the point of comparing human history to a vomitous retching. And wasn’t that his motto: *nec spe nec metu?* ⁽²⁴⁾ [neither hope, nor fear]. Msgr. Benigni’s enemies accused him of careerism and unbelief: but what kind of careerism is that where an important member of the Secretariat of State destined to become a Cardinal, himself asks to be dismissed from his office? And whatever kind of careerism is that of someone who, faithful to the purposes of Pius X, remains so even when this purpose was abandoned? An unbeliever? No, says Poulat but “*anti-anthropological*”. He believed in God, but, contrary to Paul VI who embraced the “cult of man”, Msgr. Benigni did not believe in man. In his “*Holy History without a Halo*” (Poulat’s title for Chapter VII), he writes that Benigni does not cede concessions to anyone, or almost so, and his

confidences (see the correspondence with his friend Faloci-Pulignani) show us that he made no concessions even to himself. In an environment where hypocrisy is often a must (false humility, false charity), Msgr. Benigni spoke clearly, and said what he thought. A defect at times, which, nevertheless, is the other side of great virtue.

Sodalitium and its hurdles. Bishops and Episcopalism

However the fact remains, that, as mentioned, the relationship between Cardinal Merry del Val and Msgr. Benigni became strained, even if later their good relationship returned. Msgr. Benigni even had suspicions about the Cardinal's sudden death during a trivial surgical operation, that it may have actually been a case of murder ⁽²⁵⁾. On March 6, 1912, Cardinal Merry del Val, for example, defended Msgr. Benigni to the German Nuncio against the usual, atrocious slanders ⁽²⁶⁾. Msgr. Benigni called Merry del Val "La Peur" (The Fear), as the Secretary of State had to take into account all of the pressures that were put on him by the States (for example, by Briand's France, or by Germany after the encyclical on Saint Charles [Borromeo]), by lobbies (such as the Jewish one on the occasion of the Beilis case - a trial for ritual murder) and, above all, by bishops. The canonization process for Pius X (in particular the celebrated *Disquisitio*), reveals correspondence between Pius X and Cardinal Ferrari, Archbishop of Milan (for whom John XXIII will introduce a cause for beatification, which will be concluded by John Paul II, in order to "de-throne" Pius X). From this correspondence there clearly appears a certain deafness by the Ambrosian Cardinal to the words of Pius X, as well as the seriousness of the clash between the two, specifically on the question of Modernism. It is no wonder that Pius X said to Archbishop Archi, Bishop of Como (one of his most faithful), these bitter words: "*De gentibus non est vir mecum*" (among the nations, there is not a man with me) to express his solitude (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 100-101). In his last speech to the consistory, the Pope expressed his anguish with these significant (and prophetic) words: "*Oh! How many sailors, how many pilots, and, God forbid, how many captains, becoming acquainted with the profane news and the lying science of their time, instead of arriving at port, have been shipwrecked! Amid so many dangers, in every contingency, I have not failed to make my voice heard, to call back the errant, to make them aware of the dangers, and to trace out for Catholics the way to follow. But not always, nor by everyone, were my words well understood and interpreted, although clear and precise. Indeed, not a few, following the fatal examples of their adversaries, who spread discord in our Lord's camp to bring confusion and disorder, ventured to give it arbitrary interpretations, attributing to it a significance which, in fact, was contrary to that intended by the Pope and considering prudent silence as a sanction.*"⁽²⁷⁾" [Again from Poulat]: "*the discourse that the Holy Pontiff addressed to the new Cardinals was explicitly and declaredly favorable to the so-called 'Integral Catholics', as Msgr. Benigni wrote to members of the Sodalitium Pianum the following May 29. Pius X himself met with the historian Von Pastor, receiving him in a private audience on May 30: 'I have spoken clearly, taking the side of the Integrals, I explicitly emphasized my faith in the Integrals. The following day, Von Pastor noted in his diary: 'The allocution of the 27th of May is a clear warning to all bishops who have spoken out against the Integralist trend. There is no doubt the pain that they caused the Holy Father, and the damage that will result to the Catholic cause. The address is also an energetic demonstration in favor of the Integral and intransigent press'.*"

Saint Pius X - far from believing that Modernism had disappeared and been vanquished - saw the menace growing, not only among simple sailors or pilots, but among those very captains of the ecclesiastic ship. A Modernism which, having abandoned for the moment the too dangerous dogmatic questions, became social modernism, defending the non-denominationalism of parties, trade unions, and associations⁽²⁸⁾”.

It is only by not understanding this point, as simple as it is important, that Father Nitoglia can write (in his ninth part), commenting and criticizing the S.P. in the implementation of its programme:

“Having made this premise, to distance myself from the Modernists as well as from the Neo-Pharisees, I will go on to expose the points that leave me perplexed as to the discrepancy between saying and doing, between the programme and the action of the S.P. (...).

4th point) We venerate and follow bishops, placed by the Holy Spirit to direct the Church.

Now, often, even under the pontificate of Pius X, Monsignor Benigni entered into conflicts with many bishops, not to mention the disputes that occurred with them during the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI, and who he also considered to be ‘Liberal popes.’”

Setting aside the seriousness of the “Neo-Pharisee” label attributed to the Integral Catholics, I cannot understand how one could possibly fail to grasp the difference between the (duly recognized) **principle** of the hierarchical role of a bishop, and the **fact** (especially in times of crisis) of a bishop who fails in his role, more or less gravely, by protecting Modernists and closing his eyes to the spread of Modernism in his diocese. During the Protestant crisis, many bishops and even Cardinals were tried as heretics under the Pontificates of Paul IV and Saint Pius V (rather than exonerated as under Julius III and Pius IV); in the face of the Modernist crisis, the means available to Saint Pius X - unfortunately - were no longer the same as those of Paul IV and Saint Pius V: the *Sodalitium Pianum*, as we have seen, having been given the mandate of Pius X and Merry del Val, could act only in secret, and not in the open; within certain limits and not freely, without the Secretariat of State feeling the duty not to publicly sacrifice those whom it supported from behind the scenes. Once again returning to the question of Benigni’s estrangement from the Secretariat of State, Father Nitoglia, for example, writes (in Part six):

“Guido Aureli (op.cit., p. 187) goes on to narrate the events that removed Monsignor Benigni from the Secretariat of State in 1911, attributing it to a maneuver conducted by the German bishops (according to him, almost all were modernists) against Pope Pius X’s Encyclical on Saint Charles Borromeo (Editæ Sæpe, May 26, 1910), on the occasion of the third centenary of his canonization, which provoked bitter polemics, especially in Germany, for the criticisms he leveled at the ringleaders of German Protestantism, defined by Saint Pius X as ‘false reformers and enemies of the Cross of Christ, men dedicated to passions and vices’, to which the Pontiff contrasted Saint Charles as a true reformer and a friend of the Cross of Christ. Now, being that “the most ferocious opponent of German modernism” (op.cit., p. 188) was the very Monsignor Benigni, the German bishops asked the Vatican for his head in exchange for ceasing their opposition to the Encyclical Editæ Sæpe. Valbousquet, rather, in the first part of her essay (op.cit., p. 160), has shown us how Benigni’s resignation had been solicited by Merry del Val and Pius X himself, due to a serious imprudence by the Perugian Monsignor, who had harmed the diplomatic relations of the Holy See.”

Even here, Father Nitoglia follows the opinion of Valbousquet (or what he attributes to Valbousquet!)⁽²⁹⁾ and not that of Guido Aureli, a journalist close to Msgr. Benigni. What a shame that

Emile Poulat, with regard to the pope's anti-Modernist Encyclical, which elicited violent reactions from the German and Dutch governments, almost to the point of breaking diplomatic relations with the Vatican, gives us substantially the same version as Aureli and not that attributed by Father Nitoglia-Valbousquet: most of the German bishops (of Cologne, Bachemite, or Christian Democrat tendencies) used their governments to obtain exemptions from the anti-Modernist oath for their University professors of theology, and requested Benigni's expulsion⁽³⁰⁾.

Therefore it can be said that one of the main obstacles to the activities of the S.P and to Integral Catholics in general, even under Pius X, and also in the end the principal obstacle to Pius X's very governance and directives, was so-called "Episcopalism". *"The term 'Episcopalism' - writes Maurizio Tagliaferri, an historian, quite vitriolic against the Integrals - should apparently be attributed to Msgr. Archi, Bishop of Como, who coined it in a pastoral letter. A true herald against this new expression of Modernism, was Andrea Scotton, who wrote a series of articles, later collected into a booklet of about 200 pages. By the term 'Episcopalism' is designated those priests and lay Catholics who stay close to their nearby bishop to withdraw themselves from obedience to the distant pope. In this sense, some of the more Integralist bishops published letters and gave sermons against it",* like Msgr. Archi of Como and Msgr. Volpi of Arezzo. The attitude practiced included even doctrinal errors, as the bishop of Como writes: *"in making themselves, according to them, the Pope (a gross theological error), bishops alter the hierarchical order and in so doing incur the most fatal consequences"*⁽³¹⁾ (as later happened with the doctrine on the origin of the jurisdiction of the bishop, and even more, that of episcopal collegiality in *Lumen Gentium*). Tagliaferri objected, in the same way as did the bishops who created all the obstructionism for Pius X, [saying of the Integralists]: *"Behind the alibi of struggling against Episcopalism, they legitimize certain attacks against bishops"* (ibid). Faced with these attacks, writes Tagliaferri, *"the Holy See limited itself to a few mild reminders"* without *"any public disavowal. (...) The authority of bishops came away jeopardized"* (p. 180). Only when the bishops were backed up by their respective governments, as in Germany, were the criticisms forced to be made more prudently, under the penalty, as we have seen, of 'diplomatic incidents' that could not leave the Secretary of State indifferent.

Appendix: Paternal rebukes

Nicely written, then, for once, Tagliaferri : *"mild reminders" "without any public disavowal"*. Privately, or at the very least with discretion, Pius X did not fail to rebuke one or another of the combative anti-Modernist writers. They openly recognized it themselves! Read the evidence in the same *Disquisitio* (I quote from the French edition), as for example the article by Father Gottardo Scotton in admitting his excesses (*Confiteor*, p. 198) or the very sorrowful letter of his brother Father Andrea to Pius X (p. 199). In this regard, the most interesting text is the letter by Father de Töth to Commander G. B. Ferrata, a lawyer for the beatification of Pius X, dated April 4, 1950, in which Father de Töth demonstrates the steadfastness of the Servant of God in correcting him when necessary, to the point of removing him as director of the *Unità Cattolica* where the Pope himself had placed him: *"having gone beyond the limits that a just reserve and a necessary zeal necessarily impose, he removed me from the direction of the newspaper where he had placed me at the beginning."* *"From him - continues the letter - and from his attitude, he wanted us to learn the respect due to persons invested with authority in*

the Church, bishops in particular, always showing himself very jealous of their honor". But his "severity - de Töth writes again - *made me always know the Pontiff, and made me love him even more.*" (p. 143). Sweet reproaches, then, and paternal. They knew, in fact, that Pius X shared their battles, and even their apprehensions regarding many bishops. This is demonstrated by the *Disquisitio* itself regarding Cardinal Ferrari (from pp. 202): if Saint Pius X reproached *La Riscossa* or *Unità Cattolica* for public writings that could bring disgrace to the cardinal, writing to the latter he instead manifested that he shared fully, *et ultra [and more]*, their apprehensions and denunciations, which Cardinal Ferrari insisted in not wanting to understand; things happening in his Diocese of Bergamo demonstrate this even more, as we will narrate. If Scotton received an "ear pulling" (whom Pius X knew well for a long time), as did de Töth, as did Father Boccardo (p. 149), and as did Father Cavallanti, none was directed at Msgr. Benigni (at least on the part of Pius X regarding any frictions with Cardinal Merry leading to a voluntary closure of the *Correspondance de Rome*, as we have said). This was because the Umbrian prelate acted in a more skillful and discreet manner. The worries of those who had to direct the whole Church were not exactly those of a polemical journalist; but agreement and harmony of thinking were. And Integral Catholics knew this well.

An example: Pascendi's reception

The obstacles placed in the way of the anti-Modernist actions of Saint Pius X by the episcopate and religious orders are innumerable. One example among many: the reception of the Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. This is the theme of one study entitled precisely: *The reception and application of the Encyclical Pascendi*.⁽³²⁾ One of the contributions to this volume by LOUIS-PIERRE SARDELLA says it all, entitled: "*La répression du modernisme. Une priorité toute relative pour les évêques français (1908-1914) [The repression of Modernism. A completely relative priority for French bishops (1908-1914)]*". Among the practical measures for repressing Modernism, the Encyclical *Pascendi* envisaged the establishment of a Vigilance Council in each diocese, with each bishop issuing annual, and later triennial, reports to the Holy See on the application of said measures, a decision confirmed and detailed by the motu proprio *Sacrorum Antistitum* of 1910. "Various bishops - writes Alejandro Dieguez⁽³³⁾, however - *did not seem to have interpreted the obligation of the Pascendi report in a strict manner*" (p. 28): The Bishop of Cremona sends nothing; the Ordinary of Wurzburg was scarcely convinced "*of the usefulness of the operation*" (p. 28), a Brazilian bishop omits the report: no trace of Modernism there (p. 29). Eastern bishops request exemptions to issuing the anti-Modernist oath. Two Irish bishops see no trace of the error, and request exemptions. Sardella, in turn, writes (in French)⁽³⁴⁾: "*Modernism had not been an obsession for so many French bishops*" (p. 36): in other words, they weren't interested. Many French bishops didn't even respond (p. 41); many of those who did respond said "*they had nothing to report*" (p. 42). The Bishop of Troyes noted that there were no Modernists here, so therefore the Vigilance Council had no purpose, what was the point in continuing? (p. 43) Counsels - when they exist - should deal with other things. Some bishops refuse to affix their oath to the report (p.44). Many others do little or nothing (p. 46): "*the prevailing impression is that the inquisitorial activity was modest, because it had no raison d'être, both because the bishops knew how to be reasonable in repression, and because the ecclesiastics who held close these ideas, decided not to expose themselves unnecessarily (...) for the majority of bishops it was clear that no priest, and a fortiori, no*

faithful, supported any of the errors denounced in the encyclical" (p. 47). To the many examples he cited having pseudo-absence of any Modernism, Sardella adds the example of the Bishop of Paris, Cardinal Amette, for whom "*already in November 1908, the bulk of the storm had passed*": *requiescat* Modernism...now let the Shepherds sleep! As for the seminaries, "*all the bishops are guarantors of the orthodoxy of the professors that they themselves have appointed*" (p. 50). Few professors are dismissed, "*no doubt because the bishops were disinclined to take extreme measures*" (p. 51). There is some concern for the seminarians who followed the *Sillon* (pages 53-54) but even here "*the bishops want to believe that it is enough for the pope to speak, for everything to return to order*" (p. 55). I will not dwell on that, but rather head straight for Sardella's conclusion: "*the French bishops, as far as can be judged from their reports, did not really put the struggle against Modernism at the center of their concerns*" (p. 69). Raffaella Perin counted up the reports by the Italian bishops⁽³⁵⁾: there were 47, while there should have been 546 (p. 122). The Bishop of Casale saw no Modernists in his clergy, while he himself protected them (pp. 127-128) as did the ordinary of Vicenza, Bishop Rodolfi. The bishops of Ravenna, Pisa, Milan and Bologna asked for leniency for the Murrian party (pp. 129-130); the Bishop of Concordia intervened in favor of his vice-rector, who was revoked for his support for Father Murri (p. 131); the future Cardinal Celso Costantini in his diocese was a Murrian. One who was faithful to Pius X was Bishop Volpi of Arezzo, of whom Sardella writes: "*in 1917 the excessive anti-Modernism of the bishop of Arezzo would have been the reason for Benedict XV sending an apostolic visitor...*" (p. 136). Perhaps because the bishop had written of his concerns about articles in the *Civiltà Cattolica* to the Superior General of the Jesuits and about those in the *Avvenire* to the then Bishop of Bologna...the future Benedict XV! (p. 137). The Bishop of Perugia, Mattei Gentili, instead, was ousted by Pius X in 1910. Cardinal Ferrari was late in issuing his report, whose "*pastoral project did not coincide with that dictated by the pontifical plan*" (p. 138). "*Among the Ordinaries who did not send any report, some important names stand out: the one already mentioned, Mattei Gentili, Archbishop of Perugia, and that of Pietro Maffi, Archbishop of Pisa, and Geremia Bonomelli, Bishop of Cremona*" (p. 152). "*One last general observation is the denial by Italian prelates of the presence of any Modernism in their diocese*" (p. 154). Had Pascendi struck a ghost?

An example: The case of *La Vigie*: "*The monstrous sabotage of papal directives*"

One example, among many, of the difficulty encountered in applying Saint Pius X's directives in matters of Modernism comes to us from the case of the *La Vigie*, an Integral Catholic Parisian newspaper controlled by the *Sodalitium Pianum*. The story is told by Louis-Pierre Sardella (one pole apart from our thinking) in the article "*L'affaire de 'La Vigie'. Cardinal Amette suspected of indulgence for modernism*"⁽³⁶⁾.

Saint Pius X knew that the doctrinal condemnation of Modernism would not bring about results without concrete action against Modernists; he foresaw that practical tools had to be applied to implement this action, such as the anti-Modernist oath (not surprisingly, suppressed by Paul VI), apostolic visitations, and, in every diocese, Vigilance Councils. The lack of success of these measures was due to the fact that those responsible did not always apply these methods, or at times, applied them contrarily. I have already spoken about the farce of the anti-Modernist oath sworn by Buonaiuti, Vannutelli, Turchi and Motzo in the private chapel of Cardinal Gasparri in 1916, which Msgr. Benigni

called a “*sacrilegious comedy*”⁽³⁷⁾. Sardella’s article demonstrates to us how the Vigilance Councils so desired by the Pope against the Modernists were applied, or rather, not applied, or rather, counter-applied, even back at the time of the innocent Pius X (let alone after it!).

The episode in question occurred in the last months of the pontificate of Saint Pius X. On January 5, 1914, the French Jesuit magazine *Études* (Father Léonce de Grandmaison) published an article against certain “catholics lacking a mandate” (in this case they were referring to the magazine, “*La critique du libéralisme*” by Abbé Barbier) which had been making accusations lacking authority. This attack by the Jesuits served to defend *Action Populaire* which, at Rheims, was directed by Jesuit Father Gustave Desbuquois, and which was at risk of being condemned by Rome; this over that last great battle of Pius X, that of Syndicalism [trade unionism] and countering what was later called “modern socialism” by Pius XI. Responding to the *Études* attack was not only that of *La critique du libéralisme*, but also *La Vigie*, a magazine directed by Henri Merlier and Abbé Boulin, both members of the *Sodalitium Pianum* (on the 8th and 12th of February). The problem was that *La Vigie* was printed in Paris (the future Cardinal Baudrillart was the ecclesiastical censor there), governed by Cardinal Amette (who at the time had already tried to suppress *La Vigie* by removing Abbé Boulin from Paris in December 1912 and having him recalled to the Diocese of Troyes in January 1913⁽³⁸⁾). On March 13, at the request of the famous Father Tanquerey, the diocesan [Parisian] Vigilance Council thus intervened, which had been the desire of Saint Pius X as the method to fight against Modernism, and it took a stand...against the Modernist-fighters at *La Vigie*! The Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Amette, then sent his censor Baudrillart to admonish *La Vigie*’s director, Merlier, that *La Vigie* deserved a “severe episcopal reprimand” for having criticized those who enjoyed the trust of the episcopate! Msgr. Benigni (whom Sardella mistakenly describes as still a member of the Secretariat of State) had been warned by those working at *La Vigie*, and intervened by writing a long letter to Cardinal De Lai. For the Perugian prelate, the Amette-*La Vigie* case is emblematic: [he wrote] “*Not only is the present case serious in itself, but it is a very serious index of all these situations. By now one thing is evident: there*



Father de Grandmaison s.j.

was monstrous sabotage of papal directives on the part of the Demo-Liberal and Modernist coalition, and its superiority and inferiority complexes”. Benigni’s letter does not limit itself to affirming it, but rather he goes on to demonstrate it, listing at least eleven cases in which the Cardinal [Amette] and his organs had praised, protected or ignored when instead they should have intervened in confronting associations or authors placed on the Index or otherwise condemned by other bishops or Rome itself; the best being that one of them was a member of the Vigilance Council itself and another was a member of the Episcopal Council. Cardinal De Lai then took up his pen on April 25, to complain that the Vigilance Council...was not vigilant in confronting the Modernists (taking up all the cases cited by Benigni), but were vigilant when they should not have been, that is, against *La Vigie*. Archbishop Baudrillart informs Rome: Cardinal Merry then supports De Lai’s letter, thus the

Pope himself thought the same. When the Vigilance Council reunited on May 6, Cardinal Amette was stung: who will ever be Shepherd, who isn't vigilant as he? He then prepares a new letter to Rome (May 15) accompanied by a letter from the Council, in which he reiterated that *La Vigie* acted against charity, justice and truth, while the Diocese was attentively vigilant against Modernism (referring to Loisy, who by now had been 'burned', and excommunicated). Archbishop Baudrillart tried to distance himself and at the same time advised prudence in Rome. A second, more 'diplomatic' letter from Cardinal De Lai (May 30) gave satisfaction to the 'very vigilant' Cardinal Amette, but only in form; on the actual basics of the matter he reiterates that the Vigilance Council did wrong in intervening against *La Vigie* which, as he stated in his previous letter, would instead have been an excellent help for the Vigilance Council. Meanwhile, Msgr. Benigni puts his finger into the wound: it is the bishops who are sabotaging the directive of Saint Pius X. For this purpose, all the parish priests of Paris received a copy of the letters between Pius IX and in his time the Archbishop of Paris, Darboy, in which the very liberal Parisian archbishop reproached the Pope for busying himself in his diocese, which was his sole competence: a fine example of Gallicanism. One of those accused by *La Vigie*, Abbé Letourneau, then asked for new measures against such '*hateful insinuations*': however, at first Cardinal Amette's prudence, followed by the death of Pius X, and then the war with its aftermath, rendered the requests useless. Under a new pontificate, no longer will there be anyone to protect the heirs of *La Vigie* and the Integral Catholics of Paris. Cardinal Amette's attitude ("*known for its liberal sympathies and political moderatism*", POULAT, *Intégrisme*...p. 262) had tried to put an end to *La Vigie* "*since the first issue*", in December 1912, recalling Abbé Boulin to his Diocese in Troyes, where he was named pastor to 155 souls (pp. 261-263), sending him "*to Siberia*" (p. 522). *La Vigie*, "Integral Organ of Roman Catholics" was issued for the first time on December 5, 1912 (directed by Henri Merlier). On March 26, 1913, it received the Apostolic blessing of Pops Pius X. The last issue was released August 6, 1914, a few days after the death of Saint Pius X.

Even in Germany: reporting on Modernism serves to attack the anti-Modernists

The same phenomenon encountered in Italy and France was occurring in Germany: Modernism didn't exist, while instead bishops sounded the alarm for the dangers of Integralism. One example among many: the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Fischer. Francesco Tacchi writes: "*The Archbishop of Cologne, Anton Fischer, mobilized himself in favor of Christian labor unions (i.e. non-denominational ones, composed of Catholics and Protestants, ed.), and more generally about all subjects associated with the Intergralists at Kölner Richtung (school of Cologne, ed.). In 1911, he sent to Pius X a long report in accordance with the 'Pascendi' directives concerning his important diocese: the beginning of the report was obviously dedicated to Modernism - of which, the Cardinal said, none was found in Cologne of the type described in the Encyclical - but as for the rest, the report constituted a heartfelt defense of christliche Geverchschaften ('Christian' labor unions, and not 'Catholic' ones, ed.), the Kölnische Volkszeitung (newspaper, ed.), Volksverein (Catholic workers' associations, ed.) and Zentrum (Center / Christian Democrat German political party, ed.). Fischer begged the pope not to give credit to the observations in Weiss' recent book (Albert Maria, Dominican, ed.) on German Catholics in general and on the diocese of Cologne in particular, and to have confidence in his way of relating to the Kölner Richtung; he rejected as too severe and not in keeping with the truth the accusation of liberalism and*



Cardinal Gaetano De Lai
(Sacristy of the parish Church in Malo)

modernism addressed to the 'Kölnische Volkszeitung' [German liberal newspaper, ed.], which he also guaranteed to monitor in the future; he disputed that the modernist heresy was legitimately associated with the Volksverein and its leaders; finally, he vehemently stigmatized those Catholics who denounced the Zentrum as departing from the principles professed by the Church, and in this regard he alluded to the Osterdienstagskonferenz of April 1909 [which outlined its principles, ed.]. According to the Cardinal, it was folly to squander the strength of the Zentrum, the bulwark of German Catholics on the political scene (...). In the last part of the report, then, the Archbishop of Cologne once again called to the attention of the pope the Intergralist press published outside of Germany, guilty in his eyes of having aggravated tensions within German Catholicism: his finger was pointing against the parisian *L'Univers*, *De Maasbode* of Rotterdam, *Unità Cattolica* of Florence, *Österreichs katolisches Sonntagblatt* of Vienna and above all the *Correspondance de Rome* of Msgr. Benigni”⁽³⁹⁾. In Cologne, as in Paris, the episcopal music is the same: Rome blundered: the thieves did not exist, while all the fault lay with enforcement of the law.

An example: the diocese of Vicenza and Bishop Rodolfi

The example of the Diocese of Vicenza is particularly interesting, for at least two reasons. It is in this diocese that two of the most well known hardline newspapers were published, *Il Berico* and most of all *La Riscossa*, published by three brother priests, the Scottons. Also from this diocese came the “strong man” of Saint Pius X’s pontificate, Cardinal Gaetano De Lai, secretary of the Consistorial Congregation (which dealt with bishops, seminaries, and universities). Divided between intransigent Catholics and liberal Catholics under Pius IX and Leo XIII, it saw the same division continue between modernizing Catholics and integralist Catholics under Pius X. This terminology and these oppositions, which would later be frowned upon by Benedict XV, were, however, peacefully accepted under Pius X as evidenced by the letters of Cardinal De Lai himself regarding the new Bishop of Vicenza, Msgr. Rodolfi: “*I fear that Msgr. Rodolfi inclined somewhat to that school of broad, democratic, and independent ideas, I mean Unione, Avvenire, etc., a school unfortunately too widespread but which is not welcomed by the Holy Father and the Holy See (...) Unfortunately the clergy in Vicenza is divided, between those once called democratic liberalizers, today known as modernizers, and priests of the ancient faith*” (sent to the Archbishop of Udine); “*De Lai took*

up some concepts whose meaning he had clarified a few months earlier in a letter to Cardinal Maffi, Archbishop of Pisa. By 'school of broad ideas', he meant the set of those who were 'tepid' in defending orthodoxy from the attack of the Modernists, as opposed to the 'zealous' whom he referred to as a 'conservative school' ⁽⁴⁰⁾". The new Bishop Rodolfi is, as De Lai himself said, of the "broad school", a clear fellow student of Cardinal Maffi, and an admirer of the Modernist Fogazzaro (whose works were on the Index), to the point that on Fogazzaro's death Rodolfi wrote "a wretched telegram" (De Lai) praising the deceased. Under Bishop Farina, the diocese had undergone an Apostolic visitation (by P. Bresciani) which had led to the expulsion of some priests suspected of Modernism: the new bishop Rodolfi immediately put the priests suspected or dismissed back in honor, this one as Vicar, this one as spiritual director of the seminary, etc., while he addressed only bitterness to Integralist priests and their press, such as *La Riscossa*, preferring the newspapers that Pius X had forbidden or discouraged, including *L'Avvenire*. Both the Scottons and the bishop then wrote continuously to Rome to seek support in the confrontation. The Bishop accused not only the Scottons then, but Cardinal De Lai and Merry del Val themselves: "in the case of Vicenza, the danger of Modernists or modernizing ideas insinuating themselves not only among the laity, but above all among the clergy and even at the top of Catholic hierarchy, constituted a deterrent for the Holy See, compared to Rodolfi's numerous requests to disavow the manners and tones of the Integralists, requests to deny the accusations and suspicions that hovered in the pages of their newspapers, and to support him against their attacks.. Bishop Rodolfi, like others in those years, claimed his episcopal authority not only against the abuse of power by a certain part of his clergy and lay journalists, but also against a center (the Holy See) deaf to his requests for support. On several occasions, Rodolfi made De Lai aware of his unease at his reluctance to take measures against the Integralist press. In a letter dated June 13, 1913, Rodolfi complains because "he (De Lai) abandoned the Bishop of Vicenza to the vulgar and underhanded ambition of a Navarotto and to the evil malice of a Don Gottardo Scotton!" And of the indifference shown by De Lai, Rodolfi also complained to the Secretary of State Merry del Val, who had referred his appeal to the Consistorial. (...) 'In vain, I had already turned in confidence to the Most Eminent Cardinal De Lai, the secretary of the S. C. Consistorial ...' then the bishop concludes 'I therefore sought justice from His Eminence Cardinal De Lai and I didn't find it. Then I turned to your Eminence (...) and with pain I must note that your Eminence also rejects me.' The Secretary of the Consistory did not take the Bishop's side even when the accusation of **episcopalism** was leveled against Rodolfi by some supplementary newspapers upon to his failure to be granted a papal audience during his pilgrimage to Rome in April, 1913 and the speech made by Cardinal De Lai before the diocesan delegation" (PERIN, pp. 658-662). One text by the Bishop said "the bishop is for the Vicenza church what the Pope is for the Catholic Church": a text rightly criticized by Scotton, by Cardinal De Lai and by the Pope, since he is also the Ordinary in Vicenza, while the local bishop does not enjoy, not even in his diocese, all the prerogatives of the pope (not to mention infallibility). When then the Bishop promoted those "democratic" priests whom Rome had dismissed,

and wanted to strike out against those priests or laymen whose newspapers were faithful to Rome, the problem became quite serious.

“No one who takes up the pen for the defense of God, no one ever, for any reason, can assume the mandate to enter the field reserved for bishops; nor even less to believe that in some way he has the mandate to denigrate their person.” (PERIN, p. 602): thus wrote the moderate Bishop Rodolfi (moderate only among his neo-modernists) invoking his authority; and to throttle *Il Berico*, he gave a mandate to the Banca Cattolica Vicentina not to disburse them subsidies any more; Rome then had to intervene, writing to the director of the Bank: *“The Holy Father has come to know that the well-deserving newspaper of this city, Il Berico, in order to keep its accounts in balance, would need an annual subsidy of L. 5000 for a few years. And he has given me the welcome assignment - it’s Cardinal De Lai who is writing - to present this need to Your Lordship and to ask you to take it into benign consideration as president of the*

Banca Cattolica Vicentina. In the midst of many difficulties, Il Berico has the merit of proceeding correctly according to pontifical directives, of having kept the banner of faith held high, and of never having blushed for the name of Christian or Catholic. As long as it maintains this conduct, it deserves, not just the approval of the Holy See, but the support of good people and Catholic institutions. It is for these reasons that the Holy Father wants you and the Catholic institution you head to recommend Il Berico in its needs” (PERIN, pp. 613-614). Pius X and Cardinal De Lai therefore had to sometimes “tweak the ears” of their friends for the profound respect they had for the hierarchy and authority; without however ever failing to remind these hierarchies what their duty was, and when they were lacking in it.



Msgr. Ferdinando Rodolfi, Bishop of Vicenza was a “moderate”

A final example: the diocese of Bergamo (that of the future John XXIII)

I could go on and on tracing the painful examples of episcopal negligence in the struggle against Modernism, and the “sabotage” of Saint Pius X’s directives in this regard . Limiting ourselves to only Italian dioceses, to say nothing of the transalpine ones, how can one forget the celebrated clash between Saint Pius X and Cardinal Ferrari, Archbishop of Milan. I have already mentioned Bishop Pagano, who held that behind the criticisms addressed to the Milanese seminary by the intransigent and then Integral press, particularly in the cases of *La Riscossa* by the brothers Scotton ⁽⁴¹⁾ and *L’Unità Cattolica* in

Florence, was the work of the *Sodalitium* and Msgr. Benigni. The same could be said for other dioceses, such as that of Cremona (**Bishop Bonomelli**, whose anti-temporalist pamphlet was placed on the Index), that of Pisa (**Cardinal Maffi**), or even that of Bologna, the diocese of the future Benedict XV (protector of the newspaper **L'Avvenire**). But I leave to the reader the pleasure of reading the *Disquisitio*, written by future Cardinal Antonelli, and requested by Pius XII during the process for the beatification and canonization of Pius X; in it was published a letter by the Holy Father to the Ambrosian Cardinal from which it becomes clear how the two - once friends - now had completely divergent views on the Modernist crisis. The neo-Modernists of Vatican II being well aware of this and in order to repair the “damage” caused by the canonization of Pius X, strenuously desired the beatification of Cardinal Ferrari, another “moderate” who should enter into the good graces of our critic, Msgr. Benigni ⁽⁴²⁾. I would like to conclude this list by dealing with a well known episode, but to which - in this case - a copious unpublished document has been added. It concerns the situation in the diocese of Bergamo (one of the richest in priestly and religious vocations) and in particular the clash between the bishop himself, Giacomo Radini Tedeschi, and Father Guido Mattiussi, s.j., a noted Thomist philosopher and author of the XXIV theses of Saint Thomas approved by the Sacred Congregation of Studies. The story is revealed in an interesting volume by ERMENEGILDO CAMOZZI, *Il Caso Mattiussi. La Chiesa di Bergamo tra modernismo e conservazione agli albori del ventesimo secolo [The Mattiussi case. The Church of Bergamo between modernism and conservatism at the dawn of the twentieth century]* (Vatican Secret Archives, 1911) ⁽⁴³⁾, which, with the release of unpublished documents, updates the historiography in this regard (I dealt with it myself in the biography of John XXIII, *The Pope of the Council*, in *Sodalitium* No. 23, October-November 1990, pp. 2-11, *The Pope of the Council. Roncalli and Modernism*). Reading Camozzi’s book, one written entirely in favor of the Bishop of Bergamo, and the heartfelt letters written by the Bishop himself, even the most convinced supporter of Father Mattiussi risks being seized by doubts: were not these “hardcore” Integralists exaggerating? Was Father Mattiussi (a friend and supporter of Father de Töth, director of *L'Unità Cattolica*, *Armonie delle Fede* and *Fede e Ragione*) by chance a “neo-Pharisee” like Msgr. Benigni? But those doubts dissipate like fog in the wind if one reads, in the same work, not so much the diplomatic responses by Cardinal De Lai, but rather the decisive and very undiplomatic intervention by Saint Pius X! The fact is, that Pius X was very well informed about the sad situation of the Diocese of Bergamo, thanks to one of his trusted men: Count Stanislao Medolago Albani ⁽⁴⁴⁾. Born in Bergamo in 1851 to a niece of Joseph de Maistre, Medolago Albani was esteemed by Pope Leo XIII as “a master of Catholic social thought”, becoming president of the second section of the Opera dei Congressi [Work of the Congresses]. When, in 1904, Saint Pius X dissolved the Opera dei Congressi, which had been infiltrated by Murrian elements protected by the then president of the Opera, Count Grosoli ⁽⁴⁵⁾, the Pontiff decreed to only give support to the *Economic and Social Union* presided over by Medolago (which lasted from 1905 to 1920). This is presented so that one understands the esteem and trust that the Holy Father had for Medolago.

Recently (in 2017), the magazine *Modernism* ⁽⁴⁶⁾ published in its entirety a letter that Medolago Albani sent to Pius X on April 26, 1911, and therefore shortly before the “Mattiussi case” broke out in the diocese. Francesco Mores, who edited the printing of the letter, defines it as “an impressive document” (p. 296) and for once I agree with him. Medolago wrote to Pius X to inform him that, for the year 1911, it will be the very Father Mattiussi who will teach lessons at the Catholic Social School of Bergamo; he then goes on to inform the Pope about the diocese of Bergamo, in response to an explicit question from the Pontiff. Medolago praises the episcopate of Bishop Speranza (1853 to 1879), an intransigent bishop; whose impulses were exhausted under his successor, Bishop Guindani, Bishop of Bergamo from 1879 to his death in 1904. Guindani had previously been Vicar General to the Bishop of Cremona, Bonomelli, a compromising and liberal prelate. At the time there was hope in the new bishop, Radini, but it wasn’t to be: *“the new government looked to Milan - to Cardinal Ferrari - and took him as a model: hence the beginning of our troubles! The liberals first and then the modernizers from here surrounded the Bishop (...) he believes he is in command, and yet suffers under the yoke of a bold and shrewd group that propagates, in Bergamo and the diocese, the ideas of Murri and Fogazzaro, not to mention the Catholic-liberal, L’Unione”* a trust newspaper directed by Filippo Meda. *“And, to the contrary, inquiries are being made to find out who dares to be a subscriber to L’Unità or to La Riscossa (that is, to the Integral Catholic press), and anyone who dares to send a single line, or perhaps a simple obituary, to such periodicals, is called ad audiendum verbum [a scolding], while anyone can write anything to the newspapers of the trust and consorts, without any interference.”* Things were not better at the episcopal bookstores, where they were selling “*semi-Modernist works*” such as those of Duchesne. The *Azione Cattolica* “*models itself in the same way as the one inaugurated by Meda and company*” (that is, christian-democrat). With regard to the diocesan newspaper, *L’Eco di Bergamo*, originally founded by Medolago, *“the director is a priest who has let himself be completely taken over by a group of modernizing priests. As for the weekly Il Campanone, replacing the defector Father Pagani”* (who left the priesthood in 1910) *“another priest was called up, who had always been one of his closest friends - a Bonomelli type. The modernizing priests have long since invaded the ‘casa del Popolo’, dominating us, despite efforts made by the meek and naive president of the diocesan Directorship to impede it,”* that is, Nicolò Rezzara, Medolago’s successor in that position since 1908. And here is where John XXIII enters the scene: *“And what, in fact, could these ever do in the face of the influence of the Bishop’s secretary?”* (Roncalli) *“This one, on whose priestly life you can say nothing, cultured, a graceful priest, **an admirer of Semeria, while in Rome a disciple of Buonaiuti** (...)”* a member of the office of the presidency of diocesan direction *“he always advocates to the bitter end the most dangerous trends and people, especially in terms of social action. It is clear that, as he is the Bishop’s secretary, his word is often taken as an echo of the will of his superior: thus he undermines authority and increases his importance. The practical consequence, then, is that **in the social sector, democratization is scarcely christian, and in other sectors there is liberalization at full speed,** from ideas that are cultivated in their brains, to the*

patriotic flag-waving that is flaunted in the classrooms of Catholic associations; the conclusion: the clergy and laity are misled in doctrinal principles, falsifying the public conscience of Bergamo's people, who are still mostly of ancient Catholic faith and customs." This diagnosis made, the Pope's confidant suggests a remedy: "a paternal and authoritative reprimand" to the Bishop; "If that happened right away there would perhaps still be time to save many things; but if it is delayed any longer, 'we will be crying forever!'" And despite the reprimand that took place, as we will see, we have cried and are still crying, thanks to that young secretary of the Bishop, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who, with the name John XXIII, opened the doors, not only to modernizers, not only to the christian-democrats, to liberals, but to the very real Modernists and to all the enemies of the Church.

The reprimand was made: and here we come to the "Mattiussi case". The Thomist Jesuit (which is almost an oxymoron), whom Pius X wanted to be the General of the Company of Jesus, was not esteemed within the Company, nor was he deemed to be one of the college of writers of the *Civiltà Cattolica*; he went to Bergamo, and there held a series of apologetics lectures at the Scuola Sociale, even before a large number of seminarians of the diocese. We must recall not only the condemnation of Modernism with the Encyclical *Pascendi* (1907) but also the two most recent documents from the Holy See: the letter of Pius X to the Bishops of Lombardy *Ista quanti sit* of July 1, 1911 in support of the "papal" press (that of the Integral Catholics) and against the moderate press (which was meant, although not cited, the *L'Unione* of Filippo Meda, supported by Cardinal Ferrari, and the *L'Eco di Bergamo* supported by Bishop Radini), and as well the circular *È a cognizione* by Cardinal De Lai directed against the *History of the ancient Church* by Duchesne, which came to be prohibited in seminaries (while in Bergamo it was used, *in primis* on the part of Roncalli, despite the affirmations to the contrary by the bishop). So, Father Mattiussi was reiterating these concepts expressed by the magisterium of the Church, with the result of sparking a frenzy in the diocese. On the 25th of September, the bishop wrote to Cardinal De Lai in opposition to the lectures offered by Father Mattiussi, supported by the testimony of seven priests whom he judged to be "superior without exception both on doctrinal matters and specifically an absolute devotion to the Holy See" and even "admirers of Father Mattiussi". Thank heavens that these seven priests (the rector of the seminary, the prefect of studies, vice-rector and professor of Canon Law, an official of the Curia, a professor of Dogmatics, a Vicar Forane of Alzano, and finally, *dulcis in fundo*, the professor of apologetics and ecclesial history, Father Angelo Roncalli, secretary to the bishop), were fond of Father Mattiussi and devoted to the Holy See! In their testimony attached



Father Guido Mattiussi, s.j.

to the bishop's letter, they rained down accusations on the Father, his mentality, his irreverence, his way of doing things, his accusations. The seminary of Bergamo (they were all seminary professors) praised the words of doctrine by the Father, but denigrated his style: bitter, ironic, contemptuous, partizan, poisonous, impulsive, exaggerated, with a monopoly on the truth, impromptu and disorganized... Then coming to the particulars: The father spoke badly about popes, cardinals, bishops, and catholic newspapers. On Popes, lacking the respect for Leo XIII who held the right concept of "christian democracy" but didn't specify them in words; on cardinals, like Cardinal Gibbons, who participated in the Congress on Religions in Chicago, or Cardinal Mercer for his semi-Kantian philosophy (followed by Father Gemelli as well), or Cardinal Ferrari, while not naming him explicitly; bishops such as Bonomelli, contrary to the temporal power of the Popes (Father Mattiussi even spoke badly about the fiftieth anniversary of the Unification of Italy!); on priests such as those who absolved Fogazzaro without retraction or like those (Father Lepidi) who gave the imprimatur to Duchesne. Bishops were to be respected, but only if they remain under Rome, not when they make mistakes like the aforementioned cases (so called episcopalism). And as for newspapers, Father Mattiussi had the audacity to affirm that in Lombardy, there are no truly Catholic newspapers (except that of Como), nor in Milan (*L'Unione*), nor Bergamo (*L'Eco*), nor Brescia (*Il Cittadino*, directed by Giorgio Montini), that is, newspapers compliant with the recent directives of the Holy See, and that liberal newspapers do less damage than the "catholic" ones cited. Finally, what was the point of his speaking ill of Modernism in the seminary, when none of the seminarians (and professors) were Modernists? Modernism, as we understand it, does not exist, at least in our house. The reader will have noticed that the accusations really do resemble those of Father Nitoglia against Msgr. Benigni: good doctrine, but bad character and guilty of exaggeration. The "moderates", in fact, asked Rome to remove Father Mattiussi from Bergamo, as Cardinal Ferrari will do, removing him from Milan. And if Cardinal Billot then calls him to Rome to provide him a seat at the Gregoriana, Benedict XV will take care to remove him from the Rome where Pius X had called him. How did the "Mattiussi case" end for now? The bishop demanded a public apology; however the Pope's secretary, Archbishop Bressan, instead wrote to Mattiussi: "*The Holy Father is aware of what V.P.M.R [Radini] exposes in his honorable letter of 3 corr. But even without this He is fully informed of everything, and has **entirely approved what was said** at the Scuola Sociale, pleased that the finger was placed directly on the wound. No one will dare to ask for retractions, not even for the opportunity for them, because the truth has the right to be preached always and everywhere. And this is said both with regard to L'Eco and with regard to your other observations on democracy. So be of good cheer also that in persuading them, someone, if he thinks it over, **will be ashamed of the noise he made** and will, one hopes, profit from the lesson.*" (October 7, 1911). When the Bishop [Radini] read the letter by Archbishop Bressan, he was astonished, so much more so since Cardinal De Lai had answered him much more prudently on October 18, trying to play both sides against the middle. Was the letter by Archbishop Bressan in the name of Pius X authentic, the Bishop

asked the Cardinal on November 2? Yes, it is authentic, answered De Lai, changing his tone with the Bishop and agreeing totally with Father Mattiussi, saying to the Bishop that he should wisely adjust himself to it. The Bishop of Bergamo (and his professors, including Roncalli) went from the accusers to the accused, and Radini had to apologize in a long letter to De Lai on November 15, and in another one on December 27, in which it can be seen that he did not understand the lesson he received. A Note from the Consistorial Congregation finally closed the case brought by *L'Eco di Bergamo* (newspaper controlled by the bishop): "*For the honor of Father Mattiussi we can declare, certain of not being contradicted, that after the appeal made by L'Eco in Rome, the esteemed Father Mattiussi has nothing to change or in any case to retract regarding what he said at the Catholic Social School of Bergamo and that the accusations made against him have no shadow of foundation. This we say today, given that others are more interested in keeping things silent to the detriment of the honor of an excellent religious man.*" Applause. But let's imagine the repressed hatred that animated these unrepentant liberalizers and modernizers who were only waiting for the death of Saint Pius to openly express their feelings again; imagine the confusion of the 100 seminarians of Bergamo led by these professors; and let us imagine the feelings of John XXIII when he had this correspondence delivered to him to reread it carefully in January 1962: the old bishop and his secretary had ultimately triumphed. What is truly unfortunate is that, even today, "traditionalist" priests are due to repeat the same errors of judgment as that Bishop and that Secretary back then.

Conclusion regarding the Pontificate of Saint Pius X

I have only given a few examples of the opposition that met the actions of Saint Pius X and his faithful collaborators in combating the Modernist heresy. The Modernist accomplices flattered the Pope by declaring Modernism dead, but Saint Pius X well knew this was not true ⁽⁴⁷⁾. Complete victory could have been obtained if the actions of Saint Pius X were followed through with the same intensity during the successive pontificates; and if, in that time, there was a renewal of Anti-modernist sensibility by the episcopate and religious superiors (recall that in 1914 Pius X thought of dismissing the General of the Jesuits, Father Wernz) ⁽⁴⁸⁾. The *Disquisitio* lingered on the deaf dialogue that took place between Saint Pius X and Cardinal Ferrari: the former reproaching the latter for his weakness on combatting Modernists in his diocese, and the latter reproaching the Pope



Father Rosa, s.j.

for supporting Catholic Integralists. Pius XII very much desired Pius X's canonization, held up by Cardinal Gasparri and Father Rosa; John XXIII instead desired it for Cardinal Ferrari (1963), who was declared venerable by Paul VI (1975) and Blessed by John Paul II (1987): these names seem to me to be significant in the argument raised by Father Nitoglia on who were with the "Integrals" and who were with the so-called "moderates": each one chooses his own company.

Part Two: Integral Catholics, Benedict XV, Pius XI, and their Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri

"This distinction between "Sede" and "Sedente", typically Gallican and conciliarist, is surprising in the mouths of integral Catholics and ultramontanists, who in theory profess the most absolute devotion to the Papacy; however, in practice they are aligned against the reigning Pope. This is one of the least attractive or most contradictory points in the history of the S.P." (Father Nitoglia, in the conclusion of his second part).

This statement by Father Nitoglia then, is central to his criticism of Msgr. Benigni, of the *Sodalitium Pianum* and of Integral Catholics (which, as we will see, is based on, and even further advances, Valbousquet's accusations, and before her by the Cardinal Gasparri himself: in this regard we will deal with the accusation by talking about *Fede e Ragione*). The distinction between "Sede" and "sedente" is typically Gallican, certainly, and conciliarist, perhaps. Pity that it doesn't belong to Integral Catholics, neither in theory nor in practice. Using an *ad hominem* argument, one could say that if it is anything, it is a theory endorsed by "Lefebvrian" traditionalists (and they are not alone: think of da Silveira's T.F.P. school [Tradição, Família, Propriedade, ed.]), and including Father Nitoglia in his current adaptation, who all recognize Jorge Mario Bergoglio (and his predecessors from Paul VI onwards) to be a true and legitimate successor of Peter, and the Vicar of Christ, however they invoke legitimacy in resisting his person, his magisterium and his laws, with a formula called in America "Recognize and Resist". In short: the pot is calling the kettle black! Integral Catholics have always obeyed the Pope, without servility; whether he is named Pius X, Benedict XV or Pius XI. To obey the Pope, however, does not mean one is unable to make a legitimate distinction, not so much between "Sede" and "sedente" (for Gallicans, the Apostolic See alone is infallible in the continuity of its magisterium, and not any one single sitting person), but rather between the direction that each pope intends to give his pontificate. Continuity (obviously for legitimate Popes) is divinely assured in safeguarding the deposit of faith; however it is not presupposed, as is evident, for the direction of the pontificate and the contingent choices of each pontiff, who can be, and often are, legitimately different from those of his predecessor. In articles written about the Cardinal Morone case⁽⁴⁹⁾, one can easily understand, for example, that the direction taken by Paul IV changed under Pius IV (unless you think that imprisoning Cardinal Morone under the suspicion of heresy or naming him a papal legate is the same thing), changing again with Pius V (if you think there is no difference between absolving Carnesechi or condemning him to burn at the stake): Faith and Morals do not change, contingent

choices do. We could continue with examples ad infinitum: Pope Formosus could certainly not have held the same line as his successor, who had that Pope's remains exhumed and brought to trial. Nor does anyone lack obedience or faith in the papacy because he knows how to distinguish between the Pope as such (the Vicar of Christ, whoever is occupying the See) and the Pope as a man (who might be holy man or a sinner, skilled or mediocre, mild or choleric, sympathetic for France or for Spain, in favor of the Jesuits or not, and so forth). Pointing it out is not disrespectful, as long as it avoids scandal among common people or disrespects the authority held by that person (and here there are differences between a privately expressed judgment or a public declaration, or between the judgment of a contemporary and that of a historian). May we offer one last proof? It is to be found precisely in those “moderates” so praised by Father Nitoglia who were opposed by those rancorous Integralists: Cardinal Gasparri (the Secretary of State to Benedict XV and Pius XI) and director of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, the Jesuit Father Enrico Rosa. Called to testify during the beatification process of Pope Pius X, both made depositions against him... No, not only against Msgr. Benigni, but specifically against Pius X: and Father Nitoglia, at least as regards Gasparri, cannot ignore it without then accepting the consequences (and by defending the Ussitani Cardinal [Gasparri], he must, albeit implicitly but inevitably, criticize the Riese Pope [Pius X])⁽⁵⁰⁾. Did they make distinction between “Sede” and “sedente” as well, or had they simply objected to something in the direction of a pontificate that was not entirely to their liking?

Part Three: The Pivoting of Benedict XV (1914-1922)

Father Nitoglia writes: historians viewed the 1914 conclave that elected Della Chiesa as a contrast between two sides: “*The first is that of the Integral Catholics who would have wanted a Pope in full continuity, theoretically and practically, with the pontificate of Pius X, headed by Cardinals Raffaele Merry del Val, Gaetano De Lai and Tommaso Pio Boggiani* (sic. Boggiani didn’t participate in the 1914 conclave, having only been created a Cardinal by Benedict XV!) *and the second side is that of the ‘moderate’ Catholics who would have wanted a pontificate without the rancorous, excessive and whistleblowing denunciations carried out by some elements of the Integral Catholic movement, carried out even against those who were only alleged Modernists; in addition, the so-called ‘moderates’ would have wanted, at the same time, the reaffirmation of Catholic doctrine, the condemnation - in theory and in practice, but rightly and not based on suspicions - of Modernism and of actual Modernists, without striking “imaginary” or “reputed” ones. This second side was held by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, viewed by historians as being the continuer of the pontificate of Leo XIII and the forerunner of that of Pius XI and Pius XII*” (first part). (If words have a sense, the preference all goes to the second side).

“*In the last years of Benedict XV’s pontificate, the invectives by Benigni and his entourage against the Pope amplify. (...) Benigni would even have rejoiced in the fact that the precarious health of Benedict XV could be a good omen for the next pope to return to the Integral line*” (N. VALBOUSQUET, *op. cit.*, p. 454) “*His polemics against Benedict XV continued even up to his death (1922). “During the*

1922 conclave, the Integrals did not look kindly to the strength of Gasparri's position, perceived to be in direct, political continuity with Benedict XV, and they placed their hopes in the pressures exerted by the heirs of Pius X (Billot, Merry del Val, De Lai, Boggiani)" (second part)

In speaking of Benedict XV, Pope from 1914 to 1922, a distinction can (and should) be made between Giacomo Della Chiesa, priest, bishop, cardinal, and personal secretary to Cardinal Rampolla, on the one hand; and the same person as Benedict XV, Vicar of Christ and successor to Saint Peter. Benedict XV, as Pope, could not be a Modernist or Liberal (at least for us; not so, however, for those who believe that a legitimate pope can be Liberal, Modernist, or perhaps even a "devil" as they say happened with those from Paul VI on, especially with "Francis": this being Father Nitoglia's current opinion, as well as others). Giacomo Della Chiesa did not enjoy that divine assistance promised to the Pope, but neither can one say that he was Modernist or Liberal (except, regarding this last epithet, possibly in a broad and improper sense). Instead, for Father Nitoglia this was precisely what the "Integralists", the Benignis of yesterday, and today, accuse him of: *"In short, the Genoese Bishop applied to the diocese of Bologna, which was then living and suffering strongly from the Modernist crisis, the principles of the Roman plan of action to the Modernist crisis (1904-1914), without the excesses of Msgr. Benigni. Therefore, one absolutely cannot speak of Liberalism or Modernism in Benedict XV"* (tenth point). Let's examine how things went for him, both as Bishop Della Chiesa, and as Pope Benedict XV.

The Bishop of Bologna. Giacomo Della Chiesa was born in Genoa to a noble family in 1854. Fundamental was the influence of the Archbishop of Genoa, Tommaso Reggio ⁽⁵¹⁾, of liberal-catholic tendencies and an admirer of Father Semeria, and of the Cardinal Archbishop of Turin (a Genoese by birth) Gaetano Alimonda, both very close, as Cardinal Maffi will be, to the House of Savoy. After his formation at the Gregorian (Jesuit) University, he was ordained a priest in Rome in 1878 and in 1881 he met Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, for whom he became private personal secretary during Rampolla's nunciature in Spain. In 1887, Rampolla was made a Cardinal, and named by Pope Leo XIII his Secretary of State: the career of Della Chiesa followed that of his mentor ⁽⁵²⁾, following the footsteps of the Secretary of State, where he met and frequented the future Secretary of State (Gasparri) as well as Msgr. Benigni, with whom initially there was no bad relationship ⁽⁵³⁾. It is established that under Leo XIII he frequented Modernist circles, and was an intimate of those who later manifested themselves as such. Yves Chiron, for example, mentions his friendship with Father Genocchi ⁽⁵⁴⁾, of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and Father Semeria, a Barnabite. As assistant to the Secretary of State, and collaborator of Rampolla and Gasparri, Della Chiesa *"was familiar with personalities who had a precise knowledge of the challenges of the Modernist crisis, and who themselves will be suspected of Modernism"*. It was Della Chiesa, for example, who dissuaded Leo XIII from sending a letter of congratulations to Msgr. Orazio Manzella, who had published a compendium of his Cardinal uncle's writings, instead

having him read two critical articles by Father Genocchi. His friendship with Father Genocchi also involved him with the initiative of the Pia Società of San Girolamo for the spread of Sacred Scriptures (1902), of which Della Chiesa was effective president. Their intentions were good, the protagonists much less so: the first publications came from Minocchi, Semeria, Father Giuseppe Clementi, friend of Murri, and Antonietta Giacomelli, feminist, a pioneer of the liturgical movement. All these characters were part of the circles of Roman Modernists, such as those surrounding Von Hügel, those around Giacomelli's *L'Unione per il bene* on the Via Arenula, those at the Molajoni house, and others, which brought together Father Brizio Casciola (suspended *a divinis* in 1914, reinstated by Benedict XV), Semeria, Faberi, Minocchi, Paul Sabatier: circles that Fogazzaro described in the book *Il Santo* ⁽⁵⁵⁾. In 1906, Pius X's intervention brought the Pia Società back in line, but its origins were certainly linked to Roman modernism. Father Droulers, the historian of the *Action populaire* that met with the disapproval of Saint Pius X, narrates, to the contrary, the sympathy that Della Chiesa had for "social Catholics": *"in social matters, it is enough for us to note that before being Archbishop of Bologna and Cardinal, Msgr. Della Chiesa was, in Rome, the friend and sometimes dinner companion with those great supporters of the social Catholics who were prelates: J. Tiberghien, Pottier, Veanneufville, Glorieux, or the 'social' Bishop of Bergamo, Msgr. Radini Tedeschi.* ⁽⁵⁶⁾" Under the pontificate of Pius X, Della Chiesa was replaced at the Secretariat of State, becoming Archbishop of Bologna in December 1907, but without being Created cardinal, at least not until the last consistory held by Pius X on May 25, 1914, precisely when the Pope expressed, with heartfelt feeling, his anguish at the threat that never-dying Modernism posed to the Church, and the need to defend the integrity of the faith (see POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 456-458, at his speech for the imposition of the cardinal's biretta on May 27) ⁽⁵⁷⁾ Father Nitoglia denies that the delay in the Cardinal's appointment is due to the "modernizing" character of Della Chiesa's episcopate in Bologna, rather attributing this false notion to those surrounding Msgr. Benigni: *"Furthermore, it is useful to note how this attitude of the Archbishop of Bologna was not the cause for the delay in appointing him Cardinal (May 25, 1914, i.e. two months before Saint Pius X's death on August 20, 1914). In fact, traditionally Bologna had been a Cardinalate See, while Archbishop Della Chiesa remained for about 7 years without being created Cardinal. Those close to Benigni wanted this seen as a punishment on the part of Pius X towards Della Chiesa, but then Pius X too would have been complicit in Modernism by having created a Modernist Bishop (1907) and Cardinal (1914). Instead, as Zambarbieri explains (ibid.), Pius*



Cardinal Giacomo Della Chiesa, Archbishop of Bologna

X avoided introducing new cardinals into the Sacred College for a long time (see *Revue Moderniste Internationale*, Paris:, 1911, p. 46)” (fourth part). In truth, this opinion was spread among the circles close to Della Chiesa himself, as Poulat attests: when Msgr. Benigni gave his comments on the usual list of possible candidates for the cardinalate in August 1913, in which he included those he thought Pius X would make cardinals the following year, Msgr. Benigni guessed 10 out of 14, but he excluded Della Chiesa: “Benigni must have had a good reason to make his estimation then, excluding the elevation to the purple of the one who was said to be ‘the man eliminated by Merry Del Val’ (letter from the Marquis Filippo Crispolti to his wife, Rome, 3 September 1914, in *Vita sociale*, February 1967, p. 231)”⁽⁵⁸⁾. This, then, from a supporter of the Grosolian “Trust”, a bitter enemy of the Integrals, such as Filippo Crispolti, attesting to how Della Chiesa was excluded from the purple by Cardinal Merry delVal. His eventual promotion was a surprise, but it probably occurred because Pius X (like his predecessors and successors) had to take into account certain internal dynamics both in cardinalate and episcopal appointments (studies, career, support, aptitudes, etc.)⁽⁵⁹⁾. Benigni anticipated a conclave that hesitated between Rampolla and Maffi, with the cardinals compromising on Ferrata in the end. Rampolla having died, his disciple Della Chiesa, became the competition with Maffi, and was elected. And Della Chiesa, having become Benedict XV, took Ferrata as Secretary of State. Benigni knew the environment well...

What, therefore, was the episcopate of Archbishop Della Chiesa in relation to the topic that interests us? Essentially, it was the same as that of Cardinal Ferrari in Milan or Bishop Radini-Tedeschi in Bergamo; just change the name of the newspaper they each supported: *L'Unione* in Milan, *L'Eco* in Bergamo, *L'Avvenire* in Bologna. As to the hostility towards the “papal” or “Integral” press, it was the same. Father Nitoglia knows this well, and says it, but doesn’t realize the consequence of what he writes:

“The real difference is not between Pius X and Benedict XV, but between Benigni and Della Chiesa, and objectively one cannot give the blame to Della Chiesa and give Benigni the right (even if Benigni's doctrinal program is compelling, his way of acting is much less). In fact, Zambarbieri quotes from a letter written by Archbishop Della Chiesa to Cardinal Gaetano De Lai (5 December 1912), in which he stated that he disapproved of ‘the methods followed by the magazine *L'Unità Cattolica* and that of *La Riscossa*’. Furthermore, he expressed his regret ‘because the Holy See loses just as many who say that *L'Unità* only speaks because the Holy See is silent. Instead, I would like the Holy See to be the first to speak’ (*The Disquisitio on the beatification and canonization of Pius X*, Rome, 1959, pp. 127-128). Now if one thinks about the ways some magazines act, even if animated by the best intentions, - even today referring to Msgr. Benigni's *Sodalitium Pianum* - one cannot help but objectively see in them an excessive spirit of criticism, which goes as far as slander and also to condemnation, which does not distinguish truth from falsehood and which crushes everything that deviates from one's own way of seeing things, even in questionable matters.” (Part Four)

Father Nitoglia makes three statements and gives one proof for what he is saying: “*The real difference is not found between Pius X and Benedict XV*” but rather “*between Benigni and Della Chiesa*” concluding with “*one cannot blame Della Chiesa and give Benigni the right*”. The proof? The letter by Msgr. Della Chiesa, then Bishop of Bologna, to Cardinal De Lai on December 5, 1912. To all this, I respond:

-There is no real difference between Pius X and Benedict XV in their being the Vicar of Christ, and therefore in their magisterium, I concede. In the line they followed with modernizers, regarding for example Catholic journalism: I deny (and will easily demonstrate it).

-There are differences between Benigni and Della Chiesa: I concede. But being infallible belongs to neither (speaking of Della Chiesa as a simple bishop), nor does his third conclusion necessarily follow, that:

-One cannot fault Della Chiesa and give Benigni the right. I deny this conclusion (as earlier seen between Radini-Tedeschi and Mattiussi) on the basis of the very “proof” adopted by Father Nitoglia, which provides proof, yes, but for the exact opposite!

Archbishop Della Chiesa, in the aforementioned letter, in fact, complained to Cardinal De Lai both about the newspaper *L'Unità Cattolica* and...about the Holy See, and therefore about Pius X, as giving the impression of following and confirming the journalistic campaigns of *L'Unità Cattolica* (then directed by Father Cavallanti) and of *La Riscossa* by the Scotton brothers. And he made his argument using Pius X's warning against that “moderate” press in which *L'Avvenire d'Italia* was explicitly named, the newspaper that Della Chiesa protected. In short, Father Nitoglia could not have chosen a worse argument in support of his theory, since Della Chiesa's letter to De Lai demonstrates the exact opposite. How the author might have made such an error can be understood by reading the concluding words of his sentence which shows that the target was not so much the ancient Sodalitium Pianum, but rather the magazine of the same name on which it is based, and for which he himself wrote for many years. But let's get back to us, and to Archbishop Della Chiesa...

Of the letter in question we also hear from E. POULAT (Intégrisme...) on p. 433: [Della Chiesa continues:] “*The Bishops and the best priests have a bad impression in seeing that the condemnations from the Holy See come after criticisms and complaints by L'Unità Cattolica, wrote the future Benedict XV in a letter to Cardinal De Lai on December 5, 1912, adding that the post of 'Consultor General to the Index' should be created for its director*” (*Disquisitio*, p. 83), an obviously ironic statement. Yet the harmony between the Integralist newspaper and the measures taken by the Holy See should have convinced the Archbishop of Bologna to support, and not hinder, the said newspaper. And this all the more so since, as we will see when speaking not of Archbishop Della Chiesa, but of Benedict XV, and as we have already explained when speaking about the diocese of Bergamo, in 1912 Pius X had already clearly pronounced which newspapers were recommended by the Holy See (even though at times they had to tweak the ears of the directors) and those which were not approved, like those of the so-called

“Trust” of Count Grosoli. Now, among the newspapers that Pius X disapproved in the official documents of the Church, was specifically the daily favored by the Archbishop of Bologna, *L’Avvenire*, and among those that he recommended was the one that was criticized by the Archbishop, *L’Unità Cattolica*! Before speaking about an emblematic episode of the struggle between Archbishop Della Chiesa and the Integral Catholics (specifically the director of *L’Unità Cattolica*, Father Paolo de Töth), it might be useful to present a brief history of the Bolognese daily newspaper, which is still published today (sadly known). Count Acquaderni, the valiant pioneer of Azione Cattolica, and Count Grosoli - about whom we have spoken - had the idea in 1894 to found a daily Catholic newspaper in Bologna (even though one already existed, by Venturoli). In 1896, the project opened, with the patronage of Cardinal Svampa, Archbishop of Bologna, with Grosoli the president of the administration council, and Filippo Crispolti (already mentioned) the first director. In 1902 (and up to 1915) it was under the direction of another ⁽⁶⁰⁾ Jewish convert, Cesare Algranati, also known as Rocca d’Adria (1865-1925). *L’Avvenire* (the name, perhaps, harks back purely by chance to that of the Lamennais’ daily), in 1907, became *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, less “clerical” and more “penetrating” or “trendy”, like other newspapers of Grosoli’s “Trust”. The sympathies that Grosoli and d’Adria had for the Christian-Democrats of Father Murri - who will be one of the ringleaders of the Modernists - led them to include on their pages the founding articles of the Murrian Party, La Lega Democratica Nazionale of 1905. Not surprisingly, then, Grosoli’s and d’Adria’s *L’Avvenire* engaged in ferocious battles with the Integral press, like *L’Unità Cattolica*, *La Riscossa*, and even *L’Osservatore Romano*. It is in this context that a “memorable argument” (as Vannoni called it) took place between Paolo de Töth, friend of Msgr. Benigni and then director of *L’Unità*, and Archbishop Della Chiesa of Bologna: it is even narrated in his own way by Tagliaferri (pp. 126-130 and 343-344) but in a way opposite to Vannoni ⁽⁶¹⁾: one is contrary, the other favorable to de Töth. Let’s try to summarize the two authors.

The controversy erupted in February 1907, when Father Cavallanti published a booklet on the infiltration of Modernists in the seminary of Milan (*Milano centro del Modernismo?*). Cardinal Ferrari [Milan], stung by the criticism, instead of keeping watch over his own home, described those attacks as “a newly-minted Modernism under the guise of being the most orthodox anti-Modernism” and the names and surnames of these anti-Modernists now having become newly-minted Modernists (Modernists because they dared criticize the bishops) were declared: Father Mattiussi, *Le Armonie della Fede*, and *L’Unità Cattolica* (directed by de Töth), etc. It was then that de Töth tried to “put an end to the controversy” (Tagliaferri) by going to Bologna to meet the Archbishop Della Chiesa. Alberto Maria Fortuna says: “They were family friends and were very familiar ⁽⁶²⁾. One winter evening (to be precise, it was the end of October, ed.) passing through Bologna, between one train and another he thought of going to visit the Archbishop, who received him immediately. He protected the modernist newspaper *L’Avvenire d’Italia* and, given that de Töth was one of its fiercest opponents, he began a discussion which ended in an altercation” (VANNONI, p. 462). Writing to Cavallanti from the train station on October

31, 1908 (the letter is published by TAGLIAFERRI on pp. 342-343) he says: “*what a disappointment! Archbishop Della Chiesa (...) for the sake of politics alone does not oppose L'Avvenire d'Italia, but supports it with all his might in every way. He began by disapproving the methods of L'Unità Cattolica, he said that we ‘do nothing but harm’; that our controversies are against charity; that we should denounce the error, but not denounce the newspaper or book that contains it or the person who utters it; that the L'Avvenire d'Italia is right to fight us since we were the first to attack it*”. Clearly in this case, charity, and not attacking people, is no longer valid: “*(...) He denied to our press the right to publicly denounce errors that may be contained in a book or a newspaper, yet not Avvenire d'Italia, because according to him no one has given the press the right or the mission to do this, but simply to warn those in authority. I replied that since it was the press that allowed itself to spread errors, it was right for the Catholic press to fight them, but he did not appear to be convinced of this. (...) In short: I had to defend our position, where I hoped to find help, and you can't believe how much I suffered. (...) So you see that from this side we can only expect opposition. Archbishop Della Chiesa has favorably nominated Maffi, and everything leads me to suspect that there is an agreement with Maffi; and so many backstories actually hurt me. And to say that we work with our hearts in our hands! And that the Pope does nothing but praise us! ... Lord help us!...*”. Fortuna says that being so distraught, de Töth took the wrong train and found himself in Verona, where he confessed he was ready to resign from the directorship of *Armonie della Fede*, but was dissuaded from doing so, then went to Milan before returning to Florence, from where he wrote to Archbishop Della Chiesa sending a copy to the Pope. In Rome “*he presented himself to Pius X and, as usual, knelt. The pontiff pretended not to see him, and kept him like that for a quarter of an hour. Then he made him stand up again, saying: ‘Certain things, although very true, should not have been written’. And showing him the basket, he added: ‘You see, it's full of letters against you’*” (VANNONI, p. 462). The reference was paternal, very different from that of Della Chiesa. At the canonization process for Pius X's de Töth testified: “*every time I approached him, I had the sensation of approaching a saint*” (VANNONI, pp. 442-443). On the other hand, Msgr. Della Chiesa, as the Archbishop of Bologna, had no need to change the direction of his predecessor, Cardinal Svampa. Example enough is the protection he granted to one of those whom Andreotti called “Jesus' four” (Buonaiuti, Roncalli, Manaresi and Belvederi), namely that Belvederi, the nephew to the Cardinal, relative of Andreotti, and a friend of all Modernists⁽⁶³⁾.

Pope Benedict XV. Doctrinal continuity, but practical change in the politics of the Holy See towards Modernism

Father Nitoglia's thesis is one of substantial continuity between the pontificate of Pius X and Benedict XV, not just in doctrine (faith, morals, discipline) but also in politics and in contingent choices,

and this counter to the “accusations” by Msgr. Benigni and the “Integralists”. The judgment of all (Modernists, anti-Modernists, historians) instead is in agreement in affirming the opposite.

Among thousands of examples, I will cite one written by Emile Poulat (a historian), which presents to the reader opinions, opposite but concordant, of Modernists and Integrals:

“*The era of denunciations is over*’, said Benedict XV to Cardinal Maffi on September 5 (from a letter of Filippo Crispolti to his wife the same day, Vita Sociale, February, 1967, p. 234)”; in the same letter, Crispolti wrote: ‘*he doesn’t hesitate to talk about the fall of the regime*’: “*the terrible private secretariat is dispersed. Bressan and Pescini are despised by everyone and receive an avalanche of indignities*” (POULAT, p. 461). “*We already see some good effect with respect to the new Pope, even if he doesn’t dare to give the impression of being an iconoclast of the preceding pontificate. One can breathe better: the intellectuals realize that now their intellectual quality won’t be viewed as evil any more. Mons. Duchesne is no longer the black beast, as he once was. Don Lanzoni, our hagiographer from Faenza, was made a bishop. Other victims of fanaticism or folly (requiescant Cardinal Vives and Father Pius of Langogne!) were rehabilitated, or will be. One of the first and most frequent words of Benedict XV is in favor of respecting Bishops and their jurisdiction. The ‘black’ press which blackened everything, has fallen hard, while the moderate press has regained its place once again. One doesn’t speak about Integral or Papal Catholics any more, it is enough to be Catholics. And how can we not see the charitable words that the Pope constantly has towards ‘non-catholics’?... (Father Genocchi to Paul Sabatier, Rome, Letter of December 28, 1914). Expeditionously, it is this first impression that will prevail: from the first days of his reign, Benedict XV told Cardinal Billot that ‘he no longer wanted to hear integrism spoken about for the rest of his life’, written in January 1917 by a ‘Catholic personality’, probably Louis Canet, in an anonymous memorandum (...). And it will be considered, therefore, completely normal to say that he had ‘even forbidden the name’ (Maurice Blondel...): and so it will be, his making no reference to it, neither in his first encyclical, nor in any other of his known texts.*” After having called up an anecdote (in which Benedict XV would have refused to allow Msgr. Benigni, the Apostolic Protonotary, to kiss his ring), Poulat continues: “*Better attested to and more significant are the forgotten or ignored acts, the list of which remains to be made: for example, on October 3, 1914, the letter from Cardinal Ferrara, Secretary of State, which had the newspaper La Riscossa, of the Scotton brothers in Vicenza, submit to effective control of episcopal authority; on October 8, the letter of encouragement by Benedict XV to the Società di San Girolamo for its spread of the Gospel, which Pius X had put to sleep, suspending it for Modernism; on November 6 the letter to*



Maurice Blondel

the successor to Cardinal Ferrara, Cardinal Gasparri, in which a benign interpretation is given of the papal warning which, on December 2, 1912, had hit the so-called 'penetration press' in Italy... An abrupt decompression was inevitable." (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 601-602). To this list we might add, something quite serious, the absolving of the suspension *a divinis* imposed by the Holy Office on April 12, 1916 upon the four Modernist heads, Buonaiuti, Turchi, Vannutelli, and Motzo Bachi after which they made a farcical anti-Modernist oath in the private chapel of Cardinal Gasparri, the following July 13 ⁽⁶⁴⁾. The long quote from Poulat presents us the concordant voices of some noted Modernists and modernizers: Filippo Crispolti (an exponent of the "Trust"), Father Genocchi, Louis Canet, Maurice Blondel, and the facts: the change of the direction toward the press of penetration and on that of the Integrals (one rehabilitated, the other opposed), on so-called 'episcopalism', the rehabilitation of naturalist historians, like Duchesne and Lanzone (who actually had lost the faith). The list of facts by Poulat could continue indefinitely. For that which concerns two exponents of social modernism condemned under Pius X: Abbé Lemire, suspended *a divinis* January 16, 1914 for his democratic ideas and his parliamentary militance even favoring the separation of Church and State (read anticlericals of 1905), was rehabilitated on the intervention of Benedict XV in 1916 ⁽⁶⁵⁾; and Marc Sangnier, who was the founder of *Sillon* condemned in the Encyclical *Notre Charge apostolique* by Saint Pius X was received by Benedict XV in 1917 and 1920 ⁽⁶⁶⁾. Another example: the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul, engaged in the apostolate of the working class. Among them were those clerics faithful to their founder (P. Meignan, of S.P.), and others won over by social modernism. An investigation against the innovators was ordered by Rome but was entrusted to Cardinal Richard, and from him to his coadjutor, Bishop Amette, which, in 1907, obtained the opposite effect of what was hoped for: the nomination of a modernizer, father Anizan, as superior. A new investigation in 1913 was entrusted this time to a member of the diet of S.P, Father Jules Saubat, that concluded in 1914 with the removal of the superior and the naming, decided on by Rome, of a new superior. One third of the religious, in France two thirds, asked for secularization or left the congregation. Father Anizan had his 'revenge' in 1918, when he was authorized, along with the rebellious ex-religious, to found a new congregation, the "Sons of Charity"⁽⁶⁷⁾. Father Droulers adds other testimonies for his part: *'from Rome, Father Fine can announce, discreetly, 'Integrism is finished...The influence of Cardinal Billot seems to me to be more than compromised'. And Father de Léobazel of Toulouse, triumphantly: 'excellent news from Rome, Barberism is finished!' On December 19, 1918, on the advice of Msgr.Tiberghien, Benedict XV 'made a*



Marc Sangnier, Founder of the Sillon

gesture highly significant: a personal gift of 10,000 Lira for the reconstruction of Action Populaire, whose destruction had particularly affected him, he said in a letter of accompaniment by Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State. He recalled: ‘The Holy See has many times wanted to praise you for the great efforts made by Action Populaire in promoting social ideas and organizations. It makes it with great satisfaction, knowing how great is your zeal and how deep your dedication to all its directions on such important matters...(...)’ It was an ‘enormous comfort’ in the face of the hesitations of some in the Company, and it was, as much as possible, the ‘rehabilitation’ once hoped for by Father Desbuquois, and the most solemn encouragement at the time of starting over again.”⁽⁶⁸⁾ Yves Chiron, quoting Bedeschi, added a significant anecdote, despite its...insignificance: in 1910, Cardinal Merry del Val ruled out Count Salimei from the Papal Nobel Guard, a son-in-law of Von Hügel and friend, to the point of assisting at his funeral, of the excommunicated Tyrrel; Benedict quickly reintegrated him in the position (pp. 289-290). One can easily understand, then, the impression given by Father Saubat in a letter to Cardinal Sevin: under Benedict XV there is “*l’apothéose de tout ce qui fut condamné: the apotheosis of all that had been condemned*” (March 27, 1915) (Ch. SORREL, *Le catholicisme français de la Séparation à Vatican II*).

A slight digression: Benedict XV and Thomism

Before addressing our arguments on Benedict’s pontificate by choosing here too some emblematic cases regarding his pontifical plan, I must focus on a detail which interests me because it is used by Father Nitoglia to demonstrate absolute continuity between Pius X and his successor. Absolute continuity in doctrine, yes absolutely. In practice, rather not, or not at all. What has been said so far in general also applies to the example given by Father Nitoglia, whose words I quote:

“*It is unmistakable that pope Della Chiesa’s theological orientation was integrally Catholic and eminently Thomist (see The recommendation of the Commentary on Thesis XXIV of Thomism, 1917, written by Father Guido Mattiusi; The recommendation of Thomism and the obligation to follow it in the CIC of 1917 can. 1366; the Encyclical Fausto appetente die, June 29, 1921 on Thomism). Benedict XV even “reproposed Thomism as the best method to confute Modernism, maintaining on this point the same line developed by Pius X and, following him, what would be renewed by Pius XI” (G. VIAN, Modernism during the pontificate of Benedict XV, between rehabilitation and condemnation, cit., p. 465)*” (part three).

If we are speaking about Benedict XV as Pontiff (and the examples quoted all refer to Benedict XV in this capacity) I underscore, word for word, what was said and written by my confrere. But, in the context of his writing, these affirmations have the purpose of demonstrating that nothing changed in the line of the pontificate, and that therefore, the Integrals, quite wrongly, criticized the new Pontiff. But if

we pass from Benedict XV, Supreme Pontiff, to Giacomo Della Chiesa, we grasp some nuances, otherwise such a convinced Thomist would not have treated Cardinal Lorenzelli as an “angry Thomist”, as he did ⁽⁶⁹⁾. Another example, much more important, concerns specifically the XXIV thesis (composed by Father Mattiussi, s.j.) quoted by Father Nitoglia (who has collected his comments on the same in a volume). After the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, with which Leo XIII gave the scholastics a place of honor once again, and Thomism in particular, his successor Pius X declared in his Encyclical *Pascendi* that precisely in Thomist metaphysics was found the strongest bulwark against the errors of Modernists. But what was the authentic doctrine of Saint Thomas that Pius X asked to follow in all ecclesiastic schools? There was no shortage of those who pretended to be following Aquinas, while abandoning some of his fundamental points, both in philosophy and in theology. To clarify what was the authentic and genuine Thomist doctrine to be taught in Catholic schools, the Sacred Congregation for Studies (signed by Cardinal Lorenzelli, that “angry Thomist” of which see above) published a motu proprio with the XXIV Thomistic theses in philosophy, just before the death of Saint Pius X (the motu proprio was July 27 and Pius X died on August 20, 1914). As Father Nitoglia records, the code of canon law, prepared under Pius X but promulgated under Benedict XV, canon 1366, prescribes the doctrine of Saint Thomas in seminaries and Catholic universities, and on March 7, 1916 the same Congregation of Studies approved the XXIV theses as secure doctrine to follow Saint Thomas' school. But...and there is a but. Whoever consults the last edition of Denzinger ⁽⁷⁰⁾, edited, like the previous ones, by the Jesuit fathers, will note in the historical introduction of the document by the Sacred Congregation of Studies on the XXIV theses (July 27, 1914, DS 3601-3624) an interesting clarification: “*Philosophical schools of different traditions (different from the Thomistic one, ed.) were suspect that, against their conviction, neo-Thomism was being imposed on them, and the freedom to support other conceptions was taken away. On March 7, 1916, in view of the protests, the Congregation of Studies declared: ‘All of the 24 philosophical theses express the authentic doctrine of St. Thomas and they are proposed as safe directive norms’ (...). They are therefore not absolutely binding,*” comments our Jesuits! “*To adhere to St. Thomas (adhaerendum Sancto Thomæ), it is not necessary to accept his doctrinal system in its entirety*” In this way the reverend fathers frustrated the XXIV theses, rendering them optional. But on what did they support this? “*In the letter from Benedict XV, Quod de fovenda dated March 19, 1917 to the superior general of the Jesuits, Father Wladimir Ledocowski, it was clarified how these directive norms should be understood.*” And here is the quote from Benedict XV’s letter to the Superior General of the Company: “*With no less satisfaction have we noted that you have weighed with the right balance the value of the reasons with which both sides in the discussion affirm the way in which we should rely on the doctrines of Saint Thomas. In fact, we are convinced that in this judgment you have perceived correctly when you have held that those who are sufficiently in agreement with the Angelic Doctor believe that the doctrine of Saint Thomas should be presented as safe directive norms as a whole, **without, however, being imposed as a duty to accept all the theses.** In consideration of this rule, the students of the Company can*

rightly lay aside the fear of not following with adequate obedience the commands of the Roman pontiffs, whose constant opinion has been that Saint Thomas should be considered a guide and master in the studies of theology and philosophy, while it remains unchallenged for everyone to dispute about those topics on which one can and usually does dispute.” Since the XXIV theses are all philosophical theses against the doctrine of Suarez, now the choice is no longer between Saint Thomas and Suarez, but on Saint Thomas or Saint Thomas as interpreted by Suarez. A detail, however: the letter by Benedict XV is not found in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* (where it would have the force of law) but, as it says in *Denzinger*, in the “*Acta Romana Societatis Jesu*”, a private collection of the Company. The explanation for this detail, and all the history behind the scenes, is found among those bad Integralists and the veterans of the *Sodalitium* in the series “*Vérités*” (N. 47 pp. 18-30, 1936: “*Les Jésuites contre Saint Thomas*”). Saint Pius X, they recall, wrote that: “*points which are capital in the philosophy of Saint Thomas must not be in the category of those opinions about which one can dispute in one sense or another, but as the foundations on which the whole natural and divine science is based*” for which the same Pontiff, in his *motu proprio Doctoris Angelici* (June 29, 1914) desired that “*the secular and regular clerics were clear about Our thoughts and Our will, and they put it into practice with promptness and appropriate diligence*”. What these capital, therefore obligatory and not debatable, points were, was clarified in the famous XXIV theses. Following a “doubt” raised by we know who, in 1916 the Sacred Congregation under Benedict XV, who had already responded that the theses were “*norme sûre*”, reiterated the doctrine, decreasing however, its peremptory obligation. An obligation that will instead be restated in Canon 1366§2 of the Code of Canon Law of 1917. And here we find, at the same time, Jesuit General Ledochowski, who on December 8, 1916 had published a pamphlet defending his libertarian interpretation, trying to gain the Pope’s approval. Monsignor Benigni, always aware of what was happening in the Vatican, knew in advance the anti-Thomist moves of the Society, as attested by a document dated February 6, 1917, found in his archive: “*the leaders of the Company are trying to obtain from the Pope on the current centenary of Suarez’s death a pontifical document that says how one who teaches the doctrine of Suarez is teaching that of Saint Thomas*”⁽⁷¹⁾. In fact, the following March 19, the Jesuit General obtained from Benedict XV the aforementioned letter which di facto exempted the Jesuits from following the said capital points of Saint Thomas’ philosophy! But...on August 24, 1917, Cardinal Billot, the Thomist Jesuit, was received in audience by the Pope. According to the account in *Vérités* (which must have come directly from the Cardinal) Billot informed Benedict XV that his letter was the exact opposite of Canon 1366 which he himself had promulgated. What to do? The Cardinal suggested to the Pope then not to publish the letter in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*. “*It is very difficult*” answered Benedict, but then, on the insistence of the Cardinal, suggested: “*I promise you that this letter will not be inserted into the Acta. I pray that you consider this favor as a gift for your feast (Saint Louis IX)*”. And the letter, in fact, was not inserted into the *Acta*. In light of what has been said so far, it is easy to understand who was right, and who was sincere, in the controversies on

Saint Thomas, between *Fede e Ragione* and *Civiltà Cattolica* (David and Goliath!) ⁽⁷²⁾. And now so much for Benedict's Thomism, and its limitations (not to mention the Company's) ⁽⁷³⁾.

The “pivoting” of Benedict XV: four examples

To illustrate to the reader the “pivoting” made in the pontificate of Benedict XV, I will focus, for reasons of space, on these not doctrinal, but practical episodes:

- The dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum*
- The case of Bishop Volpi of Arezzo
- The case of Partito Popolare and the victory of non-denominationalism
- The reversal of direction with regard to the Catholic press

Under Benedict XV: the *Sodalitium Pianum* from the death of Pius X (1914) to its dissolution (1921)

The *Sodalitium Pianum* (the Sodality or League of Saint Pius V), founded and directed by Msgr. Benigni, was supposed to be an ecclesiastical entity, modeled on those of actual centuries-old Institutes, subject to the Consistorial Congregation, which was governed at that time by Cardinal De Lai. Praised repeatedly and approved by the aforementioned Congregation and by Saint Pope Pius X himself, it was, however, never canonically erected, something our Monsignor had requested many times, due to the obstacle that we pointed out when we spoke about “episcopalism”. Upon the death of Saint Pius X (August 1914), it was voluntarily dissolved, also due to the war, and it was reconstituted at the request of Cardinal De Lai in August 1915 ⁽⁷⁴⁾, with a modification of its statutes, even though, for the reasons cited above, under the pontificate of Benedict XV his activity could not be carried out in the same way as it was under Pius X. Nonetheless, the S.P. continued its existence throughout the pontificate of Pope Della Chiesa, until it officially ceased its activities on December 8, 1921 (the Genoese Pope died on January 22, 1922). The dissolution of the *Sodalitium* was achieved by its enemies in three stages, which are recounted in great detail by Emile Poulat in his *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral* (1969). Having long drawn up a concise chronology of the facts, allow me the liberty of communicating it to the reader as I wrote it, concluding this chapter with a brief comment while referring you to Poulat's work for more information.

The Dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum*: the stages and antecedent chronology (1914)

The Belgian priest Florent **Prims** (1882-1954), appointed by Cardinal Mercier as secretary to Father Rutten o.p. (another enemy of the S.P.), the organizer of Christian trade unions, receives some confidential information from the lawyer, and member of the S.P., Alfons Joncks of Ghent, in which he

provides information to the S.P. regarding the Dutch priest Father Hubertus **Höner** (1871-1920), of the Clerks Regular of Ruremonde, who in 1909 had been forbidden to print the book “*Theoremata moralia*”. Höner then begins a press campaign against the S.P. in the newspaper *Düsseldorfer Tageblatt*.

August 1914: the war breaks out, Saint Pius X dies, and Belgium falls under German military occupation and administration.

October 1914: A memorandum against Msgr. Benigni written by Msgr. Eudoxe-Irénée Mignot (1842-1918), the archbishop of Albi, a defender of the heretic Loisy and his testamentary executor, is sent to the newly named Secretary of State, Cardinal Ferrata, and later adapted to Ferrata’s successor, Gasparri. Within the framework of the change in the pontificate, modernist circles are therefore calling for an intervention against Msgr. Benigni.

The Plot. The Search. The seizure of documents (1915)

March 12, 1915: Heinz **Brauweiler** (1885), director of the *Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* (1913-1925), writes a letter to Baron Oskar **van der Lancken-Wakenitz** (1867-1939), political director of the German military administration in Belgium. Using as a pretext a book about French Catholics (anti-German war propaganda), he falsely places the responsibility on the Integralist movement A.I.R (Agenzia Internazionale Roma) and its leader, Msgr. Benigni, slanderously accusing him of being linked to a “Russian agent” in Rome. He offers to do a search himself, along with P. Höner, at the office of the Ghent lawyer connected to Benigni.

April 1915: the two travel from Belgium to Lancken, which is followed by a report against the S.P., accused of activity favorable to France, Serbia and Russia, and opposed to German Catholics whom they accused of being Modernists and anti-papists, all of this for political purposes.

May 18, 1915: Joncks’ office is searched (with the two not identifying themselves) and his documents seized. The accused “Russian spy” Sonthoff was actually Redemptorist Father Alphonse George, French, a member of the S.P.! Note that an accusation of espionage in the midst of war carries the risk of being executed by firing squad.

May 19: the two go from Lancken to Brussels with the seized documents, and they request permission to bring them to Düsseldorf. The permission of Ambassador **van Bergen** was required.

June 4: In Berlin, van Bergen, who knew and feared Benigni, gave Höner permission to make the most of acquired documents.

1916: Höner conveys the documents to Father Heinrich **Brauns** (1868-1939), a German and member of the Volksverein, the German Azione Cattolica. Everything quiets during the war, Höner dies in 1920.



Portrait of Pope Benedict XV with an
Inscription to Filippo Sassoli de'Bianchi

The “Anonymous Memorandum” and the role of the French Jesuits (February-March 1921)

February 11, 1921: Fernand **Mourret** (1854-1938), historian, Sulpecian father, friend of the Modernist philosopher Maurice **Blondel** who had been kept informed of everything, goes to the priest **Geurts** (see below) who invites him to read the documents on the S.P. that Höner had left behind.

February-March 1921: on his return to Paris, Mourret studies the documents, informing Blondel and his superior M. **Garriguet**. These then put him in contact with Father Léonce de **Grandmaison** s.j., who discussed it with Father **du Passage** s.j., director of *Études*, Father **de la Brière** s.j., and Msgr. **Roland-Gosselin**. The Jesuits tell Grandmaison to write an anonymous account to attempt a “coup de main” directly at Rome. Meanwhile in another Jesuit move: Fathers **Desbuquois** and **Danset** are informed, the latter goes to Belgium to Father **d'Herbigny** s.j. (at the time, denounced by the S.P.)⁽⁷⁵⁾ who goes to Holland. **Geurts**, meanwhile, delivers the documents to the Jesuit’s in Exaten (Holland) for copying, a task completed by Fathers Pierre **Dumont** and **Gadenne**, who made a copy for Bishop **Cerretti**. Three more will be made: one for Geurts, one for the house, and one for Father

Desbuquois who likely let journalists of the *Mouvement* consult it.

March 1921: The anonymous memorandum (of Mourret) denouncing the S.P. (revised version in 1922)

The denunciation to Rome and the dissolution of the S.P. (April-December 1921)

April 1921: The “anonymous memorandum” (by Mourret) is sent to bishops, religious superiors, nunciatures, and the Secretary of State (**Gasparri**). In particular to Father **Ledochowski**, the General of the Company, by way of the Parisian fathers. The Superior General of the Sulpicians carries other copies to Rome. A copy went to Blondel, to Cardinal **Frühwith**, and to Bishop Cerretti (Secretary for Extraordinary Ecclesial Affairs).

Mourret will then obtain the suppression of the weekly *L'actualité Catholique* and the transfer of Assumptionist Father Salvien (close to the S.P., we will treat of this in speaking about “diocesan associations”), who was sent abroad.

September 1921: Msgr. Benigni’s first response (*La paille et la poutre*)[*the straw and the beam*].

Second response by Msgr. Benigni, with the text of the approvals of Saint Pius X and the Roman Congregation (*Encore une société secrète*) [*secret society again*].

Mourret’s reply to Benigni.

November 10, 1921: letter by Cardinal Donato Sbarretti (1856-1939), of the Sacred Congregation of Councils, to Msgr. Benigni.

November 16, 1921: Msgr. Benigni’s response, followed by a personal letter to the Cardinal.

November 25, 1921: The Congregation of the Council (letter from Cardinal Sbarretti) asks that Msgr. Benigni, upon the will of **Benedict XV**, dissolve the S.P., “*given the changed conditions*”...

December 1, 1921: letter from Msgr. Benigni to Cardinal Sbarretti, a letter also sent to the Council, announcing the dissolution of the S.P as of December 8.

December 7, 1921: letter by Msgr. **Cicognani** (1881-1921) (nunciature of Brussels) to Msgr. Borgoncini-Duca (Extraordinary Ecclesial Affairs). He received the memorandum from Cardinal **Mercier**. **Benedict XV** deplores that Pius X had supported such a movement.

Thus, on the 8th of December, 1921, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the *Sodalitium Pianum* came to an end; conceived by Msgr. Benigni with the approval of Cardinal Merry del Val, Cardinal De Lai, Cardinal Vives y Tutò, and above all by Pius X. Let me interrupt a moment in my chronology to offer a few considerations:

The campaign against the S.P. that brought an end to it had three stages. The first had its origin in Germany, in the German christian-democrat movement of Munchen-Gladbach. The last battle fought by Saint Pius X and Msgr. Benigni, in fact, had to do with the question of the German non-denominational unions (see the Encyclical *Singulari Quadam* of September 24, 1912) and therefore, social Modernism, which had its center...in the famous Zentrum (Zentrum Party: the party of the German Center; it was the German Catholic party that took the non-denominational and christian-democrat line). Profiting from the war, they were able to put their hands on encoded documents by the S.P. The second stage took place in France, where already the modernist Bishop of Albi (supporter of the excommunicated Loisy) had denounced Msgr. Benigni, by relying on the industry of the French Jesuits against whom Msgr. Benigni had also earlier battled. The magazine *Études*, Father de Grandmaison, Msgr. d’Herbigny the spy, who at one time had been the ‘enamored’ of Pius XI only later to fall by him in total disgrace. The third stage came in Rome, through Cardinal Mercier (protector of Modernists), the Superior General of the Company, and Bishop Cerretti. Officially, it is Cardinal Sbarretti who asks Msgr. Benigni to dissolve the S.P. in the name of the Pope; but in reality Cardinal Gasparri took care of everything, as he himself will say.



Bishop Giovanni Volpi

The aforementioned Cardinal would have wanted the dissolution of the S.P. in virtue of Canon 684 which prohibits secret societies (letter by Cardinal Sbaretti of November 10, 1921). Msgr. Benigni's responses providing the documents of approbation for the S.P. on the part of the Consistorial and Pius X himself blocked this maneuver, which would have been a true and certain (defamatory) condemnation. As Poulat recalled many times, the S.P. was **not** a secret society, as the Pope and the Consistorial Congregation were aware of everything and they approved.

The "Integralists" in general, and Msgr. Benigni in particular, are (were) accused of practicing espionage, and were denounced - denunciations more or less slanderous. The truth is, that it is (was) owing to the enemies of the S.P. who were practicing these methods: the German (pro)Modernists had slandered the Integrals, and not in a harmless way (if there is such a thing as harmless slander). To accuse them of espionage in a time of war in order to obtain a sequester puts those slandered-searched at risk of their life. In a less dangerous contest, this fault was repeated by the Jesuits of *Civiltà Cattolica* in accusing Benigni, taking it to the fascist authorities to obtain a search and seizure of his book depository. (POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 460, note 31). As for the denouncers, anonymous more or less, those pro-Modernists - as we have seen - were second to none. It is painful to see "traditionalists" fall into this trap, and repeat the hypocritical accusations of those who reproached the "Integralists" for doing what they themselves were doing in a big way.

The resignation of Bishop Volpi (1919): immoral clergy and modernist clergy ally themselves against a holy bishop

We have already spoken in *Sodalitium* (no. 35, Oct.-Nov. 1993; no. 61, July 2007) of the Servant of God Bishop Giovanni Volpi (Lucca, January 27, 1860 - Rome, July 19, 1931), in a review, among other things, of a biography dedicated to him by a priest from Arezzo, Angelo Tafi. As a spiritual life instructor, a confessor to (saint) Gemma Galgani and (saint) Elena Guerra, considered a saint by Leo XIII who elevated him to the episcopate, Bishop Volpi was, along with Bishop Alfonso Archi, one of the most faithful and most loved Italian bishops to Pius X, who wanted him on the chair of San Donato in Arezzo. However, the death of Pius X and the war put an end to these happy and prosperous years: the cross awaited him. With the election of the Genoese Pope Benedict XV, times had changed, and in 1915 the director of the Catholic Integralist newspaper in Genoa, *La Liguria del popolo*, Father Giovanni Boccardo (1877-1956: he died at the L'Opera don Orione) was forced to leave

that city. Bishop Volpi then welcomed him in Arezzo, as spiritual director of his seminary ⁽⁷⁶⁾. But the refuge did not last long, since the Bishop became the target not by the liberals and Freemasons of the city, but now by Rome itself. Msgr. Francesco Moretti (1854-1926), former vicar general to Bishop Volpi, and consecrated the Bishop of Terni by him in 1905, was, since the days of his studies in Rome, a close friend of the new Pope. The pope, who remained in contact with the Arezzo clergy, gave vent to the rancor coming from the worst elements of the diocese against the Bishop, who was trying to correct immorality among the clergy. Thus in 1917, Benedict XV ordered Abbott Arcangelo Lolli to make an Apostolic visit to the diocese with the purpose of having the Bishop resign. Bishop Volpi left the diocese on May 1, 1919 after having received Benedict XV's formal order to leave Arezzo, and he did so on June 11. Retreating to Rome, without a job (if not considering a canon at Santa Maria Maggiore) he found himself rejected by the Pope who didn't want to see or speak to him. Bishop Volpi accepted it all in a spirit of faith and love for the Pope; one of his successors opened a process for this beatification, entrusting his postulation to the Dominican fathers. Among 13 indictments found against Bishop Msgr. Volpi, one indicates its entire agenda: "*a blind fight against Modernism and Liberalism*". A "fault" that would have earned him - under Pius X - a promotion to more prestigious positions, and which instead became a reason (along with his fight against the immorality of his accusers) for his deepest humiliation. Since 2000 his remains have rested, as he had requested, next to Saint Gemma Galgani, in Lucca.

The birth of the Partito Popolare (1919) and the victory of non-denominationalism.

On January 18, 1919, under the pontificate of Benedict XV, the manifesto of the new Italian Partito Popolare "*L'Appello ai liberi e forti*" [*Appeal to the free and strong*] came to be published, signed by the constituent members of the Party's Provisional Committee: "*Hon. Avv. Giovanni Bertini – Avv. Giovanni Bertone – Stefano Cavazzoni – Rag. Achille Grandi – Count Giovanni Grosoli – Hon. Dr. Giovanni Longinotti – Hon. Avv. Prof. Angelo Mauri – Avv. Umberto Merlin – Hon. Avv. Giulio Rodinò – Count Lawyer Carlo Santucci – Prof. D. Luigi Sturzo, Political Secretary*" Many of these people supported Father Romolo Murri and his Christian Democracy, among them their political director himself, Father Sturzo. If the new party took the name Partito Popolare and not Christian Democracy (as it will do in 1943, after the 'fascist period') this was due, as the Catholic Encyclopedia writes, to the need "*to not recall a past that had lights and shadows and was too much discussed*". In 1919, the link to that past could not be claimed explicitly, however, it was explicitly claimed later, once the battle was won: "*On March 11, 1996, on the via Montecatini 5 (in Rome), a plaque was set into the wall with the following epitaph: 'At the dawn of the twentieth century, in this palace, Romolo Murri elaborated ideas and initiatives for the Catholic-Democratic awakening among new believers. Alcide De Gasperi ⁽⁷⁷⁾ and Luigi Sturzo were immediately fascinated by it, arriving here as fraternal guests*". This plaque, put in

place by Lorenzo Bedeschi, a modernist historian from the University of Urbino, commemorated the day that Romolo Murri, Marc Sangnier (founder of the Sillon) and the future founders of the Partito Popolare (Father Sturzo, 1919) and of the Christian Democrats (De Gasperi, 1943) met on the Aventine hill on September 7, 1900. On the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Father Sturzo (1870, 1970-71), the President of the Republic, Giovanni Gronchi, and the Secretary of the Christian Democrats, Arnaldo Forlani, publicly declared the debt and recognition that the Marche's priest and all Christian Democrats had for Father Murri. For those who are not familiar with Father Murri, I will briefly provide some key points of his career. Born in 1870, ordained in 1893, he followed courses of study by the Marxist philosopher Labriola and in 1894 was one of the promoters of FUCI [Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana](where he became friends with Father Sturzo: "*It was Father Murri who definitively pushed me toward Christian Democracy*"). As mentioned, the Christian Democrat school was inaugurated in 1900, with Sangnier, Father Sturzo, De Gasperi and others. Head of the "youth movement" in the Opera dei Congressi, he found himself in the majority in the Bologna Congress of 1903, protected by the benevolence of Grosoli. But already in 1902 he had manifested the political sense (opposing Leo XIII's encyclical *Graves de communi re* of 1901) of being democratic, with his article *Il crollo di Venezia [the Collapse of Venice]* (against the "old" intransigents like Paganuzzi, which was mostly rooted in Venice) and in his speech in San Marino on *Libertà e Cristianesimo* where he combined his social Modernism (that is, accepting the benefits of the [Italian] Revolution) to his dogmatic one (praising Tyrell and Loisy). Saint Pius X having dissolved the Opera dei Congressi specifically to counter the rise of Murrism, the priest from the Marche in 1905 insisted on the electoral and political participation of Catholics, with a party that was non-denominational and autonomous from the hierarchy, founding the National Democratic League (of which the Honorable Bertini, one of the founders of the P.P.I., was a member) which was also condemned by Saint Pius X the following year (Encyclical *Pieni l'animo*, 1906). And thus came the censures against the modernist priest: his suspension in 1907 and excommunication in 1909. In 1912, the wretched priest, who had become a member of Parliament, married the daughter of the former president of the Norwegian upper house. He joined the Radical Party (the closest to Freemasonry) and later supported fascism, seeing in the Italian Concordat the realization of Cavour's dream; in 1943, the year before his death, he was absolved from his excommunication. Such is the miserable and disgraceful Father of the Christian Democrats and the Partito Popolare, which has done so much harm to Italy and to the Church. But to return to the present theme of this essay or article: what was the attitude of the authority of the Church to the emergence of the Partito Popolare from the end of 1918 to the beginning of 1919? It has been called "quiet assent". Integral Catholics (Benigni, *Fede e Ragione*), heirs of the Saint Pius X line, quickly condemned the Partito Popolare: its declared autonomy, its non denominationalism ⁽⁷⁸⁾, its democratic choice in a political sense, its platform that could be called "social Modernism" (condemned by Pius XI in his first encyclical). The Cardinal Archbishop of Genoa, Tommaso Pio Boggiani, published, as we will now see,

a pastoral letter against the new Party. And the Holy See? Jesuit Father Sale recalls things, albeit in his own way. Upon the birth of the Party (January 18, 1919) "*it came to light after some months of gestation and, apparently, without the direct intervention of the Holy See in the establishment of the political and actionable platform of the new Party*" (p. 19). The "link" with Cardinal Gasparri was Count Carlo Santucci (see note 103), a liberal Catholic, "*personal friend of the Secretary of State*". "*According to the Father Sturzo's testimony, from the very beginning the Vatican gave no opposition to the project*", especially since "*without the annulment of the Non expedit, put into place back in 1874 by the Apostolic Penitentiary, it was impossible for Italian Catholics to approach the political polls or even vote for a Catholic-inspired Party*"; the circumvention of the *non expedit* envisaged by Saint Pius X through the Gentiloni Pact was opposed by Father Murri, Father Sturzo, and Archbishop Della Chiesa, precisely because they preferred a Catholic Party (p.21). Father Sale begins to discuss the development of the P.P.I., mentioning a conference "on post-war problems" held by Father Sturzo before Cardinal Ferrari on November 17, 1918 in Milan: the outcome of the war buried any alliance between the throne and the altar, along with the "Roman Question" itself, and opened the way for a new Catholic party. Cardinal Ferrari then advised Father Sturzo to discuss it with Cardinal Gasparri, who made time to report to the Pope (pp. 22-23). Gasparri consulted Count Della Torre (an enemy of the Integrals) and Cardinal Lafontaine, who both were in favor of abandoning the line held by Pius X (the Gentiloni Pact) and favorable to an unspecified democratic "Catholic Party" (p. 25-27). Then came a second audience with Father Sturzo, now the Mayor of Caltagirone, a little before Christmas of 1918. Gasparri even approved a possible alliance with the socialists (p. 29) and left the responsibility of such an attempt to Father Sturzo; about which in his memoirs he will write: "*The Partito Popolare arose by spontaneous generation without any intervention by the Holy See, neither pro nor con*" (p.31). In 1928, after the entire P.P.I. experience had failed, Gasparri wrote to his friend Santucci: "*you said, en passant, that the Partito Popolare had been formed by Pope Benedict and me; this is not true*"; but what does correspond to the truth is that it was not fought against either. On the contrary, in answer to the question from Cardinal Lafontaine if the faithful could join the party with certainty of conscience and according to the aims of the Holy See, Gasparri replied: "*it is in the aims of the Holy See that Italian Catholics join this party*" (p. 35, pp. 146-147). Benedict XV commissioned a *Nota [examination]* by Father Rosa of the *Civiltà Cattolica* on the P.P.I. in which the defects of the new party's program were examined (pp. 38-39), which however was not only *not* condemned, as we have seen, but in practice was encouraged, awaiting further developments. Thus it was that Father Rosa, Msgr. Olgiati and Father Gemelli (Catholic University) came out in favor of the creation of a "*right wing*" of the P.P.I. which defended the confessional nature of the party, in such a way as to attract into the P.P.I. all those intransigent Catholics in the PPI (Paganuzzi, Sassoli de' Bianchi, Medolago Albani and many others) still faithful to the principles of the Church, and to the Roman question ⁽⁷⁹⁾. Principles were mentioned, but in concrete terms they were made to accept the Party, about which the Secretary of State issued a report, despite a

thousand distinctions, recommending registration (pp. 65, 152-153)⁽⁸⁰⁾, while leaving the bishops to make the final decision for their diocese (pp. 66, 69, 147, 153), qualifying the attitude of the Holy See in this regard as "*benevolent reserve and expectation*" (full text of the report on pp. 148-153). The repeal of the *non expedit* by the Sacred Penitentiary a few days before the November 1919 elections effectively gave the Party the definitive green light (pp. 67-70).

One can then understand the uproar that arose against the position of the Cardinal Archbishop of Genoa in his condemnation of the Partito Popolare. The Cardinal Archbishop of Genoa, Tommaso Pio Boggiani, o.p.⁽⁸¹⁾, named such by the Genoese Benedict XV on January 30, 1919, published a famous Pastoral Letter, "*L'Azione Cattolica and the Partito Popolare*" on July 21, 1920, and then disowned the local Catholic newspaper, *Il Cittadino*, the following November⁽⁸²⁾. Following this aforementioned Pastoral Letter, the Cardinal published various notices, prohibiting the collaboration of any cleric to political parties, including Partito Popolare⁽⁸³⁾. Rome rebuked the Cardinal in July 1921, and on the first of August he issued to his dioceses his seventh and last Pastoral Letter: "*Addio ai genovesi*". Since the letter on the Partito Popolare has been reprinted by us, and at this time the latter is not to be found, I will reproduce part of it, hoping to be able later to publish it in full. Recalling his two years of episcopacy, he recalled his orders "*against the grave danger that non denominational associations present to Christian life*" (p. 297). Then he added: "*In my letter: 'For the return of Society to God' (May 1920) we demonstrated the one sure way to work toward and truly achieve this return of the Society to God. This letter, of most grave and practical importance, was not considered as it deserved to be, perhaps due to the theories of the modern political apostles who would like to lead the Church and faithful along new paths contrived by their wisdom, or better, human ignorance and human pride. And precisely because we had seen that this Genoa of ours had become one of the strongholds of one of these political parties which, even though non denominational, tried in every way to absorb into itself and totally guide our Azione Cattolica, and to involve the clergy and the name Catholic in party politics, we immediately published the other letter: Azione Cattolica and the Partito Popolare Italiano. This letter, most clear and of inexorable logic, was made the subject of the liveliest of controversies, and demonstrated how valuable the passion for politics is even among Catholics and among ecclesiastics themselves. The letter was bitterly contested; it was condemned without being read; our main Catholic newspapers did not even announce it; the supporters of the Partito Popolare, here and abroad, conceived the most hateful anger against Us. We were and are happy to have fulfilled, with the publication of this letter, a very serious duty of our Episcopal ministry, and we were not moved by the storm that arose against Us because of it. On the other hand, amidst such a storm of disapproval and condemnation, we have had and have now the consolation of knowing that the letter was not and is neither disapproved nor condemned by Him, who alone would have had the right to do so.*" The Cardinal then reported on the hostility that existed even

before his arrival in the diocese, the criticisms of the clergy and that of the lay “non denominationalists”. “*This letter - he went on - touches on too many passions and too much interest, and if, at the time, it left those affected disconcerted, it did not take long to provoke the bitterest anger and the most ferocious war against Us. They swore vengeance to Us, and did not pardon this letter.*” The Cardinal then went on to speak about the warning against the *Cittadino*. The newspaper then published a courtesy telegram from the Secretary of State, trying in vain to turn the Pope against the bishop. The notifications to the clergy regarding the P.P.I. unleashed the populace to oppose the Cardinal in



Father Sturzo together with the founders of the Partito Popolare

Genoa and in Rome, arousing the Genoese clergy and Azione Cattolica itself against the archbishop’s provisions, writing that the prelate should be removed. “*In such a way, with all the discontents united, that unfair and silent war began and continued against us, which spread and intensified in a truly shameful way, and with such art as to induce in many people the conviction that the observations, complaints and accusations brought against Us had made a breakthrough, and that Our situation, before the Supreme Roman Authorities, was now shaken and unsustainable. The malice used in fighting Us in incredible. Nothing was spared Us. (...) We will not speak of the anonymous letters sent to Rome against Us, nor of the very numerous ones addressed to Ourselves; even these are not all written by common people. We will just say that several of these were so brazen and obscene, that we don’t believe demons from hell could write worse. Thus, We could and can take from the words of Saint Paul: ‘We have become the scum of the earth, and the refuse of the world. (1 Cor. 4:13)’*” Recognizing the impossibility of doing good for the diocese, impeded by his slanderers, the Cardinal made the decision to resign⁽⁸⁴⁾. As we will also see later, in speaking about *Fede e Ragione*, the event had a sequel, when private letters by Benedict XV to Cardinal Boggiani became public (*La Tribuna*, February 4, 1922, see Sale, pp. 170-171). The first dates back to August 22, 1920, and says among other things: “*In the past few weeks Your Eminence has been in the newspapers: **I believe that you have done well to put things in order: Your Eminence’s Pastoral is a document which will be cited if ever those PPIs will dare to claim the title of Catholic party.***” At the Congress of the Diocesan Councils in Rome, a representative of the P.P.I. opposed Benedict XV to Cardinal Boggiani, but the Genoese delegates, led by the Hon. Rocco Gambaro, left the hall in protest. The Genoese Pope then wrote to Boggiani on June 19, 1921, sending him a ring as a sign of his benevolence, and appointing Gambaro Knight Commander. Finally, when in

August of the same year, it was said that Cardinal Boggiani left Genoa at the command of Benedict XV (and therefore as a punishment), the Pope wrote to him: “*Eminence, I received today - August 1, 1921 - your letter of the 28th of last month. Needless to say that your decision, although not unexpected, saddens me: But I confirm that Cardinals are priests of the Roman Church, and that therefore they can choose to reside in Rome. Lord bless us all! Your most affectionate, Benedictus PP. XV*”. The Cardinal wished for the letters to be published, but only after the death of the Pope (January 22, 1922) and after the conclave had elected his successor (opened February 2), and thus this was done on February 2, 1922, as mentioned. The attitude of Benedict XV with regard to Cardinal Boggiani confirms that the Pope did not share the platform laid out by the Partito Popolare, and congratulated the Cardinal on his opposition to them (unlike some Eminent Cardinals ⁽⁸⁵⁾). Such is the doctrinal point. In practice, however, following his Secretary of State, he let things run in a state of “*benevolent expectation*”, without any condemnation, actually favoring the rise of the Party which soon colonized Azione Cattolica, which still remained under the control of the hierarchy as well. Under Pius XI, the P.P. was sacrificed to the Lateran Pact, but Azione Cattolica was not sacrificed, nor obviously could this be done without renouncing the freedom of the Church: unfortunately, as mentioned, even Azione Cattolica was soon taken over by the exponents the P.P., especially after the Party had been dissolved by the government. From those anti-fascist ranks, Christian Democracy was born in 1943, and enlivened again (but worsened) the deeds of the P.P., and it made Father Murri’s dream come true. From these ranks emerged the young Giovanni Battista Montini, whose father, friend of Father Semeria ⁽⁸⁶⁾, was a deputy of the P.P.I. It was one of the founders of the Party, the Brescian Giovanni Maria Longinotti (1876-1944) who opened doors to young Montini in the Vatican, facilitating his entrance into the Academy of Ecclesiastic Nobles and to the Secretariat of State, and then to the ecclesial career that followed ⁽⁸⁷⁾. Rereading again today the long deposition of the Hon. Longinotti at the process for the beatification of Pius X, one is impressed by the hatred and contempt the popular deputy had for the Holy Pontiff, ignorantly dealing with the intransigent Catholics, tied to a temporalist past, anti-modernists, persecutors of Grosoli and the “Trust”; and thus we fully realize the environment in which the young Montini grew up ⁽⁸⁸⁾.

We must sadly conclude (*nefas est ab inimicis discere*)[*it is wrong to learn from enemies*] that Antonio Gramsci, the intellectual reference point for Italian Communism, was more foresighted than Cardinal Gasparri when, with regard to the nascent Partito Popolare, he wrote in *Ordine Nuovo* these words on November 1, 1919, which later became quite famous: “*The constitution of the Partito Popolare has great importance and significance in the history of the Italian nation. With it came the process of the spiritual renewal of the Italian people, which denies and overcomes Catholicism, which escapes from the dominion of religious myth and creates a culture and bases its historical action on human motives, on real immanent and operating forces within society itself, it takes on an organic form, it is personified widely in the great masses. The constitution of the Partito Popolare is equivalent to the Germanic*

Reformation, it is the unconscious, irresistible explosion of the Italian Reformation. (...) *The Popolari represented a necessary phase in the process of development of the Italian proletariat toward communism. (...) Democratic Catholicism does what socialism could not: it amalgamates, orders, vivifies, and commits suicide.* Having assumed a form, becoming a real power, the crowds merge together with the conscious social masses, becoming their normal continuation. What would have been impossible for individuals, becomes possible for vast formations. Having become society, acquiring an awareness of their real strength, these individuals understand the superiority of the Socialist motto: ‘The emancipation of the proletariat will be the work of the proletariat itself’, and **they will want to do it themselves, and they will develop their own forces by themselves, and they will no longer want intermediaries, they will no longer want shepherds of authority, but they understand that they move by their own impulse: they become men, in the modern sense of the word, men who draw the principles of their actions from their own consciences, men who smash idols, who decapitate God.** Thus the impetuous advance of the Partito Popolare does not scare the socialists, nor does the new party which pits its six hundred thousand members against the sixty thousand members of the Socialist Party. **The Popolari are to the socialists what Kerensky is to Lenin; the XXV legislature of the Italian Parliament will see the defeat of their rapid political formations, based on the impulsive hunger for power of the peasants, as seen in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Russia.** Gramsci was ‘prophetic’, even if only partially. Christian Democracy opened the door, first to secularism, then to socialism, and finally to the historical compromise with communism, in a “drift to the left” that is essential to it ⁽⁸⁹⁾; it created an “adult Catholic” who no longer needs the guidance of the hierarchy and the authority of the Church (autonomy); it opened the way to the heirs of the Protestant Reformation (non denominationalism). What Gramsci did not see is that Democratic Catholicism and the left itself would become, as they have become, “a mass radical party” (destruction of the family, divorce, abortion, civil unions, ‘civil rights’ and so on) . Monsignor Benigni was very clear about the danger, thus he fought all his life (he who came from the ranks of the authentic Leonine “Christian democracy”) against the “White International” or rather the international union of social modernists: in Italy, in France (against the heirs of the Sillon), in Germany and elsewhere. For this reason he was marginalized starting in the 1920s; accused of dividing the Catholic front because he criticized the social modernists (naming names and surnames) believed to be “excellent and faithful Catholics”. History and events, unfortunately, have proved him right.

The turning point for the Catholic press: Integral press and Penetrative press

We have already noted the importance that the issue of the Catholic press had in the modernist crisis under Saint Pius X. With the Catholic-liberal press now merged into the vast field of the secular press, the Catholic press, originally united in an intransigent position, had slowly divided into a “papal” press, a “clerical” press under “integral” Pius X , and a press that Father Nitoglia would call moderate, and which was then called “penetrative” or “trendy”, largely gathered within a “Trust” controlled by

Grosoli Pironi through the *Società Editrice Romana*. This division of the Catholic press corresponded to the preceding division in the Opera dei Congressi when, as we recall, to combat the Murrian infiltration, Saint Pius X dissolved the Opera presided over by Grosoli in 1904, who then in 1907 founded the so-called “Trust” of the *Società Editrice Romana* supported by the *Banco di Roma*. The “integral” press fought with “unfurled flags”, according to the happy expression of Saint Pius X himself, but it had few readers, and only staunchly Catholic ones. The “penetrative” press, rather, intended to become similar to the secular press in order to “penetrate” and spread into other circles. The intelligent anti-modernism of Msgr. Benigni had found the right solution to this dilemma in which there was found an integral Catholic press, but not very widespread, and a more widespread press, but increasingly less Catholic. Msgr. Benigni’s solution consisted in this: defense of the “integral” press and condemnation of the “Trust”, on the one hand; and on the other, an effective press service (like *Corrispondenza Romana*, then *Correspondance de Rome*) to express the position of the Holy See (neither official, nor officially informal) made available to the Catholic and secular press throughout the entire world; and finally “injections” of good Catholic information into the secular press through the good services of friendly journalists: the formula was successful, and it is known, in fact, that the modernist cause was not viewed highly by the secular world, certainly less than expected, and moreover that this world, almost totally ignorant of religious questions, was happy to receive “unofficial” information under the table from Vatican circles ⁽⁹⁰⁾. Saint Pius X, who, through Cardinal Merry del Val, supported this initiative by Msgr. Benigni then publicly defended the true integral press and fought the “penetrative” one (warning of December 2, 1912). Father Nitoglia, who like me, was formed in the 1970s at the counterrevolutionary school of Alleanza Cattolica and its magazine *Cristianità* (with all its limitations, which we wrote about in *Sodalitium*, and before the modernist turn of the 1980s), should know these clear words of Saint Pius X, addressed to the parish priest of Casalpusterlengo on October 20, 1912:

*“As for the newspapers, if you preach against the bad ones and spread the good ones as much as you can, **dissuading association with or the reading of those of the so-called Trust**, you fulfill your duty as a good parish priest, and you will be doing not only what the Pope wants, but that which good Catholic sense demands. In fact, how can one approve certain newspapers which, with the hidden label of Catholic because they sometimes report pontifical receptions or Vatican notes, not only never say a word about the freedom and independence of the Church, but pretend not to notice the continuous war that is being waged against it? Newspapers which not only do not combat the errors that envelop society, but contribute to the confusion of ideas and maxims divergent from orthodoxy, which lavish incense on the idols of the day, praise books, businesses and men harmful to religion? We generously pity (if in good faith) those poor deluded people who believe they are preventing the reading of bad newspapers by replacing them with these so-called tolerant half-tone and colorless newspapers, which, while they do not convert a single one of our adversaries (who are resentful at the very appearance of Catholicism) they cause the greatest damage to the good, who seek the light and find only darkness, who are in need of*

*nourishment but swallow poison, and rather than the truth and the strength to remain firm in the faith, they find arguments for becoming careless, apathetic, and indifferent in matters of such importance. Oh, how much damage these newspapers do to the Church and to souls! And how much responsibility especially in the clergy who spread them, encourage them, recommend them! The truth does not want any frills, **our flag must be unfurled**: and with loyalty alone and frankness we will be able to do some little good, so fought against by our adversaries, but respected by them, in such a way as to win their admiration and a little at a time return them to good. These are my sentiments, which you may be able, on occasion, to make known to anyone who needs them, assuring them that these are the thoughts of the Pope, who heartily imparts His Apostolic Blessing.⁽⁹¹⁾*

Saint Pius X's warnings to the Lombard Bishops (July 1, 1911) and the letter just cited from the following year, did not, however, have their hoped-for effect. The Pope then turned to the priests of the *Unione apostolica* on November 18, 1912, complaining that many priests said they loved the Pope, but then they failed to follow his directives and desires⁽⁹²⁾. The heartfelt address was followed by a "Warning", published in the A.A.S. December 2, 1912, of which I transcribe the text:

"To remove any misunderstanding that certain newspapers are creating among the clergy and the faithful, it is here declared that the Holy See does not recognize as being in compliance with the pontifical directives and the norms of the Letter of His Holiness to the Lombard episcopate, dated 1 July 1911, the following newspapers: L'Avvenire d'Italia, Il Momento, Il Corriere d'Italia, Il Corriere di Sicilia, L'Italia, and others of the same kind, regardless of the intentions of some esteemed people who direct and help them."

The "Integral" press were triumphant, the "moderates" whined. Not a few prelates disagreed with Pius X's note, like Cardinal Gasparri and Bishop Della Chiesa⁽⁹³⁾.

But their roles were reversed when Cardinal Gasparri became Benedict XV's Secretary of State. Vannoni writes in *Cristianità* (n. 14, 1975): "*Gasparri was linked to the trust circles for a long time; when he heard of their renunciation he was very saddened (G. Spadolini, Il Cardinal Gasparri e la questione romano, Florence, 1972, p. 50), and having become Secretary of State under Benedict XV, he hastened to officially declare that the Warning of Saint Pius X did not have the value of a prohibition.*"

Not waiting an instant: on November 6, 1914 (not even three months after the death of Pius X), he [Gasparri] wrote to Carlo Falcini, Bishop of San Miniato:

"I received the precious document dated October 31st in which his Most Reverend Excellence explains that 'some of the best parish



Giovanni Grosoli Pironi, founder of the "Trust" of the Catholic press.

priests of this Diocese, moved by the desire to halt and reduce the spread of bad press, would like to widely promote subscriptions and readership of the newspapers of the Roman Publishing Company and for their tranquility and quiet ask whether they can freely do this in conscience, and therefore whether the well-known ‘Warning’ had any sense of prohibition’. After duly reporting it to the Holy Father, I fulfill the Pontifical task of informing you that the aforementioned ‘Warning’ did not have the character of a prohibition. ⁽⁹⁴⁾”

Faith is not needed to demonstrate continuity between Pius X's Warning and Cardinal Gasparri's Note: a discontinuity would not involve faith; however, this continuity can be defended by strictly adhering to the words of the two documents: the Warning, strictly speaking, did not contain an explicit and formal prohibition or placing on the Index. However, if we place ourselves in the perspective of continuity in the contingent politics of the Pontificates, the discontinuity, then, is evident. Saint Pius X intended to promote the avowedly Catholic press, and oppose that of the Grosolian “Trust”; the Letter from the Secretariat of State had the opposite purpose. And in fact this was the case: the “Integral” press was gradually not only abandoned, but strangled, while that of the “Trust” (and similar press) was supported with every moral means; (Gasparri's Letter evidently aroused the enthusiasm of newspapers that had previously been renounced, especially since the secular press, less used to clerical subtleties, bluntly wrote that the Warning had been withdrawn). Benedict XV himself attests to this, disappointed and saddened by the disheartening outcome of this support for the *Società Editrice Romana*:

“*The Holy See* – the Pope wrote to the bishop of Bologna, Cardinal Gusmini – *is exhausted and indignant; Exhausted, because in 1916 it gave three million [lira] for these newspapers... To me it seems no small thing! Indignant, because in September one million two hundred thousand lire was taken from me, saying that with this sum, the Banco di Roma would carry out a saving operation... but the operation was not carried out. I am saddened by the cessation of the newspapers, although the praise for their supposed services to the Catholic cause cannot be exaggerated.* ⁽⁹⁵⁾”

However, disillusionment with the “penetrative” press did not prevent Cardinal Gasparri from working hard to discredit and, if possible, close down the integral press, as we will see in the cases of *La Riscossa* and *Fede e Ragione* in Italy, and of *Actualité Catholique* in France.

Let us therefore examine a few examples:

- The case of *La Riscossa*: *La Riscossa* submitted to the bishop (3 October 1914)
- The case of *Fede e Ragione*: the pains of *Fede e Ragione* (1919-1929)
- The case of the *Actualité Catholique* (1921) (and of the *R.I.S.S.*).



Adriano Navarotto, director of “Il Berico” of The Integral press

Bishop Rodolfi's revenge on *La Riscossa* of the Scotton brothers

We have already seen - in speaking about the pontificate of Saint Pius X - how the Bishop of Vicenza waged war on the integral diocesan press (*La Riscossa, Il Berico*) as well as the non diocesan (*L'Unita Cattolica*). In September 1913 came their formal denunciation to Secretary of State (Merry del Val) accusing the said newspapers of injury, calumny, sacrilege, and scandal for the faithful (PERIN, pp. 670-671). But “*the epilogue of the story between the two leaders of the intransigent press in Vicenza and Bishop Rodolfi took place in August 1914*” that is, after the death of Saint Pio X. “*The Bishop obtained the approval of the Holy See to forbid Gottardo Scotton from writing in La Riscossa, which shortly thereafter, despite Andrea Scotton's appeal to the Consistorial*” (De Lai could no longer defend them) “*was first forced to transfer the administrative and management headquarters to Turin, and, on 8 January 1916, to definitively cease publications*”. Thus ended the newspaper so desired by Leo XIII and supported by Pius X, who was a personal friend, like Don Bosco, of the three brother monsignors. “*Even Il Berico stopped receiving any support from Rome and suspended publication on May 23, 1915*”. “*The crackdown imposed by the new Pope*” and “*the reversal of the balance of power*” is well expressed by the famous and sad letter by Bishop Rodolfi to Msgr. Andrea Scotton on December 8, 1914. Let's remember that the writer was a friend of Fogazzaro, and the one receiving the letter was a friend of Leo XIII, Don Bosco, and Pius X: “*You ask me why not allow and tolerate your work of writing and editing La Riscossa. Before I answer you, I think it's best to say a very frank word about your periodical. I have only known La Riscossa since the time I was in Vicenza, that is, since 1911, and I am only talking about these years. I do not judge your intentions, nor distinguish the responsibilities of individual editors. I take La Riscossa as it is printed, according to the fruits borne in my diocese from my personal experience, and in other dioceses from the judgment of their respective bishops. And I declare that La Riscossa in these years was **fatal to religion, harmful to the cause of the Church and dishonorable to the Papacy**, whose name it too much abused. La Riscossa has often neglected to fight the enemies of the Church and the errors against the faith, and has turned its weapons against the soldiers of the Christian army and against its own leaders, the bishops. Nor did it hesitate to attack even its own diocesan Ordinary and to ply with ridicule that most worthy priest who, with episcopal authority, directed Catholic action in the diocese. **All these are criminal actions**. And I add, Monsignor, that I saw La Riscossa squander the honor of venerable people, poison the souls of very zealous and eminent prelates, I saw it sow the seed of discord among the clergy and **insinuate rebellion against the legitimate authority of the Church**. **And these too are wicked actions**. I recall them here because even now, despite the encyclical of Holy Father Benedict XV being so clear and so decisive, I have noted that La Riscossa does not intend to completely abandon the path of the past: and I had already once had to lament some articles in opposition to the orders of the Holy Father. And I must regret having seen, in these same days, one of my provisions violated and having had to write four times to obtain compliance with another. You*”

are also the parish priest of one of the most important parishes in the diocese, you are invested with the benefice and have very serious obligations of rigorous justice. See, Monsignor, that you might be ignoring them, so as to attend to a publication that has caused so much trouble and done so much harm. (...)" (PERIN pp. 677-681; AZZOLIN, pp. 354-384 with the text of Andrea Scotton's appeal to the Consistorial). Pius X had been dead less than four months: let the reader judge whether this letter from the Bishop, friend of the modernist Fogazzaro, is moderate, paternal, charitable.

The suffering of *Fede e Ragione*

"Even the Fiesole magazine Fede e Ragione was just as hostile against Benedict XV's legacy. It was constantly being called to order by Gasparri, until its definitive closing in December 1929. On March 6, 1922, Cardinal Gasparri addressed a circular letter to the bishops of Italy, warning them against Fede e Ragione's irreverent statements with regard to the memory of Benedict XV. According to Gasparri, the integrals distinguish the papacy (a venerable and permanent institution) from the Pope (a mortal and transitory person): a pretext actually used to criticize Benedict XV and Pius XI, while at the same time claiming faithful obedience to the cause of the Holy See" (N. VALBOUSQUET, op. cit., p. 458). This distinction between "Sede" and "Sedente" ["Seat" and "Seating"], typically Gallican and conciliarist, is surprising in the mouths of integral Catholics and ultramontanists, who in theory profess the greatest absolute devotion to the Papacy; in practice, however, they are aligned against the reigning Pope. This is one of the least attractive or most contradictory points in the history of the S.P." (Father Nitoglia in his conclusion to Part Two).

There would be much to say about the ten years (1919-1929) of an exceptional publication like *Fede e Ragione*, which saw the collaboration of Father Paolo de Töth, Msgr. Benigni, Filippo Sassoli de' Bianchi, Father Mattiussi and Father Colletti, and many others (among them Tito Casini and Piero Bargellini). But I will dwell on the one episode quoted by Father Nitoglia (who, even here, forgets the interpretation given by *Cristianità*, No. 14 in 1975, and instead recalls the more recent version and interpretation by the cultural representative of Jewish institutions, Nina Valbousquet). We are speaking about the letter by Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri "to the Bishops of Italy" of March 6, 1922. And here there is already a factual error: the letter, as we will see, was not sent to all the Bishops of Italy, but only to some of them. Let's begin by publishing in full the circular letter by the Secretary of State who sent it under the Pontificate of Pius XI, but which concerns an accusation that had to do with the memory of Benedict XV:

“Denunciations and complaints have been received by the Holy See from Cardinals, Bishops and other figures against the periodical *“Fede e Ragione”* for inappropriate and irreverent commentaries on the Venerated memory of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XV. Equally, it has been observed that the periodical in question has baselessly spread alarmist news, inspired by motives that are not in harmony with the program it claims to pursue. Serious information had already reached the Holy See for some time regarding some people employed in the offices of the periodical itself, and it was also noted that it does not carry any approval from the Ecclesiastical Authority of the place where it is printed, and where the Management and Administration offices are located. It surely is known to V.S. [your excellencies] about the campaign carried out by the paper in question against the Catholic University of Milan. It is deemed useful to inform Your Most Illustrious Excellencies of all this.”



Msgr. Andrea Scotton

Gianni Vannoni commented on this in *Cristianità*: “In 1924 the *Corriere Vicentino* published Gasparri's letter, provoking the intervention of Bishop Fossà [of Fiesole], who replied in this way: ‘Used to having nothing to say about journalistic squabbles, however, for the protection of the truth, for the honor of my priests, and a little also of my dignity and authority, which, albeit indirectly, is offended by the *Corriere Vicentino* in its controversy with *Fede e Ragione*, I believe not only to be my right, but also my duty to intervene. The *Corriere Vicentino* should therefore know that the accusations formulated in a letter from the Secretariat of State, which it made public, even though it was a confidential document, **and which I only knew about second hand, it not having been made known to me in any way by the superior ecclesiastical authority;** as to the said accusations, I must say that I myself presented due justifications to those in the right, and I have good reason to believe that they were exhaustive. To judge the truth and reliability of certain accusations spread by interested adversaries against *Fede e Ragione*, among other things, the charge was made that it was published without ecclesiastical revision; suffice it to say that, since its reception, I myself have assigned a special censor to them. And the *Corriere Vicentino* should also reflect this: that if the Bishop of Fiesole, who in love, veneration, deference and obedience to the Supreme Authority of the Church and all its acts, hopes to not to be second to anyone, continued and still continues to give his support to *Fede e Ragione*, an entirely Catholic periodical that fully responds to pontifical directives, and if the Bishop of Fiesole is joined by other bishops and Cardinals, who praise and approve of the same principles and doctrine, all this has a meaning that should not escape the *Corriere Vicentino* or at least should make it more prudent and more circumspect.’”



Father Paolo de Töth

I could say more, but this seems to me to be enough." This letter by Bishop Fossà, Bishop of Fiesole, to *Corriere Vicentino*, made clear two things: that the circular by the Cardinal Secretary of State against *Fede e Ragione* was sent to bishops in dioceses unrelated to the magazine, but not to the one person who was the Ordinary where the magazine itself resided, and to whom eventual measures should have to be taken; secondly, that the assertion that the Fiesole magazine did not carry ecclesiastical approval from the place where the magazine was published, and where was located the offices of its director and administration, was false news (and accusations) at least as far as it concerned the management and administration offices which were located in Fiesole, as the Fiesole Bishop responded, who

not only approved them, but who had delegated, as was his right, an ecclesiastical censor (Canon Biagioli). Father Nitoglia should have remembered this when rereading Vannoni, both in *Cristianità* (1975) and in the volume edited by Margiotta Broglio (1977, pp. 463-464), which he also knows and which, on other occasions, he cites. But instead, other documents on the issue are cited by an author whom Father Nitoglia knows well. I am referring to Father Giovanni Sale s.j., the historian of *Civiltà Cattolica*, who was not at all kind to Msgr. Benigni. He published three documents regarding this matter in his book "*Popolari e destra cattolica al tempo di Benedetto XV*"⁽⁹⁶⁾. All three date from 1922, the time of the circular by Cardinal Gasparri which, let's remember, was sent neither to *Fede e Ragione* nor the Bishop of Fiesole. The first document is a letter by the editor of *Fede e Ragione*⁽⁹⁷⁾ of June 20, 1922, sent ostensibly to the Bishop of Vicenza (the notorious Bishop Rodolfi, friend of Fogazzaro and enemy to the Scottons) who at that time forwarded it on August 30 to the Secretary of State (AA.EE.SS); the second is an article signed by Paolo de Gislumberti who Sale mistakenly thought was a pseudonym of de Töth⁽⁹⁸⁾, published in the *Tribuna* on February 4, 1922, regarding the pastoral letter by Cardinal Boggiani against Partito Popolare; the third is a letter by Filippo Sassoli de' Bianchi, sent from Bologna to Cardinal Gasparri on March 29, 1922. I would love to print all three documents, but I am constrained by space to provide a summary, responding to Cardinal Gasparri's points.

First of all, the accusation of "having published writings irreverent to the memory of Benedict XV". "*It is absolutely untrue - wrote the editor of Fede e Ragione - and, quite the opposite, it is absolutely false, that Fede e Ragione published writings irreverent to the memory of Benedict XV. 'F e R' always ensured to make the documents of the Pontiff known, and every time it had the opportunity to talk about them, it always spoke with respect and love, as befits Catholics to speak about the Pope, and encouraged everyone to follow his norms and directives. The 'F e R' is ready to testify to all of this.*" How these words are reconciled with the accusations made by Father Nitoglia of "virulence" and "irreverence" towards the legacy and memory of Benedict XV is not known. But then, on what was

Cardinal Gasparri's accusation based? Here comes the best part. F.e.R.'s fault had been that of publishing (**after** the Genoese *Secolo XIX* and *Liguria del Popolo*, and after the Roman *Tribuna* - in the article by P. de Gislumberti's mentioned above) the letters of Benedict XV to Cardinal Boggiani, then the Archbishop of Genoa, regarding his pastoral letter against the Partito Popolare. These letters congratulated the Cardinal, and their posthumous publication (made at the beginning of a new pontificate) was recommended by *very eminent people*, among whom it is not hard to imagine that Cardinal Boggiani himself was. Writing to Cardinal Gasparri, Sassoli argued "*We regret that such publication (as Your Most Reverend Eminence writes to me) was 'objected to by Cardinals and bishops', but it is no less true that (...) other Cardinals and bishops were very happy that these very important documents were known, because they destroy falsehoods and misunderstandings harmful to the true Catholic cause. Moreover, those who shouted the most against their publication were those who never hesitated to integrate the deceased Pontiff into their base and did not cease their campaign of slander against the Most Eminent Cardinal Boggiani...*" The F.e.R. concludes: "*That publication, anything but offensive, was the defense of Benedict XV's conduct in the face of the same party. Everyone knows, in fact, the effort made by the liberal and Masonic press in order to make people believe that the P.P.I was created and desired by Benedict XV, and the identical statement made recently in this regard, specifically during the commemoration of the same Pontiff in Genoa made by the popular Honorable Boggiano-Pico, that is, that the P.P.I had the explicit approval of the Holy See since its inception.*" So from this we must deduce that Cardinal Gasparri's attributing to Benedict XV an approval of Father Sturzo's P.P.I. is not an offense, while demonstrating that it wasn't so by publishing the letters of the Pope was an offense to his memory! And so we ask Father Nitoglia what he thinks, and whether it is an offense to say that the Pope approved the Partito Popolare, or to say that he disapproved of it.

The second accusation, in regards to an article by the F.e.R. on the inauguration of the Catholic University. (*The Catholic University of Milan*, in *Fede e Ragione*, no. 3, January 15, 1922). Cardinal Gasparri wrote to Sassoli that "*the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan*" on becoming Pius XI "*was dissatisfied with that article.*" Sassoli answered him by saying that the entire F.e.R. was saddened by having displeased the Bishop and now Pontiff, but explained that the article did welcome the founding of the new University, and praised the speeches made on that occasion by Cardinals Ratti and Maffi. Others, recalled the editor, were the objections regarding: "*the purely political character of the solemnity*", as the Hon. Meda himself deplored; the invitation of the Hon. Anile (P.P.I.) "*a Crocean and Hegelian philosopher*" (and, as the article demonstrated, a collaborator of the Theosophical Society)⁽⁹⁹⁾ and not "*a representative of Catholic science*" to speak on behalf of the government. Finally, the article deplored the fact that one of the main exponents of modernism, Barnabite Father Giovanni Semeria⁽¹⁰⁰⁾, had been invited to hold a conference at the inauguration of the Catholic University (an event of capital importance for the Church and Italy), and another politician from the Partito Popolare, the Hon. Egilberto Martire⁽¹⁰¹⁾, to the point that, the integralist magazine wrote, it seemed that it was the

inauguration of "a *University of the Partito Popolare*" rather than that of a "Catholic university". Furthermore, the Hon. Martire spoke about ... a supporter of Mazzini and the Roman Republic, Goffredo Mameli, who died (of friendly fire) fighting against the Pope. His presumed conversion made Mameli, his anthem [the Italian National Anthem], his political heritage, with retroactive effect become "one of ours", that is, a true Catholic; the unhealthy patriotism of the Hon. Martire (which led him to join the National Center) [a liberal political group, ed] even made him embrace the memory of the Porta Pia and September 20th. F.e.R. concluded that Pius XI's recent letter to the Catholic University showed "*the correspondence of our thinking with the pontifical thinking.*" ⁽¹⁰²⁾

The third accusation is that the periodical did not have ecclesiastical approval.

The magazine was managed in Fiesole, and the printing office in the diocese of Acquapendente. It was easy to demonstrate that the Bishop of Fiesole, without Gasparri even asking about it, had approved the magazine and had equipped it with an ecclesiastical censor, while the Bishop of Acquapendente had not cared about it, leaving that task to [the bishop of] Fiesole.

The fourth accusation was "of having spread alarmist rumors".

The Cardinal did not specify what this was about, so the editorial staff chose not to respond. Sassoli de' Bianchi, did respond, rather, by writing to Cardinal Gasparri. It concerned the banking crisis by the Banco di Roma, presided over by Senator Carlo Santucci (close to the P.P.I. and to the Cardinal himself, who then, in fact, obtained its rescue from the fascist government, by which, therefore, the bank lost its characteristic as a Catholic bank) ⁽¹⁰³⁾ which threatened to drag into ruin many ecclesiastical entities that relied on the bank. The crisis, wrote Sassoli, was in the public domain and the article "*recorded realities that were then well known and recorded by the press*". Catholic banks infiltrated by non-Catholics will subsequently suffer scandalous failures (think of the Giuffrè case, God's banker, the Calvi case and the Banco Ambrosiano, Sindona, Marcinkus...should one have remained silent in these cases too?)

As can be seen, the accusations by the Secretary of State were patently unfounded, even if Cardinal Gasparri and Pius XI himself had to deal with the issue after the responses that we have mentioned ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾, and the Secretary of State, through Msgr. Borgoncini Duca, Secretary of Extraordinary Affairs, asked Father Rosa



s.j. of the *Civiltà Cattolica* in September 1922, for a report on the magazine ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. Many conjectures have been made as to the reason for their closure, which occurred at the end of 1929 ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. The opening of the “Benigni Files” and the archives of that period give documentary answers to the question debated up until now. In 1924 Bishop Rodolfi of Vicenza and Bishop Longhin of Treviso complained about the activities of Father De Töth in the Veneto region, and Bishop Longhin opened an investigation. In 1925, the Patriarch of Venice, Archbishop Lafontaine, towards the end of the investigation, asked Cardinal Gasparri to close the magazine; who then put pressure on Bishop Fossà. In 1926, the new director of a no-longer intransigent *Unità Cattolica*, Ernesto Calligari (Mikròs), evidently backed by Gasparri, launched a ferocious journalistic campaign against the previous director de Töth. The controversy ended with a public retraction by Calligari, but on the other hand with de Töth’s resignation from the directorship of F.e.R. replaced by his friend Sassoli, who had been the lightning rod for the Fiesole magazine ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾. In 1927-1928, the controversy raised by Father Rosa in *Civiltà Cattolica* against Msgr. Benigni and the old Sodalitium Pianum raged, which involved de Töth and *Fede e Ragione*, (while in France, and reflexively in Rome, the matter of *Action Française* was at its peak). The coup de grace came in 1929 for reasons completely unrelated to the Conciliation. The casus belli were the F.e.R.’s articles against the activities of Francisque Gay, a long time collaborator of Marc Sangnier and a militant Christian Democrat, well-credited, however, for his opposition to *Action Française*. One of his collaborators in Rome, Msgr. René Fontenelle, denounced F.e.R. to Cardinal Gasparri on December 2, and he, after only two days, threatened director Sassoli de’ Bianchi: “*I am authorized to add that if, once again, your magazine indulges in superficial and unjust judgments about things and people, appropriate measures will be taken without delay against the editor and the magazine itself.*” “*Gasparri’s direct pressure was decisive in the complete closure of the magazine,*” commented Nina Valbousquet ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. It is sad to note that F.e.R. was closed under pressure from the Secretariat of State with the intention of defending a veteran of the Sillon, that “*miserable tributary of the great movement of apostasy, organized, in all countries, for the establishment of a universal Church*” condemned by Saint Pius X (*Notre charge apostolique*, n. 40).

Father Paolo de Töth ceased journalistic activity, and retired to the parish of San Martino in Maiano (about 400 souls) where he remained as pastor, from 1930 to his death in December 1965. Even Cardinal Gasparri was dismissed by Pius XI in 1930: the bitter words he addressed to the pontiff on this occasion (“they chased me away like a dog”) ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ demonstrated how, moderate or not, it is easy for everyone to command, but difficult to obey. He died in 1934, a few months after Msgr. Benigni.

The case of *La Vigie*. The disappearance of the integral press in France (under Benedict XV and Pius XI)

The intervention of the Secretariat of State against *Fede e Ragione* demonstrates that the suppression of the integral press was not just a local phenomenon, due to the malice of a bishop (such as Bishop Rodolfi in Vicenza) but was at the direction of a pontificate. Logically, therefore, the phenomenon should be found in all nations. We have already seen the difficulties encountered by *La Vigie* under Saint Pius X, in 1912 and 1914, due to the malevolence of the Archbishop of Paris (however, at that time Rome protected the integral press); *La Vigie* (whose first issue dates back to December 5, 1912 and which received the apostolic blessing of Saint Pius X on March 26, 1913) ceased publication due to the war on August 6, 1914. However, when an attempt was made to reorganize the group (abbé Boulin, Henri Merlier, Jacques Rocafort) under the patronage of Msgr. Lepercq, founding *L'Actualité Catholique*, the initiative lasted only from February to June of 1921. This time the closure was not prompted by the Parisian Ordinary (Cardinal Dubois, successor to Cardinal Amette, was benevolent, unlike his predecessor) but by the “*formal desire of the Holy See*”, or rather by Cardinal Gasparri through the nuncio Bonaventura Cerretti⁽¹¹⁰⁾: “*Integrism is dead in Italy, we do not want to see it reborn in France*”⁽¹¹¹⁾. The roles were reversed: if at first Rome protected and Paris persecuted, now it was Rome who asked for the closure while Paris had nothing to complain about. Apart from the local press, and Msgr. Benigni’s Roman bulletins also written in French, the integral Catholic press in France had to take refuge with the *Revue Internationale des Sociétés Secrètes* (R.I.S.S.) of Msgr. Ernest Jouin (1844-1932), a parish priest of Saint-Augustin in Paris⁽¹¹²⁾. The magazine, which still enjoys great fame in some traditionalist circles⁽¹¹³⁾, was born on January 1, 1912, its publication suspended during the First World War, it resumed in 1920⁽¹¹⁴⁾ and closed definitively during the Second World War. Praised and recommended by Cardinal Gasparri himself on behalf of Benedict XV, it was never considered an integral Catholic magazine, especially under the pontificate of Saint Pius X. Emile Poulat remembers it with his proverbial precision: “*Jouin, with whom Abbé Boulin was a collaborator from 1922 to 1929, will give many more guarantees*” than other anti-Masonic magazines, such as those of Copin-Albancelli and Brenier “*both for his ecclesiastic position and for his method of documentation (his library will come to possess 30,000 volumes) and for his concern to give the anti-Masonic struggle a religious doctrinal foundation (...); but he never wanted to qualify himself as an integral Catholic: the expression ‘franc-catholique’ (as opposed to ‘franc-maçon’) seemed more correct to him. “Nevertheless, one will be surprised (R.I.S.S., 5 February 1914, p. 205) to note Benigni’s reserve towards him which, to him, seemed unjustified, but which R. Duguet (Abbé Boulin, ed.) will say later (Cahiers anti judéo-maçonniques, pp. 74-76) was voluntary: ‘We never put the R.I.S.S. in the weekly list of publications even just as friends, this is because we did*



Abbé Paul Boulin



Msgr. Ernest Jouin

not have the same opinion on the role of Satanism in the Lodges, but also, among other reasons, because ‘our friends reproached Msgr. Jouin for regularly receiving at his table with too much indulgence a group of well-known and militant modernists, including Msgr. Lacroix, Houtin, Hébert...’”. Which explains the fact that Msgr. Jouin had not remained involved with the ‘integrals’ in the change of the pontifical government: Benedict XV will name him domestic prelate, Pius XI Apostolic protonotary, Cardinal Gasparri will send letters of praise to the magazine. These precedents must be kept in mind in order to correctly evaluate the precious but biased information of Nina Valbousquet, who tends to assimilate Msgr. Benigni and Msgr. Jouin in the “antisemitic” struggle. The French researcher evokes the early relationship between Benigni and Jouin (epistolary: October 1910, personal: March 1911) prior to the foundation

of the *R.I.S.S.*, the intensification of the relationship in 1912 with the release of the magazine (*Catholique...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-46) while mentioning some differences between the two (pp. 47-49 and 242): in practice, Jouin asks Benigni for information, and Benigni carries out the usual “injections” of good doctrine in a magazine that is foreign to him. Suspended in 1914 due to the war, the *R.I.S.S.* resumed publications in 1920, and Msgr. Benigni, who no longer had the support of Pius X, was now more interested in the anti-sectarian magazine, again through the ex-Sodalitium Pianum French (Boulin, Saubat, Rocafort) (pp. 63-66), collaborating on both French (in the *R.I.S.S.*) and the Italian (in *F.e.R.*) editions of the *Protocols* (pp. 73-96) in the years 1920-1921, and to the organization of an international “antisemitic” conference in Paris in 1924 (pp. 182ff). The influence of integral Catholics and of Msgr. Benigni on the *R.I.S.S.* was particularly important between 1922 and 1929, when Abbé Boulin was its collaborator and editor under the pseudonym of Pierre Colmet. The year 1929 will mark the end of this collaboration: first of all, due to the rupture between Msgr. Benigni and Abbé Boulin regarding the Concordat between Italy and the Holy See (we will return to this) and then over a censure by the Vigilance Council of the Archbishopric of Paris on May 3, 1929 against the *R.I.S.S.*, both due to an article on the Concordat, and above all due to the magazine’s unfavorable position of the JOC (*Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne*), a movement approved by Rome after the condemnation of the *Action Française* to channel the *Azione Cattolica*: a position which “recklessly goes against most official pontifical approvals and which testify to a spirit of systematic denigration”. “The censure by the Vigilance Council troubles Jouin, who is worried about having good relations with the hierarchy. The conflict with Boulin (particularly over economic issues) pushes the latter to leave Paris and retreat to Moussey, in the Aube. In his letter of resignation sent to Jouin on January 8, 1930, the Abbé spoke of the risk of serious ecclesiastical sanctions that weighed on him in light of the appointment, in November 1929, of a new Archbishop, Msgr. Verdier. Boulin definitively left Paris on February 14, 1930, a year

after the Lateran agreements”⁽¹¹⁵⁾. Once again, the Diligence Council, established by Saint Pius X in his encyclical *Pascendi* (Nos. 73-74) to effectively combat modernism, performed a very different function from that envisaged in its institution. With its separation from the *R.I.S.S.* (and Msgr. Benigni’s), the integral press will survive in the bulletin *Vérités* and in the *Cahiers anti judéomaçonniques*, the former published “underground” and the latter in a personal capacity.

Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the link between two pontificates, as seen by Ernesto Buonaiuti



Ernesto Buonaiuti,
Excommunicated modernist

Before addressing the pontificate of Pius XI, allow me to dwell for a moment on the figure of Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the *link* between the two pontificates, that of Benedict XV and that of Pius XI, as Secretary of State for both pontiffs. We have already said much about him up to this point, and we will say much more about the man whom Msgr. Benigni called the asphyxiating “gas” of the Church. I will not draw an exhaustive portrait of him here, in which I could also praise his “*Canonical Treatise on Marriage*” or his admirable Catechism. Neither can I deal with all of his long cultural and diplomatic activity (Buonaiuti, in his memoirs, mentions Gasparri’s policy in favor of the Central Powers during the Great War, pp. 182-183, and the subsequent pro-Soviet policy by the same cardinal immediately after the war, at the Genoa conference, when the cardinal himself explained to him that the Church was indifferent to all forms of government, economy and social life, even a Soviet one: p. 184 of *Il pellegrino di Roma*). I will therefore limit myself, in this appendix, to reporting what the same leader of Italian modernism, Ernesto Buonaiuti, wrote about the Abruzzese Cardinal in the aforementioned memoirs (*Il pellegrino di Roma*), since it is the theme of modernism that interests us here. The two ecclesiastics, Buonaiuti and Gasparri, met in 1916, when Buonaiuti, Turchi, Vannutelli and Motzo were suspended *a divinis* for not wanting the imprimatur for their magazine on the science of religions. The Holy Office (secretary: Merry del Val) took advantage of this to demand from them the anti-modernist oath (pp. 169-170 and 174). Vicar Pompilj passed the paperwork on to the Secretariat of State. “*The pontificate of Giacomo Della Chiesa – Buonaiuti observed at the time – was intended to be a return to the traditions of Leo XIII and a more or less veiled disavowal of the pontificate of Pius X. (...) And Gasparri too, automatically represented the antithesis to the previous Secretary of State*”, that is, of Merry del Val (p. 172). Already “*regarding myself, the pontificate of Benedict XV began with an act of generosity and tolerance*” regarding one of his books on Ireland. “*In the Secretariat of State, one of the first moves, symptomatic of the new Secretary Pietro Gasparri, was to eliminate the ambiguous figure of Monsignor Umberto Benigni, who tried to remake himself, unfolding his insidious ability for deceptions in underground compromises and clandestine agreements with L’Action Française. It was*

not for nothing that Pietro Gasparri had spent long years in Paris as a professor of canon law in the Catholic Institute, and had become familiar with the official directions of French republican politics ⁽¹¹⁶⁾. It was natural that the goodwill shown to me by Cardinal Gasparri at first glance was immediately reciprocated by me with a cordial devotion and a sincere and loyal attachment. For several years it was to become my pleasant habit to make several weekly visits to the most eminent Cardinal to exchange conversations in which the events of the day were commented on (...). The Cardinal showed himself more and more benevolent towards me every time," by proposing to him an activity in the press office of the Secretariat of State (p. 174) (it was in those circumstances that Gasparri confided to him his first Germanophile, then pro-Soviet bent!). Meanwhile, he resolved the issue of the suspension *a divinis* and the oath in the way we know (the sacrilegious farce). It was a "combination" in which the Abruzzese jurist was skilled (p. 175). It takes Buonaiuti four pages to try to justify his oath (pp. 176-179) based on the interpretation given by the "benevolent" Gasparri, thus resuming his "priestly duties". Meanwhile, the strange friendship between the two continued: "my constant contacts with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Gasparri meanwhile gave me the opportunity to follow the post-war policy of the Holy See in its eventful phases of development" (p. 192) even if Buonaiuti does not approve of Gasparri's support for the birth of the Partito Popolare (p. 193) ⁽¹¹⁷⁾. The Holy Office, deceived in 1916, however, did not give up, and this time excommunicated Buonaiuti on January 12, 1921. But the "benevolent" Gasparri intervened again. Seriously ill after a surgical operation, he received a visit from Gasparri "to the astonishment of the nuns of the clinic" (Bastianelli); the Cardinal had already written to him in February to encourage him to reconcile with the Church (pp. 218-219). Gasparri administered Communion to him, though Buonaiuti was still excommunicated (p. 219), indeed, "he would have actually wanted to proceed in an even more hasty manner and overcome all the obstacles and iron out all the difficulties which, according to what appeared to be the conditions proposed and requested by the Congregation of the Holy Office, stood in the way of canceling the sentence of excommunication" (p. 219). Despite his rejection of the conditions imposed by the Holy Office, which he declared to be blackmail (p. 220), the sentence of excommunication was lifted following the intervention of Cardinal Gasparri "with whom, after the happy epilogue of the long conversations and negotiations, the relations were resumed more cordially than ever. My bi-weekly visits to him thus allowed me to closely follow the directives of his sagacious policy and to



Cardinal Pietro Gasparri

know in detail, day after day, the purposes of the deployment of Vatican politics..." (p. 221). We note that this pastoral scene took place in the same year in which Gasparri dissolved the *Sodalitium Pianum*. But vanity betrayed Buonaiuti. In an article in the *Messaggero*, of Rome and the *Secolo*, of Milan, on September 29, 1921, he published "a diplomatic interview in the Vatican" on the P.P.I. and fascism, from which it was possible to understand that the Eminence who was interviewed with such familiarity was indeed Gasparri, thus discovering the secrets of a complicity that should have remained hidden (the entire text of the article on pp. 221-227). Thus ended the biweekly meetings (p. 228). No one could save him from the second excommunication in 1924 and from the major excommunication the following year. At the end of that 1925, the encyclical *Quas Primas* on the Kingship of Christ surprisingly moved Buonaiuti (p. 282) who wrote to Pius XI around Christmas. Father Gemelli was sent to him who for Buonaiuti did not have the "honest and Christian loyalty" of Cardinal Gasparri, and the rupture was definitively consummated (p. 285); there are two characters that Buonaiuti contrasts to Gasparri in terms of charity towards him: Father Gemelli, in fact, and Father Rosa of *Civiltà Cattolica*, "surly and ulcerous" (pp. 283-284). One shouldn't condemn the desire of the old Cardinal Gasparri to save the soul of Buonaiuti, who retained some feelings under his tragic loss of faith; but his, to say the least, imprudent complicities with the leader of the modernists, especially when compared with his persecution of integral Catholics, certainly do not testify in favor of someone who is presented by today's traditional Catholics as an example of moderation, balance, faithfulness to the Church, while hiding or even justifying the unjustifiable.



Part Four: Under Pius XI (1922-1939)

Without dwelling on Achille Ratti's reputation as a "liberal" or moderate prior to his election ⁽¹¹⁸⁾, it is hardly necessary to recall the greatness of Pius XI as Pope. His programmatic Encyclical *Ubi Arcano* aroused the enthusiasm of "integral Catholics" (see *Fede e Ragione*, n. 53, Dec. 31, 1922) and their deepest hopes. Pope Ratti condemned, among other things, that "social modernism" *through which modernism in dogmatic matters hoped* to survive. And how can we forget the vast teaching of this Pope, for example against the ecumenical movement (*Mortalium Animos*), contraception (*Casti Connubii*), secularism, favoring the Social Reign of Christ (*Quas Primas*), to mention just a few? I will therefore limit myself to examine only some of those cases that can serve as support to the thesis according to

which “integral Catholics” would have been opposed to Pius XI, or vice versa. We will therefore deal with the French politics of Pope Ratti (the Diocesan Associations and *Action Française*), of the Italian (fascism and the Risorgimento), and that which was internal to the Church (the Company of Jesus). Much more could be said, and has been said, regarding Gasparri’s policy regarding Soviet Russia, Mexico, Spain (in the three cases: communism), or about the underlying development of the ecumenical and liturgical movement (dom Beauduin, the Malines conversations) or lastly the rise and fall of the intriguing Msgr. d’Herbigny, his rise and fall both occurring under Pius XI; for the sake of brevity we direct the reader to the literature on the subjects (such as, for example, the -laudatory - biography of Pius XI by Yves Chiron).

The Holy See and the French Republic: from ‘no’ to Cult Associations (Pius X), to ‘yes’ to Diocesan ones (Pius XI)

When we talk about the clash between Pius XI and the “right-wing” Catholics in France, the thoughts (of both ‘traditionalists’ and neo-modernists) immediately turn to the so-called condemnation of *Action Française*; this is understandable, given that between politics and religion, people’s interest (even Catholics) seems to go more to politics than to religion. Much more important, however, for our theme, is the question of Diocesan Associations. Many readers will ask “What is this about?”, confirming what I have just said about the relationship between politics and religion. To understand it, one must return to the famous “secular laws” that various exponents of the leftist government (Ferry, Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, Briand, etc.) strongly supported at the moment of maximum splendor for the Third Republic, “*la République du Grand-Orient*” according to the happy expression of Henri Coston. After the secularization of hospitals and cemeteries (1881), the suppression of military chaplains (1883) and public prayers, plus the introduction of divorce (1884), the Freemason government launched its attack on the Church with the law on Associations of 1901 (still today reference is made to the “1901 associations”) which in 1902 were applied to educational institutions: actually, it affected male and female religious congregations and religious confessional schools, and it went so far as to prohibit teaching even to religious. France thus witnessed a forced exodus, sometimes even *by military force*, of religious who had to take refuge in neighboring countries. The “Liberté” thus triumphed over monks, friars and nuns, until in July 1904 the “République” broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican. At this point it no longer made sense to keep the Napoleonic Concordat of 1801 in force, which, like every concordat, was certainly not ideal, and in December 1905, with the Briand government (Msgr. Benigni’s “black beast” , and vice versa) led to the unilateral denunciation of the Concordat and the proclamation of the separation between Church and State; and the Church became a private association of citizens to be (mis)treated by virtue of the proclaimed secularity of the State. Article 4 of the separation law provided for an application that concerns the topic I intend to deal with:



Emile Poulat about 1969

if the Church intended to maintain its assets intended for worship (cathedrals, churches, seminaries, bishops' houses, parish houses with all their assets) it was supposed to place them at the head of “cultural associations” on the model of the law of 1901 (which had effectively served to eliminate religious congregations), that is, purely civil and democratic associations, which did not take into account the hierarchical structure of the Church. The French episcopate, in general, thought it would make the best of a bad situation, and suffer yet another abuse, so as not to lose all its assets and all the churches in France. And this was also the thinking of important cardinals, such as Cardinal Gasparri, who in fact, testifying during the beatification process of Pius X, opposed his beatification on “*the question of the Sodalitium Pianum and the prohibition of cult associations in France*”

(Disquisitio, p. 6). But both the French government and the clergy had not taken into account the new Pope, Saint Pius X, who with spiritual weapons overturned the terrible “republican” attack in an extraordinary occasion for the Church. In addition to condemning the false principle of the separation of the State from the Church (which was also accepted by ‘liberal Catholics’), Pius X rejected government blackmail and, with it, cult associations, even at the cost of losing all the assets of the Church. The government, which expected yet another surrender in view of the lesser evil, found itself the owner of thousands of churches (often occupied by military personnel during ‘inventories’ which also caused the death of some faithful who opposed the sacrilege: even the tabernacles were inventoried!) while the Church - deprived of everything and persecuted - could finally freely choose its own Shepherds without having to go through the intervention of the various governments (from the days of the monarchy to the imperial, up to the republic ⁽¹¹⁹⁾): under Pius X we witnessed a true renewal of the French episcopate! Saint Pius X condemned the “cult associations” with three solemn encyclicals: “*Vehementer Nos*” (February 11, 1906) which condemned the law of 1905 and the separationist principle; “*Gravissimo*” (August 10, 1906) with which cult associations were prohibited; “*Une fois encore*” (January 6, 1907), with which their condemnation and prohibition were renewed. Faced with a free and poor Church, the Masonic government thus found itself disarmed.

The death of Saint Pius X (1914), the First World War (1914-1918) with the patriotic “Union sacrée” of all French people (Catholic and secular, monarchist and republican, right and left), and Cardinal Gasparri’s new pro-French policy (after having been pro-German: however the Briand government was in favor of peaceful collaboration with the German Weimar Republic), opened the door to new negotiations between the French government and the Holy See. The history of these negotiations, which resulted in the re-establishment of diplomatic relations (May 1921) and the compromise on cult associations found in the approval of the “diocesan associations” (the Encyclical *Maximam Gravissimamque*, by Pius XI, of January 18 1924) is detailed in a book by Emile Poulat

(which couldn't be more official, given its preface by the French Prime Minister and the Vatican Secretary of State at the time, de Villepin and Sodano) which also published documentation, previously unseen, on the question, from 1903 to 2003 ⁽¹²⁰⁾. It goes without saying that we fully accept the doctrine and decisions of the Encyclical, which surely does not hide the delicacy of the question and the many contingent aspects of the decision (it declared that *“diocesan associations may be permitted”* even if the Pope did not formally command to constitute them; it said that they were a lesser evil justified by the change in circumstances, and that they were applied in experimental manner). Having said this, there is no doubt that the “diocesan” issue marked a turning point in relations with France and a change with respect to the previous religious policy of Saint Pius X, as sufficiently attested by the thinking of those who were closest to Pope Sarto, namely his Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val (Father Nitoglia accuses Benigni of extremism, unlike Merry del Val: so let's see what the Anglo-Spanish cardinal thought). Poulat publishes in full (in French: pp. 246-256) the Cardinal's votum (opinion) of July 20, 1922, the conclusion of which is the following: *“I therefore give an answer to the question: the present project of diocesan associations cannot, in any case, be accepted by the Holy See.”* In arguing this drastic conclusion, the cardinal writes: *“every effort to reflect on a statute for the Catholic Church in France, a statute which is on the one hand compliant with the principles of theology and canon law, and at the same time legal in comparison to French law, is futile.”* The attempt is futile, but the stakes are serious: *“it is a question of divine right; the entire future of the Catholic Church in France is at stake and we really shouldn't close our eyes and resort to diplomatic expedients and interpretations to hide the sad reality of things.”* If at the time of Saint Pius X many French bishops were in favor of an agreement, *“we must not forget that in those times at least two thirds of the French episcopate was made up of prelates appointed under pressure from the government, who were not all safe in doctrine, nor free from any ties to civil authority”*; furthermore, some had been deceived *“by the attitude of the Apostolic Nuncio”*. *“The government hopes to subject the Church to its heretical and schismatic law and take revenge for its sectarian and anti-clerical objectives, maintaining its secular laws to ensure the so-called atheist ‘union sacrée’, in the interests of a world policy without God.”* On the other hand, the very French ambassador Jonnart himself declared that *“the resumption of diplomatic relations does not entail any change in the internal politics of France, and that neither the law on separation nor the secular laws would be affected.”* *“The French government – continued the Cardinal – having failed to overcome the resistance of the bishops, clergy and Catholics with violence, is now trying to tame them with courtesies and empty promises.”* After this general introduction on the intentions of the Masonic government, Saint Pius X's closest collaborator denied the canonicity (six arguments), the legality and the opportunity for any diocesan associations. Associations cannot be at the same time canonical (for the Church) and legal (for the State): if they are truly canonical they cannot be legal, but if they comply with the law of 1905 (and they do) then they cannot be canonical (i.e. compliant with Church law). Finally, the project is not only inappropriate, but also unfortunate and harmful. *“The project is*

inappropriate and harmful because, without any doubt, it is directly opposed to the thinking and known provisions of H.S. Pius X. I am able to attest, even under oath, that Pius X did not admit that one could be subjected to the law of 1905 or use it, until another law modified or replaced it. To those who asked him to study how this law could be used, he replied: 'I'll study, but until it is modified or replaced by another, I will not change my decisions'. Decisions he had made after long study and prayer. In this regard, I consider deplorable the memorandum of the Apostolic Nuncio (Cerretti, ed.) in which he allows himself to underestimate the reasons that the Pope had for condemning the law, calling them 'exaggerations', without however quoting the pontifical documents (...). It is new that an Apostolic Nuncio contradicts a solemn pontifical Encyclical and becomes the champion of a law condemned by the Pope on the basis of theology and the sacrosanct rights of the Church." The draft agreement "is inappropriate because the project of so-called 'canonical-legal' associations was rejected in 1905, when there were many assets to be saved. It seems a real aberration to accept it today, when the Church of France has already been stripped and it is only possible to save very few goods and recover very few things." "The present project is inappropriate and harmful because, as Cardinal Maurin says: 'If the State insists so much that the Church accepts a project of diocesan associations and by it therefore to indirectly obtain at least the withdrawal of the 1905 law, it is so that they might be able to say: 'This law is not contrary to the freedom and constitution of the Church: the Church recognizes it today, therefore it was wrong in 1906. One could not accuse the State of having plundered the Church, it is the Church which, due to its own mistake, has lost all its assets'. The acceptance of those diocesan associations, substantially identical to the canonical legal ones rejected by Pius X (Encyclical Gravissimo) would wreak havoc in the ranks of the best French Catholics and in the majority of the episcopate and clergy who fought and suffered nobly and effectively for sixteen years, gaining extraordinary freedom and prestige and reconstituting with admirable generosity a good part of the ecclesiastical patrimony. It would make them lose faith in the Holy See, seeing that what had previously been denied is now accepted, as the subtlety of the explanations attempted to be given will never be able to convince them...." "The feverish insistence of the French government and the mirage of its unfounded promises to obtain the acceptance of the diocesan associations from the Holy See, while maintaining the intangibility of the secularism of the unjust laws, recall that episode in the life of Our Lord when Satan said to the Savior. 'Hæc omnia tibi dabo si cadens adoraveris me'. While for us, on the contrary, the following must be sufficient: 'Querite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus et hæc omnia adjicientur vobis'." "...all possible articles in the Osservatore Romano and all unofficial explanations will never be able to dispel the disastrous impression, with incalculable damage to the prestige of the Church." Was it Msgr. Benigni who was exaggerating and rancorous, or was the then Secretary of the Holy Office, Merry del Val, also exaggerating? A poignant letter from the same Cardinal to the Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal Maurin, dated November 8, 1922, reveals the feelings of Cardinal Merry (and his correspondent): "...An attempt is being made to induce His Holiness to overlook everyone and everything. The almost

unanimous decision of the seventeen cardinals of the plenary congregation is set aside, in accordance with the opinion of the majority of the bishops, since it is false that the latter were mostly in favor and that they try in every way to obtain from the Holy Father at least a 'tolerari posse', which would be a real disaster. (...) I returned from the countryside to find an atmosphere of distrust towards me, which aims to paralyze my action. I have said everything that needed to be said and I believe I have done everything that was humanly possible, since I think that for me it was a serious duty of conscience, for which I will have to give an account before God. Together with many of my other colleagues, I am, in this decisive hour, anguished and deeply saddened. I hope that his Eminence will write directly to the Holy Father, as he knows how to do, even in this eleventh hour. I do not stop praying to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Virgin and the Saints of France so that we may be spared a disaster as serious as the one that threatens us" (ibid., p. 258). We all know how it ended.



Marc Sangnier and Mauriac

The Vatican archivist A. Dieguez, in the treatment of modernism and anti-modernism found in the papers of the Benigni Files, mentions documents relating to the diocesan associations present in this archive, but considers them extraneous to the modernist question. It seems like an error of judgment to me. Taking a look at the protagonists of this debate, one realizes that among the protagonists of the agreement we find people linked to modernism, such as Louis Canet and Msgr. Chapot; and on the other side, among the opponents, Father Salvien stands out, to his misfortune. Let's try to say something about these three characters. Poulat's dossier on diocesan associations begins with a document from the Bishop of Nice, Msgr. Henri Chapot (1845-1925) who, as former secretary to Bishop Dupanloup was an exponent of the old liberal Catholicism. In favor of the use of cult associations of 1905, in 1918 he created a project of cult association based on the model of the 1901 law, setting the whole thing in motion; this black beast of the opposing camp, according to Poulat, defended the acceptance of the diocesan associations (ibid., pp. 130, 132, 198). On the government front, the name of the Catholic Louis Canet (1883-1958) stands out, whose role against the *Sodalitium Pianum* we have already mentioned. A student of Bishop Duchesne, the publisher of the unpublished works of Father Laberthonnière and the testamentary executor for Alfred Loisy: these three data alone demonstrate his involvement in modernism; the state counselor and consultant to the Quai d'Orsay (Foreign Ministry) for religious affairs from 1920 to 1946: these positions show us the decisive role of this modernist in the service of the "Republic of the Grand Orient". If these are two of the winners, we see someone who

undoubtedly, humanly, emerged defeated from this battle: the Assumptionist **Father Salvien Miglietti** (1873-1924). Charles Miglietti, his religious name, Father Salvien, was an important figure in the history of French Catholicism. Of an Italian father and a French mother (he used his surname, Ricard, as a pseudonym), he worked at the “Bonne presse” from 1896 to 1923, involved with numerous Catholic newspapers and magazines, and from the fusion of which, he founded in the post-war period from 1919 to 1923, the *Documentation catholique* (still extant and well known) of which he was the first editor. *Sodalitium Pianum*’s enemies, during the phases of its dissolution in 1921, tried to involve Father Salvien by accusing him of having been part of it, something he denied, as did Benigni and Boulin, without ever managing, however, to convince Cardinal Gasparri. Father Mourret (the denouncer of the S.P.) thus tried to have him removed when, in 1921, France and the Holy See re-established diplomatic relations and began talks for the “diocesan associations.” “*Father Salvien was a man precious for his competence, discussed for his intransigence: he had important support in the episcopate, in particular Cardinals Dubois (Paris) and above all Maurin (Lyon). The nuncio used his services, the government monitored his correspondence; the Holy See wanted to conclude the agreement: and irritated by his opposition, it decided to send him outside of Europe. Father Salvien managed to stay but, in the end, on the orders of the Pope, he had to leave Paris on February 28, 1923 for Sanremo (Italy), then, shortly afterwards, for Locarno in Ticino (Switzerland) where he spent ten years. Suffering from hemiplegia [paralysis of one side], he returned to Lorgues (in Var) where he died on October 26, 1934, and where he was buried*” ⁽¹²¹⁾ The Pope in question was Pius XI, while the inspirer of Father Salvien’s disgrace was Cardinal Gasparri, who, testifying at the beatification process of Pius X, included Pope Sarto’s attitude towards the affairs of France and cult associations among the arguments against him.

The Holy See and the French Republic: *Action Française*’s condemnation and the return of Marc Sangnier

“*On December 29, 1926, Action Française and some works by Maurras were placed on the Index. A considerable earthquake and prolonged controversies were to ensue in French Catholicism. In January 1928, a work, ‘L’Année politique française et étrangère’, directed by Bernard Lavergne, professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Paris, entered into the debate along with a long and very personal and very informed study, by an unknown author, Nicolas Fontaine: ‘Saint-Siège, Action Française et Catholiques intégraux’, a study which later the same year became a book to which documents were added that doubled its volume, in particular an anonymous Memorandum, and one by Bishop Mignot*” ⁽¹²²⁾. The unknown, Nicolas Fontaine (which was also the name of a seventeenth-century Janist writer), was the well-known Louis Canet, a government man and at the same time a follower of the modernist Tyrrel and friend of the modernists Loisy and Laberthonnière, as mentioned; Bishop Mignot was another friend of Loisy (as well as Archbishop of Albi), and the

anonymous Memorandum was the one written by the Sulpician Mourret under the dictation of the French Jesuits. The thesis of this book? “*Maurassianism and integralism are, starting from the pontificate of Pius X, closely associated. They fought for each other, and triumphed through each other*”⁽¹²³⁾. By equating *Action Française* and the *Sodalitium Pianum*, and therefore Maurras and Benigni, the intention was to involve integral Catholicism, already affected by the 1921 denunciation, in the condemnation of Maurras⁽¹²⁴⁾. Which, in turn, served to rehabilitate Marc Sangnier who had his own enemies, specifically in Pius X, but also in the integral Catholics and Charles Maurras. Between Maurras, a non-believer, but a defender of the traditional Catholic order, and Sangnier, a believer but in favor of the principles of the French Revolution, shouldn't the believer Sangnier be preferred? Attempts in this direction had begun as early as the pontificate of Pius X.

a) “*Damnabilis, non damnandus*” [“condemnable, but not to be condemned”]: the first condemnation of Charles Maurras under Pius X (1914)

For the whole complex and delicate question of the condemnation of the *Action Française* I will refer the reader to the exhaustive work by Jacques Prévotat (not at all Maurassian: it is the reference book for Valbousquet on this topic)⁽¹²⁵⁾.

On January 29, 1914, the last year of the pontificate of Saint Pius X, the Sacred Congregation of the Index (for prohibited books) decided to condemn five works by Charles Maurras, as well as the bimonthly magazine *L'Action Française* (not the daily newspaper): the Pope approved the condemnation but reserved its possible publication; in which case the condemnation would have been dated from January 29, 1914. Pius XI, on the occasion of the 1926 condemnation, made the 1914 sentence public, stating that he had completed what his predecessor had started. We ask ourselves: how was this decision reached? What was Saint Pio X's instinct? and what was the attitude of the integral Catholics or those closest to *L'Action Française*? (they are not the same thing). The second part of Prévotat's book deals with this (pp. 109-162), which I will attempt to summarize.

While Saint Pius X was engaged in his fight against modernism (Enc. *Pascendi*, 1907) and ‘social’ modernism (the condemnation of the Sillon, Enc. *Notre charge apostolique*, 1910), his adversaries within the Church tried to organize themselves and parry the blows. On a political level, Pius X had found support in the monarchical movement of the *Action Française* of Charles Maurras, who had supported the Church against the policy of the government of the Grand Orient (for example during the promulgation of the secularist laws, the abrogation of the Concordat, the separation between State and Church, the ‘inventories’), and against the ‘democratic Catholics’ of the Sillon. But *Action Française* had a weak point, a true Achilles' heel: many of its leaders, and above all Charles Maurras himself, were non-believers; Maurras, especially in his youthful writings, exalted the classical world of ancient Greece and saw Christianity as the democratic ruin of that pagan world, while evaluating



Charles Maurras

positively Catholicism and the Church, as favorable to the order and good of the Nation. In a certain sense, both Maurras and his Catholic-democrat opponents shared the idea of Christianity as a revolutionary phenomenon, while Catholicism distanced itself from it; while for Maurras, this distancing is seen as a positive factor, while negative for the modernists. Maurras's lack of belief, his positivist philosophy borrowed from Auguste Comte, his idea of Christianity influenced by Renan, therefore exposed him to attacks from his enemies within the Church. The Catholic enemies of both Maurras and Pius X therefore found a means - as simple as it was sure - to disqualify him among Catholics, and through him to disqualify the anti-modernist Catholics and the Supreme Pontiff himself: by denouncing Maurras's works to the Congregation of the Index, responsible for the censorship of books worthy of condemnation. Prévotat tells of the three repeated attempts in this sense which led to

the condemnation of 1914. The first denunciation - in February 1909 - came from Msgr. Charles Mourey (1831-1915) disciple of Lacordaire and the liberal Catholics (p. 170), of the circle of Bishop Mignot: based on a book by the former Jesuit Alphonse Lugan (1869-1931), whom we have already seen working against the *Sodalitium Pianum*. The second denunciation - since the first did not go forward - dates from the spring of 1912 and comes from two "abbés démocrates": Jules Pierre (1857-1937), friend of the abbé Lemire (suspended *a divinis* in 1914 and pardoned by Benedict XV in 1916, defender of the law on the separation between the State and the Church), an enemy of Maurras⁽¹²⁶⁾, as well as of the integral Catholic Emmanuel Barbier; and the more famous Léon Dehon; and in support of the complaint, Abbé Jules Pierre included an anti-Maurrassian book by the modernist Lucien Laberthonnière (1860-1932), a friend of Blondel and Sangnier! The third attempt, in the spring of 1913, was the work of the now well-known writer Alphonse Lugan, supported by the Sillonist Bishop Chapon of Nice. Lugan presents books written against Maurras by Abbé J. Pierre, by Lugan himself, and by a Sillonist, Abbé Hoog, to the Congregation of the Index. The whole circle is made up of the disciples of the philosopher Bergson (p. 177), and of the critics of Pius X (in this regard, Prévotat quotes the criticisms made by Bishop Chapon and Msgrs. Tiberghien against the Pope, p. 180). Unexpectedly, the ex-Jesuit Bernard Gaudeau also took up this side; he who had been a teacher at the Institute of *Action Française* and esteemed by Cardinal Merry del Val (p. 181) but against whom (Gaudeau!) stood warnings by Msgr. Benigni (p. 571). Poulat, providing the document by Msgr. Benigni in full, allows us to understand the position of the integrals towards the *A.F.*: "(Gaudeau) attacked the integrals and the *Action Française*: **two very different things!** (...) It is known that a cabal is

*underway to have some of Maurras's works condemned by the Index and to have the Pope accept the fait accompli, something initially kept in the greatest secrecy... especially towards the Pope. (...) We are first in line to recognize the real foundation of all that which is purely objective in M. Gaudeau's assault against the works and influence of Maurras among Catholics. We are in first line to want to separate the responsibilities of integral Catholics from the doctrinal and practical action of Maurras and Action Française. But we cannot help but have scorn for a man who attacks Maurras on the eve of a trap set for him by the demo-liberals and some of their accomplices whose opportunistic fear makes them capable of anything; a man, as we were saying, such as Gaudeau, who had a professorship in the Institute of Action Française when Maurras had already published 'Chemins du Paradis' and the deplorable 'Anthinéa', but had not yet gone so far as to have those manifestations of admiration and of respect towards the papacy and the Church that we know well" (Poulat, p. 399) Apart from Gaudeau, all the men close to Saint Pius X see in this denunciation a maneuver by the pro-modernists, and in the possible condemnation a catastrophe: Prévotat cites the opinions of prelates close to the *Sodalitium Pianum*, such as Bishop Sabadel (Pie de Langogne), or close to the *A.F.* like Cardinal Billot, of bishops like Cardinal Sevin (Lyon), Bishop Gilbert (Mans), Bishop Chollet (Verdun, then Cambrai), Bishop Humbrecht (Poitiers), Cardinal de Cabrières (MontPellier), Bishop Penon (Moulins), Bishop Marty (Montauban) etc., of Father Lemius, the material editor of *Pascendi*... For Msgr. Benigni, as we have seen, the complaint to the Index was "a trap set by the demo-liberals and some of their accomplices whose opportunist fear makes them capable of anything" (p. 571, note 159). Pius X himself was perfectly aware of this and tried to avoid the said trap (pp. 172, 180, 193). The Pope is unfavorable to a condemnation, but to avoid it he should take the issue to himself, taking it away from the Congregation [Index]: after having inclined towards this solution he decides to discard it. In fact, even the prelates closest to Maurras, like Cardinal Billot, realize that certain writings by the Provençal author are unacceptable, even if he partially corrected them in subsequent editions: "*Maurras' books (...) contain horrible blasphemies, blasphemies that border on heresy, and even go beyond, to the point that they would be the responsibility of the Holy Office rather than of the Index. There can be no doubt about it*" (p. 176). Writing privately to Maurras, the Cardinal is even more severe (p. 208). But on the other hand "*it is not a concern for orthodoxy that pushes them to ask for Maurras' books to be placed on the Index, it is the desire to obtain, by this means, the repudiation of the anti-liberal school and the intention to deduce from this that the Pope, with this condemnation, makes honorable amends for that of the Sillon, and manifests, in the only way possible, implicit and indirect, his repentance for having struck the Sillonist democratic school*" (Msgr. Chollet, in PRÉVOTAT, op. cit., p. 177 and p. 570 note 118). Caught between the two flames (the horrible blasphemies of Maurras and the equally horrible intention of his enemies of condemning, by merging them with Maurras, the entire integral and anti-modernist school), Saint Pius X behaved like a Saint, as he actually was. He ratified the condemnation of some of the works by Maurras as being worthy of condemnation; however, he avoided publishing and disseminating the conviction, postponing the matter to a more appropriate time, thus avoiding the trap set by Marc*

Sangnier's friends. *Damnabilis, non damnandus* [condemnable, but not to be condemned]: Maurras was worthy of being condemned, but his condemnation, favoring the enemies of the Church, was not appropriate.

b) With Benedict XV the whole climate changes (p. 194) and the Pope thinks of taking the dossier back into his hands and publishing the text of the condemnation in April 1915. However, two facts will prevent this: during the war it was imprudent to make a decision having undoubtedly political consequences (especially since the *A.F.* supported the government in the war effort by accepting the *Union sacrée* of all political forces). Furthermore, Benedict XV's declining to publish at that time (1915) the condemnation by the Holy Office against the modernist Barnabite Father Semeria (a friend, among other things, of the Montinis, as well as of the Italian government and army) convinced him to have the same regard towards Maurras (pp. 194ff).



Father Gustave Desbuquois s.j.
Founder of Action Populaire

It does not seem that at the start of his pontificate Pius XI intended to reopen the *A.F.* matter, (pp. 213-214) which, on the other hand, he did not know about directly, having not participated in the events of 1914. After 1914, and with the change of pontificate, the Sillonist Bishop Chapot of Nice, along with Bishop Tiberghien, Benedict XV's friend, consecrated by him on December 8, 1921, kept the attacks on the *A.F.* alive. (p. 210). Addressing the *A.F.* matter, however, had perhaps become inevitable after the issue of the "cult" or "diocesan" associations (initiated in 1918 by Bishop Chapot, let us remember) which had already led to the forced exile of Father Salvien in 1923 (see above). In the same year Mourret and Mignot's attacks on the integrals were resumed in Father Lugan's magazine (p. 215), while the nuncio Cerretti supported the "democrats" Abbé Trochu and Vanneville in Rome (pp. 216ff). Also in 1923, Father Le Floch's speeches at the French Seminary he directed, aroused political opposition by the secularists (Herriot, in 1925) supported by the anti-Thomist democratic Catholics, followers of Blondel's philosophy (pp. 219ff). It is all an atmosphere that combines hostility to the integrals with that to the Maurassians: you find the Sulpicians (hit by a biblical manual by their father Brassac being placed on the Index, thanks to Father Maignen and Father Le Floch) with Father Mourret (the one who defeated the S.P.), the two Blondels (the philosopher of *Action*, Maurice, and his son Charles), two top exponents of the ACJF ⁽¹²⁷⁾ Bazire and Flory, who are brothers-in-law of C. Blondel, and the publisher Francisque Gay, former companion of Marc Sangnier in the Sillon adventure, with the magazines *La Vie Catholique* (1924) and *Les Cahiers de la Nouvelle Journée* (1914, 1924). This group of veteran modernists (the famous "moderates") must have thought they won the lottery when in 1922 Nuncio Cerretti received Mourret and Blondel, speaking badly to them about Benigni and Salvien (1922) (p. 223; with them the doors broke open: pp. 233-234): while speaking better about Blondel

and, in the background, Laberthonnière (p. 226)! The ground was cleared and ready for Pius XI's pivoting which Prévotat places in 1924-1925, thanks to two revealing papal audiences: one was to Father Corbillé and President Charles Flory (Blondel's relative) on behalf of the ACJF, through Mourret and Blondel himself (pp. 234-235, May 1924; Charles Blondel in that year was among the leaders of the ACJF and the Christian Democrat politician, vice-president Georges Bidault, called for a non-denominational party like the P.P.I. in Italy, pp. 243- 244). The other decisive audience took place in June 1925, thanks to the then very powerful Jesuit Msgr. d'Herbigny (also involved in the dissolution of the S.P.), the audience being granted to Father Gustave Desbuquois s.j. of the *Action Populaire* (pp. 235-236), suspected under Pius X of social modernism ⁽¹²⁸⁾ in Pope Sarto's last battle: that of non denominational unions (Enc. *Singulari Quadam* of September 24, 1914) and who was the one implicated in the plot in which S.P. Father Joseph Lemius, main editor of the Encyclical *Pascendi*, was denounced. Father Lemius, in a report requested in 1913 by Cardinal Merry del Val, wrote: "*Socialist ideas lie at the heart of the Action Populaire, I have no hesitation in saying this, however much it may be revised and catholicized... One must deplore the fact that, despite having the full light of the pontifical magisterium, that such a spirit was able to be implanted in a religious institution (...) It is a new sociology, which is the opposite of the traditional one, which they call liberal, which is conquering minds... The danger is great*" ⁽¹²⁹⁾ ; twelve years later, the danger could only be greater! But times had changed... and the Society was held in high esteem by the Pope (see what we will say on the issue when we report the opinion of Saint Pius X).

c) The condemnation of the *Action Française*. The main ecclesiastical documents concerning the condemnation of the *Action Française* under Pius XI were published by Prévotat in the annex (pp. 673-713): they range from the 'preparatory' intervention of Cardinal Andrieu (August 25, 1926; in this, they proceeded like at the time of the *Ralliement* with the 'toast' of Cardinal Lavignerie) to the lifting of the daily *Action Française* from the Index of prohibited books by the Holy Office (under Pius XII) on July 10, 1939. It was not a question of excommunication, as many think, but of the placement on the Index (December 29, 1926) of some Maurras' works, the magazine but also the newspaper of the of the *A.F.*: the decree of the Index of 1914 was thus published, which Saint Pius X (and Benedict XV in 1915), for different reasons, had not published, making it worse, however, by placing the newspaper on the Index. Unlike Pius X's condemnation of the *Sillon*, there was no Encyclical or doctrinal text condemning the *A.F.* ('only' letters, allocutions and consistorial speeches by Pius XI) but, given the newspaper's refusal to submit (unlike the *Sillon*) with the famous "Non possumus" of December 24, there came disciplinary measures by the Sacred Penitentiary who applied the law in force not only to the readers of the works put on the Index but also to the confessors who absolved them without asking for reparation or correction from the penitent; these disciplinary measures entailed considering the rebels as public sinners, with all the consequences of the case, including the refusal of the sacraments and

ecclesiastical burial. For many souls, the dramatic situation also led to a revival of Gallican feelings that had never completely subsided in those who persevered with the A.F. ⁽¹³⁰⁾, and in sensational transitions to democratic Catholicism in those who abandoned it (the most famous and consequential case was that of the neo-Thomist – but disciple of Léon Bloy – Jacques Maritain who moved from integral nationalism to integral humanism and prepared the way for Vatican II).



Father Maignen

d) Integral Catholics and the A.F. before and after condemnation. Modernists and Sillonists have always tried to merge integral Catholics (or anti-liberals, anti-modernists, etc.) with the A.F. In this way, once one was condemned, the others were also condemned: this was the case in the 1920s, while in the 1970s,

Father Congar and others repeated the game towards the traditionalists and Msgr. Lefebvre. Even before the condemnation (1926) we saw the anti-Maurassian priest Alphonse **Lugan** (1869-1931), a former Jesuit incardinated into Albi by the modernist Bishop Mignot, publish, in March 1923, in *Le Mouvement des faits et des idées* the account by Mourret, the articles of the *Tijd* ⁽¹³¹⁾, the account by Bishop Mignot to Cardinal Ferrata, some documents from the Höner collection on the S.P., and in January 1928, after the condemnation of the A.F., a writing by Nicolas **Fontaine** (a pseudonym, the name of a Jansenist) alias Louis **Canet** (1883-1958), a high government official and friend of Loisy (for whom he was executor) and Laberthonnière. He blended together the cause of A.F. with that of the S.P. and it became a constant reference for those who deal with the S.P. issue.

But was there any real basis for this amalgamation? Sure, A.F. and S.P. had common enemies to fight and common interests to defend, they found themselves together against the government regarding the secularist laws, or against the democratic Catholics of Sillon; both longed for the pontificate of Saint Pius X, both had suffered in the 1920s. But the differences between integral nationalists (A.F.) and integral Catholics (S.P. for example) are clear, both before and after the condemnation, as we have seen in the broad and clear quote from Msgr. Benigni given previously. “***Not a single member of the A.F., even if Catholic, has ever been part of the S.P. or the E.R.D.S., Abbé Boulin clarifies***” ⁽¹³²⁾. Emile Poulat, summarizing the issue, writes: “*A third fracture was threatened, but did not occur: one with the Action Française. Benigni reproached it for wanting to hitch integral Catholicism to its wagon. The disagreement took a concrete form in 1912: Abbé Boulin, and then Merlier, were fired from the newspapers they covered by administrators who were from A.F., and were then ‘spied on’ at La Vigie. The dispute would certainly have gone further if he [Benigni] hadn’t refused to associate the S.P. with the campaign that was trying to obtain from the Holy See - one that almost succeeded in 1914 - the public*

condemnation of the A.F. *The amalgamation process (between integrals and the A.F., ed.) opened by the Mouvement and defended by Nicolas Fontaine ignored these aspects.*"⁽¹³³⁾ Valbousquet herself - whose thesis goes in the direction of the merger between integralists and the antisemitic 'right' - must recognize this with gritted teeth while minimizing as much as possible the profound differences between Msgr. Benigni and his friends and the A.F. (pp. 39-40), remember Benigni's reservations regarding the works of Maurras, the famous incident of 1912, with the secession of the integrals from the *L'Univers* (Boulin and Rocafort) in disagreement with their Maurrassian line, including priests like Dom Besse and Canon Lecigne. On this significant episode, Poulat instead speaks at length⁽¹³⁴⁾, citing, among other things, the recollections of Abbé Boulin, and the letter (in code) of Msgr. Benigni on this episode, which Poulat summarizes thus: "*In France, La Vigie (integral newspaper, ed.) immediately encountered violent opposition from a double front, that of the Christian Democrats and Cardinal Amette, Archbishop of Paris, and that of the Action Française which wanted to seize integralism for its own profit, and of which some members saw Roman doctrines as just as means to find adherents*". Boulin wrote at the end of his days: "*Despite a lasting personal sympathy for Maurras which, thank God, I never feared to hide or deny, I gave, (writing) to the Univers, La Vigie, La critique du libéralisme, and also in the Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes, sufficient public testimonies of spiritual independence towards the religious blunders of his nice political work... I think I have said, when so many illustrious dumb dogs were silent, everything that my Catholic conscience demanded.*" A year later, the tension between integralists and A.F. sympathizers increased (the *Univers* had advertised a book by Gisler that minimized modernism: there is fever – comments Benigni – even if it doesn't hit 100°!) to the point that Msgr. Benigni had to warn against attempts put forward by Cardinal Billot and the circles of Father Chiaudano s.j. to reconcile the two camps, and Abbé Boulin will ask for and obtain an investigation into the *L'Univers* in 1914. Valbousquet recalls the attempt of Louis Canet and Father Rosa s.j. of amalgamating the integrals and the Maurassians, but one must also remember Msgr. Benigni's replies to the contrary, the low profile kept by his members during the condemnation of the A.F., Canet's partisan enrollment of the A.F. Catholics among the integrals, the differences between integrals and Maurassians on 'antisemitism' (only to say that Benigni was more antisemitic than Maurras) (pp. 249, 244-257). Prévotat recalls that Father Maignen and Father Saubat (former pillars of the S.P. and long time friends of Benigni) no longer made the newspaper, placed on the Index, available to their students (pp. 331-332); even Father Le Floch (who was not integral, but close to the A.F.) and Cardinal Billot obeyed (pp. 332 and 360)⁽¹³⁵⁾: it will not save them from the "purge". Father Maignen also opposes those theologians who call for resistance (p. 363): after an extensive quotation, Prévotat comments: "*the significant conclusion, for the umpteenth time, is the distance that exists between integrism and Action Française*". Valbousquet, in order to accuse the integral members of collusion with the A.F. (and even of a schismatic tendency, which certainly troubles a writer subsidized by Jewish associations, who therefore has the unity of the Church at heart!) must resort not to texts by Msgr. Benigni, but to the

authors of the *Bloc catholique* (Lacointa, André Le Sage, known as de la Franquerie) who are not integral, but only sympathizers, and to the pamphlets of *La Vérité* (Boulin, Merlier, Rocafort) who, with a similar style to that which will later be found in *Si Si no no* with Father Putti, have only enemies, not doctrine, in common with the A.F. This is what *Vérités* (X, 1928, *Quelques mots à l'Action Française*) clearly recounts: the A.F. itself in speaking about Luc-Verus and *Vérités*, writes: “*the personality of this ‘Luc-Verus’ is well known to our adversaries: they know that he is as much an enemy of Maurras, of Daudet and of the Action Française as he is of the Jesuits and of the Cardinal Gasparri*” (December 18, 1927). For his part, ‘Luc-Verus’ wrote: “*We have no connection with the A.F.*”, “*Many things separate us from the A.F., and let us say, as for Admiral Schwerer, defending himself is his own business.*” “*We were opponents of the A.F. until its condemnation even though we have always recognized the sincerity of its patriotism, the effectiveness of its intelligent and courageous efforts in the fight against liberalism and democracy.*” It is for these last reasons that its enemies - as we have seen - plotted for its condemnation, both under Pius X and under Pius XI, on which he concludes: “*When this unjust condemnation was pronounced, we resolved to silence our reproaches against the A.F. until the day of its victory against common enemies.*” If one may consider it foolhardy to define a condemnation unfair which is in itself doctrinally just, it is then difficult to condemn the hope of victory against common enemies, enemies not only of the A.F. but also and first of all of the Church. Let us better examine why.

e) The resurrection of Marc Sangnier and “Sillonism”. The condemnation of seven books by Maurras, the newspaper and the magazine of the A.F., is doctrinally irreproachable. The danger denounced (that is, the influence of an agnostic positivist on Catholic youth) was real ⁽¹³⁶⁾. The consequences of the condemnation of the A.F., especially its practical consequences, from 1926 to 1939, were, however catastrophic. The blame, surely, falls on the “non possumus” of the A.F. leaders. (easily predictable for those agnostics who longed for Philip the Fair and Louis XIV more than St. Louis IX); however, it also cannot fail to be attributed, *in primis*, to those who wanted it in such an inappropriate way, and in league - as we have seen - with all the sympathizers of the social modernism of Sillonism and Blondel's anti-Thomist philosophical environment: the Secretary of State Gasparri and Nuncio Cerretti. The defense of Azione Cattolica, the apostolate of the laity under the guidance of the hierarchy, which Pius XI had in view for France as in Italy (Enc. *Non abbiamo bisogno*), was sacrosanct: it was the modernists like Father Murri who wanted to make Azione Cattolica independent of the hierarchy. But how can one not deplore the fact that Azione Cattolica was infiltrated, in Italy as in France, by the worst elements of Christian democracy, disciples of Father Murri and Marc Sangnier, both condemned under Saint Pius X? We have already seen the role played by the friends of the philosopher of the work *L'Action*, **Maurice Blondel**, both in the dissolution of the S.P. (1921), and in the condemnation of A.F. (1926). Blondel was a modernist of the worst kind, as we have already demonstrated in *Sodalitium* ⁽¹³⁷⁾.

Let us now take as an example one of the main supporters of the condemnation, the publisher **Francisque Gay** (1885-1963), and his magazine *La vie catholique*. A former seminarian, Gay met Sangnier in Lyon, and joined him in Paris in 1903: he opened a section of the Sillon in Roanne, and collaborated on his newspaper, *La Démocratie*. In 1909 he joined Librerie Bloud publishers, which would later become Bloud et Gay publishing. In 1911, he married Blanche Fromillon, daughter of a Communard and a German Jew. After the condemnation of the Sillon (1910) he did not abandon his ideas, and in 1924, to defend them, he founded *La Vie catholique*, and *L'Aube* in 1932. *La Vie catholique* takes the same name from a Christian democratic newspaper by Abbé Dabry, which had been condemned by the Holy Office on February 13, 1908. *La Vie Catholique*, *L'Aube* and Francisque Gay are in the front lines of support for Pius XI in the clash with the A.F. (in 1927 he wrote and published two books on the issue), which earned the newspaper letters of approval from Cardinal Gasparri (December 31, 1927 and September 23, 1934). Yet Francisque Gay's *La Vie Catholique* had praised Bergson and Blondel (1933), the metaphysics of Kant and Lamennais, the 'noble thoughts' of Laberthonnière, the democratic Abbés Naudet, Garnier and Lemire, and Marc Sangnier himself... (*Les Vérités*, December 20, 1934). A prominent figure in the French Resistance, Gay will serve in the M.R.P. (which he judges to be too conservative!) and will be a minister several times with De Gaulle. The open fight against anyone suspected of sympathizing with the A.F. (even if obedient to the decree) led also to the purge of important figures (Billot forced to resign from the college of cardinals, Le Floch forced to leave the French Seminary, Father Pègues was removed from the Dominican scholasticate of which he was rector; the integrals had already been out of play), which led to a renewal in the episcopate (bishops named by Saint Pius X, generally opposed to the appropriateness of the condemnation, were gradually replaced with bishops of a completely different line, including Monsignor Liénart) and to a victory of the progressive theologians who prepared the *nouvelle théologie* (Chenu and Congar among the Dominicans, de Lubac, disciple of Valensin, among the Jesuits, etc.) against which Pius XII (*Enc. Humani Generis*) had to intervene. John XXIII, as we know, reversed the situation by appointing these theologians as periti ["experts"] at the Second Vatican Council; we know how that ended.

The triumph of Marc Sangnier. On August 25, 1910, Pope Pius X, with the encyclical letter *Notre charge apostolique*, condemned the *Sillon* (the Furrow), the movement founded by Marc Sangnier (1873-1950), with these words:

"Each member of the Sillon, as such, only works for a sect. (...) The Sillon brings socialism in its train, with its eyes fixed on a chimera. We fear there is even worse yet to come. The end result of this developing promiscuousness, the beneficiary of this cosmopolitan social action, can only be a democracy that will be neither Catholic, nor Protestant, nor



Cardinal Boggiani

Jewish; a religion (for Sillonism, so the leaders of the Sillon have said, is a religion) more universal than the Catholic Church, uniting all men who have finally become brothers and companions, in the 'kingdom of God'. - 'We do not work for the Church: we work for mankind'. (...) "(The Sillon) has been harnessed, in its course, by the modern enemies of the Church and is now no more than a miserable affluent of a great movement of apostasy, organized, in every country, for the 'establishment of a one-world Church, which will have neither dogmas, nor hierarchy, nor discipline for the mind, nor restraint for the passions, and which, under the pretext of freedom and human dignity, would re-establish in the world, if it could triumph to do so, the legalized reign of cunning and force, and the oppression of the weak, of those who toil and suffer". Decidedly, Pius X was no "moderate". Rather, the Nuncio to France, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the future John XXIII, was "moderate": on June 6, 1950 he wrote about Marc Sangnier: *"the powerful charm of his words, of his soul, had enraptured me, and I retain of his person and his political and social activity the most vivid memory of all my priestly youth"* ⁽¹³⁸⁾, a youth that dates back to pontificate of Saint Pius X. But how could a Nuncio of Pius XII, only forty years after the condemnation of Marc Sangnier's Sillon as a sect that leads to apostasy, have the courage or rather the temerity to praise the sect and its founder in these terms? The nuncio explains it in the same letter: *"His [Sangnier's] noble and great humility in accepting later, in 1910, the very affectionate and benevolent (sic!) admonition of the Holy Pope Pius X in my eyes reveals the measure of his true greatness. Souls capable of remaining as faithful and respectful as he has to the Gospel and to the Holy Church are made for the highest ascents which ensure glory among contemporaries and posterity, to whom the example of Marc Sangnier will remain as an example and encouragement."* Marc Sangnier's "submission" immediately washed away all his sins and suddenly made him whiter than snow. But did he really submit, or was it only in words? The Cardinal Archbishop of Lyon, Msgr. Maurin (who was clearly no "moderate") responded in his pastoral letter of 1928: *"Have those who had professed the condemned errors, renounced them internally? Indeed, have they stopped defending and supporting them? We would like to be able to answer in the affirmative and we sincerely believe in their good faith; but, undoubtedly under the dominion of illusion, they seem to have maintained and do not cease to profess the same errors."* Marc Sangnier, in fact, after the condemnation of 1910 had not retired in silence but continued to publish the newspaper *La Démocratie*, and two years later (1912) to found a democratic, non-denominational political party, *La Jeune République*, not dependent on the hierarchy (as the P.P.I. had done in 1919). Sangnier supported the following principle in parliament: *"Here then, we can all agree on this point: the state is secular; therefore it is neither a free thinker nor a believer, it is secular"* (October 25, 1921). Canon Gaudeau, who was not an integralist, commented: *"It is a public profession of heresy and impiety. It is the cynical antithesis of the doctrine of the Faith. Marc Sangnier is not Catholic"* (*La Foi catholique*, December 31, 1921) ⁽¹³⁹⁾. On the social question, Sangnier took up the errors of the Sillon by claiming to destroy the monarchy even in the world of labor, with the nationalization of large industries, a cooperative system for others, leaving only small property to

survive. In 1936, his Party joined the *Front Populaire* with Léon Blum's social communists. On the national question, his party defended the most absolute pacifism, the *League of Nations*, hostility towards borders (*Congrès démocratiques internationaux pour la Paix* by Bierville). He participated in the pacifist congresses of the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*, with its pacifist Freemason president, Ferdinand Buisson, and the young Jewish politician Pierre Mendès-France. Contacts with Freemasonry reached such a point that the "Catholic" Marc Sangnier, in 1930, gave a speech in a Parisian Freemason lodge!⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Very active in the Resistance, after the last war he became honorary president of the M.R.P. (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) by Maurice Schumann and Francisque Gay, who came to power like the Christian Democrats in our country [Italy], following exactly the same role played in the Resistance.

Sangnier's modernist past seemed to have died along with Pius X, to the point that Benedict XV received him on January 29, 1922 praising, according to Sangnier's account (but we cannot believe it), "his theological accuracy". Also in January 1922 the Nuncio to Paris visited and blessed the premises of the *Jeune République*, *La Maison de la Démocratie*, and in August 1926 even a blessing from Pius XI arrived through the Cardinal Secretary of State, Gasparri for the VI International Peace Congress of Bierville; Msgr. Julien, Bishop of Arras, joined the ranks, and Msgr. Gibier, Bishop of Versailles. But it is actually Cardinal Verdier, Archbishop of Paris, who praised Marc Sangnier's Sillon, in an audience on March 14, 1931, "encouraging" the heirs of "Sillon catholique", giving them the old Sillon as a model: "*The Sillon – said the cardinal – is the originator of the great contemporary social movement. It was the first movement of that democratic and Christian spirit which nowadays spreads everywhere. It is good that, as "Catholic Sillonists", you preserve that source. I congratulate you on having remained faithful to the Church and to your spirit. I greatly appreciated, in the nascent Sillon, its fervor for Catholic and social apostolate among the de-Christianized popular masses. In fact, it is the Sillon that started all the youth initiatives that followed. In many youth works today, I find Sillonists among the founders, the animators, the militants. (...) Your Archbishop, who admired your fervor from the beginning, your ideals, the generosity and enthusiasm of your obedience, encourages and blesses you. He calls you, together with all Catholic youth groups, to the social and Christian apostolate, so often recommended by our great Pope Pius XI*"⁽¹⁴¹⁾. If Cardinal Verdier's "democratic and Christian" enthusiasm seemed sincere, in Rome the support for the heirs of Sillonism seemed to be more a result of the times. The climate that explains everything is that of the condemnation of the *Action Française*, for which support is sought from that old enemy of Maurras, Marc Sangnier. The sad observation of Luc-Verus, however, is that "*the men condemned under Pius X are encouraged and blessed under Pius XI, without having ceased in openly professing and propagating their errors*", despite being condemned by Pius XI in the Encyclicals *Ubi Arcano* and *Quas Primas*. (*Vérités*, X, 1928, p. 7). Abbé Boulain, right-hand man of Msgr. Benigni in France until 1929, knew something about it; he left the R.I.S.S.

and Paris with his letter dated January 8, 1930, following Verdier's appointment to the Parisian chair the previous November ⁽¹⁴²⁾.

Part Five: Msgr. Benigni, the Risorgimento, Fascism (and antisemitism?)

The accusation of Father Nitoglia

According to our confrere, Msgr. Benigni *“also began to collaborate with non-Catholic political activists, for example German, English, and White Russian emigrant nationalists. Benigni's change of strategy in the post-S.P. also explains his convergence, starting from 1923, with the Mussolini regime, of which he will be an informant until his death (1934), becoming an exponent of the clerical/fascism, a defender of Romanism”* (N. VALBOUSQUET, *op. cit.*, p 460, see G. VANNONI, *Catholic integralism and fascism*, edited by F. MARGIOTTA BROGLIO, *La Chiesa del Concordato*, Bologna, 1977). *“Now, it doesn't seem to me that we can see in fascism an integral Catholic movement. Therefore, during the pontificate of Pius XI, the same accusations of ‘collaborationism’ with the ‘moderates’ or ‘non-integrals’ that Benigni had made against the ‘conciliationist’ Catholics, could be turned against him during the pontificates of Pius X and Benedict XV. Benigni's sympathies, during the fascist era, for the Italian Risorgimento and his aversion to the Society of Jesus since its foundation, were well demonstrated by Poulat, as we will see below. Which is not fully in tune with Catholic Integralism. As can be seen, ‘there is only one Immaculate Conception’, and Monsignor Benigni had his “not entirely Catholic” shadows; but one can have mercy on an exacerbated and ulcerated spirit, which, driven by failures, has become a little too unbalanced towards the Risorgimento, fascism and anti-Jesuitism without thereby condemning all his militancy and his doctrinal struggle.”*

Let us try to bring some order to this latest accusation by Father Nitoglia (so as to avoid an easy ad hominem response that arises spontaneously in those who know the author of the objection)⁽¹⁴³⁾. This is not easy, as the themes intersect and are difficult to separate. Postponing our dealing with the relationship between Msgr. Benigni and the Society of Jesus to part six, we will try in this fifth part to address:

-The question of the Risorgimento: are there traces or any evidence of a "sympathy" displayed by Msgr. Benigni for the Italian Risorgimento, that can be distinguished at least in some way from the fascist question? Such sympathies might be "*well demonstrated by Poulat*", but unfortunately there is no trace, in Poulat or elsewhere, of this "*demonstration*". The Benigni/Risorgimento issue can be divided into two issues: the position of Msgr. Benigni during the great war on the one hand, and the Concordat between the Holy See and Italy on the other.

- The question of fascism. Did he speculatively join fascism? Did he adhere to the Regime in practice? What about his collaboration as an "informant" for the Regime?

- The question of collaboration "with non-Catholic political activists" (which occurred, as we will see, within the I.R.D.S. - *Intesa romana di difesa sociale*). Which raises a question that should not be underestimated: cannot one perhaps accuse Msgr. Benigni of that very non-denominationalism or inter-confessionalism for which he reproached "moderate" Catholics?

First part: Msgr. Benigni and the Italian Risorgimento. Great War and the Concordat

The integral-Catholic school, as is known, is strictly anti-liberal and counter-revolutionary: the Italian Risorgimento is therefore seen in a negative way and Msgr. Benigni is no exception, given his long militancy among intransigent Catholics. The Risorgimento must be judged negatively not so much for the question of knowing whether Italy should be united, or federal, or divided (as it was under the pre-unification states), but whether Italy should be entirely Catholic or not ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾. Can one hypothesize a change of position in Msgr. Benigni? For Msgr. Benigni and the integral Catholics the "Risorgimento" question could be considered from two points of view: the attitude held during the great war (neutralism v. interventionism) and the attitude regarding the solution of the Roman Question with the Lateran Pacts of 1929.

Msgr. Benigni and the *Sodalitium Pianum* during the great war

In part 5 of his 15 articles, Father Nitoglia explains his accusation: that Msgr. Benigni joined the Risorgimento siding with Italy against Austria during the First World War (Father Nitoglia's Habsburg devotion is an absolute novelty). Let's look at the issue more closely.

The first question (regarding Msgr. Benigni, and his collaborators) still concerns the *Sodalitium Pianum*, which, having dissolved itself in 1914 upon the death of Saint Pius, was reconstituted in 1915, to last until 1921. As Msgr. Benigni reminded Cardinal Sbarretti about the life of the S.P. from 1915 to 1921 it was hindered and reduced to very little, both by the war, which prevented communications between the members, and by the change in the internal situation of the Church after the death of Saint Pius X and the election of Benedict XV. Having worked in an important position in the Secretariat of

State until 1911, Msgr. Benigni had acquired the mentality and personality of a statesman, and he was considered such by foreign governments. Even before the belligerence, much more afterwards, Msgr. Benigni was considered favorable to one or the other of the warring sides, and therefore accused of being dangerous for one or the other of the European nations; for the Entente, he was in favor of the Central Powers, for the Central Powers he sided with France or Russia; we remember that the lawyer Joncks, member of the S.P. in Belgium, was accused of espionage and searched by the German occupation authorities in Belgium, despite himself being in favor of the Flemish, and therefore German, cause. This was, *mutatis mutandis*, the burden that Catholics often had to carry, as the Holy See, under Pius X and Benedict XV, was against the war. Benedict XV was accused by many French Catholics, including the clergy, of being the “Boche Pope, Kraut Pope”, while for the Germans he was the opposite ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾. The program of the *Sodalitium Pianum* (n. 11) in unsuspecting times (1913) was clear:

“We are fully: (...) against the pagan nationalism which corresponds to non-religious syndicalism (that considering nations, like classes, as a collective of which each can and must amorally pursue its own interests outside and against those of others, according to the brutal law we have spoken of); and at the same time we are against antimilitarism and utopian pacifism, exploited by sects with the aim of weakening and putting society to sleep under the Jewish Masonic nightmare; for a healthy and moral patriotism [we support] Christian patriotism of which the history of the Catholic Church has always given us splendid examples” (POULAT p. 121, Disquisitio, pp. 265)

Monsignor Benigni was faithful to this program, even during and after the great war, as we will see later commenting on an important series of articles on nationalism and internationalism, published in 1927 in *Fede e Ragione*. In an article on the impact that the First World War had on the integral Catholic network of Msgr. Benigni ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾, Nina Valbousquet begins her study with a long quote from our prelate, dating back to 1923, which summarizes the whole topic: *“The peace awaited by humanity burdened by so many misfortunes is still absent; the hatreds and struggles between peoples and within the same people torn apart by parties maintains a state of war, explicit or implicit, which leads the world to disaster. We need peace, that true, sincere, honest peace of nations and classes. Impossible to obtain it without the Christian spirit, (...) we must absolutely bring society and individuals back to God and our Redeemer. Hence the great practical duty for good Catholics is to flaunt the Cross before the de-Christianized, Freemasonized, Judaized world, (to) preach aloud the salvation of the world with the integral affirmation of Catholic truth and morality.”*⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ No trace of nationalistic exaltation (yet we are supposedly in the same year that began Monsignor Benigni’s collaboration with the fascist government).

During the Great War the relationship between members of the S.P. became difficult: the student and right-hand man of Msgr. Benigni in Rome, Gottfried Brunner (1875-1962) had to return to Germany, correspondence with German associates or those living in Germany, such as Henri Fournelle (1869-1923) and Dietrich von Nagel (1880-1955) became more difficult, but the letters (pp. 237-238) that Nina Valbousquet cite show their patriotism, at least that of von Nagel, who was a military chaplain

during the war. On the other hand, the French associates (who seem to have maintained a closer correspondence with our prelate) made concessions to the spirit of the time, showing their hostility towards the “*boches*” (the Krauts): not surprising knowing the French! (VALBOUSQUET, pp. 231-234); they asked for and thus obtained the expulsion of Joncks.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ To the French integrals, however, Msgr. Benigni recommended an “*apolitical*” line (p. 226) and they themselves avoided falling into the “patriotic mysticism” of those who would like the image of the Sacred Heart on the French national flag⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ and they condemned (as did, for example, Rocafort, former member of S.P. and always close to Benigni) the invectives against the Vatican and the Pope that came from “*moderate*” circles (read: the pro-modernists of the past) such as Cardinal Amette and Father Sertillanges, who from the pulpit praised Clémenceau's refusal of the peace proposals put forward by Benedict XV (p. 225).

Monsignor Benigni, therefore, publicly defended the policy of the Holy See and Benedict XV (pp. 226-229), for example with an article in *La Nuova Antologia* of March 1, 1916 (*The Pope and the Congress*) condemning the Vatican's exclusion from the Peace Conference; in this context he complained that all religions will have the support of some government, except the Catholic one, and that the exclusion of the Holy See demonstrates the absolute necessity for the Pope to be recognized as a temporal sovereign, in order to guarantee the interests of the Church and to guarantee the papacy not to be excluded “*from the political-social life of humanity*”.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ Like Benedict XV, Msgr. Benigni was also therefore attacked by opposing sides in the conflict, as he himself had the opportunity to point out in a letter to Cardinal De Lai dated January 2, 1917: “*So, in Germany I was sold to Russia, in France I was sold to Germany!*”⁽¹⁵¹⁾ The French modernists or modernizers, whom Msgr. Baudrillart believed, then spread the false rumor of a Benigni who was against France and in favor of the Central Powers (p. 229)⁽¹⁵²⁾.

A false rumor since, as we have seen, the Sodalitium, which believed the war was something desired by the Freemasonic sect⁽¹⁵³⁾, did not take sides among the contenders, but defended the policy of the Holy See. But a false rumor also, if we take into account Msgr. Benigni's personal feelings (we are not speaking here about other integral Catholics, each legitimately linked to their own homeland, following that healthy patriotism defended in the S.P. program, which is very distinct from pagan nationalism). Testimony given by Benigni's journalist friend, Guido Aureli, must be taken *cum grano salis*, given the person to whom it is addressed (the Hon. Bottai) and the



Cardinal Pietro Maffi

historical moment in which it was released (1923, the advent of fascism), but it undoubtedly expresses something true: "*Their most prominent leaders, such as Cardinal Merry del Val and Monsignor Benigni, were with the Entente from the first hour of the war, mindful as they were of the many betrayals with which Central Germany and Christian-social Austria, with political intrigue and modernistic exploitation, had poisoned the life of the sincere and good Pope, Pius X*" ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾. We also have traces of Msgr. Benigni's pro-Italian sentiments in a notice from the Central Investigations Office (of the Italian State) dated June 2, 1917 which writes about him: "*He is indicated as being sincerely fond of Italy, and from the beginning of our war he deplored the blindness of all those ecclesiastical circles who either did not foresee or did not desire victory for the Entente. He had known German politics in the religious-political field, before many had suspected it in the international-political field and for this reason the German Center press, that of the famous deputy Erzberger, waged a deadly war against him with a campaign of slander, which in 1914 led Cardinal Merry del Val to publish a formal denial in the 'Osservatore Romano', forcing the centrist newspaper of Augsburg (Bavaria) to insert it. Today Msgr. Benigni is in complete disgrace in the Vatican having remained faithful to Pius X and not approving the more or less Germanophile policy of certain ecclesiastical circles.*" ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ The two documents cited are thus in agreement in noting Benigni's pro-Italian feelings during the war, and on the other hand his hostility to Germany dictated mainly by a religious motivation: Catholic Germany being the vital center of social modernism (specifically that large Catholic democratic party, The Center, and Bachem's so-called Cologne school). Must we see in these pro-Italian sentiments of Msgr. Benigni a conversion to



Emperor Franz Joseph

“Risorgimentalism” and an abandonment of intransigent Catholicism? Absolutely not. He had nothing to do with those modernist or modernizing liberal Catholics (such as Bonomelli, Maffi, Fogazzaro, the uncle and nephew Grosolis, the National Center, and so on) against which he had always fought. But on the other hand, Austria itself was certainly no longer the guarantor of the balance of the Restoration (which, however, had its great limitations) fought by the Risorgimento. The issue was remembered on the occasion of the death of the old emperor, Francis Joseph, which occurred during the First World War, on November 21, 1916, after 68 years of reign. At the height of the war, an article in *L'Osservatore Romano* on November 23, on the front page, commemorated the deceased Emperor with “*a moving and praiseworthy obituary by its director Giuseppe Angelini.*” The Vatican newspaper recalled “*the attacks of Masonic Judaism*” against Franz Joseph on the occasion of the Eucharistic congress in Vienna in 1912, “*the love of true veneration*” on the part of the

different nationalities of the Empire, “*the faith and liveliness of his religious feelings*”, for which one could see in him “*a devoted and affectionate son of the Holy See and the Roman Pontiff, who never missed an opportunity to demonstrate his unalterable attachment to the august person of the Vicar of Christ*”⁽¹⁵⁶⁾. An anonymous author, who turned out to be Guido Aureli, responded in *La Tribuna*, Rome, the following day, with an article entitled “*Vatican condolences. A memento*”. The author, nephew of Cardinal Galimberti, who was Nuncio to Vienna, recalled all the indignities given by the deceased Emperor to the Church, in the person of Popes Leo XIII, Pius X and Benedict XV, mentioning facts of Vatican diplomacy which were believed to have been revealed by Msgr. Benigni, to whom the article was falsely attributed: “*Heavens above - recalled Aureli - A fury in the Secretariat of State and an investigation entrusted to Count Santucci if the article was - as was asserted, swearing on it - not mine but at the least dictated to me by Msgr. Benigni.*”⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ Santucci turned to a journalist from the *La Tribuna*, de Gislimberti, and he to Aureli, who confirmed that he was the sole author of the article; as Msgr Benigni also demonstrated in the letter to Cardinal De Lai of January 2, 1917, and this is confirmed by the judgment of Father Antonelli's *Disquisitio* (p. 276). Many of Aureli's arguments against Franz Joseph are, however, far from unfounded⁽¹⁵⁸⁾. And many others could be added to them. Catholic traditionalists, having rightly overcome the liberalism of the Risorgimento right, reacted by seeing Austria and Franz Joseph as the bastion of Catholicism. It is an understandable case, but one affected by provincialism: that is, seeing things from the narrow Italian point of view (in this case reactionary). We forget that the Austrian Empire was the heir of an anti-ecclesiastical Enlightenment legislation which took its name (“Josephism”) from Franz Joseph's predecessor, Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790), the son of the first sovereign of the continent to receive that Masonic “true light” from England: Francis I (1708-1765) of Lorraine. Before the French Revolution, which led to his death, Pope Pius VI was made to suffer precisely from Vienna (where he went in vain) and from Florence (where the Grand Duke sponsored the Synod of Pistoia). This anti-Catholic legislation remained in force even under Franz Joseph until August 18, 1851, when the Emperor had the great merit of agreeing to a Concordat with Pius IX which put an end to the suffocating Josephinist anti-ecclesiastical legislation. This Catholic turn around, however, was short-lived: after the defeat against the Prussians in 1866, the liberal party began to dominate Austria and Hungary, with Protestant prime ministers, and new laws contrary to the Concordat, until - in hatred of the dogmatic definition of papal fallibility during the First Vatican Council - Franz Joseph not only failed to intervene



Msgr. Von Gerlach together
with Benedict XV

to support Pope Pius IX and avoid the sacrilegious occupation of Rome, but instead decided, unilaterally, to denounce the Concordat of 1851 and support the sect of the “old Catholics”. In the same period, and until around 1885, the Protestant German Chancellor von Bismarck launched a real cultural and legal battle against the Church which has been handed down in history with the name *Kulturkampf*. With anti-Catholic Germany, Austria-Hungary formed a military alliance from 1873, to then form the Triple Alliance with Risorgimento and Masonic Italy, which lasted from 1882 to 1914. The anti-Judaism of declining Habsburg Austria is ridiculous: the Empire was indeed a paradise for the Israelites, favored and respected within the framework of a multi-religious state, so much so that four times Franz Joseph refused to confirm the election of the social Christian (and “anti-Semite”) Karl Lueger as burgomaster of Vienna. Nor did the imperial family make any better appearance, with his wife, Elizabeth of Bavaria, and his suicidal son Rudolf. The hopes of Catholics, especially the integral Catholics, were based rather on his heir to the throne (after the death of Rudolf), the Archduke Franz Ferdinand ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾, who, however, was in very bad terms with uncle Emperor; as everyone knows, his assassination, together with his morganatic wife, in Sarajevo, started the world war condemned by Saint Pius X, who however was not listened to. Saint Pius X himself solemnly abrogated the pseudo-right of veto, which Franz Joseph, for political reasons, had the Polish Cardinal Puzyna exercise against Cardinal Rampolla ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾. The heirs of the politics of Cardinal Rampolla, the former Secretary of State under Leo XIII, (such as Pietro Gasparri and Giacomo Della Chiesa), had however abandoned support for France, typical of the Sicilian prelate and, in contrast to Msgr. Benigni, did not exclude the possibility of realizing the Rampollian political project of providing an outlet to the sea for the State of the Church through a victory for Austria and Germany in the great war ⁽¹⁶¹⁾. In short, if the Entente powers (Protestant England, schismatic Russia, secular and Masonic France) did not give guarantees to the Church, one surely could not say that the Central Powers (with a Turkish ally, guilty of the extermination of the Armenians) would be reliable: non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum. To conclude the question of the behavior of Msgr. Benigni during the war, one cannot fail to mention the delicate and embarrassing issue of Msgr. Gerlach, on which Msgr. Benigni had the opportunity to return after the war (“*Les découvertes du jésuite Rosa, successeur de von Gerlach*, Paris, 1928). In October 1917, a bulletin from Msgr. Benigni stigmatized Prince Bernhard von Bülow, former German ambassador to Rome (and Minghetti's son-in-law) as “*a Prussian barbarian*”, “*one of the most authentic examples of that cursed race of the old Teutonic knights*”; whatever you think of these picturesque judgments, Mgr. Benigni was right to add that “*Prince von Bülow has been running a truly occult Prussian ministry in Switzerland since he left Italy. His army of spies is installed throughout Italy*”⁽¹⁶²⁾. Throughout Italy, and especially in the Vatican, at the foot of Benedict XV's throne. German espionage, in fact, could not ignore the weight of Catholics in the fate of the war, nor the presence of the Vatican on Italian territory: Annibale Paloscia thus mentions two [espionage] attempts in 1915, involving the Vatican and, in one case, the very brother of the Pope ⁽¹⁶³⁾. But most of all, the Germans could count on two very dear personal

friends of Benedict XV, Msgr. Rudolph von Gerlach, his private valet, with access to the pontifical rooms, and Giuseppe Ambrogetti, the Vatican messenger (to whom Benedict XV addresses informally as “dearest Peppino”, p. 91). Von Gerlach had been a student of Msgr. Della Chiesa at the Academy of Ecclesiastical Nobles before 1908, and from then on became friends with the future Pope. The noble monsignor set up a first-level spy network in Rome, in connection with the German embassy counselor, Franz von Stockhammern, and with the head of the German Christian Democratic Party (The Center) Matthias Erzberger⁽¹⁶⁴⁾. At the same time, he also set up a



The signing of the Lateran Pact between Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri

homosexual network which allowed him to avail himself of the help of important prelates such as the Colombian Monsignor Ricardo Sanz de Samper y Campuzano and the Swiss Bishop Alfredo Peri Morosini, brother-in-law of the former (both will have to resign following moral scandals).

The spying activity of Msgr. Gerlach was not harmless: “thanks” to him, two military ships were sunk: the flagship battleship *Benedetto Brin* (456 dead) and the battleship *Leonardo da Vinci* (249 dead). On December 21, 1916 “dearest Peppino” was arrested for espionage; Cardinal Merry del Val suggested to the grieving Pope to entrust the *Sodalitium* to perform a confidential investigation into Gerlach, which obviously was in vain (PALOSCIA, pp. 120-121), especially since the Pope bore the costs of defending Ambrogetti, whom he considered innocent ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾. Instead, Ambrogetti blows the whistle and implicates Gerlach. When the judge issued the arrest warrant against Gerlach, on January 12, 1917, the German Monsignor had already emigrated to Switzerland, following an agreement between the Italian State (as represented by the Pope's friend, Carlo Monti) and the Pope himself, still convinced of his valet's innocence. Yet Gerlach was received and decorated by Emperors Wilhelm II and Charles I for his services, after which he returned to secular life. At their trial, Ambrogetti was sentenced to three years, von Gerlach to life imprisonment (in absentia); Benedict XV then expressed to the Italian government, through Monti, all his pain for the “unjust” conviction (pp. 154 and 158) going so far as to write Gerlach a letter of solidarity (p. 165) and offering him domestic prelate again in 1919, despite the warnings of Cardinal De Lai (p. 166). By 1928, Gerlach appears to have already been defrocked and “married”. It seems that he died in 1945, in England. True, it's not an uplifting story. But it certainly helps to understand many things, and even the reasonings of Msgr. Benigni in those circumstances. A book by Alberindo Grimani, dedicated to an investigation by Emanuele Brunatto (close to Padre Pio) shows us that unfortunately Msgr. Gerlach made school, and left many disciples behind him ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾. After the war, Msgr. Benigni collaborated with the Austrian and Hungarian legitimists

as part of a common “social defense”: the reservations that we mentioned regarding Franz Joseph, therefore, did not concern in the slightest - at least on the part of Msgr. Benigni – the Italian Risorgimento. The politics of the Secretary of State, Gasparri, rather, returned to being pro-French (we spoke about it in relation to the diocesan associations), favoring then the agreement between France and the Weimar Republic within the framework of a pacifism defended in France by Briand and Marc Sangnier, and in Germany, by the German Christian Democrats.

Msgr. Benigni and the Italian Concordat (1929)

Msgr. Benigni’s attitude during the great war therefore does not imply his rehabilitation of the Risorgimento. Can we then find this rehabilitation in his acceptance, or rather, his approval of the Concordat between the State and the Church in 1929, which closed the Roman Question? In a certain sense this is what Abbé Paul Boulin thought, who, until then, had faithfully followed Msgr. Benigni, first in the *Sodalitium Pianum* and then in the *Intesa Romana di Difesa Sociale*. Poulat wrote that he “*had reacted negatively to the Lateran agreements, and any friendly relationship between them was definitively broken. Boulin regrets this, attributing it to Benigni’s ‘Italian fiber’, who, in this circumstance, would have spoken ‘much louder than the memory of twenty years of common struggle for the transcendence of the Catholic faith’ (Cahiers anti-judéomaçonniques, 1933, n. 5, p. 76). Despite his French sympathy for the regime, this exaltation of Rome was alien to him and seemed like a strange mixture. ‘Far from putting an end to the most murderous work of the Revolution, fascism fully implements its program... Mussolini is nothing other than a belated lieutenant of Garibaldi* ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾, *who realizes the dream of a modern state on the ruins of papal Rome and Catholic order’, he had written in the Revue Internationale des Sociétés secrètes (28 April 1929, pp. 409-431). The archbishop of Paris reproached this criticism towards the Holy See, and Benigni defended the attacked Italy ‘with fury, and even with delirium tremens’ (Romana, May-July 1929)”* ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ As I elaborated in the footnote, in commenting on a speech by Mussolini, Abbé Boulin, if he wasn’t right, wasn’t entirely wrong, and some Cardinals in the Sacred College ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ thought like him, still others complained that Pius XI and Gasparri had totally excluded the cardinals from the negotiations ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾, and in particular some, including Merry delVal himself, let Arnaldo Mussolini know that they did not like the way that Gasparri conducted the negotiations⁽¹⁷¹⁾; Msgr. Benigni himself initially⁽¹⁷¹⁾ did not look favorably on the negotiations, which brought Mussolini closer to Gasparri and Tacchi Venturi ⁽¹⁷²⁾; finally it must be said that historically the French, including non-Catholic governments, had always had the tendency to preserve a Rome under the Pontiff (and to avoid an Italian Rome) ⁽¹⁷³⁾, not always for religious reasons, but often for national interest. The rupture of 1929 was undoubtedly the most painful and significant event in the history of integral Catholicism after the death of Saint Pius X (1914) and the dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum* (1921), from which integral Catholicism never recovered. Msgr. Benigni lost his principal

collaborator, his relationship with Father Maignen also cooled, his French publications ceased, in particular the “Réalde” collection (which we will talk about when addressing the Jesuit question), the financial help of the benefactor Simon will also cease (upon Msgr. Benigni’s death, D’Ambrosio will report to Mussolini on the debts of the *Difesa Sociale*, in vain, following the economic crisis of 1929 and the break with the French). But above all, the denunciation of Boulin made by Benigni himself in some of his reports to the Ministry of the Interior is displeasing and saddening ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾. For Nina Valbousquet, the violent clash between Benigni and Boulin (especially Benigni against Boulin) would be proof of an unconscious abandonment on the part of Msgr. Benigni of the old integral Catholic positions to adopt clerical-fascist positions (like the old enemies of the National Centre). “*Far from having turned the corner – writes Valbousquet – Boulin remains anchored to the old integral positions, while on the contrary Benigni is oriented towards a clerical-fascist political-religious configuration*”. It is, in a certain sense, the same thesis (and accusation) of Father Nitoglia (who, however, shows no sympathy for Boulin). But are things really like this? Apart from the question of fascism, to which we will return, can it be said that Msgr. Benigni abandoned the principles of integral Catholicism to become a clerico-fascist? *Materialiter*, one might say yes (Boulin remains “intransigent”, Benigni accepts the Concordat, noting among other malicious things that “*today the Vatican is at the head, how shall I put it? of transigence*”) ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ Yet, apart from the human side, Msgr. Benigni’s position was exemplary towards Abbé Boulin and the Concordat, both with regard to the program of the *Sodalitium Pianum* as regards the Roman Question, and with regard to the program of the I.R.D.S. (*Difesa Sociale*) to which Boulin adhered, as relating to fascism: he conformed with the old integral program of the S.P., since the defense of the Roman Question and the rights of the Church had to be exercised “*according to the directives of the Holy See*” ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾; he conformed with the *Difesa Sociale* program ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾, at least in the Italian version, in points 4, 5 and 6. Boulin attributed Msgr. Benigni’s position regarding the Concordat to his ‘Italian fibre’; Msgr. Benigni attributed the opposite position to Boulin and the R.I.S.S. “*an excellent periodical in the fight against the Sect*” to the fact of being “*French and patriotic, jealous of the Italian Risorgimento, and therefore absolutely disloyal towards Italian interests in France.*” Father Nitoglia knows well the “Chauvinism” of the French traditionalists too, and can therefore understand what Benigni means by their jealousy towards the Italian Risorgimento which is not that of Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini, but rather that of Mussolini... the controversy among the integrals begins, and, returning to the current one with Father Nitoglia: how could the latter accuse Msgr. Benigni of opposing Pius XI and Cardinal Gasparri, and then criticize him for the approval of the Concordat between State and Church, desired and signed by Pius XI and Gasparri? For once our monsignor followed directives, should we accuse him of favoring fascism or the Risorgimento? If this were the case, the accusation should be directed at the Pope and his Secretary of State, which would be lacking not only in respect, but also truth. *Fede e Ragione* also wrote that the Concordat was the event that “*made fascism and Mussolini an epic of glory for Italy*”, but that despite being aware that “*we can speak of a concordat state, because a*

concordat state can also be a non-Catholic state, as in Czechoslovakia: but a Catholic state, in the proper sense of the term? No. That is what frankly would distress us. The fear of God, which in practice results in the fear of the Church, does not bring us blessing". And Sassoli (who also ended up joining the Regime) wrote in the last issue of *F.e.R.*: "*Thank God the 'immortal principles' are no longer spoken of in Italy; but the more or less secret movement led by Freemasonry, which lives and works among us, against the loyal and full implementation of the Concordat signed by the Italian State on February 11 at the Lateran and ratified on June 7, it is a fact*" (*F.e.R.*, 31 December 1929) when in theory Freemasonry no longer legally existed in Italy (however, Freemasons did exist, even within fascism!)⁽¹⁷⁸⁾. Yes, because fascism had outlawed secret societies (and therefore Freemasonry) but, as Msgr. Benigni recalled in *F.e.R.* commenting on the declaration of incompatibility between fascist membership and Freemasonry affiliation: "*there are 'friends of the order', and 'conservatives', who do the work of sectarians without knowing it... And another very common misunderstanding and error is that of confusing the sect with Freemasonry (Judeo-Freemasonry), which it is not, really, except for being the most external, most banal part of it. Freemasonry, reorganized in its modern form by the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, has evolved to the point of becoming the 'parterre' [gallery seat] of the Sect. So much so that even among the staff of the High Sect it has barely disguised adversaries and friends who are certainly not too enthusiastic. They find, in fact, that it has become too numerous, too crowded, too cumbersome, and therefore they would like a purge... Today, an anti-Freemason is neither automatically an anti-sectarian, nor a counter-revolutionary*"⁽¹⁷⁹⁾. Even on the relationship between fascism and Judaism, integral Catholics, including Msgr. Benigni, were not blind, and complained about the influence of numerous Jews on Il Duce (Sarfatti, Finzi, Jung)⁽¹⁸⁰⁾. In short, Msgr. Benigni and his friends at *Fede e Ragione* applauded the decisions of the Regime in favor of religion and against Freemasonry which had reversed, since 1923, the anti-Christian policy of the successive governments from 1860 until then, but they had no illusions: Italy was not yet a Catholic State, and the sect was not yet dead, not even in Italy.

Second part: Msgr. Benigni and Fascism

Inevitably, when talking about the Italian Concordat of 1929, we come to talk about fascism. I have had the opportunity to speak several times about the relationship between fascism and (integral) Catholicism, and I refer the reader to what has been written⁽¹⁸¹⁾. Did integral Catholics become clerical-fascists, abandoning their integrally Catholic position? Is the accusation by Father Nitoglia paradoxical (paradoxical knowing the one who makes it)? Can the question - now largely purely historical - be posed from a speculative point of view, or from a practical point of view: of adhering to fascist doctrine? Or of supporting the fascist regime? They are not the same thing.

Msgr. Benigni (and the Italian integrals) and fascism: the speculative question

Msgr. Benigni's action and the *Sodalitium Pianum* under the pontificate of Saint Pius X (1903-1914) cannot in any way be referred to fascism, which had its birth in 1919 in Milan, in the Piazza Sansepolero, having as its "host", the Freemason and Israelite, Cesare Goldman. We have already cited, in full, the position of the *Sodalitium Pianum* (of 1913) on the question of nationalism: it declared itself: "against pagan nationalism (...) and for healthy and moral patriotism, Christian patriotism..." (POULAT p. 121, *Disquisitio* pp. 261-262).

We can say that Msgr. Benigni's attitude after the war remained substantially faithful to this point of his platform. However, he accentuates the defense of Christian patriotism and a balanced nationalism, against internationalism and pacifism, while maintaining the unequivocal condemnation of pagan nationalism. In this regard, three articles entitled "*Nationalism and internationalism*" published in *Fede e Ragione* in 1927 (in full controversy over the *Action Française*)⁽¹⁸²⁾ are extremely topical. Democratic and pacifist Catholics like Marc Sangnier, "those little Christians who in Bierville gave a helping hand to Jews and Freemasons", condemned nationalism, summarized in the slogan: the Fatherland or nation "above all" or "first of all"⁽¹⁸³⁾. Now, "whoever attributes an amoral meaning to 'above all' and 'first of all', saying that the Homeland is an autonomous source of citizens' morality (making a 'God-State', as they say), that person would be an atheist or agnostic, if you prefer, who by denying or ignoring God, makes the national fact the supreme source of moral law. But in this case it is a matter of atheism or agnosticism, not of nationalism!": this is the condemnation of pagan nationalism expressed in the program of *Sodalitium Pianum*. If instead by nationalism is meant "a tendency, a movement, hence a party, for which the nation, i.e. the homeland, must be the first aspiration in the competent, i.e. political, terrain, above both the political parties of the country and internationalist views" for which "to further determine this primacy of the national interest depends (on) the moral judgment of the Christian conscience, in any case", then "it is honest, it is Christian to place the homeland, before and above that which exists and moves in the relevant political plane; which fully respects the Divine Law, the Church, etc., all things for a higher, intangible plan", as when a Christian father states that "the purpose of his life is above all to give a future to his children", without meaning "over the Creed, the Decalogue, the precepts of the Church etc. etc." And this is the Christian patriotism of which the ancient program spoke. The enemies of true patriotism are therefore: party spirit on the one hand, internationalism on the other. And internationalism found allies then: the red international of the Bolshevik Kahal, the Jewish



Father Romolo Murri

Masonic-banking Superstate of Geneva (the League of Nations, now U.N.), the pan-European movements (today the European Community) and the International White movement “*Christian Democrats*” (Marc Sangnier and *Action Populaire* in France, *Partito Popolare* in Italy, etc.) pacifist and anti-national (today's modernists). Therefore, “*master in my house, then citizen of my city, then Italian in Italy...*” without thereby bringing harm to treaties between States, to peace between them, to human brotherhood, to the universal (not international) Church, to the same ideal of the medieval ‘*res publica christiana*’ or Christianity, which are located on a higher plane. “*Democratism – concluded Benigni – i.e. the White International, is in full agreement with the Red and the Green (Freemasonry, ed.), in wanting today's Geneva to be ‘the initial stage’ that leads to superstate steamroller, if not to say absorber, of national sovereignties*”. A “sovereignist” Benigni *ante litteram* concludes by quoting Sangnier (in French) again: “*...the peace-loving youth must know that the Geneva organization is only a sketch of the definitive peace regime. This regime will be achieved only with a more accentuated limitation, in the field of their foreign relations, of national sovereignties and the establishment of a democratic, political, economic and intellectual federation of peoples.*”⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ Benigni commented: “*is that clear? Moscow, the Kahal, the High Lodge have the same identical ‘Geneva’ purpose: the federation of democratic republics, including the states of the whole world*” through a passage by moderate stages to the extreme consequences of the “*Integral Revolution of the Antichrist*”. “*And this is why we look at Geneva as the formula for the most terrible danger that dominates Christian and patriotic tradition. Are they understood?*” A clear dissent, from Msgr. Benigni, also on this point, from the 1919 Partito Popolare program which gave its full support to the League of Nations, located in Geneva, and to the Fourteen Points of US President Wilson. These prophetic words, of great relevance, dispel the sophisms of modernist pacifism, explain both the doctrinal difference between integral Catholic thought and non-Catholic nationalism, and the restraining role that these, in practice, can have against international dangers. Therefore they explain Benigni's different choices, doctrinal and pragmatic, in confronting fascism in Italy and other nationalist movements abroad.

In 1919 not only was the “Fasci Italiani di Combattimento” born, but also Father Sturzo's Partito Popolare; in the same year, in Florence, Father Paolo de Töth assisted by Msgr. Benigni founded the integral Catholic periodical *Fede e Ragione*, which continued to appear in Fiesole until 1929. From the pages of *Fede e Ragione* we can follow step by step the attitude of the two main Italian exponents of integral Catholicism, de Töth and Benigni, and of the pontificate of Saint Pius X, specifically as it regards the Partito Popolare and fascism and the politics of Benito Mussolini.

As regards the Partito Popolare, *Fede e Ragione* recognized in Father Sturzo's Christian Democratic Party and its programmatic non-denominationalism the rebirth of that “*social modernism*” that Saint Pius X had condemned in the persons of Father Romolo Murri and Marc Sangnier; “*social modernism*” was more dangerous than those in the dogmatic field, as its errors and danger were less evident. We have seen how, after an initial attempt to change the direction of the Party by the founding

of a “right wing” directed by Count Sassoli de' Bianchi, Don de Töth and Msgr. Benigni convinced Count Sassoli of the impossibility of this attempt and, against the plans of other supporters of the “right wing”, such as the Jesuit Father Rosa of *Civiltà Cattolica* and the Milanese who followed Father Gemelli and Father Olgiati, declared their definitive and irrevocable resignation from the Partito Popolare ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾. The Popolari had effectively become the Catholic party, without being a Catholic party.

The opposition to the Partito Popolare thus placed integral Catholics (and also other Catholics) as objective allies of the fascist movement, at least that they opposed the P.P.! But this did not prevent Father de Töth and Msgr. Benigni from denouncing the nascent Mussolini movement an enemy, even a Masonic movement, against which Catholics were to be warned. To realize this, it is enough to read the years of *Fede e Ragione*, or at least reread what G. VANNONI wrote on the subject in his *Church, Fascism and Freemasonry* ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ or E. POULAT in *Catholicisme...* (pp. 449ff). “*The hostility of Fede e Ragione to nascent fascism is complete, immediate and categorical. De Töth and/or Benigni go on the attack in their front page Spectator articles* ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾. ‘*People today have only one means of salvation: returning to Christ*’, he wrote on January 16, 1921, classifying Mussolini among ‘*the materialists of history*’. On April 17th the front page was not enough for him: ‘*FASCISM. Notice to Italian Catholics, What is fascism? Patriotic sentiment plus anti-socialism, are the thinking not only of ‘the big landowners and the bourgeoisie’, but also of Catholics and priests who, therefore, believe they can adhere to it with impunity. But, under anti-socialism, they do not see the horns of the devil, and thus it is that ‘the degenerate children of this Catholic youth who should and must be the vanguard of the army of Christ and the Church, have need to integrate the sublime program of which they are heirs with the smoke of fascist nationalism!!!*’. Another long return to the subject, under the same title, on May 1: *fascism has resumed the anticlerical program of Freemasonry; the intransigents have a thousand reasons to warn: ‘No! No! Catholics must not have any faith in fascism, assuming that they truly love the Church, that they sincerely desire and want the freedom of their faith and conscience.*

‘*Fascism*’, in full agreement with the Masonic sect and even under its direct control, does not want and does not seek anything other than oppression, and even persecution of the Church in Italy, to the point of completing the work, unfortunately already so advanced, of the de-Christianization of our poor wretched country.

Fascism is pagan, just as Freemasonry is pagan, and tends to reconstruct an Italy in which the only dominant concept is the one of exultation of paganism: the Capitoline Hill and the circus.

For fascism, everything is pagan in the history of Italy, where Christianity cannot even exist. (...)

We do not deny it: not all fascists have the mentality of Mussolini and D'Annunzio, but this does not change a single line of the fascist program or the ends to which the sect wants to lead. And this aim, let us repeat, is the destruction of Religion and of Church by the triumph of the Masonic ideal, of the pagan ideal. (...)

Today, the most suitable method, in the thinking of the sect, the enemy of God, for their reaching at the present hour the realization of their goals, is the deification, and the divinization of the patriotic ideal. The fatherland! Here is the divinity, the only divinity before which every spirit, every conscience, must bow; here is the last Moloch before whom everyone must sacrifice... and here is fascism, or rather the new weapon of struggle that the sect has launched for its infernal ends and with it attempts not only to regain lost ground but, as despotic sovereign, to impose itself again on the people. (...)

In short, fascism is the name of a new phase of an ancient struggle that has lasted for centuries and is moving towards its final episode. (...)

On May 8, 1921 (...) De Töth and Benigni (Spectator) recall that 'Jewish Freemasonry counts all fascist leaders in its high ranks, and that all fascists must belong to it'" (POULAT, pp. 449-450)

After the march on Rome and Mussolini's rise to power, "within the heart of the P.P.I. will emerge very soon (since 1922) a 'clerico-fascist' current, especially in the parliamentary group, in which pre-war 'clerico-moderatism' lives again, favoring a collaboration with the regime that resumes agreement with the liberals. Its subsequent and different manifestations [in the footnote: Constitutional Union of Cornaggia (Fede e Ragione, September 3, 1922), 'national Catholics' (June 1923), Center right of Mattei Gentili, National Union of Cornaggia (May 1923), National Center of Mattei Gentili, Grosoli and Cavazzoni (August 1924)], will result, in August 1924, in the grouping of a 'National Center', to which the right wing, through Fede e Ragione, declares itself extraneous and hostile (17 August), and on which he drops a ruthless judgment: 'Less and worse than Mussolini' (24 August), 'a liberal program with a non-denominational basis' (26 October) forgetting, as F.e.R. he had explained it two years earlier when speaking about the first of these attempts, that 'liberalism, whether political,



Marquis Fillippo Sassoli de' Bianchi together with his wife

social or religious, is always a sin' (September 3, 1922)" (POULAT, p. 453) Grosoli and Cavazzoni had been among the founders of the P.P.I., and even before Grosoli, Mattei Gentili etc. had been among the main players of those modernizers detested by the integrals. "The differing evaluation of the importance and terms of the Roman question constituted perhaps the most visible point of friction between the fundamentalists and the 'clerico-fascists' but it was not the only one. The judgment and attitude towards the Regime and the fascist party was also different. To the adherents of the 'National Center', ready 'to throw themselves at the feet of Il Duce even when

he required them to swear that the earth stands still and the sun turns”, *Fede e Ragione* did not spare him their sarcasm. “We”, declared the integralists, “will never say to Catholics like the creeping supporters of the National Center: applaud with your hands every time Il Duce sneezes: no! No!”. In July 1926, at the request of a reader, *Fede e Ragione* explained that a Catholic should not join the *Partito Popolare* - because the non-denominational principle ‘constitutes a danger to the Faith, being able to lead Catholics to abandon it in public, social and political life, - nor the Fascist party, ‘because this too is not informed of integral Catholic doctrine.’⁽¹⁸⁸⁾”

For Benigni and de Töth, neither adhesion to the fascism movement, nor clerical-fascist collaboration, essentially liberal-risorgimento and modernist, with the fascism regime, nor diplomacy (as Cardinal Gasparri will do) with the Mussolini government; but, as integral Catholics, remembering its principles, de Töth and Benigni do not hide their satisfaction with the evolution of fascism starting from the years '23-'24: its declaration of incompatibility between membership in the Party and Freemasonry (“It's about time!”, comments the newspaper) (February 13, 1923), its law on associations with its consequent dissolution of the two Masonic obediences (May 19, 1925), its return of the crucifix (April 1923) and of religious teaching in schools (1923) etc. (POULAT, p. 455, VALBOUSQUET, pp. 162-164), the Concordat with the Catholic Church in 1929 and the recognition of religious marriage by the State. Fascist Italy had become a Concordat state: would it also become a Catholic state?

Monsignor Benigni and Fascism. After the turning point of 1923, what to do?

In 1928, in an open letter to Mussolini, the magazine *Fede e Ragione* recalls its adhesion to the “national government” back in July 1923: “*Independent Catholics of every sort of party, always in conformity with the dictates of Catholic politics, against all forms of that colorful white, red, green Bolshevism which, arising from the debris of the war and nourished by the ideologisms of revolutionary Judaism, threatened to lead Italy to ruin; when no split had yet come to break up the Popolare team (an allusion to the Centro Nazionale) we, considering what we hailed as the providentiality of the fascist movement, joined the National Government in July 1923*” (*On the threshold of year VII. Open Letter to the Honorable Mussolini, F.e.R.* November 11, 1928). Never did Father Paolo de Töth define himself as a “fascist”, and even after joining the “national government” he did not fail to criticize the objectionable choices of fascism or fascists at a local or national level⁽¹⁸⁹⁾. After the fall of fascism and Mussolini, remembering his friend Sassoli de' Bianchi in 1958, Don de Töth wrote: “*No man in government had spoken of the Church with the respect that Mussolini had done; until then no one had hoped for the end of the conflict between Church and State in Italy, apart from many good laws and the Labor Charter, entirely inspired by the principles of Catholic sociology (...). True: pride clouded Mussolini's judgment to the point of pushing him against the Church; however, the good he has done could not be denied without a lack of justice, earning him trust and applause from very high figures in the Church, whom no one would*

dare accuse of fascism. Just as it is true that no one had the courage of Marquis Sassoli to criticize Mussolini for the very serious foolishness of the anti-historical speeches made in the Chamber on the day after the Lateran Pacts on the origins of Christianity and the Church.” ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Msgr. Benigni also never defined himself as a fascist, if anything the opposite, and precisely by writing to Il Duce! ⁽¹⁹¹⁾ An historian of the Church, he might have seen in Mussolini, at the top of his success, an emulator of Constantine ⁽¹⁹²⁾. With regard to the Emperor who Christianized the Roman Empire, Msgr. Benigni had a completely dispassionate idea, far from the canonization that the separate Eastern Church reserved for him. He was the initiator of that Caesar-papism which has always afflicted the Eastern Church, and which has found many imitators in the West. After the glorious splendor of the Council of Nicaea, Constantine had allowed himself to be corrupted by the flattery of the bishops of the Court and had favored the Arian faction, paving the way for the future persecutions of his successor Constantius (317-361). The same edict of Milan did not make Rome a Catholic state (this would only happen with Theodosius) but only gave Christians full religious freedom and the sympathy of the state. His private life was often cruel, like that of many predecessors, and his baptism, an Arian one, came only at the end of his life. Yet, against every modernist enemy of the “Constantinian church”, it is undeniable that Constantinian policy in favor of Christianity (whatever the reasons were) was, despite the shadows we have spoken of, far brighter for the lights and benefits brought to the faith and salvation of souls. To Mussolini, in his own small way, can something similar perhaps be asked for, starting with the end of the oppression that Freemasonry (and Judeo-Freemasonry) and liberal democracy had been inflicting on the Church for almost a century in Italy? Pius XI and Cardinal Gasparri didn't think dissimilarly in 1929. As a man of action, Msgr. Benigni, in practice, could not remain neutral towards the new national government (on the one hand) and its adversaries (on the other) who had also always been his adversaries: 1923 would therefore become the crucial year in which, after Mussolini got rid of (at least in part) the Masonic mortgage, Msgr. Benigni for his part made his choice with respect to the Regime-Fascism; in 1923 he founded the I.R.D.S., *Intesa romana di difesa sociale*, began his collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which later became collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior, political police, and in this context he closed the Roman office of *Fede e Ragione* while continuing the collaboration with the weekly. To respond to objections, we will look separately at the two activities (I.R.D.S. and collaboration with the Political Police) which are distinct but closely linked. Of this crucial moment, Poulat writes: “*De Töth and Benigni each took up their own autonomy after four years of close collaboration. The former maintains his direction of the periodical in Florence; the latter opens an information office in Rome, the ‘Urbs’ Agency, with the help of his nephew Pietro Mataloni. This is not a breakup: they will always remain friendly and close, and Benigni will continue to write in the Florentine organ, which will not cease to support him against opponents who make no distinctions between them. Rather, it is a specialization in the face of the growth of the subject: for one theology, for the other journalism (...). But perhaps also, on the eve of decisive elections, a difference in their evolution*”



Msgr. Umberto Benigni

that is made clearer without compromising their underlying agreement. They always refer to integral Catholicism, but between them one perceives a different tone on how to update it under the fascist regime, with a reservation that for one is essential, while for the other it is now out of the question. De Töth puts its needs, its critical function, in the foreground - timely, importunate - and this all the more so in relation to the new regime to which he gives his support: 'First the Church, and then the homeland; first God and Religion, and then the State', if you want to be able to call yourself Catholic (December 23, 1923). As a man of action, Benigni considers his possibilities, derisory in the face of the gigantic struggle that has opened up between fascism and disorder. Everything led him to go further along this path: singer of the Regime, he also became one of the informants

of the Duce's private secretariat and of the OVRA, the political police of the Regime (...)" (POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, pp. 485-459) It seems to me that Poulat has hit the mark; Msgr. Benigni does not adhere to the doctrine of fascism but, as a "man of action" (and I will return to the type of "action" chosen by Monsignor Benigni from 1909) - precisely between the end of 1923 and beginning of 1924, as we will see - to make use of fascism, which had become the government of the nation, to continue, to the extent possible and *mutatis mutandis*, its activity begun under Saint Pius X which was, let us remember, journalistic activity (Mgr. Benigni was the founder, in a certain sense, of the Vatican press office) and of confidential information (others will say "espionage", we will see in what sense), but also, thanks to his experience in the Secretariat of State, an activity of statesman, knowledgeable of the functioning of governments (ecclesiastical and civil) and state apparatus, with not only a national but also an international vision of politics and the interests of the Church and of Christian society: Msgr. Benigni was not, due to his talents and vocations, a man whose horizon could be that, however beautiful and sanctifying, of a parish, nor was he a man to retire to a private life.

Monsignor Benigni and Fascism. "Trustee no. 42"

The *Sodalitium Pianum* was dissolved by Msgr. Benigni, in accordance with the request of the Sacred Congregation of November 25, 1921, "*in the current changed circumstances*", on December 8, 1921. The collaboration between Msgr. Benigni and the Italian government at the time covered both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, starting from 1923, and the Ministry of the Interior and the Political Police, starting from 1927: and therefore only after the dissolution of the S.P. and the impossibility of continuing his activity in the service of the Holy See ⁽¹⁹³⁾, did Msgr. Benigni decided to continue his

activity using the Italian Government, even if, strictly speaking about him, it was never done directly but through his nephew Pietro Mataloni⁽¹⁹⁴⁾, and their secretary, Bianca D'Ambrosio⁽¹⁹⁵⁾.

Let us look in greater detail at the circumstances of this collaboration, thanks to the contributions of Mauro Canali, Carlo M. Fiorentino and Margherita Bettini Prosperi⁽¹⁹⁶⁾.

Initially, Msgr. Benigni was charged in 1923 with the establishment of a political service on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a service which functioned, under the responsibility of Mataloni, from 1924 to 1928, when Minister Dino Grandi suppressed the service and fired Mataloni⁽¹⁹⁷⁾; as Dino Grandi predicted and feared, Msgr. Benigni then continued his activity by turning to the Ministry of the Interior, and more particularly to the Political Police directed by Arturo Bocchini (and not to the Ovrà)⁽¹⁹⁸⁾, apparently from July 14, 1927 to April 27, 1931⁽¹⁹⁹⁾, from which date he was replaced by Bianca D'Ambrosio, who continued her activity as Trustee 42 of Political Police until August 23, 1943 (i.e., the fall of the regime brought about by Dino Grandi in the famous meeting of the Grand Council of July 25, 1943). However, there is no shortage of reports sent directly to Il Duce's private secretariat by Msgr. Benigni, or one of his trustees, "from October 1925 to July 1928"⁽²⁰⁰⁾.

Monsignor Benigni was certainly not the only priest who collaborated with the Political Police, however his case is absolutely singular and, in order to fully understand it, it is necessary to return to the beginning of this type of activity which - as everyone knows - Msgr. Benigni carried out under the direct service of Pope Saint Pius X, with the *Sodalitium Pianum*⁽²⁰¹⁾.

Among many books cited, we find one by Canali, "*The Spies of the Regime*", or that of Fiorentino, which deals with "*fascist espionage in the Vatican*". We would be deceiving ourselves, then, if we imagined Msgr. Benigni in the guise of a secret agent, forced to use lies, betrayal and even murder as we see spies do in detective stories. We cannot even imagine him breaking into the safe of the Austrian embassy, as the Italian counter-espionage agents did, to find evidence against Msgr. Von Gerlach. As trustee no. 42 of the Political Police, Msgr. Benigni was nothing more or less than an information service, a lobbying activity if you will, in favor of integral Catholicism and against its doctrinal enemies, an "injection" of news and of ideas as he did in the service of Merry del Val and Pius X towards the national and international press. For this service, he used the information he collected, among other things, with the international activity of the *Intesa Romana per la Difesa Sociale*, both with information collected from others and with his personal experience (such as the report on the political situation and on the English right during his trip to that country, published by Forno, at the University of Turin). Passages from the reports published in the cited works, and others, are there to testify to it.



The poet Francesco Zanetti

Certainly, the information from Msgr. Benigni was not trivial: Bishop Pagano writes for example (with reference to the period under Pius X, but also valid for what came after): “*Judging from the many references in the Benigni Files (...) we can be certain there were a fair number of Vatican informants (not only ecclesiastical, but also lay, sometimes employed in the most humble of services), of others working in the Vicariate, of followers recruited from the various religious orders, of parish priests eager to collaborate, of young seminarians imbued with integrism no less than carierism (sic), of zealous followers infiltrated in the police force and even in Freemasonry (so much information is in Benigni's possession on Roman Freemasonry... including some detailed reports on secret meetings, that one must believe he had infiltrators, of whom, however, I was unable to find their names), of obliging diplomats or embassy employees, not to mention the various Monsignors (some of whom were former colleagues of Benigni) who worked in the Roman Congregations*” (op. cit., pp. 245-246). Among the enemies which were under surveillance, continues Pagano, “*there were the Masonic groups of the capital, the powerful anti-papal journalistic trusts, influential banks and credit institutions (in which Benigni had also infiltrated his informants), secretariats of the Italian political parties. (...) Freemasonry, the bête noire of Benigni's movement, is constantly monitored and, as far as possible, fought with counter information or revelations of programmes, names of followers, secret moves and secret agreements which have been managed to come into his possession. It goes without saying that Roman Freemasonry often meant local or Italian politics, as there were many ties that linked the Masonic lodges to the centers of political and even ecclesiastical power (...). And naturally among the ranks of the sworn enemies of integral Catholicism, Benigni also included the Roman cultural associations that had an anticlerical background, such as the ‘Giordano Bruno’ or the ‘G. Tavani Arquati’ whose associates, through the usual espionage, are listed in detail (140 names) by our Monsignor, in an interesting document.*” Pagano ends his document by reporting an accurate list of journalists (pp. 251-252). As an informer to the Political Police, Msgr. Benigni availed himself of the collaboration of his nephew, Mataloni (a journalist), his secretary D’Ambrosio (she, too, in Trust 42), and of the Franciscan religious, Vincenzo Riccio, who informed from Alessandria in Egypt and could inform on the mail that passed through there “*through an employee of the Alessandria post office*”, “*an activity that... was strategic for checking the correspondence of those who had escaped the Regime*”: initially a sub-trustee of Benigni, he then became direct Trustee with his own no. 212: “*he passed on information about Freemasonry and the subversive movement present in Egypt to the major marshal of the CC.RR., Antonio Sechi, second to the Consul of Alexandria in Egypt, who forwarded them to the information services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to the Political Police, which, too, received Riccio's reports thanks to Benigni*” (CANALI, pp. 258-259). Another collaborator of Msgr. Benigni as Trustee 42 was the journalist and poet Francesco Zanetti (1870-1938), editor-in-chief of the *Osservatore Romano*, protected by Cardinal Merry del Val, and then by Cardinal Canali, but dismissed by Count Della Torre (FIORENTINO, pp. 23-26, 170, 245); his denunciation of Montini as an “*enemy whom we must keep an eye on*” is significant (p. 37). Although

an anomaly for a priest, the collaboration with the Italian government carried out by Msgr. Benigni was morally impeccable: as a citizen, he was at the service of his homeland; as a clergyman, he served the interests of the Church: as a counter-revolutionary militant, he fought effectively against the Revolution with the means made available to him. His activity simply adapted his previous one in the Sodalitium Pianum, which was in direct service of the Holy See, to the “*changed conditions of the times*”. The information to the national government continued the same battle with different means. What Mgr. Benigni did discreetly with the Italian government, he also did more openly with other organizations, including foreign ones, who shared a “social defense” against common enemies.

Third part: the I.R.D.S., (or E.R.D.S.) and social collaboration with the non-denominationals: a violation of integral Catholic confessionism?

*“In any case, after the end of the First World War Benigni understood that the ‘new practical and political orientation’ (not ‘new theology’) of the Holy See had made the continuation of the S.P.’s activity practically impossible. as it had been conducted under Pius X. Therefore he no longer sought the official support of the Holy See, but tried to keep his activities further and further away from the vigilance of the bishops and the Roman Curia who were now foreign, if not hostile, to him. (...) Benigni ‘also began to collaborate with non-Catholic political activists, for example German and English nationalists, and White Russian emigrants. Benigni’s change of strategy in the post-S.P. also explains his convergence, starting from 1923, with the Mussolini regime, of which he will be an informant until his death (1934), becoming an exponent of the clerical/fascism defender of Romanism’ (N. VALBOUSQUET, op. cit., p 460, see G. VANNONI, Catholic integralism and fascism, edited by F. Margiotta Broglio, La Chiesa del Concordato, Bologna, 1977). Now, it doesn't seem to me that we can see in fascism an entirely Catholic movement. Therefore, during the pontificate of Pius XI, the same accusations of ‘collaborationism’ with the ‘moderates’ or ‘non-integrals’ that Benigni had made against the “conciliatationist” Catholics, could be turned against him during the pontificates of Pius X and Benedict XV. Benigni’s sympathies, during the fascist era, for the Italian Risorgimento and his aversion to the Society of Jesus since its foundation, were well demonstrated by Poulat, as we will see below. Which is not fully in tune with Catholic Integralism. As is shown, ‘there is only one Immaculate Conception’, and Monsignor Benigni had his ‘not entirely Catholic’ shadows; but one can have mercy on an exacerbated and ulcerated spirit, which, driven by failures, has become a little too unbalanced towards the Risorgimento, fascism and anti-Jesuitism without thereby condemning all his militancy and his doctrinal struggle. (Father Curzio Nitoglia, second part: *The vicissitudes of Integral Catholicism under Benedict XV and Pius XI*).*

I reported this long quote from Father Nitoglia to present to the reader the new accusation against Msgr. Benigni which requires an adequate defense: it would be easy to respond ad hominem in

this case too, since the objections raised against Msgr. Benigni are an evangelical speck compared to the beam in the eye of current traditionalists, without exception, but the problem is nevertheless significant and it is appropriate to address it on its merits. The sentence quoted mixes topics to which I have responded or will respond in a specific manner (fascism, Risorgimento, collaboration with the Political Police, anti-Jesuitism and so on) and I will now limit myself to dealing with the activity of the I.R.D.S. (*Intesa Romana di Difesa Sociale [Roman Agreement for Social Defense]*) in French E.R.D.S. (*Entente romaine de Défense sociale*) which Msgr. Benigni founded in 1923 (a year of struggle, as we have seen, in the life of our prelate) to replace the *Sodalitium Pianum* dissolved in December 1921. The activity of the I.R.D.S., parallel to the collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then with the Ministry of the Interior, which we have talked about, poses two particular doctrinal problems, one might say, which Father Nitoglia raises albeit in a somewhat confused manner. The first is that of his collaboration - within the framework of the *Difesa Sociale* - with non-Catholics; the second is, contrarily, that of his independence of the hierarchy. And this is the big difference (though not the only one) between the I.R.D.S. and the S.P., which was rather established as a *Pia unio* or Catholic secular institute under the dependence of the hierarchy. Clearly, the change was due to the changed circumstances, and Father Nitoglia rightly remembers it: “*after the end of the First World War Benigni understood that the ‘new practical and political orientation’ (not ‘new theology’) of the Holy See had made the continuation of the S.P.’s activity practically impossible. as it had been conducted under Pius X*”; the only alternative being inaction or retirement to private life. But the problem exists, and Father Nitoglia reminds us of it. One of the fundamental points of criticism used by the Integrals against modernizers and the Popolari was precisely that of non-denominationalism and independence from the hierarchy, and so now had Msgr. Benigni created an ‘Integral Catholic’ association independent of the hierarchy that was also ‘non-denominational’? Wasn't this a contradiction in terms? Allowing for something against which you reproach others? The answer to this doubt is found in Msgr. Benigni's writings, and therefore, as he himself says, in the very nature of the I.R.D.S.; which was, moreover, an old idea. Even before founding the *Sodalitium Pianum* in 1909, Msgr. Benigni, as soon as he had entered the Secretariat of State (1906), drafted, with the agreement of Cardinal Merry del Val, the ten-point program of *Amici dell'Ordine Integrale [Friends of the Integral Order]*, which Bishop Pagano discovered in the Benigni Files and published in *Documenti sul modernismo Romano* (pp. 233-234). The program merits being printed in full, but I will limit myself to the points that interest us. In Point 1: “*we recognize the urgent need for a stable and active Intesa made up of elements spread across the world, devoted to the cause of the Integral Order, thus - in fact - to Roman Catholicism and to the integral Counter-Revolution*”. In Point 5: “*The struggle of the Integral Order and the Intesa by those elements devoted to it constitute neither a “party” nor an “operation” in the current sense of these words. It is only good Friendship leading to correspondence and stable and organic contact to ensure the appropriate exchange of information, warnings, intentions and possibly mutual help, without prior commitments,*

each being able to choose, in any case, his own way.” In Points 6, 7, 8 he reiterates how this “*free and fraternal agreement of the Friends of the Integral Order*” is streamlined and informal, in which you can stay as long as you want, aimed at creating an “*information service*”. And to the last point, “*since all of the foregoing demonstrates that the aforementioned Intesa is nothing more than simple and good Friendship, it is evident that it needs neither publicity nor authorization, while each member of the Intesa complies with the one's duties as a Catholic and a citizen.*” The “*Corrispondenza Romana*”, born the following year, became the information organ of the Agreement which, in order to obtain pontifical approval, however, wrote Pagano, needed “*to dress in more religious guise and make it appear, at least externally, to have some ecclesiastical purpose.*” This was how the *Sodalitium* was born in 1909, but this was also how it could be dissolved in 1921 by the Congregation of the Council. During its existence, however, the *Sodalitium* carried out work in its own field, that of information, that went beyond the circle of its associates: we talked about this when dealing with the Catholic press. The integral or papal Catholic press, with “*flags flying*”, was doctrinally perfect, but poor in circulation. The remedy found by the modernizers of the “*Trust*” was the “*penetration press*”, which however was no longer truly Catholic. Msgr. Benigni, on the other hand, supported the integral or papal press with his “*information service*” which penetrated the secular press, using friendly journalists (who were not part of the *Sodalitium*) or even those just in search of news: these are the famous “*injections*” which Benigni spoke about to Merry Del Val. In this way the secular, and therefore non-Catholic, press often had, in an unexpected way, an unfavorable attitude towards modernism. In the letter of dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum* in compliance with the request of the Congregation of the Council (actually of the Secretariat of State) Msgr. Benigni wrote: “*The feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be the last day of the Sodalitium Pianum, after which no other bond will exist between us other than our common love for the Church and our private friendship*” and ends with these words: “*for the Diet of the Sodalitium Pianum, your brother until today, your friend forever, Umberto Benigni*”⁽²⁰²⁾. No longer existing as an ecclesial body, the friendship between the members remained alive also through an internal information service that Msgr. Benigni immediately reactivated, as is testified in the circular letters preserved in the Giantulli archive (now in Verrua Savoia) and commented on by G. Vannoni in 1981⁽²⁰³⁾. The first letter, the only one published, and written in French, is dated January 5, 1922, only a month after the dissolution of the S.P. After the defeat, it was about “*ramasser nos os [picking up our bones]*”. But how? “*As for organizations (...) all the Friends I questioned are against it: given that with the current climate they would not survive on earth, and we don't want underground things. The good friendship that binds our Friends personally seems sufficient to them for the association necessary to work in favor of the good cause, each free to his own way, according to one another, then, the reciprocity of information, documentation, advice, counsel, etc. They want to see activated the private and free correspondence of the Friends so this reciprocity is not just an empty word*” (p. 733). The friendly agreement should be situated at the level of “*social defense*”. “*Bolshevism,*

the most terrible calamity that has befallen humanity” (Benigni) was the work of Judaism. For the first time, atheism became the “religion” of the State. The common enemy prior to the war (Judaism, Freemasonry, Liberalism, Modernism) now had a military arm that could destroy the natural basis of society itself. Already in December 1920, Benigni organized studies of social defense (Valbousquet) and in the magazine *Fede e Ragione* there was published a column “*per la difesa sociale*”. The birth in 1923 of the *Intesa per la Difesa sociale* is only a natural development of this initiative. The informal character of the agreement rendered unnecessary the control of ecclesiastical authority: in a letter of October 29, 1923 Msgr. Benigni presented to the pastor of Basel, Robert Mäder, his new “*Intesa Romana per la Difesa Sociale*” (I.R.D.S.) and the *Comitato Veritas*: they are not an organization “*such that it has no rhyme or reason: it is a group like any other. But it is a friendly correspondence that is very useful for the fight **against the common enemy**. This is why - on the one hand - there is no need for hierarchical permission and - on the other - such correspondence can take place with non-Catholic groups, without in any way causing one to fall into interconfessionalism, against which my friends and I tirelessly struggle*”⁽²⁰⁴⁾. A similar letter was sent on November 23, 1923 to Domingo Garcia Pujol († 1972 at 91 years old), of the *Diario di Barcelona*, with whom Benigni collaborated, to invite him to join the Social Intesa: “*Algunos excelentes católicos contra-revolucionarios a Roma han constituido después algunos años un grupo amigable, el Comyté Veritas que no es una asociación u organización propiamente dicha, sino una simple ‘entente’, una ‘amitié’ en el senso especial de esas palabras ya aceptado por todos. Igualmente este grupo está unido con otros de diferentes países o que sean asociaciones verdaderas, redacciones de periodicos etc., o que sean, ellos así, simple grupos de amigos. Esa union así no es una organización, sino es y se llama la ‘Entente de Defensa Social’. Cuanto al C. Veritas, a Roma, al cual sus fuerzas limitadisimas no permiten tener oficina propia, el ha encargado de su servicio un bureau puramente tecnico (pero en mano de buenos amigos) el ISES (de ‘informaciones científicas y sociales’; aquí anexado su programa por la información de Ud) que envia y recibe la correspondencia del C. Veritas. Yo que recibo esas comunicaciones, he pensado que acaso algunas de ellas podrían servir a Ud o por publicar partes oportunas de ellas o cuanto menos por la información personal de esta Redaccion [Some excellent counter-revolutionary Catholics in Rome have recently formed a friendly group, the Comyté Veritas, which is not an association or organization per se, but a simple ‘entente’, an ‘amitié’ in the special sense. of those words already accepted by everyone. Likewise, this group is united with others from different countries, whether they are true associations, newspaper editorial offices, etc., or who are, thus, simply groups of friends. This union is not an organization, but rather it is and is called the ‘Entente de Defensa Social’. As for C. Veritas, in Rome, whose very limited forces do not allow it to have its own office, it has entrusted its service with a purely technical bureau (but in the hands of good friends), the ISES (for ‘scientific and social information’; here attached is your program for sending and receiving information and correspondence from C. Veritas. I, who receive these communications, have thought that perhaps some of them could be of use to you either by publishing*

opportune parts of them or at least by the personal information of this Editorial Office." (DIEGUEZ, Fondi dell'Archivio..., p. 30, cfs. VALBOUSQUET, Catholique..., p. 147)

A bulletin from the "*Comité Veritas de Documentation sociale*" dated August 8, 1923 (reproduced, unfortunately only partially by Valbousquet on p. 130), presenting the "*Entente de Défense Sociale*", reminds us that adhering or sympathizing groups and magazines retain their autonomy and do not bind the other Friends. "*It is now very clear that our Intesa does not intend to favor or even accept such interconfessionalism, that 'christliche Basis [Christian-basis]' etc., invented or at least exploited by the White International.*" A concept reiterated in a letter from Benigni dated March 4, 1922: "*Among these groups and their leagues there must only be a free understanding between them so that there is not a block of organisations, but of simultaneous actions. We do not want 'Internationals' more or less 'Christian', or more or less 'white'*" (ibid., p. 128). For his part, Abbé Boulin with regard to the R.I.S.S. explained in turn: "*An honest cartel of groups differing in terms of nationality, religious confession and political tendency is legitimate on the common ground of the most elementary principles of social defense. Pius X would have advocated such an agreement, unlike many pseudo-Christian internationalisms and monstrous consortia of interests and parties, whose beliefs are shamefully sacrificed to appetites*" (June 17, 1923, VALBOUSQUET, p. 129). Perhaps, invoking Pius X, despite not being Italian, Boulin was thinking of the 'Gentiloni Pact' so hated by the Popolari, but put into practice by Pius X, who had already experienced it in Venice as Patriarch: in the absence of anything better, an alliance on a few precise points and against a common enemy, each maintaining their own identity and independence, while the Partito Popolare chose the model of a party of Catholics, but not Catholics (non-denominationalism).

On the other hand, NICOLA CANALI (*La spie del regime [The spies of the regime]*, il Mulino, p. 258) and NINA VALBOUSQUET (*Catholique et antisémite*, CNRS edition) give us a vast panorama of the reports of Msgr. Benigni in the framework of the *Intesa per la Difesa Sociale*: and so, we easily recognize that the collaborators of *Difesa Sociale* were Catholics, if not priests, as were the majority of those with whom Msgr. Benigni was in contact. In Italy you had the magazine *Fede e Ragione*, and a certain number of Friend-listed journalists (Guido Aureli, Carlo Felice Battaglia, Domenico Ventriglia, Riccardo Adorno, Riccardo Olivi, Aristide Raimondi etc.) and those closest Roman collaborators (D'Ambrosio, Mataloni, and the unfaithful Bordi) and the Florentines (the lawyer Giani). In France, closely connected with the monsignor were the old friends of the *Sodalitium Pianum*, the journalists Merlier (1869-1952) and Rocafort (1860-1939), and the abbé Boulin (1875-1933), who wrote for the R.I.S.S. and counted on the support of Msgr. Jouin, who also was directly involved in the initiative. There was also a German branch of *Difesa Sociale*: it too counted on the support of the old members of the *Sodalitium*: the priests Fournelle (1869-1923), von Nagel (1880-1955) and above all Gottfried Brunner (1875-1962), "*the last survivors of the Sitz Berlin who remained faithful to Pius X, and my good friends*", as Benigni wrote to Jouin. As for Switzerland, here too we find old fighting companions

from the times of Saint Pius X: the aforementioned parish priest Robert Mäder (1875-1945), founder in 1912 of the newspaper *Schildwache* (The sentinel, like its French counterpart: *La Vigie*, The lookout), who also collaborated with *Fede e Ragione*, and Ferdinand Rüegg (1884-1970) former editor under Pius X of the integral weekly *Petrus Blätter* of Trier, which closed in 1917, after which he founded the press agency KIPA (*Katolische Internationale Presse-Agentur*), which will survive until 2015, changing direction. In Spain there is the Catholic *Diario de Barcelona*, already mentioned, by the Marquis of the Casa Brusi, along with its director, Domingo Garcia Pujol. The same held true in Canada, where relations are maintained with the parish priest of Saint-Epiphane (Vifer), and director of *L'Action Sociale*, the abbé J.-A. D'Amours, and the director of the *Semaine Religieuse du Québec*, the Abbé Jean-Antoine Huot (1877-1929), an expert in Freemasonry and Judaism. Same thing in Romania: there he corresponded with Don Raphael Haag (1895-1978), ordained in Rome in 1919, a Catholic parish priest of Turnu Severin, who later became a Jesuit (what would our monsignor have said?!) who was reported to the Security Council, betrayed by his superior, the acting Bishop of Bucharest, Francisc Augustin, and sentenced to 18 years in prison by the communist regime. He declared himself a “disciple” and “devoted student” of Benigni, “antisemitic in the Christian sense” (VALBOUSQUET, p. 148, who does not make the slightest mention of his heroic confession of faith while in the communist prisons).

Also Catholics, though more or less close to the Action Francaise, are the canon archpriest of the Cathedral of Perpignan, Msgr. Ferdinand Izart (1865-1945) ⁽²⁰⁵⁾ and the journalists of the Toulouse magazine, the *Bloc Catholique*. Close to the *Action Française*, but much more knowledgeable in the fight against Judaism, is the *Nouvelle Revue Romande* (1922-1945) by Jules-Ernest Gross, “of Calvinist origin but very willing to embrace integral Catholicism” as Boulin wrote to Benigni (p . 146). His position on Christianity, anti-Judaism and Pan-Germanism is clear: “*Le pangermanisme devient par antisémitisme forcené, un antichristianisme absolu. Pour ne vouloir plus du concurrent juif, on voudra la destruction de tout ce qui le rappelle, on dira d’un même cri: mort au juif, mort aux prêtres! [...] Telle risque d’être, malheureusement, l’histoire prochaine de l’hitlérisme. L’antijudaïsme chrétien est une tradition, une nécessité, une mesure de salut. L’antisémitisme pangermanique est un danger parce qu’en détruisant l’universalité chrétienne par haine du concurrent et dévastateur juif, il commet l’erreur d’attaquer l’adaptation et la compréhension romaine et européenne du Christianisme. Anéantir une habitude de foi devenue une fonction essentielle de l’humanité civilisée, sa source principale de vie et de salut, serait pure folie. Aveuglément le pangermanisme fait en sorte d’assurer au judaïsme une victoire qu’il prétendrait empêcher et qui serait vraiment la fin d’un monde.*” [“Pan-Germanism becomes, through frenzied antisemitism, absolute anti-Christianity. For those who no longer want a Jewish competitor, will want the destruction of everything that reminds him of them, and will say with the same cry: death to the Jew, death to the priests! [...] Such risks being, unfortunately, the next history of Hitlerism. Christian anti-Judaism is a tradition, a necessity, a measure of salvation. Pan-Germanic

antisemitism is a danger because by destroying Christian universality through hatred of the Jewish competitor and devastater, it commits the error of attacking the Roman and European adaptation and understanding of Christianity. To annihilate a habit of faith that has become an essential function of civilized humanity, its main source of life and salvation, would be pure madness. Pan-Germanism blindly ensures that Judaism has the victory which it claims to prevent and which would truly be the end of a world”]. JULES-ERNEST GROSS, *Suite pour Hitler II*, in *Nouvelle Revue romande*, no. 68, 1932) If the words in favor of Christianity as being linked to European civilization are reminiscent of Maurras, the end of the quote was unfortunately prophetic. The conclusion reached by Valbousquet therefore seems exaggerated to me: that of a politicization and secularisation of the Msgr. Benigni’s program, apart from changes due to circumstances; as Poulat shows us, the heart of his Catholic action was, since the time of Leo XIII, the fight against the Revolution, and since then he (like many others in his time: we remember how Ratzinger suspended the already announced canonization of Father Dehon, a Christian Democrat, because of his alleged “antisemitism”) identified Judaism as the main driving force of the Revolution itself: if anything, in addition to the times, it is others who have changed, not him. Contacts therefore with non-Catholics (with whom we share the struggle for Christian civilization, and opposition to common enemies: Judaism, Freemasonry, Bolshevism) therefore take place above all in non-Catholic countries, such as England (in particular with *The Britons*) where Msgr. Benigni will go in 1926, and the United States, where he will go in 1927, and with the legitimist circles in Austria-Hungary (George de Pottère) and, in the field of schismatic “orthodoxy” with the “white” Russians and the Romanians close to the *Iron Guard* of Codreanu⁽²⁰⁶⁾; with all of these he formed more or less friendly relationships that he never wanted to materialize into belonging to a common association, nor in a common action in the religious field. The most concrete joint action with these groups and other similar ones was the organization of various international meetings (Paris, 1924, organized by the R.I.S.S., Salzburg and Budapest in 1925) called “the International Conferences on the fight against Judeo-Freemasonry”.

“The Anti-Semitic International” and the Difesa Sociale

Father Nitoglia does not seem to reproach Msgr. Benigni for the role played by the anti-modernist prelate in the fight against Judaism: for those who know the thoughts and actions of our confrere, that would be the last straw! Yet, Nina Valbousquet's entire book concerns this theme, that of the “antisemitism” of Msgr. Benigni, especially from the early years after the war onwards (1918-1934). The delicate point consists in this: the French historian, supported by Jewish associations, reproaches Msgr. Benigni and the Integrals (including those who were not Integral in the strict sense, like



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Msgr. Jouin) for an increasingly marked politicization of their “antisemitic” activity, focusing in particular on the attempts implemented by Msgr. Benigni’s “*Difesa Sociale*” to create an “*antisemitic International*” that included non-Catholics (“Orthodox” or Protestants), as long as they were in favor of the social defense of Christian civilization against Judaism⁽²⁰⁷⁾.

Nina Valbousquet insists on calling these initiatives an “*antisemitic International*”, but she herself has to admit that the promoters refused to create an International, even a purely anti-Jewish one, in opposition to the revolutionary Internationals (p. 185), and she is forced to admit herself of “*the limits*” of what she persists in calling an “*antisemitic galaxy*” (pp. 191-195). Indeed, she must admit how the work of integral Catholics prevented - as long as it existed - that anti-Judaism which resulted in that pan-German and anti-Christian antisemitism (pp. 199-243), while continuing to support her thesis according to which “*the identification around a Christian anti-Judaism and the condemnation of anti-Christian Nazism do not at all prevent the Catholics of the group from professing a secularized and racial hostility towards the Jews*” (p. 199). Valbousquet thinks she will find proof of this secularized racism in the distrust of integral Catholics towards Jews, even if converted and baptized. This argument is also used by anti-Christian Jewish propaganda in relation to the laws on the “*limpieza de sangre*” in 15th-16th century Spain (see *Sodalitium*, n. 70-71: DON RICOSSA, *Jesuits and statutes of “purity of blood”*; n. 39, DON NITOGIA, *The problem of the Marranos*). If on the one hand the Church has always favored conversions, and proclaimed with Saint Paul that in Christ there is no difference between Jew and Greek, on the other hand, again with Saint Paul, it has not ignored the dangers deriving from poorly converted neophytes (e.g. 1 Tim. 3, 6; Titus 1, 10-16; in general, all the persecutions suffered by Saint Paul by the Judaizing “false brothers”, cf. 2 Cor. 11, 26). This is how the Judaizers were, precisely at the time of the apostle. This was the case with the Marranos in the Iberian peninsula and, in a different way, with the Alumbrados. Thus the disciples of Sabbatai Zevi and then of Jacob Frank (*Sodalitium*, n. 49, *Karol, Adam, Jabob*), and one could go on and on: there are apparent conversions, there are half-way conversions, there are sincere conversions followed by a return to origins... there are many reasons why a convert (from heresy, Mohammedanism, Judaism, liberalism or socialism, esotericism...) can cause (voluntarily or otherwise) serious damage to the Church. For this reason, from the end of the century until the end of the last world war, innumerable religious orders required the postulants to have “purity of blood”, and even today canon law declares the children of non-Catholics prevented from receiving sacred orders if the parents persevere in their error, and the neophytes themselves until they are sufficiently proven (canon 987, n. 1st and 6th). A more severe application of these prescriptions would have avoided the nefarious action of some relevant figures during the Second Vatican Council⁽²⁰⁸⁾. The condemnation of the “*Opus Sacerdotale Amici Israel [the Clerical Association of the Friends of*



Arturo Reghini
Esoterist and Freemason

Israel]” also confirms the correctness of Msgr. Benigni’s attitude: the founder of the association, doubly “converted” (from Judaism and Bolshevism) under the pretext of the conversion of the Jews, instead worked to demolish the doctrine and practice of the Church on Judaism, anticipating the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate*. This caution had nothing to do with racism, and numerous testimonies demonstrate this. The *Intesa di Difesa Sociale*, in fact, and the Integral Catholics, were always hostile to pan-Germanism and to Hitlerism. In a column “*Azione di Difesa Sociale*” in *Fede e Ragione*, (no. 50, December 11, 1921), Msgr. Benigni wrote: “*The first danger we must guard against is that of the exploiters of antisemitism. (...) Its politics are those which, invaded by pagan nationalism, make antisemitism a hateful and absurd issue of race. Such are those pan-Germanist madmen or those scoundrels of the “Semi Gotha”, Munich’s antisemitic yearbook, who, possessed by the ethnic Nitschism of a Germanic super-race, turn against Christianity because it is... oriental. Years ago they had the courage to print this epiphonema in their almanac: when the German prays he stands and raises his hands to the sky; kneeling, asking for grace etc., is oriental... These must belong to that small group that proposed to restore the cult of Wotan in Germany - the ‘Wrath of Odin’ - the only cult worthy of the great race. If it were nothing more than some crazed excess, the question could be turned to medical expertise. But behind these thugs there are the scoundrels who increasingly push them to such excesses as to discredit serious and honest antisemitism. Therefore this must be the first to relentlessly denounce those madnesses as just so many ploys of the enemy. (...) And therefore, it is acting like Jews, and worse - it is an adoption of the most inhuman pages of the Protocols - to distort antisemitism into a question of race, imitating the most ribald pan-Zionism which is based precisely on the principle of super-race of the Chosen People*”. Valbousquet reproduces numerous statements of this kind, coming from Msgr. Benigni and his friends (pp. 199ff), including the American Leslie Fry ⁽²⁰⁹⁾, and recalls their fight against the “occultist symbol” of the swastika (it had not escaped their notice that it was the symbol of the *Theosophical Society*). The same is true for any thinker or group linked to Freemasonry or esotericism, even in a fascist environment. The current orphans of the “*Pagan Imperialism*” of Julius Evola and of “brother” Arturo Reghini complain about the “*nefarious work carried out by the prelate to the detriment of esoteric and Masonic associations*”, in particular his attempt to “*oppose the ‘pagan’ project of Reghini and his associates*” “*with the weapons of denunciation*”. The author, Fabrizio Giorgio, alludes to the attempt by Reghini, Evola and the Ur group to reconstitute Freemasonry, demolished by fascism, creating a new obedience with a “pagan”, Ghibelline, fascist and anti-Christian tendency. The attempt - which ran aground with the Concordat and with the rupture between Evola and



Julius Evola

Reghini - had to be achieved thanks to magical practices and “psychic chains” and, more prosaically, counted on, or hoped to count on, the interest of various hierarchs initiated into the Freemasonry (Giacinto Celano Puoti, uncle of Farinacci, Giuseppe Bottai and Leandro Arpinati, who published the anti-Christian articles of Evola, Edmondo Rossoni, Italo Balbo, Michele Bianchi etc.) to get to Mussolini. Benigni kept the Political Police informed (the author cites two reports from April 8 and July 19, 1928), to warn against the Masonic maneuver. In a late dispatch, for example, Giorgio writes: “*but let's get to the restorers (of Freemasonry) today. One of the leaders (...) is Arturo Reghini, professor of mathematics in Rome. Well, our informants from Florence inform us that he is the most ardent and influential member of that esoteric group of which the spokesperson... scandalous and infamous, is J. Evola, the preacher of an anti-Christian, pagan fascism, in an environment of Satanist occultism. While the criminal madman Evola overthrows such enormities and tries to inject it into the fascist world, the skilled Reghini plays the positive, and proposes Masonic restoration (...). We are told that the clique is working tenaciously, hoping to find some high-ranking follower who will persuade Il Duce to do so.*”⁽²¹⁰⁾

On the opposite side of Giorgio, let us read from the unsuspecting Valbousquet (also unsuspecting of any sympathies for Msgr. Benigni): “*The Benigni papers demonstrate his interest in the formation of an Italian antisemitic press, with the presence of numerous antisemitic newspaper clippings of fascism: La Vita italiana, il Tevere, and the magazine Antieuropa by Asvero Gravelli. Attentive to the evolution of the currents of anti-Jewish fascism, the prelate uses the channel of his activities as an informant, as a sort of lobbyist, in favor of Latin and Catholic antisemitism, within the regime. In his police reports he thus systematically accuses the Fascist neo-pagan and anti-Catholic tendencies of antisemitism, for example in the writings of Julius Evola, Preziosi's collaborator in 'La Vita italiana', already criticized by the R.I.S.S. and by Piero Bargellini in Fede e Ragione (Minimus, Resposta a Satana, Fede e Ragione, April 22, 1928; A. TARANNES, Un sataniste italien, J. Evola, R.I.S.S., avril 1928, pp. 124-129). In 1933, Benigni denounced the 'shady Evola' whom, if he sometimes rejected certain theories of Nazi racism, always ended up proclaiming that 'true Romanism is pagan': 'the sectarian wanted to take a dig at Christianity (...). He is saddened to see that Preziosi allows collaboration with such a sinister sectarian, and that he alone, or almost exclusively, is responsible for defending Rome'*”⁽²¹¹⁾. In the same report, the integral prelate accuses Italian racists of being influenced by pan-German antisemitism, which is none other than the ‘true Siamese twin of Israel, declaring that the Germanic race is the only one destined to civilize and subjugate the world’. (...) The numerous reports that Benigni sent in 1932-1933, entitled ‘Hitler's Anti-Romanism’ (May 18, 1933), ‘Anti Germanic Rome’ (July 15, 1933), or even ‘Anti-Latin Meningitis’, intended to alert Mussolini on the dangers of Nazi racism as a fundamentally anti-Roman and anti-Catholic ideology. A report from June 1933 underlines the risks of an alliance with Germany and with the ‘Anti-Rome Nazis’ against which it would be necessary to strengthen the ‘defense and propaganda of immortal Rome’. If the prelate denounces Rosenberg, Theodor Fritsch and the creators of an ‘Aryan Jesus’, he instead recommends the antisemitism of the Weltdienst

and his 'excellent German friend George de Pottère, still concerned with defending the Catholic Church'" (p. 276).

If in 1938 the *Weltdienst* came under Rosenberg's control, it was precisely because, as Valbousquet notes, there was a change "from the first attempts at international Christian antisemitism in the 1920s to the domination of Nazi-type antisemitism in the second half of the 30s. This is due to the fact that in the meantime the death of Benigni and Jouin, as well as the Franco-Italian rivalries, dismantled the Roman Difesa" (p. 198). Which is why Msgr. Benigni's secretary, Bianca D'Ambrosio, explaining (in vain) to Mussolini the financial difficulties of the Difesa Sociale after the death of Msgr. Benigni, reported among other things the impossibility of its receiving aid from the German section of the Difesa Sociale: "the undersigned, she wrote in a memo to Mussolini dated 19 September 1935, turned to the friends of the Difesa Sociale in German pro-fascists, anti-Hitlerians, asking for help, but the known provisions in force in the Reich hindered any rescue."⁽²¹²⁾ Clear, most clear, were the limits that the integral Catholics regrouped around Msgr. Benigni set for themselves regarding collaboration with elements that shared certain social values: excluded from any collaboration, even limited and episodic, were Freemasons, sectarians, non-Christians, and neo-pagans. Not all "traditionalists" in our times can say the same.

Appendix: Father Rosa s.j., the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and Antisemitism

In the remainder of this article, I will dwell on the accusation made against Msgr. Benigni as to his being an enemy of the Society of Jesus, and in particular by that model of anti-modernism such as Father Enrico Rosa, director of the *Civiltà Cattolica*. Therefore I reveal here what was used by Father Rosa himself, and the magazine of the Italian Jesuits, to reproach Msgr. Benigni on antisemitism. The opportunity for this comes to me from an article published in their magazine on May 19, 1928 (vol. II, notebook 1870) entitled: *The Jewish danger and the "Friends of Israel"* (pp. 335-344). The article refers to the condemnation of an association called the "Friends of Israel", founded with the noble aim of praying for the conversion of the Jews, and which, for this reason, had gathered numerous consensus among the faithful and the clergy, even among the members of the hierarchy. Why did the Holy Office (of which the Pope was then prefect, and Cardinal Merry Del Val was secretary) condemn that association on March 25, 1928? From reading the article in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, it is impossible to know. To reveal what the condemned association thought, one can read Valbousquet ("*the promoters wanted a change in the Catholic liturgy, in particular the formula 'perfidis judeis' in the liturgy of Good Friday*") and then goes on to quote *Fede e Ragione*: "According to the official explanations in the booklet *Pax super Israel (...)* we should consider the Jewish people as a people-elect still today; we should not talk about *Deicide* anymore; or of the conversion of Israel, but only of a return, so as not to offend the susceptibilities of Judah, which demands the privileges which it once enjoyed, but which it has

irrevocably lost" ⁽²¹³⁾: it should be noted that the "*Friends of Israel*" program was implemented in its entirety by Vatican II and by Karol Wojtyla (a true Friend of Israel!). Father Rosa, however, commenting on the document of condemnation by the Holy Office, writes that "*the document really doesn't need comment*". It says only one thing: the text of the Holy Office condemned not so much the *Friends of Israel*, but "*the opposite extremes of antisemitism and Semitism*" (p. 335). The association founded by the "*convert*" Francisca van Leer (who later returned to the Marxism from which she came) and by father Anton van Asseldonk, "*had begun under excellent auspices and sincere apostolic intentions*" (in 1926) but had fallen into some "*exaggerations*": but what were they? The Jesuit father doesn't mention even one. In a footnote there is mention of "*inexact sentences or erroneous propositions*" (p. 336), but even there, there is no trace of these errors or "*inaccuracies*". No trace because the good father admits not having seen any before the condemnation, since he boasts, speaking of the booklet *Pax super Israel*, of the fact that "*at the time we did not believe it particularly appropriate to write about it, neither to give it praise or special recommendation, nor to give it explicit blame or disapproval*" (p. 336). Wasn't this association "*approved by quite a number of bishops and cardinals, among the most eminent and venerable?*" ⁽²¹⁴⁾; Wasn't this "*enough to dispel all fears?*", "*to persuade us entirely of the practical effectiveness and wise opportunity in our times of the ideal attempt of that new and singular institution?*" (ibidem). So much so that a well respected "ascetic magazine", *Regnabit*, seemed on the same wavelength (pp. 337-338): what a shame that it was precisely this magazine that, in those years, opened its pages up to a true Freemason, Gnostic and apostate infiltrator: René Guénon, and his "Catholic" disciple Charbonneau-Lassay ⁽²¹⁵⁾. The reader might say: with these words Father Rosa was preparing his apology for not having seen or reported the danger! Not at all, quite the opposite. His attack, his condemnation, is splayed against those who denounced the danger even before the condemnation of the Holy Office, and who later commented with satisfaction on its condemnation by the Church. Before the condemnation, in fact, "*The Friends of Israel*" aroused "*scandal*" and "*strong controversy*" "*neither entirely dispassionate nor disinterested, in some especially less sincere and more vociferous anti-Semites*" (p. 335). Thus, in the face of this danger, while the *Civiltà Cattolica* remained silent, others spoke and denounced, the latter are to be condemned, and not the "mute dogs" of Via della Ripetta. But who were these "*noisy anti-Semites*"? For him, it was those who were condemned by the decree of the Holy Office! Yes, dear reader, I didn't make a mistake in writing: this is what we get from the article by the "Anti-modernist" Father Rosa. For him, the decree condemning the pro-Jewish association, which had as its aim the Judaization of the Church (this is how Cardinal Merry del Val expressed it himself to the Pope so as to explain the necessity of the condemnation) ⁽²¹⁶⁾, actually has "*two points which are crucial to the question that must be well established*": prayer for the Jews and the "*special condemnation of hatred against this people*" designated by the term "*antisemitism*" (p. 338). Actually, in fact, the decree, at the explicit request of Pius XI, specified: "*the Apostolic See protected the Jewish people themselves against unjust oppression, and as it condemns all hatred and animosity*"

between peoples, so above all does it condemn hatred against a people already chosen by God, that hatred which today is commonly called antisemitism” (p. 338; and this is the only quotation from the decree that Father Rosa deems appropriate to quote). Abbé Boulin, Benigni's right-hand man, commented on the term (*antisemitism*) and its substance (*hatred for a people*): “the term *antisemitism* is an unfortunate term, not only in terms of the falsity of its etymological meaning, but also regarding the misunderstandings that its usual meaning raises. (...) There is, in fact, around the world, unacceptable *antisemitism*: in particular that of the German racists, whom we have always fought so forcefully” regarding which he preferred to use the term coined by Msgr. Jouin: Anti Freemasonic-Judaism ⁽²¹⁷⁾. But Abbé Boulin was the hated “Récalde” of the hated Benigni. And so antisemitism, which was rightly condemned in passing obiter dictum by the decree, is no longer that which will become Hitler's, but rather rather that of Benigni, of Boulin, of de Töth, in short of the integral Catholics who had denounced the “*Friends of Israel*”: the *Civiltà* article is against those, “noisy *Anti-Semites*”. And in designating the condemned anti-Semites he does not mention names; in the footnote he only mentions: the *Revue Internationale des Sociétés secrètes* with the columnist who writes “under the nickname of *Pierre Colmet*” (the Abbé Boulin), “the *Italian panegyrist of the little French magazine*” (Benigni) and “the critic of *Fede e Ragione*” (p. 339, note 1) and finally those who published the “*Documents of the Jewish conquest of the world*” in 1921 (i.e. again *Fede e Ragione*, Benigni and de Töth) who “feed on legends” among which “there is no shortage of *Leo Taxil*” (provocateurs and fake converts to the Catholic faith) (p. 341 and note 1), legends among which is mentioned “the too easy readiness of some who want to blame the Jews for all kinds of the worst events that befall modern society, as seen for example in the question of Bolshevism” (p. 342: this is what Fr. Rosa wrote, contradicting himself immediately afterwards). And if Judaism constitutes a danger (p. 343) “the founders, supporters, as well as the good members of the association ‘*The Friends of Israel*’, certainly intended to oppose this situation, far from applauding it; and to oppose it in particular with the union of prayers to God, and with attempts at pacification and rapprochement, between men of any race or nationality, the Jews as well” (p. 344). So then, why didn't the Holy Office give these “good members” a medal instead of a condemnation? All the more since they erred: “it was an involuntary error, we believe, and, in any case, now healthily repaired with prompt and unanimous submission to the decree of the Holy Office” which repaired their name and gave them the possibility to resume their work undisturbed, unlike “certain of their critics whom we know, supporters of the condemned *Action Française* and other such anti-Christian nationalisms!” (p. 344). And so ends Father Rosa's article which transforms the condemnation of the *Friends of Israel* into the condemnation of the “*Enemies of Israel*”, or rather of Msgr. Benigni (the anonymous pseudo-supporter of the A.F. [*Action Française*] and anti-Christian nationalism, read fascism and the like). Dear Father Nitoglia, you yourself once wrote against the association “*The Friends of Israel*” and denounced the Fumet couple who inspired it (against whom

Abbé Boulin fought on the R.I.S.S. [*Revue Internationale des Sociétés Secrètes*] which scandalized Nina Valbousquet⁽²¹⁸⁾: how can Father Enrico Rosa be presented as a model for us today?

Still more on Father Rosa and antisemitism. An interesting essay by Paolo Pieraccini may be found on the internet: *The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Holy See, and Zionism in the face of the first translation of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion into Arabic (1925-1926)*⁽²¹⁹⁾. On January 15, 1926 in *Raqib Sion*, the magazine issued by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, an article was published containing an Arabic version of these Protocols (you may recall that Monsignor Benigni published the Italian version in *Fede e Ragione* in 1921, despite his warning that they had been unhappily manipulated by Slavic hands). Naturally, the Zionist world took action to obtain a repudiation of the work by the Vatican (p. 69ff). “*The political secretary of the World Zionist Organization himself, Leonard Stein (1920-1929), probably alerted by the local leadership, had immediately asked the rabbi, journalist and Hebrew teacher, Dante Lattes, to protest to the Holy See (...)*” (p. 71). Lattes was “*secretary of the Italian Zionist Federation*” since 1918, and “*director of the weekly [newspaper] Israel, founded together with Alfonso Pacifici in Florence in 1916 to spread Jewish culture and gain sympathy for Zionism. From the columns of Israel he responded methodically to the press (Catholic and non-Catholic) which published articles with anti-Jewish tones or those which were contrary to the movement founded by Herzl*”, frequently arguing also with *L'Osservatore Romano*. Monsignor Benigni naturally did not let himself be duped by Lattes, writing that his interventions were “*a maneuver truly in keeping (...) with the instructions of the Protocols on Jewish control of the press*” (p. 72). Not so our Father Rosa, who instead was engaged by the rabbi (p. 75). Within this context, I only point out the activity on June 5, 1926 by the now well-known Father Rosa, the director of *Civiltà Cattolica*, with Rabbi Dante Lattes. In the conversation with the Zionist rabbi, Father Rosa was explicit about the non-authenticity of the Protocols, on the condemnation of antisemitism, on the role of the Jewish people; apologized the Patriarch, and undertook to write to him to ask him to disavow the publication (which in fact will close its doors); finally he [Father Rosa] explained to his interlocutor that he himself wanted to write an article on the subject, but that he was held back from doing so by the fear of the attacks he would receive from Msgr. Benigni’s press agency. The article tells us the rabbi’s satisfaction following that encounter: we have no reason to doubt it.

In conclusion: Msgr. Benigni, Fascism and Risorgimento

In 1923, therefore, Msgr. Benigni founded the I.R.D.S. (*Intesa romana di difesa sociale*, with connections in France and Germany), and the agency, later publisher, *URBS*; as organs of the Intesa and of the agency, the bulletin *Veritas* and the monthly *Romana* (1924-1933), both bilingual (Italian and French). In the I.R.D.S program, the relationship with fascism is placed on an action plan: the

members of the I.R.D.S are “*pro-fascist*”, “*according to the spirit of integral social defense, and therefore anti-modernists, enemies of religious demo-liberalism as much as of political and social demo-liberalism*”. In point 4 we read: “*As for the Homeland, which according to Christian conscience and natural morality, we want great and strong, we adhere to the program and effort by the Duce of fascism who wants to make it spiritually and materially a strong and great nation with a people Catholic and patriotic, disciplined and efficient. Every political consortium, even disguised with other adjectives, that wants to overthrow the current regime, is considered by us as pernicious for the homeland and therefore also harmful to religion.*”

Point 5 does not hide the defects of fascism and the intent to correct it: “*For this purpose, every error or authentic fault (far from us to play part to all the filthy denigratory and defeatist campaigns) that can be found in the works of the Regime, must be, in our eyes, a reason not for devaluation and destruction, but for an honest and courageous effort at purification and strengthening. It is one of the cornerstones of our thinking and our activity.*”

The enemies are always the same, as we read in point 10: “*such are mainly for us: (a) the kahal, or Talmudic Judaism organized and armed for the conquest of the world; and its Judeophile accomplices, the so-called Christian front of Israel; (b) Freemasonry, including all sects of a Masonic nature, if not in name; (c) theosophical Esotericism, spiritualist, ‘idealist’, ‘spiritist’ etc.; (d) the Red International, whatever its ordinal number, and all demagogic institutions; (e) the White International, Christian Democrat, complicit with the other sects that profaned Christ; as well as those who support it and those who use it, whoever they are. Against all the sects, which together make up ‘the Sect’, which constitutes the force of the Antichrist, aided by the complicity of others, the Difesa Sociale intends to conduct all that struggle which is allowed by Christian justice and charity in times of war*” (French text in POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, pp. 528-530). Comparing the program of the Sodalitium Pianum with that of the *Intesa*, one immediately notices the changes (which are not improvements) but also what remains essentially unchanged. Circumstances have changed, both in the Church (there is no longer Saint Pius X), and in the State (there is no longer a liberal-democratic State directed by Freemasonry). Msgr. Benigni, realist and man of action, adapted. But the enemies to be fought were always the same, and the Catholic society to be restored was also the same. The Italy that Msgr. Benigni wanted to be great was not necessarily that of the Risorgimento, of Cavour, of Mazzini or Garibaldi; it was a Catholic Italy, anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-sectarian. The misunderstanding of fascism remained: but in the second half of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s it was legitimate to hope and work so that the “*national government*”, placed at the head of a Concordat State, would also become a fully Catholic State. Many members of the Catholic hierarchy and laity (including the ex-Popolari members of the National Center) supported fascism without the slightest reproach being made against them, while as regards a Catholic State, no one had clearer ideas than the integral Catholics, whose battle, from 1923 to 1934, was essentially the same as that fought from 1909 to 1914, under Pius X. Any other

conclusion would be unjust, ungenerous and divorced from reality, as it would ignore the historical circumstances of those times.

Part SIX:

Msgr. Benigni and the Company of Jesus

(Msgr. Benigni's "Russian campaign" (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 336))

he last accusation made against Msgr. Benigni is that of his having depreciated the Society of Jesus

Tas such, a paradoxical accusation on the part of Father Nitoglia, at least for those who know his extremely severe judgment towards the "official" theologian of the Society, Francisco Suarez ⁽²²⁰⁾. As regards Msgr. Benigni, the difficulty cannot concern his activity of though up to about 1913 (see POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 77, 332-337), since before that he did not express a particular critical judgment towards the Company or the Jesuits, for whom he actually had words of esteem ⁽²²¹⁾, and this even though since 1904 the *Civiltà Cattolica* manifested open hostility to the integral Catholic press that Pius X supported and financed, up to the point in 1908, of prohibiting Jesuit fathers from collaborating with the said magazines ⁽²²²⁾. The clashes between the integrals and the *Civiltà Cattolica* in 1904 and 1908 were, however, mostly clashes within the Company, between eminent clerics such as Mattiussi and Chiaudano (who had broken off relations with *Civiltà* in 1908, *Intégrisme...*, p. 337) on the one hand, and the college of the *Civiltà Cattolica* on the other ⁽²²³⁾. The difficulties, therefore, between Msgr. Benigni and the Jesuits rose little by little, within the framework of the anti-modernist struggle undertaken by Saint Pius X and by his faithful collaborator. Not solely and not really because some important modernists were Jesuits (such as Tyrrel or Brémond) but rather because the Society in general, its magazines (the *Civiltà Cattolica* in Italy, *Études* in France, *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach* in Germany etc.) dissatisfied Pope Sarto, to the point that, it is well known by all, the Holy Pontiff had considered the very serious decision to remove the General of the Company, Father Wernz, and to replace him with Father Mattiussi; only the death of the Pope (and of Wernz himself) preserved the Company from this papal intervention. The *Civiltà Cattolica*, however, was not preserved, as it had always opposed (particularly in 1904 and 1908) the



Father Chiaudano, s.j.

admission of Father Mattiussi into the writers' college, where Father Giorgio Bartoli, who later apostatized ⁽²²⁴⁾, instead made a fine show of himself; there Saint Pius X imposed as director in 1913, Father Chiaudano ⁽²²⁵⁾, a Jesuit who, like Father Mattiussi, supported the Pontiff's anti-modernist struggle, and who had broken off relations with the magazine in 1908. It is understood that the college of the editors of the magazine (of which Rosa was deputy director) did not willingly welcome the appointment of Father Chiaudano ⁽²²⁶⁾, even more so because according to Bishop Pagano ⁽²²⁷⁾, Chiaudano's appointment was also imposed to prevent the deputy director, Father Rosa, from becoming director of the magazine (as would instead happen upon Chiaudano's death in 1915) ⁽²²⁸⁾. Therefore, if by depreciation of the Society of Jesus as such we mean a negative judgment on the whole Society of those times (and not all of its members, such as Father Mattiussi), the accusation against Msgr. Benigni also strikes against Saint Pio X for the same fact.

In the climate of this “knife fight” between the Integral Catholics and the Jesuits, which attracted the attention of the very same Gramsci from his jail cell ⁽²²⁹⁾, Msgr. Benigni answered shot for shot the attacks made against him by the authorities of the Company, in Germany, in Italy and in Rome, which, mostly in the last years of the pontificate (1913-1914), brought about a press campaign by the Jesuits against integral Catholics ⁽²³⁰⁾, which finally - in the person of Father Léonce de Grandmaison, director of *Études*, upon the death of Saint Pius X manifested their less than flattering judgment on the recently deceased pontiff ⁽²³¹⁾. “(Pius X) *was still alive* - writes Poulat - *and there is no lack of signs of reticence in the Company regarding the direction of the pontificate: slowly as the years pass, the Jesuits who deemed necessary an evolution towards whoever will become the next pope, whoever he is, which the pope himself cannot oppose. **They are not preparing themselves for a turning point, they are the ones who are preparing it***” (*Intégrisme...*, p. 77). Saint Pius' opinion towards the Company was no better: “*On May 10, 1914* - writes Poulat - *on the occasion of the centenary of the re-establishment of the Company, (Father Wernz, general of the Jesuits) had received from Pius X a brief in which the very generic praise was accompanied by an exhortation to avoid the contagion of the world, the indulgence for its errors and the reckless attraction of novelties. The magazine Études totally ignored the document.*” Poulat also cites the article by the Jesuit Father Celestino Testore, in the Catholic Encyclopedia, dedicated to the said Father Wernz: “*He was not without anguish and tribulations, since he saw himself and his followers targeted by adversaries and false brothers as reticent and not very docile to the authority of the Church on the question of modernism*”. But among these “false brothers” could be placed Pius X himself, according to the testimony of Cardinal Gasparri of March 28, 1928, in the process for the canonization of the Pope: “*Pius X was not always sure of their orthodoxy; he considered them, some more, some less, a little tainted by modernism, and he said so privately; but later his words, as was natural, were reported to them. The current superior general told me that this lack of trust deeply afflicted Father Wernz and perhaps even hastened his death. That this attitude of the Pope was the consequence of false information which came from the S.P. was taken as certain by the Jesuits, and with reason.*” This is

what the Secretary of State to Benedict XV and Pius XI thought about Pope Pius X! Poulat comments: Cardinal Gasparri inverted the explanation: if Msgr. Benigni distrusted the Jesuits, it was because the same Pius X wasn't convinced of their orthodoxy ⁽²³²⁾.

Father Enrico Rosa: Vatican oracle or “crazy criminal”?

In his series of articles on Msgr. Benigni, Father Nitoglia, especially in his third installment, proposes as an emblematic figure of well-balanced anti-modernism, “moderate”, faithful to the Church, the long time director of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Father Enrico Rosa: “*The case of Enrico Rosa (1870-1938) is emblematic. He was universally considered as ‘an example of sure orientation in the fields of philosophy and theology, a faithful interpreter and defender of the directives of the Holy See’. Catholics commonly consulted him in determinate circumstances to know what needed to be thought and done* ⁽²³³⁾. *In the first thirty years of the twentieth century, he was a true leader in the religious and doctrinal fields. From 1905 he wrote numerous articles in the Civiltà Cattolica, of which he was director from 1915 to 1931, against liberalism and modernism. He was celebrated for his book ‘The Encyclical Pascendi and Modernism’ (1918). (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vatican City, 1953. Vol. X, col. 1338, care of C. Testore, entitled ‘Rosa Enrico’).*” (One should recall in passing that C. Testore was a Jesuit and writer for the *Civiltà Cattolica* like Father Rosa, ed.) “*Nevertheless, Msgr. Benigni - Father Nitoglia continues - considered him a modernist, but had he read his articles criticizing liberalism and modernism - as well as his 1918 book which is a classic of anti-modernist literature - he would have been fascinated by their clarity, depth and purity of doctrine, totally Catholic and anti-modernist. Why would he say that he was a modernist? Only unruly passion, which prevailed over reason and good will, could explain a similar judgment that was certainly not founded on reality. In addition, one should recall the fact that Father Rosa had written for the Civiltà Cattolica beginning in 1905, that is, under the pontificate just begun by Pius X, which served as the organ of the Jesuit fathers, in strict collaboration with the Secretariat of State, to explain and confute modernist errors. Is it at all possible that Pius X had entrusted his fight against modernism to a modernist, who worked under the direct supervision of the Secretary of State, the Integral Cardinal Merry del Val, and under the eyes of the same Pontiff without him having known anything? Is not this judgment, perhaps, an implicit criticism of Pius X himself? If one realizes that, beginning in 1911, as we have seen in past articles, Msgr. Benigni had broken with his old protector, Cardinal Merry del Val, who he then also criticized and considered excessively moderate and ‘timid’, this judgment shouldn’t surprise us too much. We therefore note Benigni’s objective exaggeration in harshly criticizing every person who didn’t think exactly like he did.*” On the basis of which, Father Nitoglia concludes: “*Therefore Benedict XV’s reaction against Benigni and the S.P. was not unjust, disproportionate or an unpleasant effect of his presumed ‘liberalism’ or*

'modernism', but was due to the way that Benigni acted, excessively criticizing and condemning everyone and everything, which damaged his work of Integral Catholicism, substantially good in itself, but accidentally spoiled by a certain excessively critical, almost slanderous, *modus agendi*." Indeed: for Father Nitoglia, not only would Benedict XV's reaction against the *Sodalitium* and Integral Catholics have been right and proportionate, but even the Holy See's practical change in attitude towards the modernists would be as well (which, then, was: "less vigilant and repressive, more inclined to monitor than to condemn"!), this too was Monsignor Benigni's fault! You need to read it in order to believe it: "what really is out of place is not the way Benedict XV or Saint Pius X acted, but above all that of Monsignor Benigni, who subsequently pushed the Holy See to be less impetuous in condemning the modernists" (this is how the third installment ends).



Picture for the election of Saint Pius X

Father Nitoglia therefore chooses Father Enrico Rosa himself as a model, the one for whom Msgr. Benigni was the cruelest enemy (we will see), and who testified, like Cardinal Gasparri, against Pius X's sanctity during the canonization process⁽²³⁴⁾. Very free to do so: everyone chooses their own heroes. Unfortunately, given the esteem the author enjoys in the 'traditionalist world', his judgment (in favor of Father Rosa, against Monsignor Benigni, presented as a slanderer) could irremediably influence young readers, in particular young seminarians and "traditional" priests, the hope of the Church of tomorrow: this is what I would like to avoid. Father Rosa is presented as the most faithful interpreter of Saint Pius X, Msgr. Benigni as a critic, albeit implicit, of Saint Pius X himself (because he criticized Father Rosa and the Jesuits of the *Civiltà Cattolica*). Let us then read a testimony above suspicion, that of Cardinal Gasparri, given on March 28, 1928 (in the midst of the crisis of the *Action Française*) at the beatification process of Pius X (a deposition which Don Nitoglia knows, since he cites it in the first of his articles in this regard). "Here, for example, are the Jesuits. The Holy Father Pius X – testified Cardinal Gasparri – was not serenely sure of their orthodoxy, he believed them, more or less, to be smeared with modernism, and he said so in private; but then his words, as is natural, came to be reported to them. The current superior general (W. Ledochowski, ed.) told me that this lack of trust deeply afflicted Father Wernz and perhaps even hastened his death." One could not, then, accuse the historian Roberto DeMattei of partiality (noted for his esteem for the Company) when he exposed the same explicit comment by Cardinal Gasparri which is none other than historical evidence: "Pius X did not hide his suspicion toward the new line taken by the Company of Jesus. Father Franz-Xaver Wernz (1842-1914), the superior general of the Company, gravely sick, on July 31, 1914

wrote a long letter protesting his fealty and that of his order and asked the Pope for direction. Pope Sarto did not respond and in a confidential conversation with their new 'Italian assistant', manifested his concern for the line taken by the magazines *Études* and *Stimmen aus Maria Laach* and for the person of Father Włodzimierz Ledochowski (1866-1942), 'assistant' to Father Wernz and, from February 11, 1915, his successor as general of the Order." ⁽²³⁵⁾

So then, Father Nitoglia accuses Msgr. Benigni of doubting the orthodoxy of the Jesuits, and in doing so of going against Pius X, while Gasparri attributes this thinking to Pius X himself, to the point that it may have caused the Father general to die of heartache. Certainly, Gasparri to attributed Benigni influence on Pius X: "*The Fathers of the Company rightly believed, then, and with reason, that this attitude of the Holy Father was a consequence of false affirmations which came from Sodalitium Pianum: one could question the current Father general, Father Rosa...*" (*Disquisitio*, pp. 10-11) Therefore, according to Father Rosa, the hero of Father Nitoglia and the "moderates", Benigni was a slanderer, and Pius X was the gullible one who drank up Benigni's lies. A truly beautiful portrait of Pius X, that of the anti-modernist Father Rosa... But Father Rosa, argues Don Nitoglia, had been writing in the *Civiltà Cattolica* since 1905, under Pius X therefore, and the *Civiltà Cattolica* reflected, as everyone knows, the thoughts of the Secretariat of State, which at that time was Merry delVal, and therefore of the Pope himself (Pius X): Padre Rosa = C.C.= Merry = Pius X. But is it really like that? Let's ask Pius X what he thinks! I am referring to the aforementioned episode of 1908 (clash between the *Civiltà Cattolica* and the Integral press): here is what the Saint Pope wrote to Father Ruggero Freddi, first assistant to the General of the Company (September 18, 1908, TAGLIAFERRI, pp. 338 -339): the interview with Father Pavissich, of *Civiltà Cattolica* produced "*a real scandal for the insults hurled in that publication (authorized by Pavissich) against many worthy people of the Catholic cause, and for the contempt with which they were treated, and for the certainty that what was written by Civiltà Cattolica must be considered as an oracle. I immediately wrote to the Cittadino di Mantova to ask for a retraction, but it answered that what was written was barely half of what was said. Meanwhile, letters and reports continually arrive in which it is repeated that some Father of Civiltà is proclaiming that the Father General and the Pope should condemn the criticisms that were made, so much so that the Fathers of the Company were forbidden to write articles in Unità Cattolica or Armonie della Fede, or to enter into conflict with the Civiltà in any other way - and that, in a word, the Pope is in entire agreement with their opinion, but has those in the Vatican who are opposing him. This, then, is so enormous, I cannot let it pass.*" And for the director of Father Rosa's magazine, Pius X writes: "*I believe he is now powerless to impose himself on some who have gained the upper hand, who after having made provocation, invoke fraternal charity, the respect due to a college of scholars, the authority of the Pope (these are their letters), and they claim not only to remain untouchable, but to be praised. Your Most Reverend Paternity will do me a distinct favor if you will speak on the subject with the Most Reverend Father General, because I now believe that some measure is necessary to put an end to these conflicts and avoid an excessively*

accentuated division in the Company.” After this text, what remains of the argument “Father Rosa = Civiltà Cattolica = Pius X”? only a “presumption” which is “so big” that Pius could not pass it up (another case in which the *Civiltà Cattolica* and Father Rosa, in 1913, wrongly boasted the approval of the Pope, is reported by Pagano, p. 267) ⁽²³⁶⁾. The Jesuits' proverbial obedience to the Pope... made them continue on their path, waiting for the Pope's death. The “obituary” of Saint Pius X written in *Études* by Father Léonce de Grandmaison (who in Ecône and Albano Laziale was introduced to us by a professor as the true “moderate” interpreter of Saint Pius X, unlike the bitterly zealous fundamentalists) certainly did not arouse regret for the deceased, as we have seen.

Mgr. Benigni, “Exaggerator”? Look Who's Talking!

Father Nitoglia accuses Benigni of being “*exaggerated*”, “*almost slanderous*”, while Father Rosa was “moderate”. We will shortly see the “*moderate*” methods of Father Rosa and his companions; for now we limit ourselves to what he wrote against Msgr. Benigni. Moderate? Sweet? Charitable? Allow me a short (but not exhaustive) anthology. “*Enemies of the Church*”, “*slanderers*”, “*small but poisonous clique*”, “*in the hypocritical guise of zealots of the fundamentalism of faith and morality, of charity above all, for which the authors are tormented*”, “*under the skin of lambs harbor the anger of wolves*”, “*defamatory work (which) under the pretext of fighting against modernism, conducted by a kind of sodalitiium or secret association, which was allegedly founded by an ancient master of modernists*”, “*misdeeds*”, “*senseless work of the interested pseudonyms which was most favorable in practice to the spread of modernism*”, “*full of gall*”, “*most shameful lies and contradictions*”, “*the envy that gnaws*”, “*so much bitterness of gall and such baseness of slander, seasoned with pity*”, “*the embittered soul of the deserter*”, “*unfortunate instrument of such propaganda*”, “*mysterium iniquitatis*”, “*vile campaign*”, “*spirit of malignity, of slander, in the pretense of defenders of the most perfect orthodoxy*”, “*hypocrisy*”, “*desire to slander the victims of his passion*”, “*fierce and hired*”, “*despicable*”, “*mask of hypocrisy. With this, traitors to the Church were then covered, even among the clergy, who were accomplices of the sects and the Courts in what Pius VI rightly called mysterium iniquitatis; and among them the author who imitates them...*”, “*this smacks of bad faith more than of crass ignorance*”, “*foolishness that smacks of blasphemy*” “*he lies knowing he is lying*” “*insolences and slanders of the pamphleteer*”, “*he descends to the most abject personal slanders*”, “*clearly show the style of the most elegant French slanderer (Pascal)*”, “*the slanderer wallows in himself like an ignoble soul in the mud*”, “*scrappy anti-modernist*”, “*he cannot escape the accused of ignorance or bad faith or of one or the other together*”, “*passionate blindness*” which “*also pushes him to wallow in the mud of the most infamous slanders*”, “*expressions of ignoble feelings*” “*of the methods and sometimes of the vulgar language of the most abject anticlericals*”, “*reminds us of the similar case of some anti-modernists of our times who in truth favored error and supported the errant, imitating their methods, discrediting the cause he pretended to be defend and finally slandering even its*

sincere and disinterest defenders”, “*it seems impossible such an exorbitant amount of slanderous imagination in those who pose as a delicate, tender conscience of morality and orthodoxy against modernism, opportunism, royalism, liberalism , on which he reproached the Jesuits, but subtly favored in the service of Sorbonists and French capitalists*”, “*insipidity*”, “*the abject countryside will be able to ignobly amuse the vulgar souls who delight in slander...*”. Enough! I have near me numerous issues of *Civiltà Cattolica* with Father Rosa's moderate and charitable prose, but what's the point? So far I have quoted from only one 11-page article ⁽²³⁷⁾: if we remove the insults from them, how much is left? For once the saying “*ex uno disce omnes*” applies, so I will spare the reader the numerous other articles which only aggravate the situation, since, as we will see, Father Rosa will mention Benigni's name and surname.



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“Somewhat Exaggerated” methods, fine. But by whom?

From words to facts. In reality, the “*somewhat exaggerated*” methods attributed to Msgr. Benigni, were if anything those made by his enemies, just think of the circumstances that brought about the dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum*, circumstances of which I have already spoken: accusing someone slanderously of espionage in favor of the Intesa to the authorities of the German occupation, and in full world war, is certainly not the greatest moderation or fraternal charity! But the unscrupulous methods of the “*moderates*” were not limited to this case. Should we talk about the search and seizure that the Anti-fascist Father Rosa obtained (thanks to Father Tacchi Venturi) from the fascist government in the case of Msgr. Benigni? EMILE POULAT speaks about it (*Catholicisme...*, pp. 26 and 460): “*Benigni Umberto, (...) clean criminal record; notable is only a police search of his home, ordered, under the fascist regime, at the request of a powerful Jesuit enemy, which remained without follow-up or without result*” (p. 26). Without follow-up or result among the police, yes, but not among the Jesuits of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, who instigated the search: “*according to Father Rosa, the Police Headquarters suspected ‘Bolshevik or similar’ propaganda, and found only anti-Jesuit material (Civiltà Cattolica, December 3, 1927, p. 399). ‘Pure invention’ and ‘the slander’ of a ‘crazy criminal’, Benigni replied: ‘We have been and always are in good standing’ (Romana, April 1928). In a letter to Cardinal Gasparri, on May 3, 1928, he denounced Rosa as ‘the happy inventor of a search of my house with which he filled the Vatican’. Father Rosa, in any case, knew prior to the ‘search’, thanks to a letter from Benigni's servant who reported (July 16, 1926) to him that the discoveries which were attributed to the police were his own activities*” (p. 460, note 31).

Anonymous letters, etc. (“*Benigni is one of those people about whom anyone believes himself authorized to say anything*”, Poulat, *Catholicisme...*, p. 42)

The type-written letter, anonymous, or rather pseudonymous, (signed Rossi, by [Benigni's] valet, Domenico Bordi) (p. 448), is still found in the archives of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Fondo Rosa, from where Jesuit Father Sale ⁽²³⁸⁾ retrieved it for publication (I still remember that when he read it, Father Nitoglia's esteem for Benigni wavered for the first time, as he already frequented the Jesuits of the *Civiltà Cattolica*). We have already talked about this ugly matter in a previous footnote (n. 195). Although the letter sent to Father Rosa was undated, Poulat can date it back to July 16, 1926. It is first of all necessary to place the letter in its context. We have already seen how the *Civiltà Cattolica* and the Company itself (i.e. the General) were hostile to integral Catholics and to the line of Saint Pius X from 1904-1908. In 1913 it erupted into open conflict with Msgr. Benigni on the line of the pontificate in general, and on the question of trade unions in particular: the last great battle fought in vain by Saint Pius X and the integralists, and in particular against non-denominationalism and leftism in France and Germany ⁽²³⁹⁾. Upon the death of Saint Pius X, the Company, which had prepared for a turning point, realized it, with a sigh of relief for the end of the “exposés” against eminent figures (they were fighting only against the dogmatizing modernists, already identified and condemned as such, while they wanted nothing said against the social and practical modernists, and their more or less benevolent accomplices, considering the modernism question closed with Pascendi in 1907). Msgr. Benigni was isolated and, as we have seen, German Christian Democratic circles got their hands on the *Sodalitium* documents that had been kept in Ghent (1915). Once the war was over, the French Jesuits managed these documents, and with them, their large-scale attack on Rome, with the dissolution of the *Sodalitium* (December 1921). Meanwhile, from 1920 until 1929, the Abbé Paul Boulin (under the pseudonym of I. de Récalde, a companion of Saint Ignatius), with the collaboration of Benigni for archival research, had begun to publish important historical studies on the Society of Jesus, which aroused the immediate reaction of the Fathers (we have already seen some examples, and we will return to them). Finally, the affairs in France (first the negotiations in 1921 on the diocesan associations, then in 1926 the condemnation of the *Action Française*) which prepared the ground for the assimilation of the integrals and the Maurrassians into the same condemnation devised by the modernist government official Louis Canet. Without relating to this context, one cannot understand the extent of Domenico Bordi's denunciation (this, yes!) against his employer. The letter (agreed upon?) explains the “reason” (or one of the reasons, as we will see) for this gesture: “*devoted admirer of the worthy Order, I feel the duty to denounce the denigratory operation that Msgr. Benigni has been campaigning against the Society of Jesus for a few years now more intensively than ever: a truly repugnant campaign that needs to be contained energetically.*” The subject of the complaint: on the one hand, the publication of anti-Jesuit pamphlets



Father Saubat

(he mentions eight of them in detail: they are the books from the Récalde collection) giving the address of where the material was located (50 quintals of books!) in the event of a search; and on the other hand, the accusations against his nephew Pietro Mataloni and his secretary Bianca D'Ambrosi (sic, for D'Ambrosio), "*two true outlaws in an unworthy crusade*". D'Ambrosio, despite living in her own home, would have been the prelate's "*lover*" and "*concubine*". The financier of the anti-Jesuit books would then be "*the banker Simon*"⁽²⁴⁰⁾, but Benigni, his nephew and his lover, in reality, would share in the money. Let us follow the two tracks, then, that of (im)morality, and that of the anti-Jesuit pamphlets; we will then see the others: the illicit enrichments, the complicity with Buonaiuti (!), the betrayal of the Holy See and so forth. As to the "relationship" with D'Ambrosio, we have already spoken in a footnote (195). In

1926, the woman, who had been presented to Benigni as confessor, was 39 years old (at that time!); the prelate, seriously ill, was 64. We have seen the weight that E. Poulat gives to the accusation (zero), aimed at many other celebrated ecclesiastics at that time⁽²⁴¹⁾, as well as the weight (zero) given to it by the sharp-eyed fascist police who defined D'Ambrosio as having "good morality", especially since her correspondence - and therefore that of the prelate - was, as mentioned, controlled by this same police: a little report on an "affair" would have been useful to the Police Headquarters, if any affair had actually taken place. Even an author completely hostile to Msgr. Benigni, Paul Droulers, writes in this regard: "*une dénonciation de son ancien valet de chambre est de nulle valeur - the denunciation by his ex-valet is of no value*"⁽²⁴²⁾. Bordi, however, reported Benigni not only to Father Rosa, but also to his friend and collaborator, Father Saubat (who had already been a member of the Diet of the Sodalitium). The father himself spoke about it at the process for the beatification of Pius X and testified as follows: "*There was shouting from every side against Benigni; he was accused of unorthodoxy, of bad morals, of connivance with Freemasonry. His ideas regarding faith were substantially correct; his morality, unquestionable. For years and years I followed him almost everywhere and approached him at every hour, even in certain periods in which a valet was with him, whom he trusted a lot and I very little, and who, therefore, viewed me with distrust; yet I was never able to discover the slightest hint of anything more than spotless morals.*" Saubat himself attached a written memo to the oral deposition: "*They attacked him about his private life. Before helping him, I consulted Father Pio of Langogne (Msgr. Sabadel) who told me: 'he is a good priest.'*"

After speaking about his faith and his religious and sacramental practice, he added: "*I never found the slightest indication that he behaved badly. This is to respond to those who, at a given moment, had multiple copies of a letter typed to say, without any proof, that they were behaving badly. In this regard I must declare with the same solemnity as for faith, that I have never discovered that there was anything reprehensible in his moral conduct. I would add that following some complaints made to me*

and others about his valet Domenico Bordi, in whom Benigni had confidence, but not me, I was on guard. But despite this, I noticed absolutely nothing at any time”⁽²⁴³⁾. Do we want another testimony? We have that of the journalist Guido Aureli, whom the *Disquisitio* esteems highly, unlike Father Nitoglia (the entire fifth of his 15 articles is a continuous insult to his person!)⁽²⁴⁴⁾: “Lies after lies struck Monsignor Benigni (during his lifetime, however, all destroyed as soon as he was aware of it) even after his death. False were those of his immorality with women.” After talking about some collaborators at the *Storia Sociale*, Aureli deals with our case: “The betrayal of a servant who he could no longer generously support - Bordi - paid treason - was the cause of atrocious bitterness for the poor monsignor and it turns to everlasting condemnation to those who used it. Bordi, who died in a clinic in Rome, where he was taken ill due to an attack of appendicitis, urgently called Monsignor Benigni to his deathbed to whom he cried for forgiveness, confessing his crime and the instigator, a name that Msgr. Benigni would not reveal, but everyone guessed. (You can have all the details you need about this, I could procure them myself)”⁽²⁴⁵⁾, and we too can easily guess who it was. We can easily guess the instigator, but the reader will perhaps find it difficult to believe that he is an enemy of the Church or a modernist (which is worse; as the modernists did not fail to raise similar, and at the same time improbable, accusations)⁽²⁴⁶⁾ but an esteemed religious man, a Vatican oracle. And then perhaps another source will be useful, and another slander coming from the same character. This time the accusation, regardless of the contradiction, concerns the sin against nature. An accusation which, however, remained hidden, even more than the previous one, precisely because it lacked proof and corroboration. I mention with repugnance this dark story, which concerns a type of event that has become sadly topical today. It is linked to the previous one, i.e. Domenico Bordi’s complaint against Msgr. Benigni, made to Father Rosa, let’s remember, in July 1926. Only at this point⁽²⁴⁷⁾ does Father Rosa unleash a rather intense and personal attack against Msgr. Benigni from the authoritative pages of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and an article from September 1926 with the unequivocal title: “Last episodes of Modernism: Benigni, Buonaiuti’s teacher”⁽²⁴⁸⁾; and let’s remember that Buonaiuti was declared excommunicated *vitandus* in 1926⁽²⁴⁹⁾. Does Father Nitoglia accuse Benigni of claiming - an implausible accusation - that Father Rosa was a modernist? Actually, it was Father Rosa who supported, and wrote publicly, that Msgr. Benigni was more than a modernist, that he was a teacher of the modernists: but his accusations, no, these weren’t exaggerated! (and he could afford to make them because he had, as an ace up his sleeve, Bordi’s letter of denunciation and the results of the police search which proved the links between Benigni and the Récalde booklets). The sad story that concludes that of Domenico Bordi’s denunciation is based entirely on the archives of Emanuele Brunatto, an entrepreneur nephew of Father Chiaudano, s.j., converted by Padre Pio of Pietrelcina from a disorderly life, who, with the support of some friends, including the mayor of San Giovanni Rotondo, Francesco Morcaldi, worked with every means (more or less orthodox) to remove the disciplinary measures taken by the Holy Office against the venerated Capuchin friar. There are three writings to refer to: the book (written by Brunatto himself but published under a

pseudonym, JOHN WILLOUGHBY) *“The Antichrists in the Church of Christ”*, Aldana, Paris, 1933; *“The Ordeal of Padre Pio”* by GIUSEPPI PAGNOSSIN, Vol. 1, published by the author, 1978; and the original work by ALBERINDO GRIMANI *“For Il Duce or the Pope (the Antichrists of Brunatto)”*, Rome, 2015. Our story begins with two documents reproduced by Pagnossin on p. 457. The first is of the following tenor: *“Secretary of State. Vatican, December 15, 1927. The undersigned Cardinal Secretary of State with the special approval of the Holy Father appoints Msgr. Felice Bevilacqua to carry out an investigation into an ecclesiastic of which the personal details will be revealed orally, authorizing him to examine those people he deems useful for the purposes of the investigation and subject them to the oath de veritate dicenda et de secreto servando; and equips him for this purpose with all the necessary and appropriate faculties, ordering anyone, even those with dignity or otherwise exempt, to lend themselves to whatever he may request. Pietro Cardinal Gasparri”*. The second instead says: *“Vicariate of Rome – Office II. Rome, December 19, 1927. Since the undersigned must, by mandate of the Superior Authority, canonically inquire into the conduct of an ecclesiastic, I hereby appoint Mr. Emanuele Brunatto to carry out some investigations in this regard. Monsignor Felice Bevilacqua.”* We already know Cardinal Gasparri. Msgr. Felice Bevilacqua (1876-1936) was then in charge of the discipline of the clergy in the Vicariate of Rome, and a little later, in the spring of 1927, was named apostolic visitor to inquire into the accusers of Padre Pio among the clergy of San Giovanni Rotondo, clergy supported by the same bishop of Manfredonia, Msgr. Gagliardi. On the occasion of this apostolic visit, Msgr. Bevilacqua enlisted the collaboration of a layman, specifically Emanuele Brunatto (1892-1965), devoted to Padre Pio, who had already denounced, along with the mayor Morcaldi, the immorality of the clergy in question. Msgr. Bevilacqua and Brunatto therefore knew each other well; they had recently collaborated, specifically in matters concerning the immorality of some priests. But who was the anonymous priest who was to be canonically investigated by the two? In theory, I had already dealt with it by citing the case of Msgr. Ricardo Sanz de Samper y Campuzano, the Maggiordomo of His Holiness and Prefect of the Apostolic Palace from 1921 to 1926, who had been suspended (but not yet stripped of his duties) due to rumors of his immorality ⁽²⁵⁰⁾. But actually, someone else was the target, as Father Enrico Rosa revealed when receiving Brunatto (whom he already knew from the P. Pio affair) on 13th and 14th of December 1927: it was Msgr. Umberto Benigni. The investigation by the two “inquisitors”, Bevilacqua and Brunatto, moved on two parallel tracks, one on de Samper and one on Benigni (and some of his priest friends: Francesco Lucidi and Giuseppe Crosatti). Of the two, however, there came different, if not opposite, conclusions. Msgr. de Samper had no escape: it was easy to ascertain his scandalous life, that already by



Emanuele Brunatto

1926 had compromised his rise to higher positions (he would have surely received the purple cardinalate). In fact, in October, 1928, he was ousted, with his forced resignation, from his job as the Maggiordomo of His Holiness, becoming in the Pontifical Yearbook, the “Maggiordomo emeritus”. Msgr. Bevilacqua, however, dedicated himself exclusively to Msgr. Benigni, going to Turin to collect “testimony” against him from Dominican Father (or Tertiary) Lorenzo Regatieri ⁽²⁵¹⁾, who many years earlier had been addressed by Saint Pius X himself to Msgr. Benigni to denounce the situation at the University of Fribourg ⁽²⁵²⁾. Bevilacqua wrote triumphantly from Padua to Msgr. Carlo Perosi ⁽²⁵³⁾ on February 19, 1928 thinking he would be able to incriminate Msgr. Benigni: “*I hope to have found the way to beat him, it is always genere morum [the moral field]*” (a photograph of this letter in PAGNOSSIN, vol I, p. 157), and in ALBERINDO GRIMANI, p. 70), this time against nature, predicting that Benigni will be shipwrecked in this way. I don't think it's a coincidence, then, if a ministerial note dated March 25, 1928 ordered the correspondence of the sisters Maria and Bianca D'Ambrosio to be monitored, from whom Msgr. Benigni received postal communications, a control that lasted until April 29, 1931 (when it ceased following the intervention of the head of the political police Arturo Bocchini) ⁽²⁵⁴⁾, despite they themselves along with Benigni being trustees of the political police: this control, and precisely starting from that date, one cannot fail to bring to mind the police search of our monsignor's home in 1927, obtained by the Jesuit Father Rosa through the Jesuit Tacchi Venturi! But despite police control for four years, and the hopes of Msgr. Bevilacqua, the accusation ended in a soap bubble: there is no trace of any canonical process, nor of any proof or consequence against Msgr. Benigni. Brunatto had also reached this conclusion (mine, not Bevilacqua's), having tracked down Bianca D'Ambrosio (accused, let's remember, by the servant Bordi) through an old friend: the publisher of the Libreria del Littorio, Giorgio Berlutti, who had printed for Brunatto, in 1926, writing under the pseudonym of Giuseppe De Rossi, a book in defense of Padre Pio which was immediately put on the Index for lack of an Imprimatur, but which gave rise to Bevilacqua's apostolic visit to San Giovanni Rotondo. D'Ambrosio had worked for Berlutti before moving to the service of Msgr. Benigni, and Berlutti recommended her in all respects. Thus it was that Brunatto, convinced of the innocence of Msgr. Benigni ⁽²⁵⁵⁾, ended up collaborating with D'Ambrosio and Msgr. Benigni's nephew, Mataloni, in the parallel investigation that Cardinal Merry delVal had commissioned him in February 1928, to the detriment of Msgr. Camillo Caccia Dominioni (1877-1946), Master of the Chamber of His Holiness (the post immediately below that of de Samper) and very close friend of Pius XI (as de Samper bore the arms of Benedict XV, Caccia Dominioni in his coat of arms combined his with the family coat of arms of Pio XI). In the case of Caccia Dominioni the evidence of his “homosexual practices” was precise and detailed, and known even to the police ⁽²⁵⁶⁾. Caccia Dominioni was destined to receive the purple Cardinalate (he did obtain it, in fact, but only in 1935). Intervening to silence the scandal... yes, Father Rosa himself, so zealous against Msgr. Benigni, asking Brunatto to close both his eyes (see *The Antichrists in the Church of Christ*, pp. 68-70), and indeed, if we are to believe Brunatto himself, reaching the point of commissioning a possible

attempted murder to recover a rare, compromising document on the Master of the Chamber (see *The antichrists in the Church of Christ*, pp. 70-75); Father Rosa would have been the instigator of the attempt (p. 73): “*this type of undertaking was not new to Father Enrico Rosa, who knew of some other successful ones, of which the reader will find detailed documentation in the following volume*” (p. 72). How could a religious person, however devout, slander or even plan a possible murder, we should ask the ancient laxists ⁽²⁵⁷⁾. But the matter is so big that we ask ourselves: is Brunatto fully reliable? He certainly had witnesses, but my answer is: only God knows. Msgr. Benigni, the same year of the publication of this work, was rather severe regarding him ⁽²⁵⁸⁾, and in this he was right, since Brunatto is unreliable on Msgr. Benigni (pp. 64-67), not giving any proof of what his enemies claimed, especially since he collaborated in 1928 with D'Ambrosio and Mataloni, which he would not have done if his unsubstantiated judgment on Msgr. Benigni had been correct. The situation is different regarding other characters, on whom there is no lack of documentation. I close this sad page which I would have gladly omitted, and which in any case the ‘traditionalist’ press had already substantially covered for several years ⁽²⁵⁹⁾. I have dealt with it in turn, although I have always avoided talking about contingent and private issues, limiting myself to doctrinal issues. In this chapter, if I have broken, so to speak, the rule, it is to demonstrate how the excessive methods attributed to Msgr. Benigni should instead be attributed to those “moderates” who are proposed as examples, such as Father Enrico Rosa.

Msgr. Benigni, Modernist and Buonaiuti’s teacher? The equivocation of Father Rosa (and others)

We have already seen how since 1922 Father Rosa defined Msgr. Benigni as “*the old teacher of modernists*”: he didn’t cite the name, but the allusion is transparent. When, however, Buonaiuti was excommunicated *vitandus* (the maximum ecclesiastical punishment) and Msgr. Benigni’s valet gave him proof of the fact that his prelate had the Jesuit books from the Récalde collection in storage, Father Rosa went on the attack. The article [in *La Civiltà Cattolica*] previously quoted by me, (*The last episode of Modernism*, Vol. III, quaderno, 1829) of **September 4, 1926** was, in appearance, against Buonaiuti and his disciples (Ambrogio Donini, Alberto Pincherle) using a style which, although directed against a heretic, one can’t help but feel sorry for him, as when he writes that even his friends recognize in him “*a case of that hysteria which is very frequent in people or in female personalities in our day*” (p. 426). But...in cauda venenum [the poison’s in the tail]. On page 430 he writes that for twenty years Buonaiuti had no longer been a Christian “*as since he was still a clergyman* (actually he had already been a priest, and professor in the seminary, ed.) *he began, in 1904, to translate and publish in the Miscellanea of Umberto Benigni the more than heretical doctrines of Auguste Sabatier, the first theoretician of modernism (Les religions d'autorité et les religions de l'esprit) without naming the source.* A few pages later, came the attack on Benigni for Récalde’s pamphlets: “*But there are still others who manipulate error, and some even take on the appearance of fighting it, either by working to cast division*

and distrust among sincere Catholics, to discredit very eminent figures and the very authority of the Pontiff, and in the defamation of entire religious orders” (his, for example) (p. 437). And who could he be? “There is, in other words, a practical modernism, full of flaws, both private and public” and here is Bordi’s denunciation, “aimed to be hidden by a doctrinal anti-modernism that is all the more suspicious as it is less accredited by the gravity of his life, studies and writings”. And here is the name, in an allusive tone: “about which the former director of *Miscellanea*, who was Buonaiuti’s teacher and then editor of the first modernist popularizations of Sabatier, could give extensive information, as we said above” (p. 438). Ending with the threat of new revelations “if these people resume their clandestine activity after the holidays, supported by some rich Simon, by the pseudo ‘Simoniacs’ paid for by him, in Rome and the French capital, then we will also reveal (threat and blackmail, dictated by fear, ed.) by necessity, many very sad episodes of this true modernism that we have so far concealed for high reasons easy for our readers to understand. And from them will also come, we believe, new light on the apparently inexplicable fact of the continued tolerance and propaganda of modernism, and the boldness that the true modernists took from it, even under the pontificate of Pius X. The case - which we allude to here with discretion - is much more serious” than that of the inadvertence of the ecclesiastical auditors who gave permission to Buonaiuti. But Rosa’s threats, born from anger at the Récalde pamphlets and favored by Bordi’s act of informing, did not stop the publications of those who, evidently, were not blackmailable as he believed or hoped. On **July 16, 1927**, reviewing a book by Buonaiuti, he recalled Buonaiuti’s “very brief and very astute collaboration with Umberto Benigni’s *Miscellanea*” ⁽²⁶⁰⁾: the stone was thrown again. Father Rosa was always the bane of Buonaiuti, and in general of modernists already discovered and excommunicated, while he was all sweetness and indulgence with the more secluded ones ⁽²⁶¹⁾. In fact, after having defended Father Semeria, “slandered” by *Fede e Ragione*, and insulting as usual “the Récalde gang” in the issue of **August 20, 1927** ⁽²⁶²⁾, on the following **December 3, 1927** Father Rosa renewed his attacks by responding to an article published by Giovanni Preziosi’s *Vita Italiana* on March 15 -April 14, 1927: *The other “International”: what are the Jesuit’s attitudes towards fascist Italy?* The article, although anonymous, was by Msgr. Benigni, and Preziosi (“already a priest”, as Father Rosa recalled), had published, censored and amended it (Benigni will publish it in full edition with the title: *The Jesuits and Fascist Italy. Another “blow” by the Jesuit International against Fascism*, in December 1927). For Msgr. Benigni, the Company, in Italy and abroad, opposed the Regime; which was something evident to everyone, which Father Rosa tried to hide but which will manifest itself clearly in 1943; but already in August 1929 Father Rosa had to undergo a brief exile in Spain for these reasons ⁽²⁶³⁾. Father Rosa pretended it was a slander by “Benigni’s Roman accomplices” (p. 389), by “that old journalist, already a democrat and supporter of Murri, master of the modernist Buonaiuti, then friend and companion of the most sensational or most sincere anti-modernists” (p. 390) with a purple threaded collar, with “clumsy and exaggerated ways” (p. 400), written in the style of the clandestine agencies *Urbs, Veritas, Romana* (p. 390), slanderer “against the Vatican, the Cardinals, the

Eminent Secretary of State himself (...) or rather the Holy Father himself and first against the venerated memory of Benedict XV monstrously defamed in a fashionable literary periodical, La Ronda (February 1922) ⁽²⁶⁴⁾ *which included Umberto Benigni among the names of its writers*" (p. 399). Father Rosa boasts of his kindness in not mentioning his name (!) but in a note (p. 399) offers the reminder "*that several years ago (actually the year before, ed.), the servant of the well-known character gave assurance that he himself sent thousands more*" (anti-Jesuit 'libels') for which the suspicious police headquarters, fearing it to be Bolshevik propaganda, carried out the famous search. Father Rosa is well aware that these are lies, but the note is a clear, reiterated threat that he would publish "*other evidence and other documents to clarify the faith and morality of our 'integral', but not honest, denouncers*" (p. 400). Of the maneuvers to tarnish his morality, we have spoken about; now we are talking about those to tarnish his faith, and here is where, after Buonaiuti, Murri's specter also arises. And so we arrive in 1928. On **April 7, 1928** the *Civiltà Cattolica* publishes a new article, entitled "*New defamations of a clandestine agency*" ⁽²⁶⁵⁾, which would be the *Agenzia Urbs* "*of the Benigni-Mataloni-Récalde*", as Father Rosa writes. In it, he continues the controversy on nationalism-internationalism ⁽²⁶⁶⁾, without hinting at Benigni's modernism, but a step forward is accomplished: he explicitly names him and his enemies. The article announces new revelations on his "gang" of enemies, and so on **May 5, 1928** Father Rosa brings up, this time in great length and breadth, the old thesis of Benigni the modernist, in an article that announces itself to be against Buonaiuti, but rather is against Benigni. "*In the present case then, which has lasted for twenty years (ergo 1908), the palliative of the subtle struggle was even more blatant and hypocritical, while our defamers and that of the entire Society of Jesus presented themselves as 'integralists', as if upright members of the Church, whereas in truth they were among the cooperators, no less dangerous, of the open modernists. And Benigni excelled as founder and director of a bimonthly magazine - Miscellanea of ecclesiastical history and culture - allowing, if not encouraging, in Rome the diffusion of modernist theories which Ernesto Buonaiuti, then a cleric and previously his student, published himself in the magazine, translating verbatim Auguste Sabatier, the well-known Protestant and first theorist of modernism. It is true that then, for entirely different reasons, a rift came about between the teacher and the pupil; indeed, as the wind changed, with the Pontificate of Pius X and the condemnation of modernism, the more Umberto Benigni showed himself to be fierce in form, the less effective an opponent he could be in substance. For which he was reproached, as we remember, since those times by the young lay people of the Milan magazine, Il Rinnovamento. Who were certainly more frank and sincere than the clerics, their inspirers and teachers; so they then easily adapted themselves, giving up those youthful passions, to much more serious and orthodox thoughts and feelings, whereas the friends and supporters of Buonaiuti, although in opposite ways, continued to deteriorate more and more*" (pp. 235-236) ⁽²⁶⁷⁾. And so for Father Rosa Pius X was served by a teacher of modernists with whom he collaborated, while the true modernists of the *Rinnovamento* (Aiace Antonio Alfieri, Alessandro Casati, Stefano Jacini and Tommaso Gallarati Scotti, whom Achille Ratti knew well, all supported by

Fogazzaro, Buonaiuti himself and by Fathers Gazzola and Semeria) were the “good guys” and Maurice Blondel (Buonaiuti's true teacher) ⁽²⁶⁸⁾, as we have seen, was “a good Catholic”: the world turned upside down! The aim of the new article was to demonstrate “*how the spirit of the disciple Ernesto Buonaiuti is identical with that of his old teacher*” or with the “*fake anti-modernism of Umberto Benigni and the false integrals dependent on him*” (p. 238). The article ends with a final tirade against “*that strange and insincere form of anti-modernism, which, directed or surreptitiously inspired by Buonaiuti's old teacher, favored true modernism in many ways*” (p. 245): read and re-read those pages, but there is no proof of his repeated statement, as to what Benigni and Buonaiuti had in common (besides the first initial of their names!) except for the fact of their not respecting the Jesuits (which could be said of many Popes, Saints and Catholic theologians, without being able to call them modernists or Jansenists or Lutherans). Buonaiuti and Benigni responded indignantly to Father Rosa: neither had the one been a disciple, nor the other a teacher. Father Rosa replied to both on **July 21, 1928** ⁽²⁶⁹⁾. With little imagination, the director of the *Civiltà Cattolica* repeats that Benigni is Buonaiuti's “old teacher” (p. 158), and that he [Buonaiuti] is the “pupil” (p. 161), repeating the young Buonaiuti's article as the only proof (it was 1904) on Benigni's *Miscellanea*, where the former quoted, without naming him, the Protestant Auguste Sabatier (pp. 161-162). Father Rosa had noticed this in 1910 ⁽²⁷⁰⁾, but then, Poulat notes, Father Rosa wrote that “*the Miscellanea had a notoriously Catholic orientation, with a shrewd and trustworthy director*”: but Father Rosa wrote those words under Pius X with Benigni in the Secretariat of State, while in 1928 he could easily “kill a dead man” as Benigni was under Pius XI.

To Father Rosa's statements, Buonaiuti responded that his relationship with Msgr. Benigni was not that of teacher and pupil, but rather of victim (him) and executioner (Benigni). And he cited the famous episode, which occurred in 1909, which Bishop Pagano, Don Lorenzo Bedeschi, Emile Poulat and Giovanni Sale all speak of in detail ⁽²⁷¹⁾. Buonaiuti wrote a letter to his modernist friend Antonino De Stefano, then living in Geneva, regarding his collaboration with the *Revue Moderniste internationale*. A few weeks later he was called by the assessor of the Holy Office, the Dominican Father Pasqualigo, who read him “word for word” the letter he had written to his friend, and which incontrovertibly revealed Buonaiuti's modernism, which until then had still been hidden. The letter had been copied by Don Perciballi, on behalf of Msgr. Benigni, who knew both De Stefano and Buonaiuti well (as they were his students at the Roman Seminary). Pagano writes: “*Among the ‘merits’ that the new association could boast in the same year of its foundation in the eyes of Pius X there was certainly that of the denunciation and espionage against Antonino De Stefano in Geneva through Don Pietro Perciballi, a careerist priest who was a friend of Benigni; the latter was perhaps the inspiration for the maneuver and the means to get the De Stefano dossier into the hands of the pope*”, or rather: without “maybe” since Bedeschi referred to the Holy Office dossier that came from Benigni to Aureli, and “a

true copy of those documents are found in the Benigni Files” (p. 235). Therefore, not only were Perciballi and Benigni involved in the operation, but also Merry del Val, who was aware of the *Sodalitium*, Cardinal De Lai who followed the whole affair, the Holy Office, and most of all Saint Pius X himself, who paid the expenses and gave Benigni instruction to investigate, and for the Holy Office to proceed. Now, how does Father Rosa in *Civiltà Cattolica* judge these actions by Msgr. Benigni (who unmasked the leader of the Italian modernists) and implicitly of Saint Pius himself? In the aforementioned article from *Civiltà Cattolica*, Father Rosa judged the whole thing to be a “*reprehensible fact*” (p. 163), and as for himself he writes: “*we were completely unaware of the ugly matter and when we heard about it, years later, from an old friend of Buonaiuti and his modernist accomplices from Geneva, we showed our disapproval*”. According to him there was “*no need to resort to the illicit stealing of letters. We have used many other methods*” boasts the Jesuit, than those “*of police plots or worse immoral things*” (p. 164). Father Rosa dares to accuse Msgr. Benigni of complicity with Buonaiuti and then, together with Saint Pius X, of having used immoral methods against Buonaiuti himself, and hypocritically boasts of not using certain methods; but wasn’t it he who had made use of the fruits of the German search on Joncks, who had Msgr. Benigni’s house searched, who probably did have his correspondence intercepted by the police, who did have his morality spied upon, and who did cover up the immorality of Pius X’s chamberlain, perhaps going so far as to plan a crime, if necessary, for this purpose? The accusation was not only published in the *Via della Ripetta* magazine, but also repeated in private letters (and certainly in conversations) by the director of the *Civiltà*. Father Sale s.j., very understanding towards Buonaiuti and severe against Benigni ⁽²⁷²⁾, quotes from some unpublished documents by Father Rosa where he repeats the usual accusations: “*It has been certain for several years, he wrote to a monsignor, that he [Benigni] first favored modernism, as can also be seen in his ecclesiastical Miscellania, where Buonaiuti himself began to write in 1904. He then fought it, but in a way that is not always praiseworthy and also resorting to less than fair means. Finally he posed as a supporter of so-called integralism, before whom all those who did not think like him were modernists...*” concluding: “*it is strange that measures have not yet been taken, which moreover could have been taken as early as since the time of Pius X*” (another implicit criticism of Saint Pius X) ⁽²⁷³⁾. Father Rosa, following Msgr. Benigni, who had gone to Spain, step by step, again wrote on **July 28, 1928** to the director of the Spanish integralist magazine (in the Carlist sense) *El Siglo futuro* that Benigni’s party “*could be called a ‘new kind of modernist’*” ⁽²⁷⁴⁾. To complete the examination of the articles in the *Civiltà Cattolica* against Msgr. Benigni in the years '26-'28, here is the article *The balance of truth among the extremes of error* of **November 3, 1928**. Father Rosa takes inspiration from the writing “*Saint-Siège, Action Française et Catholiques intégraux*” published under the



*Msgr. Angelo Roncalli,
future John XXIII*



Father Romolo Murri

pseudonym Nicolas Fontaine (of which we have already spoken). He says that Fontaine is a liberal (while actually he was Louis Canet, a modernist Catholic and friend of Father Rosa's friends), but he approves of his writing because it is against "integral Catholics". Against them, and primarily against Benigni and Boulin, the *Civiltà Cattolica* renews its accusation of "false anti-modernism" of "playing the game of the errant modernists, imitating their spirit" (p. 199), "confusing the cause of those deluded, but not badly intentioned" (read: the modernists who more or less escaped excommunication) "with that of those obstinately errant" (p. 199), renewing the accusation against Benigni of having "favored modernism in his teaching and in his periodical *Miscellanea di storia ecclesiastica*", and then to have fought it with suspicious zeal, "with ways that were certainly not frank and praiseworthy, a commonly held opinion, which were used by him and which he counseled in the struggle, such as in his famous *Corrispondenza [Romana]*" (financed by Saint Pius X), for which the director of the *Civiltà* boasts of "never having such methods approved" (even when the Pope approved them?) and of never having had "any part" in them "and this for reasons of conscience, dignity, honor" (unlike Pius X) and "pointing it out to those in charge" (who did not listen to him). Rosa writes of those who called themselves "more papal than the Pope", now assimilating more or less integrals and Maurrassians, as did Louis Canet, "openly fighting against him [the Pope]" (p. 200) so "there was, and indeed is, a practical propaganda of true modernism, with all its spirit of insubordination even against supreme ecclesiastical authority", but above all, against the Jesuits. As from the title, Father Rosa denounces the opposing extremisms of "nationalism and internationalism, semitism and antisemitism, democratism and conservatism, liberalism and absolutism" "between the errors of the old Sillonism, as they say, and those less serious of the *Action Française*" (p. 195) and, on the religious front, between modernists and integrals. Now, it is true that truth lies between errors of excess and of defect (Father Cantoni, Abbé Bonneterre and Father Nitoglia love to recall this truth, just as did Father Rosa), but the principle must be used in a prudent manner, otherwise it can be used as a little game, as it was in the 1970s, saying that the truth of the Council lies somewhere between the opposing extremisms of Msgr. Lefebvre and Father Franzoni, or that the truth of Christian Democracy lies somewhere between the extremisms of fascism and communism (when the "centrists" detested only one of these extremes: Lefebvre, or 'fascism', just as Father Rosa fought the *Action Française* and, even more, the integrals, but certainly not the Sillonists, whose intentions he excused and praised due to their submission to the Holy See: p. 196). The article, as usual, ended with the usual allusions to new, unmentionable revelations "about too many things we would have to add."

Excusing the repetitions (not mine, but Father Rosa's), it is time to ask ourselves: is there something true in the accusation surrounding Msgr. Benigni of having been a teacher of modernists and an accomplice of Buonaiutti and Murri? Undoubtedly, Buonaiuti, De Stefano, Mario Rossi and others attended the lessons on Ecclesial History by Msgr. Benigni; Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli also attended, whose *Giornale dell'anima* began specifically with a quotation by his professor. But this was true for almost all the Roman clergy in those years (Benigni taught in Rome from 1901 to 1923) as did Canestri and Dante. Let's examine, then, modernist testimony. Let's listen to his fellow compatriot and seminarian disciple, Msgr. Fracassini (1862-1950), in a letter to the Perugian modernist, Piastrelli (1883-1975) ⁽²⁷⁵⁾: "*I can say that his ideas were not that of ours: his sociology was very antiquated and orthodox. His ecclesiastic imperialism was also then his ideal*" (PAGANO, *op.cit.* p. 227). Buonaiuti, in 1907, also wrote to Piastrelli: "*But of a man of this kind, cynical and astute, we, poor knights of the ideal, have everything to fear! He must be demolished for the good of the cause!*" (ibidem). The epithet "*cynical and astute*" refers to the famous episode narrated by Buonaiuti even in his autobiography, told naturally from his point of view: "*...At times I explained to him my fervent enthusiasm for a priesthood that industriously aimed at raising spirits, in an era that promised to be so dramatically pregnant with novelty and metamorphosis. At each of my most open and warmest confidences, he looked at me with a skeptical and ironic eye, almost as if my candid and confident confessions were the expression of an overexcited imagination and a childish illusion. He, Monsignor Benigni, saw the Church as nothing more than military discipline and bureaucratic uniformity. For him the cause for Christianity could only be the cause for the Church and the cause for the Church was the cause for an organism now definitively schematized and rigidified, from which there was nothing more to expect other than a forensic and external interpretation of canons and forms. There was some very black pessimism in the ecclesiastical conception of this prelate (...). Was there perhaps something good to be hoped for from the progress of human society and the evolution of spirits? I remember it as if it were today: One day after class I accompanied Benigni, as I had become accustomed to doing, to his home, and taking inspiration from the topic he had shortly before discussed from the teacher's desk (...) I allowed myself to observe how (...) in the face of a world that through the dissemination of democratic principles was preparing to open a new, luminous era in the history of Mediterranean civilization, Benigni, staring at my face with his very black pupils, in an act of sarcastic disdain for my flights of hope and optimism, pronounced with his slight stammer, this tremendous aphorism: 'My good friend, do you really believe that men are capable of anything good in the world? History is a continuous and desperate retching, and for this humanity nothing is needed other than the Inquisition!'. I was astonished."* And Buonaiuti commented: "*this dark and macabre verdict from my ecclesiastical professor should have stopped me from proceeding further on the path that led to priestly ordination...*" ⁽²⁷⁶⁾ (if only it was so!). The episode is placed by Buonaiuti at the beginning of Benigni's teaching, it could be dated between 1901, then, and 1903 (when

Buonaiuti was ordained, in December): is this, perhaps, the portrait of one that Father Rosa claims is a modernist?

Father Rosa writes that the young Benigni was a traveling companion of Father Romolo Murri, who would later be excommunicated as a modernist; and, as late as 1904 he was an accomplice of the modernists, publishing Buonaiuti. But Sergio Pagano publishes a letter from Father Murri to Father Benigni, then at the *Voce della Verità*, from December 1901: “*I didn’t accept, I mocked your union program*” “*You then recall your acceptance of Christian democracy. But it has already often been said in our periodicals that we cannot take that democracy into account as long as you then fight ‘the young people of Christian democracy’ (remember whose words those are?) and all the direction, the Christian democratic work*” (*Documents on Roman modernism*, pp. 293-295). It doesn't seem like they got along! Murri reproaches Benigni for no longer being what he was in 1895, when he signed the Christian democratic social program of the Turin congress; a disciple of Murri, Francesco Invrea, does the same: “*when I heard for the first time that the attacks against the Cultura Sociale (of Murri) and its director contained in the Voice of Truth came from you, I literally fell from the sky. How could you, one of the first and daring pioneers of Italian Christian democracy, promoter of a very daring program in an era in which the social Christians of Italy could be counted on one hand (...) how could you have become an opponent of the young and daring ranks of Italian Christian Democrats?*” (December 7, 1901). As Pagano recalls, on January 18, 1901, Leo XIII published his encyclical *Graves de communi* on Christian Democracy, and Benigni aligned with the Pope, against Murri. And as Pagano also recalls, Poulat examined the entire question (*Catholicisme...*, pp. 255-333): the second generation of intransigents, that lived at the times of Leo XIII, divided itself among “*those for whom Leo XIII, like Saint Thomas, was a beacon and not a limitation; and those, rather, for whom moving away from his light meant advancing into darkness*” (p. 255): Murri was among the former, Benigni among the latter. “*We then stumble upon a more real problem, the real problem, when we read that Benigni, ‘once extremely social under Leo XIII, had changed his drumbeat too much with the arrival of Pius X’ (P. Droulers). In fact, the problem becomes more complicated: if Benigni changed, from a social point of view, he did so while Leo XIII was still alive, since he had attacked Murri already in 1901; but if he already changed under Leo XIII, in what way, and did he change? Was it perhaps out of opportunism, or to adapt, in the absence of a change of pontificate, to changes within the reigning pontiff? But if so, then, was it Leo XIII himself who changed? And what if he had refused to change, what if instead it was Murri and the Murristas who had undergone an evolution, and the Pope had limited himself to standing up against this evolution in which he saw a deviation?*” Father Rosa accuses Benigni: under Leo XIII he was with Murri, and then with Pius X, for opportunism, he took the side against him; the truth, according to Poulat, is the opposite: with Leo XIII he took the side against Murri, when it was clear that the young Christian Democrat distanced himself from good doctrine. Benigni is intransigent in the second generation, like Medolago Albani (1852-1921) (who will, in fact, be with him in support of Pius X) and the II session of the Opera

dei Congressi, that which concerned social-economics, the only one which Pius X will not dissolve (p. 279).

Was Father Benigni a modernist in 1904? And then how does one explain the controversy with Father Semeria and Father Minocchi who went to visit Tolstoi, again found in the *Voce della Verità* on the 15th, 16th, and 17th of August 1903? Bishop Pagano extracts from the Benigni Files a letter from Semeria to Benigni to explain it, and the stinging response of the “modernist” (as per Father Rosa) Benigni: “*The entire spirit of your writings agrees in this typical way with your School and so-called friends: to exalt the non-denominationalists and deflate the intransigent Catholics; and this is not with slander and falsity, goodness! But with a very skilled system: to exhibit particularly the non-denominational Catholics' strong side, and ours weak side. (...) The school of which Murri is the contorted master, Minocchi the reckless one, and you the skilled one. Now well, here are my sincere and dispassionate professions of faith, which I would repeat on my deathbed. The school of the three masters and their related disciples I consider deleterious. Yours is a revolution with its systemic condemnation of tradition, with its desire to modernize everything immediately, with impatience. It is deleterious especially among ecclesiastical youth, and I can say that I have continuous intellectual relationships with them: too many young people are displaying an unspeakable contempt against the ‘old stuff’, the weak old baggage of Latin Catholicism ‘from scholastics to hierarchy’, they strengthen themselves in the name of the three masters*”. For Father Rosa, it is a modernist that was writing this in those days: but was such a person modernist? The following is a letter which explains the misunderstanding: “*I who would like to see the healthy and true Catholic reform, which we desperately need, unhindered, I deplore that the excesses (and worse) of the modernists do harm the evolution of the reform, far more than those of the few old resistors and misoneists [haters of innovation] (...). That's why I fight the said modernism (note: Leo XIII has only died a month earlier, ed.) which I do not confuse with modernity: and the hatred and warfare that I attracted to myself (so that I passed from antidemocratic me who had been the first in Italy to spread Christian democracy and to Misoneist me, who was the first in Italy to introduce Taine into the preparatory classes of ecclesiastical history), knowing that I attracted it to myself for having fulfilled what I consider a strict obligation of conscience. (...) ... when a declaration of war comes - and such is the article by Minocchi - I shoot, and of course I try not to waste the cartridges.*” And on September 5 he writes again: “*By now Minocchi has taken a decisive position: he attempts to remain among us to get a better pull on us: he must have clearly told Tolstoi when he talked to him about the ‘uselessness’ of apostasy. Ah, when we have against us the daggers of so many conspirators of Freemasons, Jews, non-denominationalists and anti-Christians of every kind, to see the reverend collaborator of the *Giornata d'Italia* (Minocchi) transparently whistling to us the *De profundis* [a prayer for the dead] (...) eh, Father Semeria, the articles and the footnotes of the *Voce della Verità* are Madrigals [kind jokes] compared to what it would take!*” (PAGANO, pp. 296-300). In these lines we have all that is needed to say. Sergio Pagano (for once) describes Benigni’s personality well when he

writes: “*Formed in the purest Leonian tradition (of Leo XIII who in the Seminary of Perugia left a fruitful legacy of studies, and in particular of historical studies), Benigni perceived precisely through that innate and assiduous historical attendance, the urgency to face the most arduous issues of the moment which - according to a personal evaluation which he never felt like abandoning - threatened the Catholic Church even more than old heresies ...*” (*op.cit.*, p. 225). His letter to Semeria perfectly expresses this double aspect present in Benigni: to be modern and, at the same time, against modernism (our Istituto strengthens itself by following in his tracks: see *Sodalitium*, n. 64, *Notes on the study of Sacred Scripture and, in general, of the other ecclesiastical sciences*). Poulat dedicated two entire chapters in his *Catholicisme...* to the matter: Chapter VII (*Holy History without the Halo*, pp. 199-254) where he examines the numerous articles from *Miscellanea* that so scandalized Father Rosa, and in Chapter VIII (*Christian Democracy in Crisis*, pp. 255-333). In both areas (ecclesiastical studies and social questions) he enthusiastically followed Pope Leo XIII’s directives: modernization and seriousness of studies, the social commitment of clergy to extend to society the benefits of Christianity (Chapter IX: *The Kingdom of God and the Empire of the Church*). In both cases he found himself to the “left” side of the intransigent, anti-liberal, counter-revolutionaries. But he always remained on this side, even when the others (Buonaiuti in his studies, Murri in politics) betrayed and left their place. On its closure, *Miscellanea* (1907) recalled its program: “*to unite true faith with true science, sincere orthodoxy without implications as without attenuations, which does not admit to either non-criticism or hyper-criticism, but serious and honest criticism.*” (V, 78) “*In short - comments Poulat - a median position (called leftist), between a conservative right and a modernist extreme left*” (*Catholicisme...*, p. 220). But then what will separate Msgr. Benigni from authors like Lagrange, Duchesne, Batiffol, Delehaye, Funk, etc, whose works were put on the Index (as in Duchesne’s case) or prohibited in Italian seminaries (like Duchesne, see the circular by Cardinal De Lai, September 1, 1911; or Delehaye, Funk, Lagrange, see letter by Cardinal De Lai, October 17, 1913)? Surely his mentality, the spirit that animated him, and his reaction in confronting the modernist danger: while Benigni became the most intransigent in support of the anti-modernism of Pius X, the authors mentioned, in primis Duchesne, were ferocious against Pius X and anti-modernism (e.g., for Duchesne, Poulat, *Intégrisme...*, p. 602). Father Rosa doesn’t understand, and he progresses freely from a small-minded conservatism that sees modernism in the *Miscellanea*, to social pro-modernism that allowed modernism to survive and thrive more virulent than ever. And what of the famous article by Buonaiuti of 1904? Poulat examines the case in detail on pages 211-212 of *Catholicisme...*(footnote 20) to clarify what has already been said. In Buonaiuti’s lines on tradition (in general) as found in the *Miscellanea* (and not, the following year, in Minocchi’s *Studi religiosi*), there is nothing erroneous, and Buonaiuti himself “*unsatisfied with the teaching that he received in seminary by Benigni and others, he neither recognized himself with the ‘heterodox’ authors: Harnack, Sabatier, Loisy*”. Rosa made “*a late mixture*” in 1928 between Benigni and Buonaiuti, that

he had not made in 1910 (as we have seen). And Benigni, since 1903, “*was already Loisy’s murderer, in a movement composed of a culture where the weeds were mixed with the grain.*”

Some personality traits of Msgr. Benigni, between the accusations of his enemies, like Father Rosa, and reality

Msgr. Benigni? An opportunistic skeptic. A businessman thirsting for money and honors. Or a faithful collaborator of Leo XIII and Pius X? Let’s try to figure this out.

Benigni the skeptic, or even an atheist? Cynical, skeptical, cold, of a dark pessimism...This is how Buonaiutti described his old teacher (in the sense of professor) almost that, like him, he had lost the faith but, contrary to him, he sided with the ecclesiastical institution, a little like the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoyevski. Poulat poses the question and gives himself (and us) his answer: “*Benigni is ‘religious’ as much as his new adversaries and past friends; if he is different than them, it is another question to decide whether his way of being is better than theirs. There is nothing more gratuitous and erroneous than to see him as an ‘atheist’, while he is, if we can shape this term, an ‘anathropist’ (in footnote: misanthropist and asocial would be out of place in this case). He cannot but believe in God, but cannot, or can no longer, believe in man.*” In a footnote, the French historian writes among other things: “*Benigni depends in this revealing case on a difficulty, inherited from the Molinist controversies on grace and liberty, of thinking theologically of modern man before God and of overcoming their profound incompatibility.*” And, again in the same footnote, he offers an example of the mentality opposite to his, a famous and disconcerting phrase, with which Paul VI closed Vatican II: “*We, we too, more than anyone, we have the cult of man.*”⁽²⁷⁷⁾ The mentality of Msgr. Benigni could not be more distant from that of Msgr. Montini.

Rich (or Poor?). We conclude the portrait of Msgr. Benigni’s personality (as mentioned from the beginning, the articles by Valbousquet and then those of Father Nitoglia were, very insistently - in the negative - on his personality) with a few words on the prelate’s attachment to riches and honor. We have seen how, according to Father Rosa, Benigni was an opportunist. He would have betrayed the democratic and modernist causes for opportunism, siding with Pius X due to his thirst for ambition and wealth. The “Cresius” Simon, the “Banker” Simon would have been the practically bottomless financier of Benigni. Where did he find the money to fund the free distribution of the Récalde? Or for his trips to France, England, or the United States? Who were his principals? We have read, here and there, varying testimonies. In Emile Poulat’s judgment, for example, he presents us a Benigni always faithful to the same ideas, under Leo XIII as under Pius X, and under his successors⁽²⁷⁸⁾. Benigni was well conscious of these accusations and he defended himself against them, during the investigation into the *Sodalitium*, writing to Cardinal Sbarretti on November 16, 1921: “*I know from various and sure parties that the same spreaders of calumnies against the S.P. should spread that I rented a building with a ground floor*

and a first floor: in this beautiful house I live with my personal secretary and my servant [driver]: how much money and how much of a mystery! Now, the truth is a little different. My health forced me to come to higher quarters, and I live in a simple house in the Vittoria Cooperative, renting a small apartment (the smallest in the building) composed of four rooms, which I keep with my old servant (since the war I was unable to keep him, because nobody gave me an equivalent rise in prices), who now works in the trams; he is with his wife and a child: in compensation for the room and light I give them, they clean my room and provide meals. As for other apartments, where my secretary or similar things are said to be, I am ready to cede these riches to my slanderers, if they will show me here or in any other part of Rome where they can be found. As for money, I live like the poor I have always been: and now having to pay a relatively high rent, I have incurred a debt that I am trying to pay off by working all day teaching in school or the library, etc.” (*Disquisitio*, p. 293) Even his friends describe him quite differently than painted by his calumniators, when they had to testify during the process for canonization of Pius X. Father Antonelli (future Cardinal) in the *Disquisitio*, did not hesitate from the beginning to write of him: “*He was unable, or not worried about making a comfortable life for himself; in fact he died in poverty*” (p. 197). We have already seen how his secretary, Bianca D’Ambrosio, asked Mussolini in vain for a subsidy to pay the huge debts of the I.R.D.S. that remained after Benigni’s death. The house where he lived was possible only thanks to his brother, Federico, an auto salesman in Perugia, who, at the death of his brother, being his only heir, had to sell his library and archives (the actual Benigni Files) to the Vatican to repay his debts. One house, that of via Arno 97 where the prelate died, was described as a “*poor house*” by Emilio Cecchi. Father Jules Saubat, secretary of the S.P. and consultant to the Holy Office, declared, among other things: “*He had neither honor nor money*”; “*Msgr. Benigni had in his favor the fact of having lived poor and of dying poor. He could have let himself be bought: they would have paid his weight in gold! But what he knew, he used to make his holy war: books, pamphlets, magazines, fliers, the newspaper Correspondance de Rome, letters...*” (also the *Disquisitio* on p. 233 writes of his having received 1000 francs from a trappist convent; he said: “*how miserable, when I need millions!*” for the gigantic work that he wanted to do). Saubat continues: “*They had the audacity to take away the chaplaincy stipend of 1,000 lira annually that he had received in the past; they deprived him of the professorship at the Accademia dei Nobili; without giving him a cent. Knowing of his indebtedness and poverty, I gave him all the money I could find...*” (my translation from the French edition of the *Disquisitio*, pp. 70, 74-75). Guido Aureli reported on the judgment of the doctor who cared for Benigni (and of Aureli himself, also friend of Benedict XV), doctor Faelli: “*he had become so fond of the Monsignor that he no longer wanted anything for his fees, the bill of which was huge. And despite this, he always rushed to the monsignor, whom he admired and glorified for the dignity of his great poverty...*”. Again Aureli: “*After leaving the Secretariat of State he lived as best he could. Without ever justifying why, everything was gradually taken away from him, and he was left with only his job as an apostolic protonotary. Vallardi’s subsidies* (the publisher of the *Storia Sociale*, ed.)

occasionally repaired the flaws in his deficit. An industrial brother from Perugia, earlier anticlerical, who had become rich, began to repent and made peace with the priest. But this happened very late. Sick of uricemia, he was supported by his brother for his annual treatments in Montecatini. For many, many years he lived in real poverty." Pio Molajoni, of the well-known modernist family, but who then got closer to Benigni, wrote in his obituary: "There is no conventional phrase to say it other than that he died poor, though one of the strangest facts of his life was precisely this point: that he never wanted to ask - not even about the post-war increase in the value of his pensions and stipends - his checks remained those of 1909: his seat and prelatore, teaching at the ecclesiastical Accademia dei Nobili, in the academy of the Propaganda of the Faith, and at Apollinare, his apostolic protonotary, he enjoyed five monthly allowances that in their entirety barely amounted to six hundred lire: the wages of a manual laborer. Endowed with perhaps an excessive pride, he refused to draw up those simple demands which in all bureaucracies in the world are oftentimes necessary, and he preferred to accept what help he could get from relatives ⁽²⁷⁹⁾." He did not ask for money (if not for a good cause) and still less for honor. Highly esteemed by Leo XIII and Saint Pius X, he had before him a secure career that could have resulted in a cardinalate (his successor, Msgr. Pacelli, became Pius XII), though, as we have seen, he himself asked Merry del Val to be able to leave the Secretariat of State. "Benigni had in his favor - wrote Father Saubat - the fact of having left (from the Secretariat of State, n.d.a) while if he had supported the politics of Cardinal Gasparri it would have made his career ⁽²⁸⁰⁾: he had sufficient talent to aspire to any job. He would not have died forgotten, despised, slandered, as he was; first of all by the German press (...). Msgr. Benigni was slandered his entire life, in particular in an illustrious ecclesial magazine (an allusion to the Civiltà Cattolica, n.d.a) - whose director had other personal reasons to attack him - denounced as an instigator of a secret society against the Church, as a worldly man among the laity, as they themselves were, yet he was ferociously abstemious, and almost like concubinage. All this pushed Cardinal Galli, a friend of mine, on that occasion, to say: 'Benigni is done for: he will be gotten rid of!' It was then that I convinced him to publish the documents of the Consistorial, the letters and blessings of Pius X that they demonstrated... the slander: which also convinced Cardinal Galli, who was indignant at the magazine that had spread these slanders... and which they never retracted!": so we also have Father Saubat at the process of beatification of Saint Pius X (l.c., p. 74). The poverty and frank speech of Msgr. Benigni are also attested to from a portrait of his character by the pen of an informant of the Regime on February 14, 1926, in an informative directive to the police chief Francesco Crispo Moncada: "Poor, shabby in his clothing, closeted for hours and hours in his modest home, rich only in books, magazines and index cards (he has been working for years on a ponderous historical work), Msgr. Benigni immediately reveals to his interlocutor a keen intellect, a prodigious culture of a rare variety and an unscrupulous political spirit. His judgments on men and things are often precise, always sharp and with almost no reserve of formal courtesy (...). As a politician he seems too passionate and at the same time doctrinaire for managerial and responsible positions, and this, perhaps combined with his corrosive spirit and his

unscrupulousness, which borders on cynicism, must have contributed greatly to keeping him away from the government of the Church" ⁽²⁸¹⁾ (an acute judgment, it seems to me, and truthful). Already in 1903, he responded to Father Semeria who had written him thusly: "*Let's fight, dear professor, but why not use in this unpleasant office, more chivalrous ways?*" Benigni replied: "*perhaps you were thinking of this as a tournament of double-bottomed phrases when in your letter you admonished me to also use 'chivalrous manners'. Well, dear father, I too make a humble confession: I can't do it. Put this flaw with all my others, just as I put that quality among yours.*" (PAGANO, pp. 296 and 298). Even his best friends were conscious of Msgr. Benigni's characteristics (who could be accused of excessive frankness, but surely not pharisaic hypocrisy): "*Strange man, full of talent, but an impossible character*" also capable to play "*a bad joke*" on him as well (so his ex-friend Boulin, November 16, 1931); "*Msgr. Benigni has his defects...imprudence...excesses...(...) It is true; he was still a man; and the defects were of his qualities*" (so from Father Saubat, p. 73). And despite knowing all of this, the *Disquisitio* wrote in 1950: "*It must be said, on this point, that from all the information that we have, there can be no doubt of the sincere attachment by Msgr. Benigni to the Church and to the Pope. He intended to place himself and his multitude of intellectual qualities, his vast experience, above all in the historical-cultural field, at service to the Church. On this point we must insist against any malicious judgments (...)*" (p. 199) "*with this right aversion against modernist tendencies, in the broadest sense of the word, Msgr. Benigni entered precisely into the mentality of the Supreme Pontiff Pius X*" (p. 200), "*Mgr. Benigni, known as a militant supporter of Pius X's policy against modernism in all its various manifestations, had become, as was to be expected, the target of hatred and resentment on the part of those who felt discovered and accused by him and by his organizations. But Benigni also had direct adversaries in the field of big politics: thus Aristide Briand ⁽²⁸²⁾, minister several times since 1906, president of the French ministers since 1909, was very hostile to him, knowing very well that Msgr. Benigni had not once managed to thwart or hinder certain of his maneuvers; he therefore began to put pressure on the Secretariat of State to ensure that this troublesome character was eliminated. At this point it is perhaps appropriate to mention the disagreement that had arisen in the meantime between Msgr. Benigni and Cardinal Pietro Gasparri and which continued as long as they lived. Be that as it may, on March 7, 1911 Msgr. Benigni left his post at Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (...). From this moment Msgr. Benigni, free from official constraints, dedicated himself with all his energy to his various organizations, to continue the fight against every kind of open and veiled modernism*" (pp. 202-203); "*It is to be deplored – concludes the Disquisitio commissioned by Pius XII who knew Benigni intimately – that no one to date has made a serious and documented study of the activities of those who followed Pius X's directives, among whom Msgr. Benigni, with all his personal defects and all his excesses, would occupy a place of honor*" (p. 237). Compare these words with the statements of Cardinal Gasparri and Father Rosa: every honest person will admit that these last misjudged Msgr. Benigni, and that they were unjust to him.

The History of the Company of Jesus according to I. de Récalde

In treating the “relationship” between Father Rosa (the moderate) and Msgr. Benigni (the neo-pharisee), we spoke many times about “anti-Jesuit libels” (*dixit* Father Rosa) published under the pseudonym “I. de Récalde” (who the “great historian” Sale mistook, incredibly, to be a pseudonym of Buonaiuti) ⁽²⁸³⁾. In fact, carefully reading the numerous articles in the *Civiltà Cattolica* against Msgr. Benigni and his work, one easily realizes how the (ridiculous) accusation of modernism, that of his attacks on the Secretary of State and even on the Popes (the deceased Benedict XV and the reigning Pius XI), and how many other things the moderate vein of the director of *Civiltà* could come up with are actually ancillary to what really worried Father Rosa, namely Msgr. Benigni’s collaboration in the spread of “anti-Jesuit” pamphlets from the Récalde collection (Domenico Bordi’s letter of denunciation speaks with disdain of the attacks on the Society and of the storage of the books in Benigni’s house, which Father Rosa will have scrupulously searched; and the threat of new attacks and revelations contained in the articles in the *Civiltà Cattolica* which are always conditional on the cessation of publication of these “pamphlets” in question). But what was so terrible about these “pamphlets” that they provoked such a reaction? ⁽²⁸⁴⁾ What are we talking about, really?

Let’s begin with the author. “I. de Récalde” is obviously a pseudonym, considered by some to be the name of Saint Ignatius himself (Iñigo Lopez de Récalde), for others the name of one of the saint’s early companions. Father Rosa himself correctly identifies the author, in the person of Abbé Paul Boulin, an early member of the *Sodalitium*, and also then Msgr. Benigni’s collaborator in France, as well as the editor of Msgr. Jouin’s R.I.S.S. under the pseudonym Pierre Colmet. Father Rosa’s denunciation, however, of Msgr. Benigni’s involvement, in my opinion, is not wrong: not only in his spread of the brochures (which is an established fact) but also in the editing of the same. In my opinion Msgr. Benigni provided his French brother with copious archival documentation, perfectly accessible to a professional historian, such as he was: we are led to believe this by the prelate’s declared intention to deal with precisely those topics in his Social History of the Church, and also the fact that publication of these pamphlets ceased after 1929, which was the year of the break between Benigni and Boulin (except for a re-printing in 1930).

What are these pamphlets? The list of publications will help you understand what we’re talking about.

1920: *Le Message du Sacré-Cœur à la France et le P. de La Chaise. Etude historique et critique.*

1920, 1930 (second edition): *Clément XIV. Le Bref “Dominus ac Redemptor” portant suppression de la Compagnie de Jésus, avec une Introduction et des Notes.*

1921, 1928 (second edition): *Ecrits des Curés de Paris contre la politique et la morale des jésuites (1658-1659) avec une étude sur la querelle du Laxisme.*

1922, 1928 (second edition): *Lettres sur le Confessorat du P. Le Tellier, par l'abbé de Margon, avec une Introduction et des Notes sur la Politique des Jésuites et l'Oratoire.*

1922: *Histoire intérieure de la Compagnie de Jésus, d'après les documents, adaptée par I. de Récalde du récent ouvrage espagnol de don Miguel Mir.*

1922: *Une victime des Jésuites. Saint Joseph Calasanz. Le P. Pietrasanta s.j. contre les Ecoles Pies d'après le chanoine Timon-David.*

1923: *La cause du Vénérable Bellarmin. L'autobiographie. Votum de Passione. Lettre à Clément VII. Avec une Introduction et des Notes.*

1924: *Autour d'un Bref secret de Clément VIII.*

1924: *Histoire jésuite. Histoire vraie. À propos du Bref "Dominus ac Redemptor" et de la Querelle des Rites.*

1924: *Un scandale jésuite. L'initiation sexuelle d'après une brochure de l'Action Populaire.*

1925: *Les Bulles "Immensa pastorum" et "Ex quo singulari" de Benoît XIV contre la Compagnie de Jésus pour l'affranchissement des Indiens du Paraguay et la condamnation des Rites chinois. Texte latin et traduction française avec une introduction et des notes par I. de Récalde.*

1927: *Les Jésuites sous Aquaviva. La canonisation de Saint Ignace. La Compagnie et les Illuminés d'Espagne. Condamnation de Suarez. Imago primi saeculi (d'après des documents inédits extraits des Archives du Vatican).*

1929: *Les Mensonges de Ribadeneira. Des miracles et de la mort de Saint Ignace. Sur le fléau de la "Sollicitation" en Espagne au XVIIe siècle*

This detailed, and I hope not too tedious, list of notorious "anti-Jesuit libels" demonstrate, to the contrary, the nature of these writings: all, except one, the one against the *Action Populaire*, are historical books, which give a different version of the history of the Company from the apologetic one of the Jesuit historians. Now, that the historiography on the Company is vast and detailed (think of Guido Mongini, Stefania Pastore, Sabina Pavone, Michela Catto, Robert A. Maryks, just to name a few, especially among the Italians), and that the *Civiltà Cattolica* itself went so far as to write about the similarities between Saint Ignatius and Luther (!) ⁽²⁸⁵⁾, the argumentation over the "Récalde" would not scandalize anyone (except those who wish to be scandalized). Especially since, unlike Mongini for example, the "Récalde" does not place in any doubt the orthodoxy and sanctity of Saint Ignatius of Loyola or of his sons, nor the authority of the Church in recognizing religious orders, which is not the case among all current traditionalists regarding certain recent canonizations ⁽²⁸⁶⁾. The topics discussed - respecting, then, the authority of the Church in approving religious orders and canonizations - all concern arguments that historians freely discussed, even where the Church intervened with its authority (for example against laxism, or in the matter of Chinese rites). Questions on Thomism (about which we have already spoken) and of grace, questions of laxism, questions of the Alumbradism and the relationship with the Inquisition, the reform of religious life, the Reductions of Paraguay, gallicanism,

etc., were all subjects of maximum interest for the history of the Church, and one should not be reproached for touching on them with the aid of numerous historical documents. And in fact, of the 13 volumes published by Récalde, only one was put on the Index, and it wasn't a volume written by Récalde himself, but a translation. It treated a French adaptation in the first volume of the "*Storia interna documentata della Compagnia di Gesù*", by a Spanish priest historian, removed from the Company, Miguel Mir Noguera ⁽²⁸⁷⁾. The "*Storia interna e documentata*", written in the years 1905-1906 and which had remained unpublished for lacking an *imprimatur*, was published in 1913, a year after the author's death, and put on the Index, together with its French adaptation ten years later. I am well aware of the fact that a volume not placed on the Index, even if denounced, is not a guarantee of orthodoxy (nor is the *imprimatur*), but it is also true that placing a volume on the Index does not always involve its heterodoxy (but sometimes, just its inappropriateness). The decree is dated May 1923 (the same day of the decree which placed the "*Segreto di La Salette*" on the Index), and Récalde, whose second volume by Mir had already been translated into French, in obedient conformity with the ecclesiastical decree, ceased its publication ⁽²⁸⁸⁾. The invective by the *Civiltà Cattolica* does not seem to me to be proportionate to the historical and documentary tenor of the "Récalde" volumes (although accompanied by polemical introductions referring to the ongoing dispute between the *Civiltà Cattolica* and the integrals, which we talked about); as for the Society, the Church approved it under Paul III, abolished it under Clement XIV, re-established it with Pius VII, crowned it with the glory of many Saints, but also condemned some errors defended by many of its authors (as on laxity and Chinese rites, for example): it is not against the spirit of the Church to remember the condemnations, or to take a position on the issues still discussed (think of the long disputes within the Congregation *de Auxiliis*), as indeed even Jesuits faithful to the school of St. Thomas did, and not to that of their own Order. The attacks on the volumes of the "Récalde" by Father Rosa are understandable, given his esprit de corps and devotion to his religious family, but completely disproportionate and unjust.

The education of the young, the Montessori method, between Jesuits and the integrals.

One of our confreres (aligned with the so-called "Resistance", *sedepenists* who however criticize the negotiations between the Society of Saint Pius X and the modernists), Abbé Pivert, recently wrote an interesting article on the education method of Maria Montessori ⁽²⁸⁹⁾. His intervention was probably prompted by an internal discussion in the traditionalist world (the first chapter is entitled *Montessori et les traditionalistes*), since some private schools run by religious women have adopted the method of the Italian educator. The columnist criticizes the educational method in question, both on its merit and because of the well-documented affiliation of Maria Montessori to the Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant.

The conflicting opinions of Catholics on the Montessori method are not recent, because Maria Montessori, although an initiate of Theosophy since 1899 and a collaborator with Freemasonry, did not fail to declare herself a Catholic and tried to systematically infiltrate Catholic circles to receive their support. Interesting contributions on the issue have been published in *Annals of the History of Education* (2018, 25) from which I refer to some information taken from two articles: *Maria Montessori among modernists, anti-modernists and Jesuits* by Fulvio De Giorgi and *Maria Montessori's projects enmeshed in Msgr. Umberto Benigni's network* by Erica Moretti and Alejandro Mario Dieguez: the titles of the articles clearly show the relevance to the topic I am dealing with. Already under Pius X, Montessori tried to influence Catholic circles, despite her Masonic and modernist associations.



Maria Montessori

Montessori's formation was, by her own admission, positivist, and clearly her education method found its roots in Rousseau, in the Jewish positivist Marco Ezechia, known as Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) (see De Giorgi, pp. 66-69), in the less known Jacob Rodrigues Pereira (1715-1780), belonging to a Portuguese Marrano family transferred to France, and Edouard Séguin (1812-1880) (of the Lamennais and Saint-Simon school) who both worked with children with cognitive deficiencies (De Giorgi, p. 70). Again imitating Rousseau, Maria Montessori had a son, Mario, in 1898, by psychiatrist Giuseppe Montesano, whom, however, she did not want to recognize as it would jeopardize her career: a splendid model for an educator and a woman (placing him in foster care, she claimed him at age 14 as her "nephew"). In 1899, nominated by the Italian minister for Public Instruction, the freemason Guido Baccelli, she participated in the *International Congress of Women* in London. On May 23 of that year, she entered into the Theosophical Society, founded by the occultist Blavatsky, and in 1907 she returned to London specifically to meet Blavatsky's successor, the feminist Annie Besant, affiliated with mixed Freemasonry, with whom she was friendly for her entire life: "*it was not a superficial bond: Montessori's pedagogical thought, her philosophical-feminist writings, show notable traces of theosophical influence.*"⁽²⁹⁰⁾ The same year Mazzini's godson, the Jewish Ernesto Nathan, was elected mayor of Rome (he would become Grand Master of Freemasonry) favoring the creation of the Montessorian *Casa del Bambino* in Rome: "*and it is here that in 1907, the year in which Nathan was elected mayor, Montessori was able to open, thanks to the material and moral support received from mostly Masonic environs, the first Children's House, clearly highlighting during her inaugural speech its social function and clearly inspired by the ideas of radical, socialist and masonic circles; not surprisingly the Milanese Umanitaria environment was also socialist and freemason, where the following year they too would open a Montessori institute.*"⁽²⁹¹⁾ It is this same Grandmaster Nathan and

his masonic circle that would form the link between Montessori and the Franchetti Barons, that is, senator Leopoldo Franchetti (1847-1917) and his wife, the American Alice Hallgarten (1874-1911). The Franchetti family was an extremely wealthy Israelite family who moved from France to Mantua in the 15th century, from there to Livorno and Turin, made nobility by Victor Emmanuel II and Umberto I for their (economic) services to the cause of the Risorgimento, and their intermarriage with the Rothschilds. Leopold, politically close to the Jewish Sidney Sonnino, is “*a free-thinking freemason*”⁽²⁹²⁾ who willingly hosts the Grandmason Nathan in his home near Città di Castello, in Villa Montesca; he will die by suicide by “lugubrious ritual” (A.A. Mola) following the defeat at Caporetto. His wife, also Jewish, is interested, like Montessori, in pedagogy, the new school, and feminism. In 1909 the “Jewish Masonic” couple (it is worth mentioning) met Montessori at Sibilla Aleramo⁽²⁹³⁾ and visited the *Casa del Bambino* opened in Rome by Montessori, and were so enthusiastic about it that they invited the educator from the Marche to Villa Montesca where the educator conceived her main work: “*The Method of Scientific Pedagogy applied to children's education in the Children's Houses*” (Città di Castello, S. Lapi Publishing House, 1909) dedicated to the Franchetti Barons. The Franchettis not only frequented the lodges, but also modernist or pro-modernist circles, including the aforementioned *Unione per il Bene*; and they also became friends of Montessori: Moretti and Dieguez cite Sofia Bisi Albini (1856-1919), the Jew Felicitas Buchner, Antonio Fogazzaro⁽²⁹⁴⁾ himself to whom Bisi Albini and Buchner were very close, Father Semeria's circle, p. 103; De Giorgi cites, in addition to the Franchetti's, on p. 27 Cardinal Svampa and Msgr. Faberi p. 29, Egilberto Martire and the magazine *Vita*, p. 36. Thus, modernist spiritualism led Montessori - also having been initiated into Theosophy, let's not forget - to frequent female religious circles and to try to have her method adopted by Catholic nuns, to the point of planning her religious consecration along with that of her disciples. Since 1903 the theosophist had entered into a relationship with Cardinal Svampa, and with the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart, led by the Jesuit father Carlo Giuseppe Rinaldi (1852-1915), a writer for the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, “*a young religious congregation appreciated by innovative circles but also by Cardinal Ferrata*” (DE GIORGI, p. 36). On November 10, 1910 the theosophist, who the year before had dedicated her method “*to the free thinker and freemason*” Franchetti and his wife, made a secret religious profession with five of her students, and for two years the “*Pia unione montessoriana*” kept their own private chapel (DE GIORGI, pp. 36-37). The Franciscan Sisters then obtained the support of Father Gemelli (a “moderate”, Father Nitoglia would say) who also opened a Children's Home in Milan in 1911 and defended the Montessori method in a conference in 1912; a blessing from the Pope (Pius X) on the occasion of his Easter wishes in 1911 brought to the peak the “catholic” fortunes of the initiates (occultly) to Theosophy (DE GIORGI, p. 38). The *Civiltà Cattolica* was no stranger in supporting Montessori being close, as we said, to Father Rinaldi and as we will see to Father Tacchi Venturi. Two articles in 1910 and 1911, the first by Father Pavissich (1910) and the second by Father Leanza (1911) tried to discern the good from the bad in Ernesto Nathan's disciple. Father Pavissich, let's

recall, had already been criticized for a previous article in 1908 on the women's Congress, and his new work in the *Civiltà Cattolica* is judged "largely positive" by De Giorgi (p. 40) contrary to the one by Father Leanza. Msgr Benigni, however, will later recall the terrible impression the still cautious articles in the *Civiltà Cattolica* left on him and his followers: "for quite a while, our most experienced friends have had an extremely limited esteem of the infamous Montessori and her method, since the now distant days (under Pius X) in which the Jesuits seemed to exalt this woman and her method (see the article of the *Civiltà Cattolica* at the time). Used to "tell me who you are associating with and I'll tell you who you are", they understood the woman and in addition to her method, her game" (MORETTI-DIEGUEZ, p. 98, note 36). Montessori's "Catholic" advance was forced to "retreat" due to a series of articles by "an integralist", those of Father Alessandro Cavallanti ⁽²⁹⁵⁾ in *L'Unità Cattolica* (*Il metodo Montessori*), January 25, 1911; *A zonzo. Il metodo Montessori*, May 12, 1912); and above all in the *Sentinella antimodernista* of June 1, 1912: *Padre Gemelli, il metodo Montessori, e le Missionarie Francescane di Milano* (n. 6, 1912, pp. 169-174). Father Gemelli, who, through these same Sisters, supported the Montessori method, felt bad about the article, and wrote to the Sisters against those "scoundrels who see modernists everywhere" (Moretti-Diequez, p. 103, footnote 57; De Giorgi, pp. 41-42), however, out of necessity, he then became more cautious: however, her maneuver was discovered, and the submarine was sunk! The said... submarine...took refuge in Spain and, after the death of Saint Pius X, returned to the attack (the infiltration maneuver) thanks to the very powerful historian of the Company, the Marche native (like her) Father Pietro Tacchi Venturi, secretary of the Company. *Unità Cattolica* had expressed its doubts about Tacchi Venturi on the issue of the confessional unions and Pius X had his reservations (DE GIORGI, p. 44); on the other hand, Roman modernist circles sympathized with him, as they were very interested in his studies on the early years of the Society of Jesus. The historian of the Company, since 1901, dealt with the poet Vittoria Colonna, a "supporter of Catholic reform" in the 16th century, who actually was a supporter of the heresy of Juan deValdes which had contaminated even Cardinals Morone and Pole. The "non-heterodox modernists" (sic) were very interested in Tacchi Venturi's studies on the beginnings of the Company and so-called "Catholic reform" (DE GIORGI quotes Don Brizio Cascioli, p. 35) and Tacchi Venturi was linked to the modernist circles of Counts Gallarati Scotti (Giancarlo and his son Tommaso). From Barcelona in 1916, Montessori entered into close correspondence with Tacchi Venturi, who became, as it were, her spiritual director and protector and advisor in high places (DE GIORGI, pp. 45ff). Montessori attempted to get



Theosophist Annie Besant with Masonic Insignias

approval for one of her old projects, a Montessorian religious congregation, the Croce Bianca, or at least encouragement on the part of the Pope, who was then Benedict XV. She tried at first by writing a letter to the Vicar Cardinal in Rome, Pompilj (August 1917) accompanied by support from the Catalan Capuchin Father Miguel de Esplugas o.f.m. cap., and the Vincentian Father Antonio Casulleras. This path proved to be a failure, as Father Joaquin de Lleveneras was brother to the late Capuchin Cardinal Vives y Tuto, so he had the idea (unfortunately for Montessori) of leaning on...Msgr. Benigni! Our Monsignor intercepted the entire dossier, which again figures in the “Benigni Files” of the secret Vatican Archives (MORETTI-DIEGUEZ, pp. 102-105). Her better fortunes arrived through the support of Father Tacchi Venturi and the Jesuits of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, then directed by Father Enrico Rosa. She was able to obtain a blessing by Benedict XV in November 1918 (MORETTI-DIEGUEZ, p. 106), DE GIORGI, p. 49), but nothing more on the part of the Pope. Much more support, rather, was obtained from the Fathers of the *Civiltà Cattolica* who no longer had reason to be prudent, as they had under Pius X. Father Barbera wrote numerous articles in favor of the Montessori method in 1919 and 1922 comparing it to Don Bosco and Philip Neri and publishing the papal blessing (MORETTI-DIEGUEZ, pp. 107-109; DE GIORGI, p. 49ss) to the point that Father Gemelli himself wrote to Father Rosa to disagree with the position of the Jesuit magazine (DE GIORGI, pp. 54-56; while having a benevolent article published by Meda in *Vita e Pensiero*, 8/112 - 1922 - pp. 666-678).

Father Barbera wrote in the *Civiltà Cattolica* (73 (1922) I, 375-358) of the “*substantial goodness of her method, which is not substantially discordant with the principles of good reason*” (DE GIORGI, p. 58), reviewing in the following edition n. 73 (IV pp. 452-453) a book by Montessori, praising the fact that the educator made the liturgy accessible to the children and recommended religious studies in her method (DE GIORGI pp. 58-59). Montessori’s pastoral liturgical interest, emulating Giacomelli, significantly interested Msgr. Montini, who went to Father Barbera to delve deeper into the matter! (DE GIORGI, p. 59). While Father Barbera praised Montessori in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Msgr. Benigni, instead, attacked her, directly accusing her of being initiated into the Theosophical Society, which had already been condemned by the Holy Office of Cardinal Merry del Val on July 16-17, 1919 (DS 3648). Another work published with the contribution of Moretti and Dieguez informs us that Msgr. Benigni wrote a report on the relationship between Montessori and Theosophy on November 30, 1919: “*It was Msgr. Umberto Benigni who directly accused Montessori of being part of the Theosophical Society and of having favored its diffusion throughout much of Europe through her method*”. “*Divided into three parts, the report*” examines the diffusion of the method “*through three networks of relationships: educational activities, those linked to healthcare, and politics. He then quoted Besant who, speaking in Calcutta on the problems of peace in December 1917, recognized that ‘Education is one of the greatest (problems) if not the greatest’.* She had taught that ‘*to educate the child well, he must be considered first of all a permanent spiritual intelligence, enveloped in a covering of matter*’, and therefore studied well, in order to be able to help him and not impose on him a method unsuitable for his

development. *The great Teacher advised us to introduce Theosophical ideas into Education. This has actually been done in Europe, and the Montessori system is proof of this.*" The "great teacher", explains Benigni, is the Messiah of Theosophy, Juddu Krishnamurti. *"In his writing, Benigni continued by targeting the writers of the Civiltà Cattolica, (...) who 'recently attempted to justify Montessori's errors by labeling them as 'inaccuracies' of language, and this in contrast with their previous judgment given a few years earlier' (...). Now, however, Benigni had before his eyes, fresh from the press, a 'long and systematic critical incursion into the Montessori method' written, probably commissioned 'from above', by Mario Barbera in three installments from April to June 1919".* The Benigni report envisaged creating an "anti-sectarian activity" to "eradicate the 'unique mysticism of a pantheistic religion' which was often 'very fascinating especially in women'...". He noted that the Theosophical Society did not intend to impose their theosophical labels on its educational ideas, in order to better be able to spread them "in the mental atmosphere, so that they may be grasped by all receptive brains."⁽²⁹⁶⁾ Msgr. Benigni's mismatched battle continued the following year in his Newsletter of October 20 and 21, 1920, when he denounced the support given by the Bolsheviks to the Montessori method in Russia, and how it continued to work in Milan with the Masonic association *L'Umanitaria*: "the sect's most justifiable enthusiasms for the Montessori method should give pause to those Catholic ecclesiastics and lay people who so lightly became its champions" (MORETTI-DIEGUEZ, p. 104, footnote 60). Among them, in the same years (1920-1922), were Fathers Tacchi Venturi and Barbera.

But what could Msgr. Benigni's articles then do against a battleship like the *Civiltà Cattolica*? Meanwhile the Montessori method, expanding to England, got positive support from religious congregations (Sisters of the Assumption, the Mercy Sisters), but also at the same time from Jews, theosophists, and Freudians (DE GIORGI, pp. 61-65). When an Irish Jesuit father, Father Corcoran, strongly criticized the Montessori method, its defenders called upon the undisputed authority of Tacchi Venturi (DE GIORGI, pp. 69-72). According to De Giorgi (p. 110), the Encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* of Pius XI providentially dispelled the Montessori misunderstanding, which could now only give space, in the 1930s, to an "ecumenist vision of the child", and, following the "Indian period" at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society, Montessori had thrown away the mask! Once the infiltration into the Catholic Church failed, the educator from the Marche resorted to infiltrating the fascist government: here too Mgr. Benigni warned the authorities: the information from Trustee 42 to the political police on October 29, 1932 exhorted: "that the entire Montessori shack be cleared away, at least as a dependency of this evil female and the reformer of its central spirit" given that there is "nothing more spiritually anti-fascist than the Montessori method" (MORETTI-DIEGUEZ, p. 104): here too Mgr. Benigni saw things better than Mussolini.

We conclude this subject with a verification: the "moderates" of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, taken as a model by Father Nitoglia, naively (?) favored a theosophist in her infiltration of the Catholic Church: the

“extremist” integrals, had the merit of denouncing and foiling the danger. We see the same comparison - in the field of education - in relation to the “scout” movement...

The education of the young. From Catholic oratories to the “Bar Anglais” of the Black Fox.

One of the greatest worries - and of the greatest merits of Pius XI in opposing it - was the advance of so-called ecumenism, at that time called pan-christianism, of Protestant origin it is true, but which was infiltrating itself into Catholic environments: against it, memorably, was the Encyclical *Mortalium Animos*. After the condemnation of modernism, ecumenism also became one of its fields of application, so that it was able to survive in the Church (and work against it). Leaving the open denial of dogmas to the declared and unmasked modernists who were now outside the church, modernists and modernizers hidden within it continued their work, always applying the same principles not so much to speculative questions, but to the practical and contingent ones, where it was less easy to discern and denounce their denial of dogma. Already by the end of the pontificate of Pius X, the battle against modernism was displaced from dogma to praxis: like in the great debates on nondenominational labor unions, those on the penetration press, those of the political commitment of nondenominational Catholics and their disconnect from the hierarchy. Under Benedict XV and Pius XI, the modernist and modernizers strategy moved to ecumenical dialogue, the liturgical movement, the infiltration of the *Azione Cattolica*, then returning under Pius XII to directly undermine doctrine with the so-called *nouvelle théologie*, even here, however, hiding behind a patristic appreciation, especially of the Greeks (as opposed to the scholastics), of a philosophy (to replace Thomism), and the Biblical movement.

One of the contingent, and apparently indifferent, fields of application of the modernist and modernizing strategy manifested itself in the field of the education of the young, among other things (and not only) in its support for the scouting movement. The Catholic Church had always been a teacher in the education of youth, from schools to oratories: this had recently been demonstrated by Don Bosco in Italy and Timon David in France. In Belgium, however, Cardinal Mercier, and in France the Society of Jesus and Marc Sangnier's Sillon, suggested adopting the method invented by Colonel Baden-Powell: that of scouting. Integral Catholics, especially those around Msgr. Benigni, but also Msgr. Delassus, had always, and from the very beginning, been against every form of scouting, both the original one, clearly, and the Catholic one, which was judged to be inevitably linked to the original one (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 272, 276-277). Yet the “bar anglais” (the code name for scouting in the documents of the *Sodalitium Pianum*) in its Catholic version had been praised in a letter from Cardinal Merry del Val on January 18, 1913. A lost battle, then? Not necessarily. Under Pius XI, Catholic scouting was just one step away from condemnation, and this thanks to a dossier from a priest very close to Msgr. Benigni, to the point of being one of the two priests who would later attend his funeral in 1934. The exciting history of this story is narrated by Christophe Carichon ⁽²⁹⁷⁾. The priest and religious we are



Pope Pius XI

talking about is Father Henri Jeoffroid (1880-1961), of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul, to which numerous members of the *Sodalitium Pianum* belonged (Charles Maignen, Charles Rollin, Henri Hello), and who lived in Rome as professor, belonging to the Billot school, and then procurator of his own congregation. He is also the first chaplain of the Roman Oratory of Prati di Castello: an expert educator of the young. At the end of 1923 he wrote a 95-page (later expanded to 113) paper on scouting, entitled *Le scoutisme catholique et la Théosophie*. It is Baden-Powell who personally received the scout promise from Annie Besant, Blavatsky's heir at the head of the Theosophical Society, who was also founder of the Malthusian League (for contraception and abortion) and a member of the mixed lodges of Freemasonry, as well as being appointed commissioner of the scouting movement for the Indies. To the Protestant and Masonic origins of scouting, must be added its Theosophic influence, its ritual initiations, its insignia, its uniforms, and its terminology. Furthermore, Baden Powell's closest collaborator declared that "*since its very beginning, scouting has presented itself as neither confessional nor non-denominational, but to be precise inter-confessional, open to all those who wish to promise to 'serve God' , a promise that implies the practice of some form of worship*". Having said this, was "Catholic Scouting" possible in the way it had affirmed itself in the 1910s and 1920s, taking into account that it would have only been a branch of the Scout family, and therefore necessarily linked to the Scout brotherhood? The response from the Jeoffroid paper was negative, and Bishop Chollet of Cambrai expressed this position to the French bishops, while numerous cardinals, such as Billot and Van Rossum advised Pius XI in this sense; the Pope believed that scouting should be kept under control. In May 1924, Msgr. Benigni forwarded the paper to Msgr. Jouin of the *Revue internationale des Sociétés Secrètes* (R.I.S.S.), and it was then presented to the public in an article by Pierre Colmet (Abbé Paul Boulin). Frightened and worried, Father Sevin S.J., the "father" of Catholic scouting, close to the *Action Populaire* of Father Desbuquois S.J., accompanied by General de Salins, then went to Rome, in May 1924, and Cardinal Billot directed him to Father Jeoffroid. From this meeting, Father Sevin s.j. concluded that Father Jeoffroid is "*someone very dangerous*" "*an active adversary*" and he then turned to his protectors: Cardinal Bourne, and Father Rosa s.j. of the *Civiltà Cattolica*... Cardinal Merry del Val, rather benevolently, explained to him

Father Jacques Sevin, the Black Fox



that the Pope's fear concerns nondenominationalism (but that the Holy Office, which he directs, does not concern itself with scouting), and in fact Msgr. Pizzardo communicated to Father Sevin the Pope's decision not to receive "inter-denominationalists". Eventually, Pius XI meets Father Gianfranceschi s.j., chaplain of the Italian Catholic scouts, and agrees to receive Father Sevin. In Father Sevin's writing, *Les leçons de notre séjour à Rome*, there are the concessions, the retractions, the "act of contrition" (which Carichon defines rather as attrition, i.e. dictated by the fear of condemnation) of the Jesuit religious, who only due to these conditions which were never put into practice, obtained the blessing of Pius XI at the international pilgrimage of the scouts in September 1925. Young scouts will no longer be called "cubs" (as the sons of Freemasons are called in Freemasonry), promises Father Sevin, but "little foxes": so now we can sleep soundly! (under the green flag of Masonic naturalism) ⁽²⁹⁸⁾. On May 10, 2012 the "Renard noir" (the black fox, a symbolic name for Father Sevin), who had abandoned the cassock to wear the scout's uniform, was declared "venerable" by Joseph Ratzinger.



Father Rosario Esposito

P.S.: The apparently marginal question of scouting then, is much less marginal than it seems. It was, for example, an environment favorable to the liturgical movement (one thinks of Father Donceur, 1880-1961). We will speak of another role accomplished by the Company in the 1920s: dialogue with Freemasonry. In this regard, one can also read Chapter VIII of the book by Father Rosario Esposito, *Le grandi concordanze tra Chiesa e Massoneria*, dedicated to scouting. Scouting would be, in fact, one of these concordances. The Freemason "Catholic" Alec Mellor declared: *"If the Integrals had been able to have Scouting condemned - and it is probable had we lived in the 18th century that they would have - the Scouting movement would have become an anomaly, and would have become fundamentally hostile to the Church"* (p. 303). The mask would then have been thrown off.

1928: The Company inaugurates dialogue with Freemasonry

Father Rosario Francesco Esposito (1921-2007) s.s.p., Honorary Master Freemason of the Grand Lodge of Italy ⁽²⁹⁹⁾, would have been happy and touched to see the "bishop" of Terni, on September 17, 2022, literally cross the columns of the Temple to inaugurate, beside the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, Stefano Bisi, the local "Masonic house". He himself loved to recall the fraternal agape of April 11, 1969, in the Casa del Divin Maestro of the Pauline Fathers, in Ariccia [Rome]: *"The three Freemasons at the table were, respectively, an Israelite, a Gnostic, a Waldensian; the GrandMaster Gamberini, to whom we offered the seat at the head of the table, intoned the Our Father,*

which everyone recited, then as soon as he sat down he took a loaf of bread and breaking it said: 'The Freemason breaks bread with the Jesuit' and handed piece to Father Caprile (of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, ed.); we all repeated the gesture of fraternal sharing. In another session Elvio Sciubba read to us a prayer he had composed for a lodge ritual: the shared emotion was profound." ⁽³⁰⁰⁾ Both Father Esposito (loosely) and Father Caprile s.j., before the Council, had a Masonic past. But Father Esposito points us to a precursor, a pioneer of dialogue with Freemasonry: the Jesuit Father Hermann Gruber (1851-1930). "The first example" "of the reconciliation movement" "is that carried out by two Austrian Freemasons (Lennhoff and Reich) and one American (Ossian Lang, 1865-1945, of the Grand Lodge of New York) who obtained from the Jesuit Father Hermann Gruber the consent for a meeting, which took place on June 18, 1928 in the Jesuit residence at Aachen". This first meeting "aroused the need for dialogue also among the French Jesuits, particularly in Fathers J. Berteloot ⁽³⁰¹⁾ and E. Portalié and in the entire group within the Parisian magazine *Études*." ⁽³⁰²⁾ Father Gruber, on the other hand, was not a stranger when the three Masonic dignitaries met him: a long-time scholar specializing in the study of counter-Freemasonry, he also wrote, (under the pseudonym of Hildebrand Gerber), however in newspapers which, like *Études* in France, took sides against the Integrals, as we saw in Italy and Germany : the *Civiltà Cattolica*, *Stimmen der Zeit* (then: *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*), *Kölnische Volkszeitung* by J. Bachem. Now, who opposed these first steps in the dialogue with Freemasonry? Only integral Catholics: the R.I.S.S. of Abbé Boulin and – still worse – the *Vérités* of Luc-Verus, i.e. the trio of former members of the *Sodalitium*, Boulin, Rocafort and Merlier. The R.I.S.S. issued its warning first, in 1927 (n. 49, p. 879) and 1928 (n. 1). Upon Gruber's death, the *Vérités* in turn published one of its articles (n. XX, year 1930 - already distanced, therefore, from Monsignor Benigni: *Ce qu'est un "jésuite". Le Jésuite Gruber et la Franc Maçonnerie*) . After an introduction, in which it talks about Father Gruber's plan after the First World War to launch an "anti-Masonic international" (which would have led distrustful Catholic militants to follow Christian trade unionism according to the inter-confessional formula of Cologne, p. 8), the article first describes the anti-Mason Gruber (pp. 8-14), then the pro-Mason Gruber (pp. 14-25): and the contrast is impressive. Luc-Verus informs us about the Freemasons Eugen Lennhoff (1891-1944) ⁽³⁰³⁾ and Kurt Reichl (1899-1956) ⁽³⁰⁴⁾, who went to see Gruber in 1928. The former was Jewish, and member of the column of the Grand Lodge of Austria, the latter, editor of the *Wiener Freimaurer Zeitung*. The dialogue (epistolary only) is recounted by Lennhoff in the book *Die Freimaurer* (Amalthea-Verlag, Zurich-Leipzig-Vienna, 1928; Italian ed.: *Il libero muratore*, Bastogi, 2006) (LUC-VERUS, pp. 17-24) . Articles by P. Gruber in the weekly *Das Neue Reich* in 1926 had aroused the interest of Dr. Reichl, who saw a change in sensitivity: Freemasons believe in God, Freemasons no longer have any secrets. "From a Catholic point of view – wrote Gruber to Reichl – I consider it an absolutely urgent task – taking into account the kind of relations that exist between us – to fight first of all the infantile and erroneous notion of Freemasonry which still prevails today in certain environments" (p. 21). "A point worthy of the utmost importance is

that Fr. Gruber is not the only one to have adopted this new attitude: a whole series of Jesuits, in different countries, have adopted this new orientation” (p. 21). “To lead Catholics to an understanding (with Freemasonry, wrote P. Gruber to Dr. Reichl on 5 June 1928) everything must be done to gradually disarm the deep-rooted distrust towards the Masonic association itself, making them understand that the papal condemnations concerned fundamental naturalism, the enemy of God, which since 1848 had manifested itself in the Secret Societies, in a much more radical, aggressive and destructive manner than in the Lodges properly so called: since the latter on the contrary fought this basic naturalism in the most manifest way” (LENNHOFF, p. 409, LUC-VERUS, p. 23). “What P. Gruber is doing today is nothing other than a decisive renunciation of a two-century-old system of controversies based on lies” (LENNHOFF, p. 410, LUC-VERUS p. 24). The article ended with the reproduction of the news, in the *Osservatore Romano* of May 28, 1930, of the death of Father Gruber, “the hammer of freemasonry”. “A hammer similar to that of the venerable ones”—commented Luc-Verus bitterly. “L’*Osservatore Romano* neglects to tell us which of the two Grubers we should believe: the “hammer” of the old masonophobic campaigns or the more recent “hammer” of masonophile rapprochements” (p. 27). What would you say today, seeing a bishop inaugurate the Masonic House, and the very Wojtylian Code of Canon Law suppress the excommunication of Freemasons?

To conclude: in the 1920s the director of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Father Rosa, dialogued with the Zionist Jews, a writer in the same vein as Father Gruber, with the Freemasons. Was Benigni wrong in accusing the *Civiltà Cattolica*?

P.S.: The 1920s saw the development of the ecumenical movement (the Malines conversations were held from 1921 to 1925, the movement was condemned in 1928 with *Mortalium Animos*), the liturgical movement, the biblical movement... all closely connected. On the issue of the ecumenical movement, see the third day of the Regalità sociale di Cristo (October 11, 2008): *L’ecumenismo: nella Chiesa, contro la Chiesa. A 80 anni dall’enciclica Mortalium Animos di Pio XI (1928)*; on the liturgical movement: the fourth day of the Regalità sociale di Cristo: *Lutero non vincerà. 1969-2009: la battaglia per la messa romana dopo l’introduzione del Novus Ordo*; first lesson: *l’eresia antiliturgica da Lutero a Paolo VI*. All conferences can be found on our YouTube channel. The information contained therein completes the panorama of the crisis in the Church during the 1920s and 1930s.

Conclusions on the theme of the “Integrals and Jesuits”

Of the three warring parties that Gramsci wrote about (the modernists, represented by Buonaiuti, the Integrals, represented by Msgr. Benigni, and the Jesuits, represented by Father Rosa), there is no doubt that the “*Jesuit party*” came out victorious in the end.

This “party”, which had enjoyed unconditional (or almost) esteem for its laudable battles in defense of the Church after the Revolution, saw itself undermined in the Pope’s trust by another party under Saint Pius X. Father Sale s.j. wrote:

*“Meanwhile, reactionary and conservative forces, already beginning in 1906, had taken over the Vatican, **gradually preempting the fathers of the Civiltà Cattolica in the Pontiff’s consideration**; forces which directed the Pope’s action in a strongly conservative and, indeed, integralist direction, making him see modernist plots organized to the detriment of the Church everywhere, even in areas, such as in social ones, where the principles of Catholic orthodoxy were clearly respected. This climate of suspicion, which was carefully organized around the Pontiff by people who had an interest in presenting things to him in a certain way, little by little risked nullifying the work carried out so far (and which had begun since the glorious times of Leo) by the best minds of the Catholic world in the social and political fields. And this well-thought-out integralist project had its driving force in the Secretariat of State which, as we already know, could not stand the direction that some fathers of Civiltà Cattolica, together with other exponents of the Catholic world, proposed in matters of social and political action and Catholic trade unions. And when we talk about the Secretariat of State we don’t just mean the person of Cardinal Merry del Val, but rather the entire establishment that was around him. In fact, these are the years in which Msgr. Umberto Benigni, recently hired as undersecretary in the Secretariat of State, began to patiently weave, with the explicit support of some powerful figures of the Roman Curia (and apparently of Pius X himself) his evil and poisonous web, in which eminent people (both lay and ecclesiastic) of holy lives subsequently found themselves entangled, whose only wrong was not indulging his anachronistic plan for the restoration of a supposedly so-called integral Catholicism.”*⁽³⁰⁵⁾

Apart from the acrimony of the Jesuit historian, and his evident partiality (on the one side the integral “evil and poisonous web”, on the other men of orthodox doctrine and holy life) what impressed me, and for this reason I quoted him, was the jealousy that shines through in the words presented in bold: the integral Catholics were preempting the place of the Jesuits of *Civiltà Cattolica* in the Pope’s trust, and this was not acceptable. From a doctrinal point of view, however, the issue was based on so-called “social modernism”, that is, the “social, political and trade union activities” of Catholics. Father Sale alludes to the clash that pitted the integrals against the *Zentrum*, the *Volskverein*, the *Scuola di Colonia* in Germany, the *Sillon* and the *Action Populaire* in France, *Murrism* and the *Partito Popolare* in Italy, which is, always and in any case inter-confessionalism, or ecumenical and “liberal” non-denominationalism (socialist tendency), while the Company took the opposing side (i.e. against the integralists). The heart of the battle was in Germany: a journalist who defended the Jesuits from the accusation of their having supported the Central Powers by arguing that the French Jesuit magazine, the *Études*, spearheaded “*the war against the integrals*”, was answered by a journalist friend of Benigni, Riccardo Olivi, who, clarified “*that was a German war (Gladbachism versus integralism)*”; “*the gaffe is very significant*”, commented the document in the Benigni Files of August 1916⁽³⁰⁶⁾.

If the French Jesuits made a notable contribution to the *nouvelle théologie* (think of the Fourvière school, Daniélou, de Lubac, Teilhard de Chardin), a re-edition of modernism, it was a German Jesuit who was the main driving force behind the turning point of the Council: Father Agostino Bea⁽³⁰⁷⁾, of the Biblical Institute⁽³⁰⁸⁾, confessor of Pius XII and protector of the nascent liturgical movement in Rome, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity (the “counter-Holy Office”) under John XXIII, and it was he who made triumph the doctrine on religious freedom, ecumenism and Judeo-Christian dialogue at Vatican II with Paul VI, while those bishops and theologians still of good doctrine, formed at the Gregoriana in voluntarism and naturalist tendency, placed the visible Institution ahead of the very faith that it must serve, unintentionally realizing what Msgr. Lefebvre will call “Satan’s master stroke” and which Father Guérard des Lauriers will describe with greater theological depth in the *Cahiers de Cassiciacum*.⁽³⁰⁹⁾

Conclusion: the “new course” according to Msgr. Benigni

Alejandro Dieguez quotes a document by Msgr. Benigni himself (*Note Vaticane*, “*La più grande lotta*”, December 27, 1923) which seems to me to summarize the whole question very well: the opposition between modernists and integralists, and the role of the various pontificates, from Pius X to Pius XI: *A tenacious and profound struggle, hidden in its trenches, rages in the ranks of Catholic culture and action: between the modernists and the integralists. The struggle broke out noisily in the time of Pius X on philosophical, theological and biblical grounds; the modernists fiercely defended their system which was fiercely attacked by the integrals. When the Pope definitively condemned that same modernism, and shortly afterwards died leaving the government of the Church to those who wanted to give it another direction, the tactics suddenly changed. The extremist modernists emerged from the Catholic ranks in open rebellion: such as Tyrrell, Loisy, Minocchi, Murri, but their ‘political’ command proclaimed that the modernism condemned by the late Pope was yesterday’s matter and no longer existed: the integrals slandered in saying the opposite. From then on a more tenacious struggle than ever took place on this front: on the part of the modernists, they stopped flaunting their scientific heterodoxy [sic] and worked more actively in the field of action, on the pragmatist terrain of ethics, law, and sociology; while on the part of the integral members, they denounced this double maneuver and tried to prove it. Regarding pragmatic modernism, the integral struggle could not remain in vain, because in truth the modernistic doctrines and maneuvers had gained too much strength and too much momentum to be disguised. Relying on parties or at least on parliamentary-based political orientations and therefore with greater or lesser influence on governments, trusting in the ‘new course’ prevailing in the Vatican since September 1914, the leaders of the movement continued as long as they could. The new Pope himself, Pius XI, despite being so measured and with ancient liberal sentiments, must have found that the new course*

had... gone too far, since in his programmatic encyclical *Ubi arcano* he vehemently denounced and condemned ‘no less than dogmatic modernism, the ethical, juridical and social one’, expressly deploring that the clergy themselves were profoundly contaminated by it. Under this blow, the modernist command bowed deeply and immediately ordered its numerous and influential organs to no longer speak ... of the *Encyclical*. Simultaneously, the clever campaign that denied the survival of that modernism which had been condemned by Pius X, biblical, dogmatic, philosophical modernism, was strengthened; and a very influential Parisian magazine, the *Études*, published an article specifically reaching this conclusion.⁽³¹⁰⁾

Model to avoid or unheeded ‘prophecy’

Father Nitoglia’s judgment on Msgr. Benigni seems to be the following:

“*Errare humanum est, but excess zeal cannot be cited as an example. Monsignor Benigni is an author to be studied, but he is not a model to imitate, for which reason I do not propose him as an example for faithful Catholics of Tradition to imitate*” (part nine). Clearly, Father Nitoglia’s interests refer to current events, that is, to those faithful Catholics of Tradition who might make Msgr. Benigni a “*model to imitate*”. The suspicion is that Father Nitoglia is not so much interested in fighting the memory of Msgr. Benigni, but rather those who refer to him, like us: “*Unfortunately, this mentality of of the most ardent “integral” Catholics of the early twentieth century (who even went so far as to blame Merry del Val and De Lai), today is found in some circles that take inspiration from them and accuses all “other” Catholics of being modernists*” (third point). Who should we look up to as role models? Father Rosa and Cardinal Gasparri who, in hatred of Msgr. Benigni, testified against the heroic virtues of Pius X, and therefore against his canonization?

A person who doesn’t think like us is surely not, for this reason, a modernist: even in this case the accusation by our confrere is based upon unfounded allegations and perhaps influenced by past personal relationships, from sincere friendship and shared ideals to a dull resentment (one assumes that one cannot write for twenty years in a magazine inspired by the *Sodalitium Pianum* without thinking of it a certain way: or not?): the same resentment that the author attributes to Msgr. Benigni as the motive for his actions. It happens: no one, with the exception of the Madonna, is the Immaculate Conception.

What happened with Vatican II demonstrates that the repression of modernism was not sufficient but deficient: *quod erat demonstrandum*.



Footnotes

- 1) *Di fronte alla calunnia*, Rome, from the author, 1928; *Attraverso la stampa*, in *Fede e Ragione*, May 27 and June 3-7, 1928, pp. 179-180 and 190-195. See also the two replies to Mourret's memorial, from 1921, as well as Msgr. Benigni's letters to Cardinal Sbarretti, published by POULAT in *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral*, pp. 464-603.
- 2) POULAT, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral*, Casterman, 1969; *La Correspondance de Rome* (edition), Milan, Feltrinelli, 1971; *Catholicisme, Démocratie et socialisme*, Casterman, 1977.
- 3) E. POULAT, *Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme. Le mouvement catholique et Mgr Benigni de la naissance du socialisme à la victoire du fascisme*, Casterman, 1977, p. 472. The two priests were the same Father Saubat and Father Jeoffroid.
- 4) Even today, especially in France, Catholics who opposed Vatican II and its reforms, and who generally prefer to call themselves "traditionalists", are called "integralists" by their opponents. In particular, the Dominican theologian Yves Congar (1904-1995), first a prominent exponent of the nouvelle théologie condemned by Pius XII, then an expert at the Council, finally created "cardinal" by John Paul II (for his theological merits) wanted to connect the figure and position of Msgr. Lefebvre to the integrism of the Action Française, with the poorly concealed intent of reconnecting the traditionalist prelate to the infamous integrism and the condemned movement of Charles Maurras, degrading the religious motivations of the opponents of Vatican II into political motivations ("fascist", ça va sans dire). The blending of "integralists" and Action Française, involving one in the condemnation of the other, is the work, as we will see, of Louis Canet and the Quai d'Orsay.
- 5) As is well known, Mgr. Eugenio Pacelli was the immediate successor of Msgr. Benigni when he left the Secretariat of State in 1911. Bishop Pagano, of the Vatican Secret Archives, demonstrates, as we will see, how Msgr. Pacelli was an informer for Msgr. Benigni. (*Documents on Roman modernism from the Benigni Fund*, p. 259). On the occasion of the election of Pius XII, in 1939, the journalist friend of Msgr. Benigni, Guido Aureli, wrote an article (entitled precisely "*Pius XII*") in *La Vita Italiana* (volume LIII, 15 March 1939, pp. 273-287) in which he recalled the bond that united the late Msgr. Benigni and the new Pope. Eugenio Pacelli, Aureli recalls, had been a student of Msgr. Benigni, attended diplomacy lessons at the Academy of Ecclesiastical Nobles, and then was his collaborator and "favorite" subordinate in the Secretariat of State (p. 278). When Benigni resigned in 1911, his successor, Msgr. Pacelli, "together with another very eminent cardinal (...) was the one who not only remembered, when he had the opportunity, but had respectful consideration for his doctrines" (p. 279). The lifting of sanctions against the Action Française since 1939, and subsequently the beatification and canonization of Pius X demonstrate how Pius XII was linked to the memory of the pontificate of Pope Sarto, even if it would be completely out of place to classify Pope Pacelli among the "integral Catholics".
- 6) (F. Antonelli) S.C. dei Riti, *Romana beatificationis et canonizationis Servi Dei Pii Papæ Disquisitio circa quasdam obiectiones modum agendi Servi Dei respicientes in Modernismi debellatone una cum sommario additionali ex officio compilato*, Tipis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950, p. 41.



*The Bishop of Terni, Francesco Soddu on October 2, 2022
present at the inauguration of a Masonic lodge*

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- 7) G. SALE, *La "Civiltà Cattolica" nella crisi modernista (1900-1907) fra transigentismo politico e integralismo dottrinale*, 2001; *Popolari e destra cattolica al tempo di Benedetto XV, 1919- 1922*, vol. I of *Popolari, chierici e camerati*, 2006; *Fascismo e Vaticano prima della Conciliazione*, vol. 2 of *Popolari, chierici e camerati*, 2007. All these volumes are published by Jaca Books in the series *I libri della Civiltà Cattolica*, and are prefaced by Pietro Scoppola.
- 8) In addition to Nina Valbousquet, Alejandro Mario Dieguez, Francesco Tacchi, see also CRISTOBAL ROBLES MUNOZ (*El modernismo religioso y su crisis*, Acci, Madrid, 2016-2017, 3 volumes)
- 9) The expression is by Leo Strauss.
- 10) Marc Lazar, sociologist, professor at the University of Paris. He also taught at LUISS and collaborated with Repubblica. The book *"Catholique et antisémite"* is a re-adaptation of Valbousquet's degree thesis.
- 11) Limiting ourselves to those that exclusively concern integral Catholics, we can cite: *"Il complottismo di un nostalgico integralista: Guido Aureli e il suo memoriale su Monsignor Benigni e Pio X"*, co-authored with Alejandro Mario Dieguez, a critical edition of work from the Vatican Archives, *Modernism*, vol. 1-2, December 2018, pp. 159-222.
- "Catholic Anti-Modernism and the Modernity of Fascism: Integral Catholicism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism in Fede e Ragione"*, *Incontri. A European journal of Italian studies.* (University of Utrecht), vol. 10, December, 2017, pp. 80-95.
- "Antisemitismo italiano e cattolici integralisti nel primo dopoguerra"*, *Passato e Presente*, vol. 102, September 2017, pp. 68-91. *"Anti-Modernism and Catholic Nationalism. The Impact of WWI on Msgr Umberto Benigni's Catholic Integralist Network"*, *Modernism*, vol. 3: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in the Great War, September 2017, pp. 212-246. *"Tradition catholique et matrice de l'antisémitisme à l'époque contemporaine"*, *Revue d'Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine*, vol. 62-3, September 2015, pp. 63-88.
- "Transnational Antisemitism and Political Christianity in the Aftermath of the Great War: The Catholic Participation in the First Diffusion of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion"*, inel Rebecca Carter-Chand, Kevin Spicer (dir.), *Religion, Fascism, and Ethno-nationalism, 1918-1945*, publication planned for debut 2020. *"Gasparri, Benigni et les catholiques intégraux. Autorité du Saint-Siège et opposition intégrale, de Pie X à Pie XI"*, inel Laura Pettinaroli, Massimiliano Valente (dir.), *Cardinale Pietro Gasparri*, Rome, Publication online du Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rome (new series) 2019. *"Trasformazioni del cattolicesimo integrale sotto Benedetto XV: la rete Benigni dopo lo scioglimento della Sapinière"* inel Giovanni Cavagnini, Giulia Grossi (dir.), *Benedetto XV nel mondo dell'inutile strage*, *Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2018, pp. 450-462.
- 12) Nostalgia...I found in an old folder - while writing this article - the photocopy of a letter that I sent in this regard to *Abbé Aulagnier*, director of the *Fideliter* magazine, on 2 November (!) 1981, and which caused shortly afterwards - without any fault of *Abbé Aulagnier* - my (definitive) expulsion from the Ecône seminary and my (provisional) one from the Society of Saint Pius X. The letter contained a small critical study (12 handwritten pages) of the articles of *Abbé Bonneterre* (especially the last one, September-October 1981, n. 23, pp. 42 and following) against integral Catholics, accused of being "exaggerated" and in favor of "moderate" Catholics (Grandmaison, Batiffol, Lagrange) true enemies of the modernists and exemplary interpreters of Saint Pius X. The series of articles resumed the conferences that *Abbé Bonneterre*, then director of the seminary at Albano, held for seminarians in the years 1979-80, during which he had the life of Father Léonce de Grandmaison s.j. read in the refectory. written by Fr. Jules Lebreton s.j. (obviously the director of Albano intended - with the historical reference to the times of Saint Pius X, to allude to the disputes within the Society between the so-called "liberals" and "anti-liberals", concluding in favor of the "liberals", who obviously did not consider themselves such). Rereading it myself after so many years, in addition to youthful audacity, I would correct only two judgments: the one, overconfident on Rampolla's membership
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in Freemasonry, and the other too severe towards Father Lagrange, whose doctrine was substantially good, even if his mentality was no longer good.

- 13) I don't rule out that authors of this genre exist. If they exist they are not integral Catholics, and probably not even Catholics. The author has the duty to cite them, if they exist.
- 14) In his little chapter "Benigni according to Nina Valbousquet" Father Nitoglia refers to "N. Valbousquet, *Transformations of integral Catholicism under Benedict XV: the Benigni network after the dissolution of the Sapinière*, incl A. Melloni – taken from – *Benedict XV. Pope Giacomo Della Chiesa*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2017, I vol." as the volume "*Catholique et antisémite*" had not yet been published. *Le réseau de Mgr Benigni 1918-1934*". Valbousquet - in this volume - supports the thesis that the integrals constituted "a schismatic tendency" under Pius XI, the culmination of a coherent evolution (ch. 6, pp. 267ss). Father Nitoglia "drinks" from these sources: Melloni (School of Bologna) and Valbousquet (Jewish associations). The theme of the "schismatic tendency" is taken up by Valbousquet in her latest book (pp. 267ff) without being able to quote a single sentence from Msgr. Benigni in support of this thesis.
- 15) Father Nitoglia perhaps forgets to collaborate with the anti-modernist fortnightly *Sì Sì no no*, whose motto is "ubi verita et iustitia ibi charitas", founded by Father Francesco Putti (whom he esteemed and loved) who certainly did not have, in words and writings, a "priestly" and moderate language, quite the opposite. In this regard, see the commemorative article in *Sodalitium*, n. 6, March April 1985, pp. 3-4, taken up, with an introduction, from *Centro Federici* n. 102, 21 December 2014: *In ricordo di don Francesco Putti - Centro Studi Giuseppe Federici*.
- 16) Yet he himself complained about having undergone similar proceedings by Roberto De Mattei: "Why did I have to sue Roberto De Mattei" (6 October 2014): <https://doncurzionitoglia.wordpress.com/2014/10/06/why-had-to-sue-roberto-de-mattei/> in response to De Mattei's article "The Nazi-Catholic delirium of Don Curzio Nitoglia", which was removed by the author but can still be read here: http://www.unavox.it/ArtDiversi/DIV925_De-Mattei_Delirio_nazicattolico_di_Don_Nitoglia.html
- At that time, De Mattei responded to an article by don Nitoglia "*Putin, Dugin, DeMaistre, De Mattei e i Teocon*" http://www.unavox.it/ArtDiversi/DIV921_Nitoglia_Putin_Dugin.html
- Paradoxically, Father Nitoglia criticized De Mattei for having participated, among other things, in an initiative together with the Russian philosopher Dugin; recently De Mattei criticized the presence of Dugin at a "no vax" conference in Venice at which Father Nitoglia participated! On this question, see also http://www.unavox.it/ArtDiversi/DIV931_Don-Nitoglia_Risposta_a_deMattei.html
- 17) In perfect Soviet style: the dissident is a sick person who needs to be re-educated. The method is still in force: anyone who opposes the "nefarious vice" of sodomy (plus related elements) is not simply a coherent Christian, but a homophobe, or a mentally ill person suffering from phobias (not to mention transphobia). The Zan bill wants to legally punish a... mental illness?
- 18) MARC ORAISON, *Essai sur la peur en psychologie religieuse*, in *La Vie spirituelle*, supplement, 15 September 1952, cit. from POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, op. cit., p. 79, note 29. Paul Droulers s.j., of the Pontifical Gregorian University, in his biography of Father Desbuquois s.j., thinks he has found the explanation for the "integrist" question in psychological abnormality: "*Very gifted, but abnormal, 'hochbegabt, aber abnormal'*, he said of Msgr. Benigni a high Vatican dignitary (E. Ritter, p. 343). This point of view is undoubtedly one of the keys to this strange story: its Roman protagonist shows himself to be agitated and anxious, a skilled person who gets intoxicated by his secret game, much more, perhaps, than the disloyal ambitious one, who contemporaries who suffered so much at his hands thought they saw" (*Politique sociale et christianisme. Le Père Desbuquois et l'Action Populaire. Débats, Syndicalisme et Intégristes*, 1903-1918; Les éditions ouvrières, Paris, 1969, p. 262, note 96) (I point out en passant that the book by Emil Ritter cited by Father Droulers on Benigni's abnormality is considered historically unreliable by Emile POULAT, see. *Intégrisme...*, p. 199).

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- 19) Why, Poulat asks, on March 7, 1911 – therefore still under the pontificate of Saint Pius X – is Msgr. Benigni promoted to participating Apostolic Prothonotary, a prestigious position but without concrete powers, and instead leaves the Curia and the Secretariat of State, where he occupied the fourth hierarchical position and where he would normally have had prospects for a further career (a nunciature, or even the purple cardinal; his successor, Monsignor Pacelli, will become Pope)? For friends it was a promotion, for enemies it was a fall from grace due to some betrayal on the part of the man they portrayed as a “refugee” from the Christian democratic movement and even from modernism, to move on to the most rigid integrism, and who had ended up betraying even Pius X’s trust. Under the influence of whom, would Msgr. Benigni have been forced to resign? Of Cardinal Ferrari, archbishop of Milan? (pp. 383ff); of Cardinal Gasparri (pp. 384ff)? Of Secretary of State Merry delVal? (pp. 386ff); on what basis? Because of France? (pp. 393ff); of Russia? (pp. 394ff); of Germany? (pp. 418ff.). The Secretariat of State had to personally intervene and deny the rumors of Msgr. Benigni’s enemies, who, in 1912, explained in *La Correspondance de Rome* that it was he himself who insistently asked the Pope and the Secretary of State to be able to leave his functions in the Curia. Msgr. Benigni’s statements correspond to the truth, but not to the whole truth, because he had to hide the real reason why he had actually insisted on being freed from the commitments of the Curia. The whole truth, which could not be disclosed, has now come to light thanks to the research of Bishop Pagano, of the Vatican Secret Archives.
- 20) On the relationships between Msgr. Benigni and the “secretariat” of Saint Pius X, see PAGANO, *Documents on Roman modernism*, p. 243, and POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 66, 581, 588. On the Secretariat itself, see A. DIEGUEZ, S. PAGANO, *Papers from the “Sacred Table”. Aspects of Pius’ pontificate from documents in his private archive*, Vatican Secret Archives, 2006.
- 21) A. DIEGUEZ-SERGIO PAGANO, *Papers from the “Sacred Table”*, Vatican Secret Archives, Vatican City, 2006, vol. II, p. 876-877, footnote 1488; less clear N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, pp. 52- 53, 230-231.
- 22) E. POULAT, *Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme. Le mouvement catholique et Mgr Benigni de la naissance du socialisme à la victoire du fascisme*, Casterman, 1977, pp. 386-391; E. Poulat, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 76-77, 267-270 etc. See also F. TACCHIA, *The Roman Curia and Germany during the modernist crisis*, Viella, 2022, chapter IV: *A crucial year: 1912, 1. Benigni and Merry del Val* (pp. 111-118). On the term “La Peur” attributed to Merry del Val, see p. 116; on the continuation of the collaborative relationships between Merry, Benigni and the Sodalitium even after the misunderstandings of 1911-1912, see pp. 117-118.
- 23) We follow the text cited by Sergio Pagano (*Documenti sul modernismo romano, op. cit.* note 67 pp. 250-251) and not that of Valbousquet, as Father Nitoglia does. We note that also in this case Msgr. Benigni guesses the name of the elect of the conclave. After ruling out that Gasparri could have been chosen, he writes of Cardinal Ratti: “*Well known in Poland, he is the candidate of the P.P.I. and of the White International, together with Maffi di Pisa and Gasparri. Of the three, the most popular is Ratti.*” Cardinals Merry del Val and De Lai offered their current votes to Ratti if he agreed not to confirm Gasparri as Secretariat of State: Cardinal Ratti refused, still obtaining their support. Pius XI’s programmatic encyclical, *Ubi Arcano*, aroused the enthusiasm and hope of the integrals, enthusiasm which, as we will see, left room for disappointment. “The white international”, in Benigni’s language, was the international alliance of Christian democrats.
- 24) One curiosity about this. According to Paul Droulers, the biographer of Father Desbuquois s.j., Msgr. Benigni tried to rebuild the *Sodalitium Pianum* by creating the Intesa Romana di Difesa Sociale and the “Veritas bureau”, which, according to him, would also be called “Société des nec spe nec metu”, with the aim, noted Father Desbuquois on February 15, 1924, “to fight the current ‘economic, social and juridical modernism’” (PAUL DROULERS, *Le Père Desbuquois et l’Action Populaire*, Pontifical Gregorian University, 1981, p. 137, note 93).
- 25) He was the only one to suspect: see <https://www.parcchiariesepiox.it/san-pio-x/opinioni-e-news-pio-x/561-la-mis-teriosa-morte-del-cardinale-merry-del-val-nelle-carte-della-police-politicians-fascist>
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- 26) N. VALBOUSQUET-A. DIEGUEZ, *Guido Aureli e il suo memoriale su mons. Benigni e Pio X*, in *Modernism*, p. 214 e nota 116; cfr. POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, pp. 240-243.
- 27) “*Il grave dolore*”. *Allocutio habita in occasione impositionis bireti novis cardinalibus die xxvii maii 1914*. The text was published in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* (AAS 28 May 1914, anno VI, vol. VI, n. 8 pp. 260-262) in Italian, translated into French and commented on by E. POULAT in *Intégrisme...*, pp. 455-458.
- 28) Introduction to the publication of the same text by Saint Pius X by the Centro Studi Giuseppe Federici on January 3, 2018: “*The Testament of Saint Pius X*” <https://www.centrostudifederici.org/testamento-san-pio-x/>
- 29) In fact, on the cited p. 160 of the article by NINA VALBOUSQUET and ALEJANDRO MARIO DIEGUEZ “*The conspiracy theory of a nostalgic integralist: Guido Aureli and his memorial on Monsignor Benigni and Pius X*” published in the magazine *Modernism* (anno IV, 2018) there appears nothing that Father Nitoglia attributes to the French...writer. Either Father Nitoglia was distracted, or he thought that no one would check the source he cited.
- 30) POULAT, *Catholicisme...* pp. 201-204 e 234-236.
- 31) MAURIZIO TAGLIAFERRI, *L’Unità Cattolica. Studio di una mentalità*, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, 1993, p. 178 e nota 473
- 32) Edited by Claus Arnold e Giovanni Vian, Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2017.
- 33) *Tra competenze e procedure: la gestione dell’operazione*.
- 34) L. M. SARDELLA, *La répression du modernisme*.
- 35) R. PERIN, *Le relazioni dei vescovi italiani a norma dell’enciclica Pascendi*.
- 36) In *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique*, Vol. 109, No. 3-4, 2014, pp. 758-782. The question is treated by POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 438-440.
- 37) *Un “profeta” modernista. Il testamento di don Primo Vannutelli* in *Sodalitium*, n. 64, May 2010, p. 14, e pp. 21-22 footnote 4.
- 38) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 71-72 e 261-265. He will be entrusted with the parish at Saint-Pouange, 155 souls.
- 39) FRANCESCO TACCHI, *La Curia romana e la Germania durante la crisi modernista. L’Integralismusstreit tedesco (1900-1914)*, Viella, 2022, pp. 104-106. Ample references to the Benigni Files.
- 40) RAFFAELLA PERIN, *Reazioni curiali antimoderniste: il caso vicentino* incl C. Arnold and G.Vian (editor) *La condanna del modernismo. Documenti, interpretazioni, conseguenze*, Viella 2010, pp. 572-573. On the same theme see GIOVANNI AZZOLIN, *Gli Scotton: prediche, battaglie, imboscate*, La Serenissima, 1998
- 41) On January 8, 1911, the young priest Father Giovanni Menara (1885-1933) wrote to Msgr. Bressan, Pius X’s private secretary, to explain to him a problem of conscience. A collaborator of the *Riscossa*, of the *Liguria del Popolo*, of the *Unità Cattolica*, of the *Berico* and of the *Armonie della Fede*, all “papal” or “integral” newspapers, he had recently been hired by Count Della Torre to write on *Libertà*, of Padua (not at all “integral”). “*Born and raised in Breganze, under the direction of Msgr. Andrea Scotton who treated me like a son, I embraced the ideas of the Riscossa and Unità Cattolica. There was never a moment in which I doubted the rectitude of the program of these newspapers: only today, after the disapproval of the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, do I begin to doubt that the path taken by La Riscossa is not the path to follow*”. Menara, who was, also or would become, a member of the *Sodalitium*, then asked the Pope, through Bressan, if he could “*in good conscience continue my weekly collaboration with the Riscossa*.” Pius X’s handwritten response was as follows (January 10): “*Most Reverend Sir, thank the Lord for having had Monsignor Andrea Scotton as a teacher, and try never to forget the lessons received and the example given by La Riscossa. To comfort you, read the letter that the most eminent Cardinal Secretary of State recently wrote to Monsignor Scotton and you will never regret having stuck to the principles valiantly defended by your master*.” Merry had written of Scotton on November 28, 1910: “*as a valiant soldier he is always alert to battle, determined not to lay down his weapons until God takes them from his hands to exchange them for a glorious trophy of victory in Heaven*” (DIEGUEZ, *Le carte del Sacro Tavolo*, vol. I, pp. 346-347). Don Menara was assigned by Pius X to
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collaborate on the editorial staff of the *Riscossa* in 1914, but found opposition from Bishop Rodolfi (G. AZZOLIN, , , *Gli Scotton. Prediche, battaglie, imboscate*, La Serenissima, 1998, pp. 290- 291 and 363, DIEGUEZ, l.c.). According to Msgr. Benigni, upon the death of Pius X he left the *Sodalitium* (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 583). In fact, after the war, he changed his position: he supported the new director of the *Unità Cattolica*, Ernesto Calligari (Mikròs) of whom he became biographer (see TAGLIAFERRI, *L'Unità Cattolica...*, passim), joining the Partito Popolare, he fought and was fought (beaten) by the fascists, finally ended his career as editor of the *Osservatore Romano*, always close to Count Della Torre (*Breganze on postcards, Gruppo Ricerca Storica Breganze*). However, he remained fond of the Scotton brothers, for whom he wrote his first biography in 1925 (*I Fratelli Scotton, mons. Jacopo, Andrea e Gottardo, Memorie biografiche*, Florence, Tipografia Santa Maria Novella)



Father Giovanni Semeria

- 42) John XXIII, who was his friend, opened the cause for beatification of Cardinal Ferrari on February 10, 1963. Paul VI declared him venerable (with the recognition of heroic virtues) on February 1, 1975, and John Paul II proclaimed him blessed on May 10, 1987. The three conciliar “holy popes” therefore all made their contribution to this sort of decanonization of Pius X. From an historiographic point of view, the volumes of the postulator of the cause of beatification are interesting (even if biased, obviously, CARLO SNIDER: “*L’episcopato del cardinale Andrea Carlo Ferrari*”, Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 1981.
- 43) Published by Centro Studi Valle Imagna. The volume was published in 2015, to commemorate the centenary of the death of Bishop Radini Tedeschi. My thanks to my friend Stefano Vitali who sent me and donated the volume.
- 44) The Medolago Albani family, edited by Renato Borsotti, had the great merit of finally publishing the biography of their illustrious ancestor written by Don Paolo de Töth: “*Il soldato di Cristo: Stanislao Medolago Albani*”, of which the Centro studi don Paolo de Töth published the preface by Don Paolo himself: Preface by Don De Töth to the book: “*Il soldato di Cristo: Stanislao Medolago Albani*” – Centro Studi Paolo DeTöth. Unfortunately, the voluminous publication (777 pages) does not include the conclusive part of the writing, certainly the most interesting (the narrative ends in 1904, while the count died in 1921), which has perhaps been lost.
- 45) Marco Invernizzi, current head of *Alleanza Cattolica*, published a eulogistic piece about Count Grosoli in the “Dizionario del pensiero forte” of this association (Invernizzi began his career studying Medolago, de Töth and Benigni, and here he ends up with Grosoli and... Bergoglio A path followed, unfortunately, by many, too many others). Giovanni Grosoli Pironi (1859-1937) was born to a Jewish father and a Christian mother. In 1902 he was elected president of the Opera dei Congressi, succeeding Paganuzzi, whom he opposed. One of his circulars dated July 15, 1904, written in collaboration with Filippo Meda and Msgr. Radini Tedeschi, criticized Catholics still linked to “dead issues in the national conscience” (allusion to the Catholic opposition to the Risorgimento). On July 19, the Holy See published a note of dissent in the *Osservatore Romano* which was followed by the resignation of Grosoli and the dissolution of the Opera, with the exception of the group directed by Medolago Albani. In 1907 Grosoli founded a “Trust” of “penetrative” Catholic newspapers, which were disavowed by the circular of the Holy See in 1912, to be then rehabilitated under Benedict XV: we will talk about it again. In 1919 he was among the founders of the Partito Popolare, which he however left in 1923 to found in 1924, with other liberal or modernizing Catholics like him, the Centro Nazionale Italiano, a supporter of fascism, which closed its doors in 1930, having now achieved the the ancient dream of the conciliarists with the Italian State born from the Risorgimento.

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- 46) FRANCESCO MORES, *Ammiratore di Semeria, discepolo del Bonajuti. Una lettera e un giudizio di Stanislaw Medolago Albani su Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in Modernism*, anno 2017, pp. 289- 300, ed. Morcelliana. *Modernism* is the magazine of the *Fondazione Romolo Murri, Centro Studi per la Storia del modernismo* at the University of Urbino, whose origins are due to an initiative by rev. Lorenzo Bedeschi way back in 1972. *Modernism* succeeds in a certain sense in the publication *Fonti e Documenti* (1972-2005). The Study Center also deals with anti-modernism, obviously from a purely modernistic point of view.
- 47) “*In the pontifical audience that I had a short time later, I rejoiced at the salutary effect that the Encyclical (Pascendi) would have and already seemed to have, he sadly asked me: ‘Do you believe so?’*” Filippo Crispolti explained to Pius X the reasons for his optimistic conviction, “*but instead of agreeing, as I desired for his comfort, (...) he continued to shake his head. He was still a man who performed a solemn act because he had an obligation before God, but as for the effects he remains pessimistic. And yes – concluded Crispolti – a few years were enough to recognize how the blow he dealt to modernism was truly mortal!*” And a few decades were enough, however, to see how right Saint Pius was, and how wrong the naive or self-interested “buryers” of modernism pretended it was dead. The “liberal” Crispolti could not or did not want to understand, and of Saint Pius X he wrote: “*his pontificate was for him one of the saddest in memory. He always saw under the surface the conditions of the Church that he had to govern. He certainly trusted in the sacred word which ensures that Peter’s ship is unsinkable, but for that time and who knows for how long, he nevertheless believed the storm to be so threatening to think that the desolate motto of the apocryphal prophecy had been attributed to his reign: religio depopulata. How often and to how many people did he not say: ‘the Pope is no longer listened to!’*” (F. CRISPOLTI, *Pio IX, Leone XIII, Pio X, Benedetto XV. Ricordi personali*, Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1932, pp.129- 132). Even Pius X, like Benigni, was, humanly speaking, “*nec spe, nec metu*”.
- 48) See *Sodalitium* no. 23 pp. 4, 10, 11 which cites GUIDO SOMMAVILLA s.j., *La Compagnia di Gesù*, Rizzoli, 1985, p. 225; *Storia della Chiesa*, edited by H. Jedin, Jaca Book, Milan, 1973, vol. IX, p. 576; G. CASSIANI INGONI, *Vita del P. W. Ledochowski*, Rome, 1945, pp. 71 e 73; *Disquisitio...*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
- 49) *Sodalitium*, no. 70-71, pp. 22ff; no. 36, pp. 33-47. In the article of no. 70-71 I concluded: “*the vicissitudes of the various pontificates of the 16th century remind us that the Pope, the Vicar of Christ and successor of Peter, is one thing, the personalities of the individual men who hold this sublime dignity are another thing: absolute ‘concordism’ leads to bad apologetics.*”
- 50) This is what Father Nitoglia writes in his first installment: “*Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, in his deposition of March 28, 1928 during the cause of Pius’ beatification, dealt with the question of the S.P., also called ‘League of Saint Pius V’ (hence the nickname “Pianum” from Pope Saint Pius V), directed by Monsignor Umberto Benigni and wanted to point out, polemically and perhaps a little acrimoniously, that Pope Sarto had supported the aforementioned association, defining it: ‘An occult espionage association outside and above the hierarchy, or rather which spied on the members of the hierarchy themselves [...]. A kind of freemasonry in the Church, something unheard of in ecclesiastical history’, seeing in this a ‘dark point’ that could have harmed the beatification of Pius X, implicitly accused of having the Episcopate spied upon to uncover modernists (Sacra Rituum Congregatio, Disquisitio circa quasdam obiectiones modum agendi servi Dei respicientes in modernismi debellazione, Rome, 1950, p. 6).*” But here there are two cases: either Cardinal Gasparri was unjust against Pius X and the *Sodalitium*, and then how can one defend him? Or one wants to defend him, precisely on this fact, but then, he wasn’t unfair. The author gets away with: “*a little acrimonious*” (maybe! a little...). The problem, though, is another: was he just or unjust?
- 51) Tommaso Reggio (1818-1901), of a noble Genoese family, was “beatified” by John Paul II on September 3, 2000. He celebrated the funeral mass of King Umberto I, who had awarded him the honors of the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus. He opposed the formula of Father Margotti which led the Holy See to “non expedit” (“neither elected nor electors”) with the opposite: “elected and electors”. On the website of the archdiocese of Genoa, Cardinal Tarcisio
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Bertone, his “successor”, commemorated him as follows: “*Msgr. Reggio sought to modernize the structures within the Opera dei Congressi and to implement ‘the postulates of a truly Christian democracy’, counteracting the step ‘towards the madness of anti-Christian and anti-social socialism’. His impulse towards social studies continued with the activity that Prof. Toniolo, the venerated teacher of young people of the Spinola Club, conducted in Genoa and with **Father Semeria** (who would become a well-known modernist, ed.) at the Higher School of Religion. The aim of the latter school, which was founded in 1897 at the Vittorino da Feltre Institute where a youth club very open to social and political initiatives is based, was to offer young Catholic high school and university students an adequate religious education. Reggio entrusted the School to Barnabite Father Semeria, to whom he then granted - again in the same year 1897 - permission to preach his famous ‘Advents’ in the church of Santa Maria delle Vigne: a gesture of trust and courage towards the new forces, for Msgr. Reggio will not be spared criticism by the intransigent exponents of the Opera dei Congressi. (...) It seems necessary to say, regarding the nascent Christian democratic group, that Reggio has far-sighted visions, knows how to grasp turmoil that will find development in the future, perceives that some phenomena are part of a slow but unstoppable movement of society. Father Semeria summarized the action of Msgr. Reggio, in his famous commemoration of 13 December 1901: ‘**Our good archbishop showed that he felt the breath of the new times which, slowly but fatally, were maturing; this democratic breath**, from which all of us in the world, men of heart, expect an improvement, an ascension of the humble and underprivileged classes. I don’t know if this name of democracy was pleasant to him, and, I would rather think, and I must be frank, I would think that no, but, faithful to *in dubiis libertas*, he was not opposed to it and, above all, he had the good sense to understand that, more than the name that is so easy to take and leave, what matters was the thing itself, without which the name is either childish vanity or even calculated hypocrisy.’ (...) Historiography has agreed on these aspects of Tommaso Reggio’s long life: (...) In politics, his sympathy for the cause of **liberal Catholics**, so much so that he was remembered, together with Scalabrini and Bonomelli, as **one of the Italian prelates most favorable to the Risorgimento tradition and the constitutional order of the unitarian State.**”*

- 52) Interesting, with regard to the relationships between Cardinal Rampolla and his secretary Msgr. Della Chiesa, is what a friend of the latter, FILIPPO CRISPOLTI, writes in *Pio IX, Leone XIII, Pio X, Benedetto XV. Ricordi personali*, Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1932, pp. 148-165. Cardinals Agliardi and Rampolla saw in the young Della Chiesa “*a new Consalvi*” (p. 148). For his part, Della Chiesa remembered Rampolla on the occasion of the death of his “*venerated father and Master*”, writing to Crispolti: “*perhaps no one has had such a long familiarity with the late Cardinal as I have had, no one was favored by him as I was. Imagine the bitterness of my soul from here. However, I am happy to have come to place a warm kiss on His cold hands!*” (p. 154). However, Crispolti also notes their differences: the very buttoned-up diplomat, Rampolla, the talkative and imprudent Della Chiesa, as demonstrated by the Latapie case (pp. 156-158).
- 53) SERGIO PAGANO, *op. cit.*, pp. 243 nota 51 e 244.
- 54) Giovanni Genocchi (1860-1926). In 1877 he entered the Seminario Pio in Rome (a hotbed of modernists) where he was a fellow disciple of Fracassini, Lanzoni, and Della Chiesa. Ordained in 1883, he entered the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun in 1886. “*In early March 1897 he visited A. Loisy - the biblical scholar and one of the promoters of French modernism, who had lived in Neuilly since 1894, after his removal from the Institut catholique of Paris - and they began a relationship that continued by correspondence and with new subsequent meetings in April 1900 and June 1901: a frequency that probably also had an important role in his personal formation as an open and erudite biblical scholar.*” “*In the most acute moment of the modernist crisis, an anonymous consultant of the Holy Office was able to write that within the house of the Sacred Heart in Piazza Navona, G. had “formed a school of hypercritics among his young disciples and which feeds ‘German hypercriticism’” (TURVASI, 1971, pp. 24ff). “Among those who were close to him, in addition to Fracassini, we recall S. Minocchi, B. Casciola, A. Ghignoni, G. Semeria, C. Pizzoni, G. Vitali, N. Piastrelli, A. Fogazzaro, I. Torregrossa and, generally almost all the protagonists*



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of the modernist crisis; G.'s entourage was also a point of connection with the European modernists. (...) Meanwhile, since November of that same 1897, he had been entrusted with exegesis lessons at the chair of biblical exegesis established by Leo XIII in the Pontifical University of Apollinaris. The chair was abolished the following year due to the tenacious opposition of the cardinal C. Mazzella. (...) In the years that followed, due to his association with friends and acquaintances who were linked to modernism, his assumption of very advanced positions in the field of biblical criticism obviously raised the problem of his personal relationship with the modernist movement; however, he managed not to alienate the esteem of the highest ecclesiastical authorities. He discussed the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch and the historicity of the first three chapters of Genesis, advising not to reject the conclusions of scholars in this regard; he intervened on

the composition of the book of Isaiah by advocating the theory of the plurality of authors. In fact, this translated into positions that were constantly contrary to the responses of the commission in relation to both the various themes mentioned so far and, in addition, to the overall evaluations of the Pauline corpus, the synoptic question with particular reference to the authenticity of the Gospel of Matthew, and the problem of the parousia in the eschatological speeches of Jesus and in Paul's statements in the First Letter to the Thessalonians." (TURVASI, 1974, pp. 217-284). "This biblical pastoral work, designed and created by G. with the collaboration of Msgr. G. Della Chiesa, Cardinal M. Mocenni and, as secretary, Msgr. G. Mercati (who was succeeded by P. G. Valdambriani), took the name of the 'Società di s. Girolamo per la diffusione dei Vangeli'; the management was at the Secretariat of State, the administration was in Genocchi's house. The first task consisted in the Italian edition of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles: the translation was entrusted to Don G. Clementi, the notes to G. and the introduction to Father Semeria (*Il Santo Vangelo di Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo e gli Atti degli apostoli, Roma 1902*) (...)" (ROCCO CERRATO, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 53, 2000, under Genocchi). See also DIEGUEZ, *The cards of the Sacred Table*, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 185, 283-284, note 510.

- 55) ROBERTO DE MATTEI, *Modernismo e antimodernismo nell'epoca di Pio X*, in *Don Orione negli anni del modernismo*, Jaca Book, 2002, pp. 44-47 and above all SERGIO PAGANO, *La mancata pubblicazione dell'opera 'Pio IX e il Risorgimento italiano' di Giuseppe Clementi e Edoardo Soderini*, in *Barnabiti studi*, 28 (2011): *I Barnabiti nel Risorgimento*, conference proceedings, Rome, 14-15 January 2011.
- 56) DROULERS, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 405. Archb. Jules Tiberghien (1867-1923), friend of Fr. Sevin and Catholic scouting, was consecrated by Benedict XV in 1921. Antoine Pottier (1849-1923), Belgian, one of the leaders of Christian democracy and Catholic trade unionism. Gaston Vanneufville (1866-1936) founder, with Abbé Six, of *La Démocratie chrétienne*, for the diffusion of the ideas of Abbé Lemire. Louis Glorieux (1867-1925), also considered an "ally of the German Bachemites" (Poulat). they were all from the region that was also the birthplace of Archbishop Lefebvre. In fact, it should be remembered that their roots were common: social Catholicism was born from La Tour du Pin, from de Mun, from Maurice Maignen, in short from intransigent and legitimist Catholicism; only later will the paths divide, to the point of opposing each other.
- 57) The text of the speech by Saint Pius X, with our introduction, was published by the *Centro Studi Giuseppe Federici*, announcement no. 2/18 of January 3, 2018: <https://www.centrostudifederici.org/testamento-san-pio-x/>
- 58) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 331. "According to Cardinal Tisserant, Pius did not want to elevate Giacomo Della Chiesa to the purple while Rampolla was alive, so as not to have two cardinals united in their aversion to integralism": see F. ENGEL JANOSI, I, *Il Vaticano tra fascismo e nazismo*, Ital. Transl., Florence 1973, p. 25, cited by GIANNI VANNONI, *Integralismo cattolico e Fascismo: Fede e Ragione* in *La Chiesa del Concordato*, edited by Francesco Margiotta Broglio, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1977, footnote 28 p. 463.

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- 59) Thus, for example, Pius X created Della Chiesa cardinal, who in turn created Tommaso Pio Boggiani cardinal, totally on the line of Pius X.
- 60) “Another”: I am referring to Giovanni Grosoli. To be precise, the convert from Judaism was not Giovanni Grosoli Pironi himself, but his father, the wealthy Jewish lawyer Giuseppe Forlì, who “*in passing to Catholicism, had assumed the surname of his baptismal godfather (who was precisely called Grosoli: see G. CANDELORO, Il movimento cattolico in Italia, 3rd ed., Rome 1972, p. 299, footnote 1)*”. (G. VANNONI, in *Cristianità*, no. 14, 1975). Pironi was instead the surname of his mother, Luisa.
- 61) GIANNI VANNONI, *Integralismo cattolico e Fascismo: Fede e Ragione, op. cit.*, pp. 443-443 e nota 27 p. 462.
- 62) Father Paolo (Francesco Ferdinando Paolo) Tommaso (in religion) de Töth, was born in Udine on March 7, 1881. He was Friulian of Hungarian origin. His noble family moved to Friuli around 1828 with Francesco, Father Paolo’s grandfather (a son of another Francesco). The family had a liberal and Risorgimento tendency, and among his uncles Father de Töth included some deputies in parliament and various journalists, such as Guglielmo de Töth, of *Fanfulla*, and *Raimondo Brenna*, of *Agenzia Stefani* and the *Nazione*. Father Paolo, who joined the Carmelites at a very young age (at eight years old) and whose parents who died young were devout, did not receive from the family environment its liberalism, but he undoubtedly received its passion for journalism and its connections. A friendship in common with Msgr. Della Chiesa was the Marquis Filippo Sassoli de’ Bianchi, from Bologna, collaborator and patron of *Fede e Ragione*.
- 63) On Msgr. Belvederi: GIULIO ANDREOTTI, *I quattro del Gesù. Storia di un’eresia*, Rizzoli, Milano, 1999; FULVIO DE GIORGI, *Maria Montessori tra modernisti, antimodernisti e gesuiti*, pp. 30-36; *Sodalitium* no. 42, p. 8; n. 51, pp. 68-69; n. 64, pp. 20-22
- 64) See *Sodalitium*, no. 64, p. 14 and note 4 p. 21: *A modernist ‘prophet’. The last testament of Don Primo Vannutelli*. In the footnote I reported this comment by Msgr. Benigni: “*Modernists and Gasparri 1916. The affair of the sudden oath placed into the hands of the Card. Gasparri. From the well-known modernist priests Buonaiuti Ernesto, Turchi Nicola, Mozzo (sic)... and Vannutelli had the following background. They ended up with that trial at the Holy Office from which Rampolla and others had saved them. Then Gasparri (by order of the Pope?) took the matter to himself, taking it away from the Holy Office. After the sacrilegious comedy of the oath, Bonaiuti spent an hour with Gasparri, and said that he came away admiring the cardinal’s broad (!) ideas. Evidently Gasparri persuaded them to swear in his hands and in his sense of it, in an agreement with their own sense of it (...)*” (SERGIO PAGANO, *Documents on Roman modernism from the Benigni Files, op. cit.*, Pp. 261-262). Benigni had been right, as confirmed by the long account of the facts as narrated by Buonaiuti himself in his autobiography (*Pellegrino di Roma. La generazione dell’esodo*, Gaffi publishing, Rome, 2008: *Part II: Il manipolo (1915-1920)*, pp. 168-178).
- 65) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 559.
- 66) HENRI COSTON, *Dictionnaire de la politique française*, Flanant, Limoges, 1998, p. 958; PRÉVOTAT, *op. cit.* p. 389.
- 67) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 419-421.
- 68) DROULERS, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 405, 419-420. The offices of the A.P. was bombed during the war.
- 69) A. M. DIEGUEZ, *Fondi dell’Archivio Segreto Vaticano relativi al modernismo*, p. 24.
- 70) HEINRICH DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, edizione bilingue*, edited by Peter Hünermann, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, third edition, January, 2000.
- 71) PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano...*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
- 72) On this theme see “*Tomisti e antitomisti in un’opera recente*”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, vol. IV, quaderno 1858, November 19, 1927, pp. 330ss (where the critics of Father Pègues o.p. are criticized in a work translated from the French precisely by the ‘famous’ - for us - Fr. Regatieri); “*La recente calunnia di Fede e Ragione contro la Civiltà*
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Cattolica”, vol. III, quaderno 1878, September 15, 1928, pp. 527ss (a response to the article in *Fede e Ragione: “Ritorno a Scoto? L’opposizione alle XXIV Tesi”*: a theme dear to Father Paolo de Töth).

- 73) Don Paolo de Töth writes about the whole question in the volume “*Della preminenza, in sé e secondo le dichiarazioni dei Sommi Pontefici Leone XIII, Pio X, Benedetto XV e Pio XI, della Filosofia e Teologia di San Tommaso, a proposito di un opuscolo su ‘La Scolastica e i suoi compiti odierni’*”, La Commerciale, Acquapendente, 1936. The pamphlet in question defended the theory according to which Benedict XV had, in fact, given freedom to follow Suarez’s philosophical theses (see in particular pp. 68-77), for whom Saint Thomas was a great Doctor... “*dead and buried*”! (an anticipation of the “historicization” of Saint Thomas carried out by the Dominican fathers Chenu and Congar). De Töth strenuously defends Benedict from the attempt to credit him with this freedom of opinion, which is absolutely correct from the point of view of the official magisterium (since the letter to the General of the Company was not included, as explained, in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*).
- 74) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 536-540 who published the documents regarding the reestablishment of the S.P. in a French translation; the Italian text in the *Disquisitio*, pp. 271-276.
- 75) Jesuit, Michel d’Herbigny (1880-1957) became “*Pius XI’s trusted man on oriental questions*” (Congar). Influenced by the ecumenism of Father Portal and Soloviev (the Russian New Man, as d’Herbigny calls him) he became president of the Pontifical Oriental Institute (1922) and of the Pontifical pro Russia Mission (1930) after having founded the Russicum in Rome (1929). Eugenio Pacelli secretly consecrated him bishop in 1926, to found a clandestine hierarchy in Russia, which was immediately discovered. For Benigni he was also a spy for the French government: the fact is that he fell into disgrace between 1931 and 1934, to the point that from 1938 his name was even deleted from the Pontifical Yearbook and he no longer wore the episcopal insignia: from riches to rags (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 322-324).
- 76) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, p. 591. Poulat writes: “*in 1915, faced with the new course, he had to abandon his duties*”, he who had been “*supported by Pius X*”. The “*new course*” was that of Benedict XV. In 1919, with the misfortune of Bishop Volpi, he also had to leave his refuge in Arezzo.
- 77) In the building on the via Montecatini 5, De Gasperi also met - with deep feeling - the modernist Fogazzaro.
- 78) “*The Italian Partito Popolare (...) was born as a non-Catholic, non-denominational party, as a party with a strong democratic content and which is inspired by Christian ideals, but which does not take religion as an element of political differentiation*”, Don Luigi Sturzo, Verona speech of March 16, 1919, cited by G. SALE, *Popolare e destra cattolica...*, p. 19.
- 79) Father Sale s.j. publishes a series of letters (p. 227ff) from a spy for Father Rosa s.j, Roberto Faino, around Father de Töth (pretending to be his friend, then reporting on him to Father Rosa), which well illustrates the actions of the Jesuits within the right wing. The assignment was to fight against non-denominationalism within the... non-denominational P.P.I. Indeed: “*we let them know* (i.e. ‘them’ being Miglioli’s left wing, allied with the right wing in their hatred of Father Sturzo, ed.) *that by opposing the declaration of non-denominationalism we do not want confessionality (as they - i.e. Father Rosa, ed. - and His Eminence - that is, Gasparri, ed. - told me), but the effective catholicity of the party, while retaining the name and autonomy (which is not to be confused with forgetting the necessary discipline)*”. So the right wing “Father-Rosa-version” was against non-denominationalism but not for confessionality, and for the autonomy from the hierarchy in discipline towards the hierarchy: a Jesuit masterpiece in denying the principle of non-contradiction! Another informant for Father Rosa within the right wing (pp. 250-252) describes in his own way the December 1920 meeting in Bologna of the aforementioned trend, which led to the resignation of Sassoli de’ Bianchi as president of the right wing and even from the P.P.I., on the advice of Don de Töth, the informant politely describing him “*the long hand of Msgr. Benigni*” “*unbalanced*” “*violent*” “*who shows a truly deplorable and unworthy hatred for a priest*”, who “*spoke in quite reprehensible outbursts*”, a “*furious priest*” whose magazine, F.e.R., “*can only be qualified as an unworthy pamphlet*” (while Father Rosa’s informer friend

nicely smelled, as can be seen, of the purest charity). Sassoli and Medolago Albani were in agreement with de Töth's "undemonstrable" or "nonsensical" statements.. But what was this nonsense? That the "*P.P. was in absolute contradiction with Catholic doctrine, and that it was a very serious sin for every Catholic to belong to it*": precisely what the Secretariat of State denied. Father Rosa's action within the right wing of the P.P.I. is a classic example of how to manage the opposition: putting yourself at the head of the opposition, excluding any real opposition, and effectively managing to play the game of the power you claim to resist.

80) The report of the Secretariat of State does not ignore the objections to registering with the P.P.I. "*Moreover, one could object: the Partito Popolare is not a Catholic party, on the contrary it proclaims itself to be autonomous and independent from the Ecclesiastical Authority. From the mouth of its own leaders (speech by D. Sturzo in Verona 16 March 1919: 'it was born as a non-Catholic, non-denominational party', it is 'a free association of free citizens who come together for the creation of a their own strictly political program. Furthermore, the development taken by certain tendencies in the party itself and the admission of distrustful elements (who, moreover, on the basis of art. 2 of the statute, could not be denied entry) gives rise to serious concerns, so that, in the opinion of many, it does not give to Catholics certain confidence that it can be an instrument for the Christian restoration of society. The question therefore arises as to whether or not it is advisable for Catholics to join the party itself.*" The objections are well expressed, and its reasoning cannot be denied, but incredibly the necessary conclusions do not follow, on the contrary, the opposite conclusions are reached: "*Evidently there is no question of licitness. The aggregation of the Partito Popolare could be illicit only if, as such, it were used as a means to a bad end in itself, or if participation in it brought with it a proximate and serious danger regarding faith or morals*". And doesn't the Secretariat of State see a danger for Catholics to join a non-Catholic party, believing it to be Catholic? Evidently not, since "*this certainly does not happen since the Partito Popolare explicitly declares that it is inspired by Christian ideals, and includes many good Catholics within its ranks*"! The question remains as to whether it is advisable to join the P.P.I., since it would be permissible to do so: "*Will it therefore be advisable to join the Partito Popolare? In the current state of things (i.e. until Catholics have found a better and safer way than that, to exercise practical and effective political action for the good of society) the answer can only be affirmative, even more so if Catholics have access to it with the noble intention of improving the Party itself and making it increasingly suitable for the realization of Christian ideals.*" With a flat finale: "*however this is in general thesis and in the current circumstances*" (as proof of this, the Secretariat of State sacrificed the Party on the altar of the Lateran agreements) and was left to the judgment of the bishop in local realities, who could prohibit ecclesiastics from joining the Party.

81) Pio Boggiani was born in Bosco Marengo, in Monferrato, in 1863: he was therefore a fellow citizen of Saint Pius V, whose name he bore, who he wanted to honor by erecting, in 1936, a monument in his name in the town square which now bears the name of the Cardinal. He soon entered the Dominican Order where he took the name of Thomas, playing many roles in Italy and abroad, among which is recalled his numerous apostolic visits to the Italian dioceses, entrusted to him by Saint Pius X to eradicate modernism. The Holy Pontiff made him bishop of Adria in 1908 (under his episcopate the city underwent an interdict) and he had already had two Genoese experiences: as parish priest of Santa Maria in Castello and professor in the seminary in 1900, and then apostolic administrator of the Diocese in 1914. This last appointment was particularly delicate, as the archbishop, Msgr. Andrea Caron (1848-1927), whom Saint Pius X wanted, a proud anti-modernist, did not have the *regio exequatur* ["authorization" of the civil authority] so that he had not been able to take over the government of the diocese, due to the veto of the Freemason minister Camillo Finocchiaro Aprile (from the Lodge *Giorgio Washington* of Palermo, then in the *33rds Supreme Council*), and the murky opposition of the modernist elements stirred up by Barnabite father Giovanni Semeria (on the whole question, see the excellent article by RAIMONDO GATTO, *L'interdetto su Genova del 1912. Una pagina pressoché sconosciuta di fedeltà e tradimenti*, published on agerecontra.it and again by our Centro Studi Giuseppe Federici, no. 85/15 of 27 October 2015, which highlights the sad position taken - from a historical point of

view - by Cardinal Siri, against the action of Saint Pius X and Monsignor Caron in those circumstances, and in favor of the Ligurians modernizers). Benedict XV, Genoese Pope, therefore knew Monsignor Boggiani well when he created him cardinal on December 4, 1916, assigning him to the Genoese diocese in 1919. *Fede e Ragione* printed and spread the volume *I due anni di episcopato genovese dell'Eminentissimo card. Tomaso Pio Boggiani: atti pastorali*, Acquapendente, 1922, which contains the pastoral letter on the Partito Popolare and the farewell pastoral letter to the diocese with further notes on the issue; our publishing house has reprinted the pastoral letter in the booklet: : *Un vescovo contro la democrazia cristiana*.

- 82) “*Il giornale ‘Il Cittadino’ di Genova. Monito. Novembre 1920*”. The text includes: *I due anni di episcopato genovese...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.
- 83) Even before the famous pastoral letter, he published a notification entitled “*Clero e partiti politici*” of May 1920 (*op. cit.* pp. 109ff.). After the Pastoral of July 1920 (pp. 126ff) he published the Notifications “*Ancora il clero e i partiti politici*” in August 1920 (p. 154), “*I locali della associazioni cattoliche e i partiti politici*”, in the same month (p. 155) and “*L’Unione popolare*” (p. 156), the aforementioned warning against *Il Cittadino*, the Notifications “*norme e disposizioni confermate*” of January 1921 (pp. 201-203) and “*Clero, Associazioni Cattoliche ed elezioni politiche*” of May 1921 (pp. 284-286), and finally the last farewell pastoral letter of August 1921. Surely I forget some...
- 84) See *I due anni di episcopato genovese, op. cit.*, pp. 295-315. The volume, dated November 1922, published on page 329 the letter of support from Pope Benedict XV to Cardinal Boggiani for the pastoral letter against the Partito Popolare.
- 85) In addition to Cardinal Gasparri, Father Sale s.j. cites for example the judgment of Cardinal Eugenio Tosi, successor to Cardinal Ratti on the chair of Saint Ambrose, according to a paper from the archives of Father Rosa, and the bishop of Treviso (SALE, E, *Popolari e destra cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136, 237).
- 86) FAPPANI-MOLINARI, *Montini giovane*, Marietti, 1979, pp. 39, 61, 81, 93 (Semeria "prophesied" that Montini would be made Cardinal and would arise to something more), 95, 108 (supported the Montinian journal, *La Fionda*, together with Gemelli, Meda, Longinotti, Martire), 144 (again the "prophecy" about the seminarian Montini on the part of his admirer and friend of his father, Giorgio).
- 87) FAPPANI-MOLINARI, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160 (introduces him to Rome), p. 192 (through his friend, Cardinal Gasparri, he is introduced to the *Accademia dei Nobili ecclesiastici*, to prepare him for a diplomatic career), p. 335 (substitute at the Secretariat of State). See also Y. CHIRON, *Paul VI, le pape écartelé*, Perrin, 1993, pp. 38-39.
- 88) *Disquisitio*, pp. 18-24. Longinotti declares that he had no devotion for Pius X and dwells on the reasons why he believes Pius could not rise to the honors of the altars.
- 89) Equally noteworthy - like that of Gramsci - is the quote from De Gasperi, at the III congress of the D.C. held in Venice on June 5, 1949: “*Christian Democracy is a left-leaning center party that derives almost half of its electoral strength from a right-wing mass*” (therefore continually duped).
- 90) POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, pp. 366-369
- 91) *Cristianità*, n. 14, 1975, <https://alleanzaccattolica.org/i-caratteri-del-giornalismo-cattolico/>
- 92) Saint Pius X said in this speech: “*It seems incredible, and it is painful, that there are priests to whom this recommendation must be made, but unfortunately in our days we are in this hard, unhappy condition of having to say to priests: love the Pope! And how should we love the Pope? Not words and language, but work and truth. When you love a person you try to conform in everything to his thoughts, to carry out his wishes, to interpret his desires. And if our Lord Jesus Christ said of himself: si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit, so to demonstrate love for the Pope it is necessary to obey him. Therefore, when you love the Pope, you do not have discussions about what he orders or demands, or how far obedience must go, and in what things one must obey; when you love the Pope, you don't say that he didn't spoke clearly enough, almost as if he were obliged to repeat to everyone's ears the will that he clearly expressed so many times not only orally, but with letters and other public documents; his orders are not*

questioned, citing the easy pretext of those who do not want to obey, that it is not the Pope who commands, but those around him; the field in which He can and must exercise his authority is not limited; the authority of other people, no matter how learned, who dissent from the Pope, who if they are learned are not saints, cannot be placed before the authority of the Pope, because whoever is holy cannot disagree with the Pope. This is the outburst of a sorrowful heart, which, with profound bitterness, not for you, beloved brothers, but with you I make to deplore the conduct of so many priests, who not only allow themselves to discuss and scrutinize the wishes of the Pope, but are not ashamed of reaching the point of impudent and shameless disobedience with much scandal among the good and with such ruin of souls.” The Pope was referring to those priests and bishops who “sabotaged” his provisions regarding the Catholic press, and the fight against modernism in general. But these words should also be meditated on by those who - following the Society that is named after Saint Pius X - theorizes resistance to a person recognized as a legitimate Pope. The full text of the speech, and the Warning, can also be found on the Vatican website.

- 93) The famous letter of Msgr. Della Chiesa to Cardinal De Lai against *L'Unità Cattolica* and *La Riscossa* (reproduced from TAGLIAFERRI, *op. cit.*, p. 177 and *Disquisitio* pp. 127-128) cited inappropriately by Don Nitoglia, “*was tied to the publication of the warning*” (TAGLIAFERRI, p. 177, note 470).
- 94) For the whole question, and the text of the letter, see M. TAGLIAFERRI, *op. cit.*, p. 190 note 536 and, in general, pp. 181-193.
- 95) TAGLIAFERRI, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
- 96) Series *I libri della Civiltà Cattolica*, Publ. Jaca Book, 2005-2006, volume 1: *Popolari, chierici e camerati*, pp. 165-174.
- 97) The letter is signed by: Rev. Dr. Don Paolo de Töth, Marquis Filippo Sassoli de' Bianchi, the lawyer A. Renier, the lawyer Count Comm. Aurelio Pecoraro, Rev. Dr. Oreste Nuti and, for the ecclesiastical revision, can. Dr. Giuseppe Biagioli.
- 98) Paolo Leopoldo de Gislimberti, accountant “*redattore de La Tribuna, fu consigliere comunale dal 1914 al 1919 nella giunta di Prospero Colonna*”: Footnote by N. VALBOUSQUET e A. M. DIEGUEZ, *op. cit.*, p. 105, nota 104. Far from being a pseudonym for Father de Töth.
- 99) The Hon. Anile, who in 1922 was undersecretary of Public Education, had collaborated with the *Bollettino della Società Teosofica* (April-May 1917), claiming that the phenomena of telepathy and spiritism were a case of the spiritualization of matter! See *Fede e Ragione* year I, April 1920, and year III, 15 January 1922.
- 100) On Father Giovanni Semeria, a Barnabite friend of the Montini, see what the *Disquisitio* writes on the occasion of the beatification process of Pius X (pp. XXVI-XXVII): “*Nor can it be said that Father Semeria had not given occasion to such accusations (of modernism, ed.); apart from his writings, his own relationships made him suspect. In 1896, Msgr. Mignot, then bishop of Fréjus, very liberal and a friend of Loisy, came to Geneva, together with Baron V. Hügel, the great traveling salesman of modernism, to visit Fr. Semeria. Loisy himself corresponded frequently with him and sent him his writings. In 1897 Fr. Semeria read a conference by Baron V. Hügel at the Friborg congress in Switzerland on the Hexateuch, based on Loisy's theories. At the time of the condemnation of Americanism and the placing of the German theologian Schell on the Index (1899), Duchesne wrote to V. Hügel about Semeria: ‘There is talk about forcing Semeria to leave Italy...all the devils are unleashed’ (LOISY, Mémoires, I, 515). When Fr. Semeria published his much discussed work: Dogma, Hierarchy and cult in the primitive Church (1902) Baron V. Hügel wrote to Loisy that in this book there was ‘development everywhere’ (i.e. the evolution of the dogma) ‘to which Lepidi granted a generous imprimatur’ (LOISY, l.c., II, 116). The same year Loisy sent to Fr. Semeria, as well as to Fr. Amelli, Fr. Gazzola, Fr. Minocchi and Fr. Genocchi, his two volumes, Etudes évangéliques and L’Evangile et l’Eglise (LOISY, l.c., II, 155). According to Loisy's volumes of memoirs, the name Semeria occurs very often. Here we are at Pascendi. Precisely because of the suspicions that weighed on Fr. Semeria, he was forced by his superiors to read from the pulpit a declaration of acceptance of Pascendi. Loisy speaks of this fact as ‘sad*
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incident', and reports the following words of a letter from Baron V. Hügel February 3, 1908: 'Do you know that our poor dear Father Semeria thought he was forced to read an acceptance of Pascendi from the pulpit of his church in Genoa, January 16, and these gentlemen are not yet happy?' (LOISY, l.c., II, 619). Finally, Fr. Semeria was transferred from Genoa to Brussels (he left on 12 April 1912)". And he concludes by quoting words addressed to Semeria by Pius X: "you widen the doors to bring in those who are outside, and in the meantime let those who are inside come out" (p. XXVIII). Was it really appropriate to invite said father to speak at the inauguration of the Catholic University? (Pius X, who strictly prohibited Semeria from preaching, took a very different attitude: see the Pope's injunctions to Monsignor Della Chiesa for Bologna in DIEGUEZ, *Le carte del Sacro Tavolo*, vol. I, pp. 173-177).

- 101) Egilberto Martire (1877-1952). I have taken the following information from the "Biographical Dictionary of Italians": "in November (1901), he joined the Roman group of Christian Democracy, thus getting closer to Don R. Murri's movement. In 1904, in the wake previously traced by R. Bettazzi's Movement for Morality, he established the religious studies circle, Roman Youth Union for Morality, and during the same year, with the help of important exponents of the interconfessional and secular group *Unione per il bene* (such as Antonietta Giacomelli, G. Salvadori, A. Fogazzaro, the Barnabite P. G. Semeria, B. Casciola and the Protestant pastor P. Sabatier) he began to publish in Rome, with the collaboration of G. Pioli, the monthly *La Vita* (published until 1910), particularly oriented towards dealing with the problem of sexual education among young people. Also important was his participation in the *Lega cattolica per il lavoro*, founded in 1902 to spread Christian democratic ideals among the workers of the capital, which was headed by G.B. Valente and in which worked, among others, Martire, M. Cingolani, G. Borromeo and G. Quadrotta. Between 1906 and 1908, M. - a prolific journalist as well as a convincing speaker in defense and support of issues relating to Catholic morality - still close to Murrism and modernism - collaborated with the bimonthly *Murri's Rivista di cultura* as well as the fortnightly *Nova et vetera* by E. Buonaiuti (1908). But already in 1906 he had joined the editorial staff of the newspaper *Il Corriere d'Italia*, founded by G. De Felice, oriented on a moderately-clerical and conciliatory line; gradually, in harmony with the positions taken by the ecclesiastical hierarchies, M. was distancing himself from the more advanced and heterodox movements, an attitude that was strengthened after the publication of the encyclical *Pascendi* (1907) condemning modernism. M. remained at the *Corriere d'Italia* until 1929, always sharing its editorial line", which, let us remember, was that of the Grosolian "Trust". An interventionist [for Italy's intervention in WWI] but not a combatant, "at the end of the war he participated in the birth of the Italian Popular Party (P.P.I.), immediately demonstrating his sympathies for the theses of pro-nationalist and conservative Catholic circles, positions that placed him in the right-wing current of the party. He was, however, among the few that Don L. Sturzo called around him on 23 and 24 November, 1918, at the headquarters of the *Unione Romana* to develop the programmatic platform and the first appeal of the nascent party. On 16 and 17 December he participated in the assemblies of the 'little constituent' which approved the merged documents, of 18 January, 1919, appealing to all free and strong men, in the act of the birth of the P.P.I. Elected deputy in Rome in the general elections of 16 November, 1919 (...) was confirmed, still among the first, in those of 15 May 1921 (...)." Following this "he soon sided in favor of a closer understanding between the P.P.I. and the new fascist government and, on 10 April, 1923, on the eve of the popular congress of Turin (12-14 April), he signed (...) an agenda calling for the expulsion of the left-wing current (one of the conditions posed by the fascists for continuing P.P.I.'s collaboration with the government). M. instead refused to sign the manifesto that appeared in Rome on 30 June, drawn up by conservative Catholic elements, which declared "complete consent" to the Mussolini government, as he considered as inappropriate for the political moment both the evident confusion between politics and religion that was manifested there, and the direct attack on the person of Sturzo, whom someone wanted to force to resign from the party secretariat. Subjected to investigation by the National People's Council and then expelled from the P.P.I. (25 July 1923) for not having respected party discipline by abstaining in the vote that established the passage to the

discussion of the articles of the Acerbo electoral law, M. presented himself in the 1924 elections as a candidate of the National Union on his 'plank' and was re-elected; he then joined the Italian National Centre, a Catholic group supporting the fascist government, established in Bologna (12 August 1924) on the initiative of P. Mattei Gentili, S. Cavazzoni, F. Mauro, G. Grosoli Pironi and A. Carapelle, of which he then joined the central committee": always therefore with the modernizing Catholics, his lifelong friends. "Since November 1922 he had founded the cultural association *Fides Romana* in the capital, based in the oratory of the *Filippinis* at Chiesa Nuova, which many ecclesiastics and exponents of the Capitoline Catholic world joined, gathered around a program aimed at reconciling the ideal aims of a "sacred Romanity" with those of a politically moderate and socially conservative fascism. (...) With the patronage of the Association he published various magazines (*Conquista Cattolica*, *Riscossa Cattolica*) and, above all, *La Rass. romana* (4 Nov. 1929 - 15 July 1938) with the specific aim of promoting constructive coexistence between the regime and the Church and of alleviating and resolving possible tensions between them. (...) His missionary interest - which dated back to his youthful attendance at the school of G. Genocchi and was then enriched by his long experience in the Anti-Slavery Society of Italy, for which over the years he had become general secretary - brought him to a three-year academic period, starting from 1936-37, to teach as professor of mission history at the Oriental Institute of Naples." Arrested in 1939, he was sent into exile until 1942. "At the end of the Second World War, M. committed himself again to public life, placing himself on a line of dissent compared to that of A. De Gasperi's *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC). On the occasion of the institutional referendum and the elections for the Constituent Assembly (2 June 1946) he used his agile pen and brilliant oratory in defense of the monarchy and, above all, in the fight against communism. His last journalistic experience, the satirical weekly *Rabarbaro*, which he founded and directed in controversy with a then widespread anticlerical periodical, *Don Basilio*, had a short and difficult life (from 1946 to 1949). In full coherence with his previous activity it was also M.'s last political commitment: the foundation of a new *Unione romana*, a sort of cartel of the capital's Catholic right-wing parties, which should have been launched on the occasion of the Roman administrative elections of 1952, as part of the so-called "Sturzo operation", which was also aborted. M. died in Rome on 4 October, 1952". A right-wing modernist, we could say, which makes us understand the meaning of the invitation addressed to him by Father Gemelli.

- 102) Without a doubt, the thinking of *Fede e Ragione* was completely in conformity with the teaching of Pius XI. Why then, according to Card. Gasparri, was Card. Ratti dissatisfied with the article on the Catholic University? Evidently, the criticisms of the important representatives of the Catholic (political) world were not appreciated, and even less, the criticism, unexpressed but inevitable, of those who had invited these figures to the inauguration (not only Father Gemelli; wasn't Cardinal Ratti himself the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan?). Understandable reaction. But what to make of those who condemn others for disturbing the public peace by crying "Thief! Thief!, while the problem is not the cry, however annoying, but the thief...
- 103) Carlo Santucci (1849-1932), from a Catholic-liberal family, considered the capture of Porta Pia positively and opposed the *non expedit*, trying under Leo XIII and Pius X to encourage the electoral commitment of Catholics in the new unitary state ("meetings at the Campello house"), and Pius X repudiated him. In 1906 he participated in the foundation of the *Corriere d'Italia*, a newspaper which became part of Grosoli's "Trust" repudiated by Pius X. "Under the pontificate of Giacomo Della Chiesa (Benedetto) Santucci returned to the top of the Catholic movement" (Treccani) succeeding Count Ottorino Gentiloni, and in 1916 he accepted the presidency of the Banco di Roma, succeeding Ernesto Pacelli. In 1919 he was among the founders of the P.P.I., and was appointed senator of the Kingdom. With other modernizers of Grosoli's circle, he left the P.P.I. in 1923 to found the National Centre, with a clerical-fascist orientation, and was involved with Gasparri in talks with the government for the conciliation between State and Church. Although not personally a Freemason, there was no lack of involvement with Masonic finance (Obbedienza Piazza del Gesù) as testified in great detail by GIANNI VANNONI in *Massoneria, Fascismo e Chiesa Cattolica*, Laterza, 1979, pp. 95-101. A nice anecdote: the first secret meetings between Mussolini and Cardinal

Gasparri in view of the Conciliation took place in the palace of Santucci, which had two entrances, to ward off the control of Freemasonry; except that Mussolini was accompanied to the meeting by the Hon. Acerbo, of the Freemasonry of Piazza del Gesù...

- 104) NINA VALBOUSQUET (*Catholique...*, p. 262, notes 70 and 72) points out the letters of Msgr. Fossà, Bishop of Fiesole, to Pius XI on August 8, 1922, the Pope's response on September 29, and a memorandum sent by Bishop Fossà to the Pope on October 5. For his part, Card. Gasparri wrote to Canon Biagioli, appointed ecclesiastical censor of F.e.R. by the bishop, on October 29, 1922, arguing that "*the distinction between the Papacy in the abstract and the Pope in concrete, or between Pope and Pope, is not worthy of a Catholic*" (I've translated from French): this is the accusation taken up by Father Nitoglia (who forgets to apply it to himself in relation to the Popes – as he considers them – from John XXIII to Francis)...
- 105) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, p. 243). Father Rosa advocated the removal of Msgr. Benigni and Father de Töth from the magazine (a hostility that dated back to 1908), sparing the magazine and Count Sassoli. The letter from Borgongini-Duca to Father Rosa is dated September 17, 1922, the report from Father Rosa to Borgongini-Duca is dated September 29.
- 106) VANNONI, *Integralismo cattolico e fascismo: Fede e Ragione, op. cit.*, pp. 457-459
- 107) TAGLIAFERRI, *op. cit.*, p. 82, and G. VANNONI, *Catholic integralism...*, pp. 445-448. Calligari defined de Töth as a "maniac", "a recidivist in telling lies", "a self-styled Athenasius of shortercrust pastry" and "accused him of having spoken badly of Saint Alphonsus and Cardinal Gasparri! 'We, imitating the Genoese Balilla, throw a soggy tomato, picked up in his garden, at the nose of the papier-mâché idol (de Töth), and the idol wobbles on the pedestal and will soon fall.'" Naturally de Töth had not spoken badly of Saint Alphonsus, but followed, when teaching in the seminary, a sentence by Saint Thomas rather than one by Saint Alphonsus. The retraction signed by Calligari and published in *Unità Cattolica* on December 12, 1926 was drawn up by de Töth himself (text in VANNONI, p. 447).
- 108) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-265, for that which regards the "suffering of *Fede e Ragione*" from 1922 to 1929.
- 109) In this regard, see the entire chapter 1, *Il tramonto del Cardinal Gasparri*, by Carlo M. Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, Le Lettere, 1999, pp. 41-83, in particular pp. 52-58 where he vents his anger against Pius XI and his successor, Cardinal Pacelli. According to an informer of Msgr. Benigni, the architect of his fall was Father Rosa: "There was no shortage of those who attributed the imminent defenestration of Card. Gasparri to Father Enrico Rosa, director of *Civiltà Cattolica*, who had just then returned from Spain, and to the Jesuits who increasingly influenced Pius XI's anti-fascist policies" (FIORENTINO, *ibid.*, p. 49, and note 29).
- 110) The brief experience of the *Actualité Catholique* is recalled by E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 43 note 54 and p. 72; and by N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique et antisémite...*, pp. 61-63. According to P. DROULERS (*op. cit.*, p. 133) a friend of Msgr. Delassus, Msgr. Delmont of Lyon, also collaborated. The letter from Card. Gasparri to Card. Dubois of May 25, 1921 expresses the "wish of the Holy Father" that Msgr. Lepercq had to cease all collaboration with the magazine.
- 111) Phrase addressed to Msgr. Baudrillart and reported by Msgr. Benigni in his letter of January 5, 1922 (see VANNONI, *New documents on Integrism. Sodalitium Pianum e Action Française, in Contemporary History*, no. 4/5, Il Mulino, 1981, p. 733).
- 112) CHANOINE SAUVÊTRE, *Un bon serviteur de l'Eglise. Mgr Jouin, protonotaire apostolique, curé de Saint-Augustin* (1844-1932), Paris, Casterman, 1936.
- 113) Particularly the Editions Saint-Rémi, which, among many demerits, had the merit of reprinting the magazine's collection. N. Valbousquet cites (p. 290) this publishing house and its magazine as an example of the continuation of Catholic anti-Semitism.

- 114) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, pp. 63ss., Msgr. Benigni was informed as early as Autumn, 1919 of the reopening of the magazine, and was enthusiastic about it.
- 115) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, pp. 261-262.
- 116) When dealing with the *Action Française*, we will see what to think of this statement by Buonaiuti. However, it demonstrates how Gasparri's attacks on Benigni also served to fight against the *Action Française*, and all those nostalgic for Pius X.
- 117) Buonaiuti complains several times that, with the condemnation of Pascendi, modernism abandoned dogmatic themes to move on to political and social ones (pp. 89-95, 234-238). He is generally against any connection between politics and religion, and between State and Church, of which he himself will be an illustrious victim after the Concordat.
- 118) A completely apologetic biography of Pius XI, by YVES CHIRON (*Pie XI*, Perrin, 2004), didn't hide this aspect of Achille Ratti up to his election to the throne of Saint Peter. A typical example of Lombard Catholicism, the young Achille Ratti cannot be considered a liberal in a doctrinal sense, but he was considered such in a broad sense. In 1888, in favor of Rosmini and the Rosminians, he hoped for the canonization of the philosopher from Rovereto, in a letter dated February 20, only 15 days before the document of condemnation by the Holy Office (*Post obitum*). A friend of the Gallarati Scotti's (Tommaso's father is defined by de Töth as an "*insignificant liberaloid, unfortunately full of money*", TAGLIAFERRI, p. 332) he had been Tommaso Gallarati Scotti's pedagogue since 1880, and when Gallarati Scotti later became the leader of the Milanese modernists, although he distanced himself from him, he dealt with him on behalf of Cardinal Ferrari (pp. 71-73). He is also a friend of Filippo Meda, called a liberal by Chiron, but more precisely a Christian Democrat politician (pp. 41-43), as well as of the chief rabbi of Milan Alessandro Da Fano (pp. 68 and 80). During the clash between the integrals and Cardinal Ferrari, inaugurated by the Scotton brothers' denunciation against the Milanese seminary, he signed the protest letter by the seminary professors in 1910 (p. 73), and was sent by Cardinal Ferrari to Rome, to Pius X and Cardinal De Lai, to plead the cause of Milan against the integrals (pp. 74-75); again in 1913 he played this role in favor of Ferrari (p. 77). Among his close friends there was also the Milanese monsignor, from a transigent family, Msgr. Caccia Dominioni; Alberindo Grimani's book attests to the terrible morality of the subject (pp. 76-77). Nuncio in Poland, he was appointed bishop by Benedict XV in 1919, succeeded Cardinal Ferrari in Milan in 1921 and was created cardinal. It was then that, in July 1921, he twice met the modernist Louis Canet, representative of the French government for religious affairs, in Rome and Monte Cassino. Canet praises him to the French government (p. 105). On 7 December 1921 he attended the inauguration of Father Gemelli's Catholic University with Cardinal Maffi (p. 110); on that occasion the integral newspaper *Fede e Ragione* will react, and for this it will be reprimanded by Card. Gasparri (see details when I talk about the Fiesole magazine). In the impending Conclave that will elect him, a report to the government by L. Canet presents the election of Cardinals De Lai and Merry del Val as absolutely to be avoided. Gasparri should also be discarded, as he was "liberal" in religion but not a supporter of France (he was a Germanophile). Canet's favor went to Card. Ratti (pp. 113-114). But it is the French ambassador to the Holy See, Jonnart, who, hoping for the election of Card. Ratti, defined him as "*liberal and in favor of the Entente*" (p. 114): Father Nitoglia should take it out on Jonnart, and not on Msgr. Benigni. The Conclave was laborious (14 ballots). Merry del Val received the most votes at the beginning, but not enough to be elected, even Gasparri's votes on the opposite side were insufficient. It was then that Cardinal De Lai, representing the "party" of Pius X, offered the votes of this group if he disregarded Gasparri as Secretary of State (p. 117). As Gasparri himself reports in his memoirs, stating that with this act De Lai had incurred excommunication, Card. Ratti refused, but still obtained the votes of the intransigents, who in this case were not intransigent. It was in this circumstance that Msgr. Benigni criticized Cardinal De Lai (after the dissolution of the S.P. in 1921, the conclave dates back to 1922), "scandalizing" Father Nitoglia: "*Benigni, after the death of Pope Sarto, found himself 'betrayed' by almost all those who had protected him, in 1922 he even went so far as to take*
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it out on Cardinal De Lai, who had always been his friend and protector even under the pontificate of Benedict XV, writing bitterly: 'De Lai Gaetano: under Pius X without foundation, impressionable, violent, changeable, extremely ambitious to the point of intrigue...' (ASV, Benigni Files, b. 59, letter from Benigni to his French collaborators of February 1922). Now, if it can be admitted that after 1914 Benigni opposed several more moderate-minded prelates regarding the way of governing the Church, it is difficult to follow him in his accusations against Merry del Val (since 1911) and De Lai (since 1922). It cannot, therefore, be denied that after the death of Pius X, there was 'a Benigni case', characterized by ever greater frustration and resentment, which led him to excessive and ungenerous criticism, but this does not authorize us to condemn the work of the S.P. in its entirety, the anti-modernist struggle and the academic production of Monsignor Benigni." If Don Nitoglia rightly states that no one is the Immaculate Conception (except Mary), not even Benigni, this can also apply to Card. De Lai, who still enjoys our esteem and admiration; Benigni could in a private letter mention the prelate's defects, especially in a contingent circumstance, without necessarily being frustrated and resentful. A document from the Benigni files cited by Bishop Pagano (*op. cit.*, p. 272) partly explains Cardinal De Lai's position after the death of Saint Pius X. The pro-modernist Father Genocchi reproached Benedict XV for, among other things, "having steered towards the anti-modernists, for example. keeping De Lai at the Consistorial, while his election demanded for another behavior, favoring his voters and supporters (democratic-modernist-liberal) who expected reprisals along the entire anti-modernist line, but instead Benedict XV only struck against the anti-modernists with whom he had issues for very personal reasons, from Merry del Val to Benigni": this explains the aforementioned reproach: "yielding to keep his place".

- 119) Many French "traditionalists" harshly criticize the Napoleonic Concordat of 1801, which had also allowed the reopening of worship in France; even on that occasion the schism - based on Jansenist and Gallican ideas - of the "Petite Eglise" (still existing) was born. They forget that the drawbacks of the Concordat - primarily the governmental selection of the bishops - dates back to the Concordat "of Bologna" of 1516 between Leo X and Francis I, stipulated to remedy a worse evil, or the "Pragmatica Sanctio" of Bourges (7 July 1438), desired by King Charles VII, which was based on the conciliarist doctrine of the "Council" of Basel (1431-1445), a distant consequence, in turn, of the humiliation of the papacy desired by Philip the Fair against Boniface VIII, and of the "Avignon captivity" and the Great Schism. Present evils often have ancient roots.
- 120) EMILE POULAT, *Les Diocésaines. République Française, Eglise catholique: Loi de 1905 et associations culturelles, le dossier d'un litige et de sa solution* (1903-2003), La Documentation Française, 2007.
- 121) E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 575-576; see also, *ibidem*, pp. 286-287 and E. POULAT, *Les Diocésaines...*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
- 122) E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 15ff. Benigni defined the work of Nicolas Fontaine (Canet) "in his picturesque French" writes Poulat (p. 16, note 9) (no more picturesque than his Italian!): "Une bouille-à-baisse où il y a de l'asafoetida au lieu de l'ail" [A broth where there is asafoetida instead of garlic] (Veritas, V/10, 10 March 1928). To appreciate the quote: "The asafoetida or assa fetida (*Ferula assa-foetida* L.), also called fetid fennel, devil's manure or devil's dung, is a species of the apiaceae family, native to Persia. The name derives from the Persian نيزر (razin) which means resin and from the Latin fetida, an adjective that describes its intense and unpleasant smell. Once cooked it gives the preparations an aroma similar to that of garlic" (Wikipedia).
- 123) FONTAINE, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 e 114, in POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- 124) In this regard, Antonio Gramsci's analysis is interesting: "The article: *L'equilibrio della verità fra gli estremi dell'errore*, in the 'Civiltà Cattolica' of November 3, 1928, takes its cue from the publication by Nicolas Fontaine: *Saint-Siège, 'Action Française', et 'Catholiques intégraux'*, Paris, Gamber, 1928, of which, in a footnote, this judgment is given: 'The author is dominated by political and liberal prejudices, especially when he sees politics in condemnation of Action Française; but the facts and documents, attached by him, about the famous 'Sodalizio' were not proven wrong.' Now Fontaine has not published anything completely new (Fontaine's documents on the

'integrals' had been published in April 1924 by 'Mouvement'); so why hadn't the Jesuits used it before? The question is important and it seems it can be resolved in these terms: the pontifical action against the Action Française is the most striking and decisive aspect of a broader action to liquidate a series of consequences of Pius X's policy (in France, but indirectly also in other countries), that is, Pius XI wants to limit, without however attacking them head on, the importance of integral Catholics, who are openly reactionary and who make it almost impossible in France to organize a strong Azione Cattolica and a popular-democratic party that can compete with the radicals. The fight against modernism had unbalanced Catholicism too far to the right; it is therefore necessary to 'center' it again in the Jesuits, that is, to give it back a flexible political form, without doctrinal rigidities, with great freedom of maneuver, etc.; Pius XI is truly the Pope of the Jesuits. But fighting against integral Catholics on an organic front is much more difficult than fighting against modernists. The fight against Action Française offers excellent terrain; the integrals are not fought as such, but as supporters of Maurras, that is, the fight is scattered, it takes place against individual people who do not obey the pope, who hinder the defense of faith and morality against a public atheist and pagan, while the whole trend is officially ignored. Here is the capital importance of Fontaine's book, which shows the organic connection between Maurras and 'integrism' and energetically helps the action of the Pope and the Jesuits (it should be noted that Fontaine repeatedly insists among French 'secularist' people on the fact that the Integrals, and not the Jesuits, are 'anti-democratic', and that the Jesuits, in reality, help democracy etc.; who is Fontaine? is he a specialist in studies on religious politics? Couldn't he himself have been inspired by the Jesuits?) [Prison Notebooks, quad. 20 (XXV) § 4 Cattolici e integrali, gesuiti, modernisti].

- 125) JACQUES PRÉVOTAT, *Les catholiques et l'Action Française. Histoire d'une condamnation 1899-1939*, Fayard, 2001, with a preface by René Rémond of the Académie française. Prévotat is a contemporary history professor at the Charles De Gaulle University - Lille III.
- 126) On he and Lugan, see Prévotat pp. 112-114.
- 127) ACJF: *Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française*. Founded in 1886 by legitimist Albert de Mun, it had as its first chaplain Charles Maignen, then of *Sodalitium Pianum*. The Ralliement to the Republic moved it to democratic positions. Its president Henri Bazire will be Blondel's father-in-law, whose other son will marry Charles Flory, also president of the AJCF and among the founding members of the MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, the French D.C. [*Democrazia Cristiana*, Italy's after-WWII nondenominational 'Catholic' party]).
- 128) On this question see E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-391
- 129) In addition to the opinion of Father Lemius, reported by Poulat, it seems useful to me to report the following of Card. Billot, quoted by Father Droulers s.j.: "*I cannot help but note that Reims, which reproaches you, tries to make common cause with the destroyers of 1789*" (the Reims school accused the Catholics who criticized it of being 'liberals' because they were anti-socialists). "*It does nothing but recreate their work, the construction of an omnipotent, omnivorous State, in possession of unlimited rights, master of religion, education, the family: ... this is where we see the integral trade unionism advocated by the Action populaire...which takes us directly to Marc Sangnier's dream; ...moreover, I cannot fail to note the total opposition of the tendencies of Reims with the directives of the Holy See, confirmed and accentuated once more by the recent letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to de Mun*" (letter to Joseph Rambaud, Lyon director of the Nouvelliste, 10 February 1913). The letter concluded: "*as you say quite well, Mr. Editor, in your fine article, the wind is blowing in favor of the revolution; it breaks out everywhere, unfortunately, everywhere! And in Reims, as elsewhere, you sail following the wind.*" The provincial of the Company of Jesus in Lyon wrote to Rimbaud reproaching him for the spreading this letter, "*so serious for the honor of the Company of Jesus*" (DROULERS, vol. 1, p. 289, and note 184). The honor of the Company was compromised not by the spread of a Jesuit cardinal's letter, but by the support given by the Company to the school of Reims!
- 130) PRÉVOTAT, *op. cit.*, pp. 343ss.



131) After the dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum* the campaign against the “integralists” continued making public the documents previously sent to the Vatican. On January 11, 1922, *La Nation belge* (Walloon nationalists) took up the “*Anonymous Memorandum*” (of Mourret) to attack Joncks, who had become a “Flamingant” operative. The article, signed Virey, is by Alphonse Janne (1870-1928). He takes revenge on the *Correspondance de Rome* (S.P.) (behind which was Merry delVal), he who in 1909 began a journalistic campaign that had earned him dismissal from the newspaper *La Croix* for an article in favor of Briand’s politics. On January 13, an article was published in the *Courrier de Genève* and on January 30, in the *Excelsior* of Paris; between January 17-28, a series of articles in the Catholic newspaper of Amsterdam, *De Tijd*; the author is the Dutch priest Peter J.H. Geurts (1869-1928), heir to the Höner fund, professor at the Ruremonde seminary, who in 1911 had to resign as editor-in-chief of the same newspaper, for which he hated the integralists. The articles were later published in one volume in 1927.

- 132) *Cahiers anti-judéomaçonniques*, marzo 1933, no. 5, p. 73, cit. by POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 460, footnote 32. The E.R.D.S.: in French *Entente Romaine de Defense Sociale*, in Italian I.R.D.S., *Intesa Romana di Difesa Sociale*, founded by Msgr. Benigni after the First World War.
- 133) POULAT, *Intégrisme*, *op. cit.*, p. 78. The other two points of rupture, according to Poulat, were the Secretariat of State and the Company of Jesus.
- 134) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-265, 338-350, 361-364.
- 135) Regarding Father Henry Le Floch, a Spiritan Father and rector of the French Seminary in Rome (which trained future transalpine bishops), Jacques Prévotat questions the rumor, also supported by some traditionalists, according to which he, consultor to the Holy Office, would have hidden the documents of the 1914 trial against Maurras, thus preventing Pius XI from immediately having those documents that would have been useful to certify the continuity with his predecessor. A letter from Cardinal Merry del Val to Father Le Floch, cited by Prévotat, is categorical in this regard (*op. cit.* pp. 337ff). Not for this reason, therefore, but due to an internal faction by some professors, Pius XI removed Father Le Floch from the leadership of the seminary during the A.F. crisis.
- 136) In the background that led to the 1926 decree, Prévotat lists a survey carried out in Belgium which showed that among all the writers considered teachers of Catholic youth, Maurras came first. We have seen that Msgr. Benigni, before Pius XI, realized this danger.
- 137) *Wojtyła “una cum” Blondel...* in *Sodalitium* no. 34, pp. 39ss.
- 138) See *Sodalitium* no. 27, p. 20 and no. 22, p. 15, with the full text of the letter to Marc Sangnier’s widow.
- 139) Information taken from *Vérités XV (Notre ‘perfidie’. Nos ‘inepties’. Nos ‘impiétés’*, by Luc Verus, Paris 1929), *Vérités XIV* (1928) and *Vérités X (La continuité pontificale*, 1928). Nina Valbousquet, speaking of the *Vérités* collection, speaks, rather than of an irreverent tone, of a schismatic tendency (*Catholique et antisémite*, *op. cit.*, pp. 267ff), especially in the 1930s (when Monsignor Benigni had nothing to do with it anymore). The tone is certainly irreverent, and more than irreverent, favored by anonymity and the fact that the editors were often secular (Merlier, Rocafort...) but I don’t see the schismatic spirit. And unfortunately, the facts reported were true, and sad. We note that, despite a denunciation to the Index by the Cistercians, *Vérités* was never included among the prohibited books.
- 140) *Bulletin Hebdomadaire des Loges Parisiennes*, no. 728, year 1930, cited by HENRI COSTON, *Dictionnaire de la politique française*, Editions Flanant, Limoges, 1967, 1998, p. 959, entry *Sangnier Marc*.
- 141) See *L’Ame populaire, organo del Sillon catholique*, July 1931: *Les encouragements de notre Archevêque*, taken from *Vérités*, XXVII, Paris, 1931, pp. 1 and 2.
- 142) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique et antisémite*, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-262

- 143) There would be countless examples, for which reason I will limit myself to cite the (unrestricted) praise that Father Nitoglia expressed in 2017 for Msgr. Joseph Tiso, president of Slovakia, “*an example of a true Christian ruler*”. Msgr. Benigni is condemned by Father Nitoglia for having collaborated with the fascist government, that is the government of his country, while Msgr. Tiso (an exponent of the Christian Social movement, that is the *Partito Popolare*) receives praise when he collaborates with a national-socialist government of a foreign country. Taking nothing away from Msgr. Tiso, I don’t understand my confrere’s measure of judgment.
- 144) Until the 19th century, not only Italy, but also Germany maintained a multiplicity of states, conversely to other European monarchies; the reason is therefore to be found not only in the presence of the papacy and its ecclesiastical state, but also in the legacy of the medieval Empire. With the formal collapse of the ancient medieval Empire under Napoleon’s blows (1806), Italy and Germany each became single states, a centralized one in Italy (1861), a federal one in Germany (1870) (where most of the ancient principalities remained within the framework of the Prussian Empire). On the whole Risorgimento question, see the *VI Day for the Social Reign of Christ* (Modena, 8 October 2011): *Risorgimento: Massoneria e Protestantismo all’assalto della Chiesa Cattolica* (video on our YouTube channel, in particular (for the aforementioned theme of the imperial or universal, rather than the national, vocation of Italy <https://www.youtube.com/watchv=FVKgiEVXNcc&list=PLPV8HFQ0V0sj7g5aukKUnZhb37buxjfq6&index=28> : min. 11.1): *La Controriforma: sconfitta dell’eresia protestante in Italia*. A confidential letter from Monsignor Bressan, from the Pope’s secretariat, and approved by Pius X, sent to Monsignor Andrea Scotton on December 7, 1912, ends with these words: “*as for the unity of Italy , which is the strong point of the adversaries, let it always be pointed out with the most valid arguments that constituting it as it was constituted was a mistake, a political deviation, and on the part of the sects a conspiracy against the Church and against the true good of Italy itself. Italian unity could be constituted legitimately, but respecting the sacred and intangible rights of the head of the Church*” (DIEGUEZ, *Le carte del Sacro Tavolo*, vol. I, pp. 802-803).
- 145) The “Latapie interview” made a sensation in France, that is the imprudent interview that Benedict XV conceded to the French journalist Louis Latapie, which aroused dismay among Belgian and French Catholics (PAGANO, p. 272) and which *L’Osservatore Romano* had to deny.
- 146) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Antimodernism and Catholic Nationalism. The impact of World War I on Msgr Umberto Benigni’s Catholic Integralist Network*, in *Modernism*, 2017, Morcelliana, p. 212.
- 147) The quotation is taken from H. BRAND (U. Benigni), *Notes Internationales: L’Encyclique*, in *Fede e Ragione*, February 4, 1923. The encyclical in question is the first of Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano*. The original text is in French.
- 148) On the one hand Alfons Joncks (1872-1953), accepting a role in the pro-German Flemish government during the war, for which he had been sentenced to life imprisonment in absentia by the Belgian courts in 1920 (and then again to 15 years in 1945), had compromised himself on political issues from which the S.P. wanted to distance itself; on the other hand, there was the suspicion that he had also collaborated with the Germans in handing over the confidential documents of the S.P. during the search of his house (but he probably had little choice!). Pro-German propaganda among Flemish Catholics was spread during the war by the priest Carl Sonnenschein, “*the black beast of integrism, which saw in him one of the pillars of Bachemism and one of the ‘most dangerous of Gladbachists’*” (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 473). Even in this case, an originally religious question became, during the war, a political one.
- 149) Claire Ferchaud, evoking the visions of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1689), proposed (in 1917) inserting the image of the Sacred Heart into the French flag. This devotion was spread by Canon Gaudeau and Monsignor Jouin, among others, while Cardinal Billot opposed it with an article in *Figaro* May 4, 1918. The thinking of the integrals close to Msgr. Benigni? It can be found in a book by I. Récalde (abbé Boulin) *Le message du Sacré-Cœur à Louis XIV et le Père de la Chaise, étude historique et critique*, 1920, absolutely against the initiative. On the topic see also:

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- E. APPOLIS, *En marge du catholicisme contemporain: millénaristes et naundorffistes autour du 'secret' de La Salette*, in *Archives de sociologie des religions*, no. 14, 1962, pp. 103-121.
- 150) According to Valbousquet, who cites Pollard, the article did not please Benedict XV; the Secretariat of State tended to exclude the Roman Question from international politics (unless the Central Powers won, as we will see later!).
- 151) The letter, only partially published in the *Disquisitio* (pp. 277-279) and in the French translation of the *Disquisitio* in E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 542-544, had been disclosed in full in Guido Aureli's memorial, now published by N. VALBOUSQUET-A.M. DIEGUEZ, *Il complottismo di un nostalgico integralista. Guido Aureli e il suo memoriale su Monsignor Benigni e Pio X*, in *Modernism*, Morcelliana, year 2018, pp. 206-217.
- 152) For further details, see E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 543-547, especially footnotes 6 and 7, and N. VALBOUSQUET-A. DIEGUEZ, *Il complottismo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-215. On the contrary, the accusation of his working for Russia against the Central Powers was the pretext for the search of Ghent against the S.P.: POULAT, *ibidem*, pp. 524-536.
- 153) VALBOUSQUET, *Antimodernism...*, p. 221.
- 154) Letter of February 8, 1923 to the Honorable Giuseppe Bottai, cited in VALBOUSQUET, *AntiModernism...*, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
- 155) CARLO M. FIORENTINO, *All'ombra di Pietro. La Chiesa Cattolica e lo spionaggio fascista in Vaticano 1929-1939*, *Le Lettere* publishing house, Florence 1999, pp. 27-28, footnote 67. On the matter of the clash between Msgr. Benigni and the German Christian Democratic press, cited by the Italian informant and which actually occurred in 1912, see POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-244, in particular footnote 10 and F. TACCHI, *La Curia romana...*, pp. 111-114. The note from *L'Osservatore Romano*, *A proposito di una velenosa corrispondenza*, was published on March 8, 1912; the previous day, Benigni had already thanked the Secretary of State. The Augsburg newspaper was the *Augsburger Postzeitung* "the main organ of the Bavarian Center which, a year ago, had come under the control of J. Bachem". The article ("Le macchinazioni contro i cattolici tedeschi", 1 March 1912) accused Msgr. Benigni of betrayal of Polish Catholics in favor of the Russian Empire and of support of Freemasonry! In reality it aimed higher: at Merry del Val himself, and at Pius X.
- 156) E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 544, my translation from French.
- 157) VALBOUSQUET-DIEGUEZ, *Il complottismo...*, p. 204.
- 158) VALBOUSQUET-DIEGUEZ, *Il complottismo...*, pp. 204-209. The only possible trace of Risorgimento spirit can be found in the reproach made to Austria for having condemned to death Father Tazzoli (one of the "martyrs of Belfiore"). But this is Aureli's thought, not Benigni's.
- 159) On the support for Franz Ferdinand by integral Catholics - including Benigni's group - see. E. POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 528 and *Catholicisme...*, p. 408 (Saint Pius X himself had faith in him). Subsequently, however, Benigni's judgment on the deceased Archduke was negative, due to the influence that the Jesuits had on him, to which he attributed Cardinal Rampolla's anti-Italian policy (*I Gesuiti e l'Italia fascista. Documenti e fatti*. Rome, 1927, cited by the *Civiltà Cattolica*, *Internazionalismo e nazionalismo nelle diffamazioni di un'agenzia clandestina*, year 78, 1927, vol. IV, p. 392). Other integral Catholics were more favorable to Austria, such as Father Cavallanti in *L'Unità Cattolica* (who was actually close to the Jesuits): TAGLIAFERRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 194ff, even if the Florentine newspaper, upon the death of Franz Joseph, was much more sober than the *L'Osservatore Romano* (pp. 238-239).
- 160) See *Sodalitium*, no. 60. February 2007 and above all no. 65, February 2012: *Il conclave del 1903, il veto contro Rampolla, l'elezione di san Pio X*.
- 161) ANNIBALE PALOSCIA, *Benedetto fra le spie. 1914: l'anno fatale della Grande Guerra*, Mursia, 2013, p. 34.
- 162) VALBOUSQUET, *Antimodernism...*, p. 231.
- 163) A. PALOSCIA, *op. cit.* pp. 44-46.
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- 164) Erzberger (1875-1921) was the leader of the party's left. Among the signatories of the German capitulation, he became finance minister of the Weimar Republic. He was murdered by a commando of the Freikorps.
- 165) Bishop Pagano, of the Vatican Secret Archives, still presents the defensive thesis today (*Documenti sul modernismo romano...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270 and footnote 44).
- 166) ALBERINDO GRIMANI, *Per il Duce o per il Papa*, Rome, 2014. Interesting book, rough in some pages, unpublished now (I thank the author for having sent it to me). It is based on the archive of Emanuele Brunatto, and on the book by the same, written under a pseudonym in 1933, "*Gli anticristi nella Chiesa di Cristo*". On Von Gerlach, in the aforementioned work, see chapter VIII, from page 88 to page 94, merciless towards Benedict XV (p. 87, as well as the entire chapter XII on Carlo Diana) and the future Pius XI (p. 92). I decline any responsibility for Brunatto's conclusions in this regard (Carlo Diana or Diano is mentioned in FIORENTINO, *op. cit.*, P. 83; the existence of his correspondence with the Pope was known to the Political Police).
- 167) "*Garibaldi's late lieutenant*": a harsh judgment, however, not devoid of plausibility, especially after the speech in which Mussolini commented on the Lateran Pacts, and which the integrals of *Fede e Ragione*, although favorable to the Concordat, did not fail to criticize harshly: "*The State, coming from mouth of the Hon. Mussolini, wanted to highlight its juridical pre-eminence: we are, therefore, always about Febronius and about Joseph II*" (SPECTATOR-SASSOLI, *Note politiche. Il discorso dell'on. Mussolini sugli accordi lateranensi*, in *Fede e Ragione*, May 15, 1929, p. 165). Mussolini said, among other things: "*In the State, the Church is not sovereign and is not even free. It is not sovereign due to the 'contradiction that does not consent to it'; she is also not free, because in her institutions and in her men she is subjected to the general laws of the State and is also subjected to the special clauses of the Concordat. Which is why the situation can be defined as follows: Sovereign State in the Kingdom of Italy; Catholic Church with a certain pre-eminence loyally and voluntarily recognized; free admission of other faiths. (...) Italy has the singular privilege, of which we must be proud, of being the only European nation that is the seat of a universal religion. This religion was born in Palestine, but became Catholic in Rome. If it had remained in Palestine, it would most likely have been one of the many sects that flourished in that red-hot environment, such as those of the Essenes and the Therapeutians, and it would most likely have died out, leaving no trace of itself (...). Another statement: in the first eight centuries of Christianity there is no trace of a civil principality in the history of the Church (...). Moreover, the most summary history tells us that in the first three centuries Christianity was the religion of a minority that was poorly known, poorly tolerated and finally and intermittently persecuted by the emperors. It is only in the years 311-313 that religious freedom was granted to Christians first by Galerius, then by Constantine and Licinius, with the famous Edict of Milan. This event coincides with the terrible massacre of all the descendants of the old imperial families - men, women, children - ordered by Licinius, after the defeat and suicide of Maximinus. Fifteen centuries later, something similarly horrendous happened in Russia, with the massacre of all the Romanoffs. It is Constantine who introduces the ecclesiastical forum. Some of the benefits granted to Christians in civil matters will give substance to future agreements stipulated by the Church with the civil authorities. And only through the negotiations and deeds between Charlemagne and Leo III was the civil principality of the Roman Pontiffs established. This lasts ten centuries. (...)*". After speaking about all the blows inflicted on the Pope's sovereignty (Napoleon, the Roman Republic, the Kingdom of Italy) and mocking the inadequate papal army, he concludes: "*At this point you will say to me: 'But why this historical lesson?'. Because I want to show you the precedents, because I want to show you that I am consistent, and that not only do we not deny the Italian Risorgimento, but we complete it.*" Mussolini then exalts the precursors of the Conciliation, especially Bishop Bonomelli. "*Well, gentlemen, we have not resurrected the temporal power of the Popes: we have buried it. With the treaty of February 11, no territory passes to Vatican City other than that which it already possesses and which no force in the world and no revolution would have taken from it. The tricolor flag is not lowered, because it was never raised there.*" "*Be warned, then: there is the Vatican City, and then there is Rome. From the time of Augustus we had to reach 1870 to once again find Rome the capital of*
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Italy; but from 1870 to 1929 there was still a reserve, still a mortgage of a moral nature. This mortgage and this reserve on the part of the highest religious authority in the world disappears today. Rome belongs only to the Kingdom of Italy and to the Italians. I hope that you will perceive the enormous importance of this fact (...). "That said, there is no doubt that, after the Lateran agreement, not all the voices that were raised in the Catholic camp were in tune. Some have begun to prosecute the Risorgimento; others found the statue of Giordano Bruno in Rome almost offensive. I must declare that the statue of Giordano Bruno, melancholic like the fate of this friar, will remain where it is. It is true that when it was placed in Campo dei Fiori's square, there were very violent protests; even Ruggero Bonghi was against it, and was booed by the students of Rome; but now I have the impression that it would seem like we were becoming cruel towards this philosopher who, if he erred and persisted in his error, paid for it. Of course, it is not even worth thinking that the monument to Garibaldi on the Janiculum could have a different location. Not even from the point of view of the horse's neck. I believe that Garibaldi can calmly look in that direction, because today his great spirit is appeased! Not only will it remain, but in the same area the monument to Anita Garibaldi will be built by the fascist regime. It was noted that some Catholic elements, especially among those who had not burned all ties with the ideologies of the Partito Popolare, intended to make a case against the Risorgimento. They read appeals of this kind: let's multiply our ranks, let's tighten our ranks, let's close the ranks, etc., etc. Naturally, when faced with this phrasebook, one is forced to ask: but what is happening? It is a curiosity that in three months I seized more Catholic newspapers than in the previous seven years! This was perhaps the only way to bring them back into the right harmony! (...) Nor should you think of denying the moral character of the fascist State, because I would be ashamed to speak from this platform if I did not feel that I represented the moral and spiritual strength of the State. What would the State be if it did not have its own spirit, its own morality, which is what gives strength to its laws, and through which it manages to make its citizens obey them? What would the State be? A miserable thing, before which citizens would have the right to revolt or scorn. The fascist State fully claims its ethical character: it is Catholic, but it is fascist, indeed above all exclusively, essentially fascist. Catholicism integrates it, and we declare it openly, but no one thinks, under philosophical or metaphysical species, of changing the cards on the table! (...) When, at the culmination of the negotiations, Camillo Cavour, anxiously recommended to Father Passaglia: 'Bring me the olive branch before Easter', he felt that this was the supreme requirement of conscience and progress in the national revolution. Today, honorable comrades, we can bring this olive branch to the tomb of the great builder of Italian unity, because only today is his hope realized, his vow fulfilled!" (From the Acts of the Italian Parliament. Chamber of Deputies. Discussions. Year 1929 – Volume I, pp. 129 154). Mussolini's speech clearly is not Catholic, and considers the Church purely as a human institution, and not a divine one, whose possible rights derive not from God but from a concession from the State. However, we must honestly take into account the fact that he intended to justify the Concordat from the criticisms of the most anticlerical elements of the Regime.

168) POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 464, footnote 35.

169) Carlo M. FIORENTINO (*op. cit.*, pp. 131ff) distinguishes three different attitudes towards fascism in the Curia: "the first of these attitudes present in some cardinals responded to the old intransigence, which made inroads especially in the older cardinals, which took no account of the Lateran Pacts, and indeed expressed every reservation about the action of Pius XI and his Secretary of State Gasparri, which had led to the signature of February 11, 1929, that is, to the definitive renunciation, on the part of the Church, of its ancient temporal prerogatives over the city of Rome. The pope's vicar, Basilio Pompilj, 'one of the dissident cardinals who remained a friend of Merry del Val', belonged to this group of cardinals. Pompilj showed himself openly hostile both to the fascist government, to Vatican politics and to Pius XI himself, towards whom he did not fail to direct 'harsh criticism and even vulgar and irreverent jokes'. The reason for Pompilj's attitude, which did not weaken but indeed became radicalized with the passing of time, was the Concordat and the way in which it had been implemented" in particular with regard to the role played by Francesco Pacelli. For this reason Pius XI and Gasparri wanted to replace the Vicar, and the Pope

summoned Pompilj in December 1929 “*urging him to spontaneously submit his resignation. On that occasion, however, the elderly cardinal reiterated his aversion to the Conciliation and expressed his intention of not wanting to resign from the position he had held with dignity for many years*”. Pompilj then criticized Msgr. Pizzardo for his management of Catholic Action, and attributed his own illnesses “*to the persecution brought against him by the Pope*”. The vicar of Rome complained: “*they gave away Rome without telling me anything, that is, they gave away Rome, its prestige, its historical importance, its monuments, its churches, as if it were an Abyssinian village*”. “*His death which occurred on May 5, 1931 put an end to the physical and spiritual suffering of the Card. Basilio Pompilj, perhaps the last important protagonist of the now anachronistic temporal protest of the Holy See*”. Other cardinals who shared Pompilj’s thoughts were Ragonesi, Verde, Capotosti, Bisleti, Marmaggi, some of whom were reported to be close to Merry del Val.

- 170) The same Msgr. Benigni (or someone from his network), though in favor of the Concordat, notes in one of his reports to the Political Police: “(Cardinal Francesco Ragonese was) *the Pope’s terror and hatred, because in his brutality he did not abstain from making a scene with him, like when the Pope signed the Concordat without saying anything to the cardinals*” (informative note “42”, Rome, 14 September 1931, cited in FIORENTINO, p. 139, footnote 23). The authoritarianism of Pius XI was, after all, proverbial and known to all.
- 171) “*The priest, Dr. Father Paolo de Töth came to me, speaking about the disappointment of Cardinals Boggiani and Merry del Val at having been totally cut off from the ongoing negotiations for the Concordat between Church and State in Italy. I did not fully understand the reasons for this move against the Jesuits, who would have liked to make a monopoly of the recent negotiations. Since they were cardinals, I thought it appropriate to let you know their state of mind*” (letter from Arnaldo Mussolini to his brother [Benito, the *Duce*], Milan, February 7, 1929, cited by VANNONI, *La Chiesa del Concordato*, *op. cit.*, p. 470, Footnote 74). But Father Tacchi Venturi kept vigil on Mussolini; whose political realism advised him in any case not to take into account a party that was then a minority in the Church.
- 172) VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, p. 157.
- 173) The French republican government that freed Rome from Mazzini’s republic in 1849 was certainly not Catholic in sentiment, nor was the ancient *Carbonari* Napoleon III who helped Vittorio Emanuele II against the Austrians, and also in his annexation of the papal provinces of Romagna, Umbria and the Marche, but who ensured that Lazio remained with the Pope. It was not France’s interest to allow Italy to be too strong.
- 174) On this whole sad question, see VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique et antisémite...*, p. 260, which makes note of various reports by Benigni to the Ministry of the Interior, both before and after the definitive break on the subject of the Concordat: the reports of August 30 and October 10, 1928 on the R.I.S.S., and those against Boulin’s article: May 17, 1929 (*French bile for the Conciliation*), July 7, and November 30, 1929. The tones are very heavy.
- 175) *Veritas*, V, no. 41, October 20, 1928, p. 1, cit. in POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 464, footnote 36.
- 176) “*We are fully: against any attempt to diminish, to make secondary, to systematically dissimulate the papal claims to the Roman Question, to hinder the social influence of the Papacy, to let secularism dominate; for the tireless vindication of the Roman Question, according to the rights and directions of the Holy See, and for a continuous effort to bring, as much as possible, social life under the legitimate and beneficial influence of the Papacy and, in general, of the Catholic Church*” (no. 8 of the program of the S.P., in *Disquisitio*, p. 264). Pius XI, in his first encyclical of 1922, had claimed the rights of the Holy See and protested about the Roman Question; the Concordat of 1929, however, was according to “*the directions of the Holy See*” and envisaged a renewed social influence of the Papacy and the Catholic Church for Italy and indirectly for the world. This was the challenge of the Concordat: to make Italy a truly Catholic country, and not just a concordatory one. The gamble failed due to Mussolini’s secularist background, of course, but also due to the Christian-democratic infiltration into the ranks of Catholicism. The defeat of Italy after the war, the republican constitution (which incorporated the Concordat) opposed to the principles of the

Concordat itself, the religious freedom proclaimed by Vatican II and the outcome of the new Concordat (1985) as an application of the Constitution and the Council, buried the hopes of making Italy a truly Catholic State again, and of making reign into it the Social kingdom of Christ the King, which was so hoped for by Pius XI in the encyclical *Quas Primas*.

- 177) The 10 points of the I.R.D.S. program date from October 1, 1928 and were published in the international edition of *Romana* (October-November 1928) and also in *Fede e Ragione* October 28-November 4, 1928. French text in POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, pp. 528-530.
- 178) In a notice to the Political Police in July 1928, Msgr. Benigni wrote: “*While the old Freemasonry is clamping down on fascism from within and out, the question of ‘remaking’ a fascist Freemasonry is kept alive among selected initiates*” (F. GIORGIO, *Ignis cova sotto le ceneri*, Fondazione Evola, L’arco e la corte, 2022, p. 127, footnote 1). The “*old freemasonry*” represented by the two obediences (Palazzo Giustiniani and Piazza del Gesù) and which were dissolved in Italy (not abroad) after the law on secret societies, continued however to influence fascism (from within) or fight it (from without); the “*new re-made Freemasonry*” was the one designed by Reghini with the Ur Group.
- 179) VANNONI, *Integralismo cattolico...*, pp. 456-457. The article by Benigni (H. BRAND) is: *Per la difesa sociale. Il motore della Rivoluzione*, in *Fede e Ragione*, February 18, 1923, p. 6.
- 180) VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique...*, pp. 161-162 who quotes, among other authors, a writing by Benigni from October 1923 (*L’internazionale ebraica stringe sempre più Mussolini*) and by Boulin in the R.I.S.S. (*L’œuvre de Mussolini*, March 23, 1924) even more skeptical. On the support given for a long time by the fascist government and even that of the socialist-nationals to certain Zionist movements, even in anti-English tones, see E. RATIER, *I guerrieri di Israele*, Centro librario Sodalitium, Verrua Savoia, 1998.
- 181) See for example, the conclusion of the article *Ezra Pound and Theosophy*, in *Sodalitium*, no. 67, December 2015; my presentation to RAFFAELE AMATO’s book, *Vangelo e moschetto*, Solfanelli, 2019; the videos of the a *Day for the Social Reign of Christ*, Modena, October 12, 2019. By other authors: GIANNI VANNONI, *Massoneria, Fascismo e Chiesa Cattolica*, Laterza, 1979; MARGIOTTA, VANNONI, *op. cit.*; and also GIANFRANCO DE TURRIS (editor), *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, Mediterranee, 2006; and LUCA ERWIN FRAGALE, *La Massoneria nel Parlamento. Primo Novecento e Fascismo*, preface by Fulvio Conti (an author close to Freemasonry), Morlacchi Editore, Perugia, 2021. Also on Freemasonry and fascism, a book recently published by *L’arco e la corte* with the collaboration of the *Fondazione Julius Evola: Ignis cova sotto le ceneri*, by FABRIZIO GIORGIO, discovered thanks to a review in the *La Verità* newspaper, October 21, 2022, p. 19: “*When Mussolini tried to create his own pro-fascist freemasonry*”. The pro-fascist, Italian and Pythagorean Freemasonry was supposedly designed by the Freemason Arturo Reghini (who was also a member of the O.T.O., as well as of the Grand Orient) with the support of Evola; the subsequent rift between the two esotericists led to the failure of the enterprise. Despite the title, the content of the article is more cautious about Mussolini’s role (although not sufficiently cautious). Personally, I doubt Mussolini’s support for the initiative, simultaneous with the negotiations with the Church on the Concordat, as the Reghini-Evola group, and the Ur group, wanted to influence fascism to move towards “*pagan imperialism*”, but it was marginal to the Regime, and at times even hostile. Furthermore, Mussolini already had a pro-fascist Freemasonry at his disposal, had he wanted one: that of Piazza del Gesù, of Grand Master Raul Palermi. Reading the book confirmed my first impression, and gave me the pleasant surprise of hearing about Msgr. Benigni as a valourous opponent of this Masonic-esoteric initiative.
- 182) *Fede e Ragione*, January 23, 1927, no. 4; January 30, 1927, no. 5; February 6, 1927, no. 6. The articles are signed *Fidelis*, but they clearly are by Benigni.
- 183) The article cited the expressions “*Deutschland über alles*” (Germany above all) and “*France d’abord*” (First of all France). Today, in different contexts, we say “*America first*” or “*Italy to Italians*”; these are not specifically

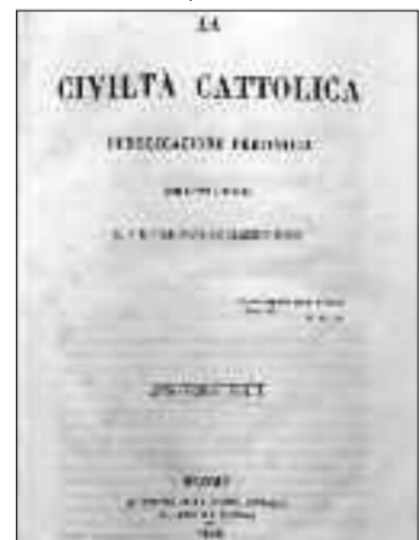
Christian principles but simple natural law (and therefore anything but anti-Christian), if maintained, as explained in the article, within their scope, and not placed as a supreme principle.

- 184) I think it is interesting to report another quote from Sangnier, in the Bierville congresses, also praised by the Jesuit fathers of the *Action Populaire*, which we find in the aforementioned articles, this time concerning the economic-social themes: “*The congress, believing that the strike and low wages are a consequence of the capitalist system, declares that* (and here we allowed ourselves to report the great manifestation in its literal French text) *‘le seul remède aux difficultés actuelles est dans l’établissement d’un nouveau système économique, basé sur le principe de la production organisée en vue de la complète consommation et non des bénéfices, de la coopération au lieu de la concurrence: il engage les Syndicats de jeunes travailleurs de toute race, de toute croyance religieuse, de tout parti politique à créer des comités d’entente afin de pouvoir mieux résister à l’oppression patronale...’*. [‘*the only remedy to the current difficulties is in the establishment of a new economic system, based on the principle of production; organized having in sight the complete consumption and not the profits, of cooperation instead of competition: it involves the Union of young workers of all races, all religious beliefs, all political parties to create committees of agreement in order to be able to better resist the oppression of the employer’*]. Please, couldn’t this agenda also be voted on by the Moscow congress?... Isn’t this the cry of all who preach of class struggle and the prophets of the proletarian advent from Merdokai (C . Marx) to Lenin?...”. As I noted in the Vignola conference dedicated to social-communism, Catholics who are interested in the social doctrine of the Church on economic matters rightly cite the great encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum* or *Quadragesimo Anno*, but they often forget another encyclical that had already condemned the errors, including economic and social ones, of Marc Sangnier, through which the apostle of democracy wanted to apply the principles of the French Revolution to economic life: *Notre Charge apostolique*. This is an encyclical that should be carefully reread by many proponents of unlikely third ways, which are often nothing more than variations on the theme of the eternal socialist error.
- 185) On the resignation of Sassoli de’ Bianchi from the Partito Popolare and as president of the Party’s “right wing”, see two versions: that of Father SALE s.j., *Popolari e destra cattolica al tempo di Benedetto XV*, Jaca Book, 2005, and that of FATHER DE TÖTH, *Filippo Sassoli de’ Bianchi*, Florence, 1958. See also the information that Valbousquet (*Catholique...*, p. 164) gives or could give from the Benigni Files in particular of a meeting between Sassoli, Boggiani, de Töth, Benigni and Reggio d’Aci to decide on the exit from the right wing (the right wing which had never persuaded Benigni, considering it to be, as it was, “*a misunderstanding of the White International and a Jesuit trap*”, December 1, 1920)
- 186) GIANNI VANNONI, *Massoneria, Fascismo e Chiesa Cattolica*, Laterza, 1980, especially chapter six (pp. 164-192), with particular attention to the figure of Father Oreste Nuti (1850-1926), “the last intransigent” of the group of *Fede e Ragione*.
- 187) ‘Spectator’ was the pseudonym of Count Sassoli. The fact remains that the opinion given by ‘Spectator’ on original fascism, was evidently shared by the other collaborators of the newspaper.
- 188) G. VANNONI, *Integralismo...*, pp. 451-452 who cites *Fede e Ragione* from May 24, 1925, October 25, 1925 and July 25, 1926.
- 189) Leafing through the years of *Fede e Ragione*, there are countless examples. Even in 1942, now a simple parish priest, Don de Töth complained to the bishop that “*the greatest difficulty is encountered in the religious education of adults, and also of young people, after their first Communion, and as soon as they enter fascist organizations, which distract and distance them from attending Church*” (MARGIOTTA, VANNONI, *op. cit.* p. 477).
- 190) *Filippo Sassoli de’ Bianchi*. Florence, 1958, pp. 147-149 for the full quotation.
- 191) MAURO FORNO, *Comunisti, ebrei e massoni: mons. Benigni da Londra scrive al Duce*, published in the *Contemporanea* magazine, Il Mulino, 1/2005, pp. 87-104, where, in a report sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he wrote about himself, sincerely, although with a hint of irony: “*I am not a fascist*” (April 1926).

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- 192) On the Constantine-Mussolini theme see ALBERTO GUASCO, *Il 'Nuovo Costantino' fascista. Immagini e utilizzi dell'Imperatore tra Chiesa cattolica e Regime*, in *Costantino I, Enciclopedia Costantiniana...*, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, Rome 2013, vol. III, pp. 469ss.
- 193) In addition to the dissolution of the *Sodalitium* at the end of 1921, it must also be considered that in 1923 Msgr. Benigni, along with other teachers, was dismissed from teaching (which he had carried on at the Academy of Ecclesiastical Nobles) only a few days after the resumption of school, on November 17, 1923, by Msgr. Zonghi (Dieguez). Furthermore, after the lively hopes raised not really by the election of Pius XI, but rather by his programmatic encyclical (1922), *Ubi Arcano*, Msgr. Benigni wrote, on February 20, 1922, to Monsignor Pizzardo, Substitute at the Secretariat of State, already his student and protégé, asking him to intervene on his behalf with the new Pope. Pizzardo, instead, would become an enemy and persecutor of Msgr. Benigni (and friend of the Popolari), but this episode shows how in 1922 he still glimpsed the hope of working directly in the service of the Church. In 1923 the position of Pius XI, "*Pope in Jesus' company*", had become clearer (in a negative sense for him) while paradoxically the national government began to abandon the anticlerical positions of the fascist movement to fight (more or less) not only social-communism but also Freemasonry and democratic Catholicism.
- 194) Pietro Mataloni (1889-1966), son of Giuseppe Mataloni, editor of the *Voce della Verità*, (a Catholic journal for which Msgr. Benigni was made director at the behest of Leo XIII from 1901 to 1903), and of Settimia Benigni (alias Jolanda, according to Valbousquet), the unhappy sister of our Monsignor. Mataloni signed up for the National Fascist Party in 1925 (see FIORENTINO, *op. cit.*, p. 20n).
- 195) Born in Naples in 1887, defined as "of good morality" in a confidential note from the police commissioner of Rome at the *Polizia Politica* Division, she was instead defamed as being immoral by Msgr. Benigni's valet, Domenico Bordi, in a letter to Father Rosa, of *Civiltà Cattolica*. It was Msgr. Benigni's confessor, Father Emery, of the church of San Carlo al Corso, who recommended her to the prelate when he was looking for a secretary. E. Poulat - who talks about the issue on pp. 37-38 of *Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme*, Casterman 1977 - shows that he believes Bordi's slanders to be unfounded (and those of his prompters). The Political Police controlled the correspondence addressed to Bianca D'Ambrosio from 1928 to 1931, when their control was suppressed; they dealt with correspondence from abroad for the drafting of the international bulletin in the French language of Msgr. Benigni's *Urbs* agency, (see FIORENTINO, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-22). (Other information in ALBERINDO GRIMANI, *Per il Duce o per il Papa*, already cited).
- 196) MAURO CANALI, *Le spie del regime*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2004; CARLO M. FIORENTINO, *All'ombra di Pietro. La Chiesa Cattolica e lo spionaggio fascista in Vaticano 1929-1939*, Le Lettere, Florence, 1999; M. BETTINI PROSPERI, *Le carte di Umberto Benigni*, "*Clio*", XVIII (1992), pp. 289- 300. Documented works, however not without some errors.
- 197) FIORENTINO, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22; Bettini Prosperi, p. 289.
- 198) The Political Police (Pol.Pol) was created by Arturo Bocchini (1880-1940) at the end of 1926, after he was called by Mussolini, in September 1926, to the General Directorate of P.S. (Canals, pp. 59-60). The Ovra "*came to light a few months after Pol.Pol., as its operational arm*". "*Although the need for it was felt, the OVRA nevertheless came to light almost by chance, and perfected itself, so to speak, while 'in progress'*. *The extemporaneous nature of its institution is demonstrated by various elements, starting from the name, which was coined only when it had already been operating for a few years. (...) Leto recounts that 'Bocchini used to say that Mussolini got the idea from an octopus, and by removing the 'p', had created the name OVRA, in whose interpretation the Italian people indulged themselves (...) Leto maintains that there was never 'an official interpretation of this acronym, which however was commonly explained as follows: 'Opera volontaria repressione antifascista' [Voluntary anti-fascist repression work] or 'Organizzazione vigilanza reati antistatali' [Organization for the surveillance of anti-state crimes]*" (CANALI, pp. 302-303).
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- 199) CANALI, *op. cit.*, p. 560. In the address book of the head of the police, the name Benigni does not appear, but only that of D'Ambrosio, as an operative from September 27, 1927. In 1931, however, the name D'Ambrosio is wholly replaced by that of Msgr. Benigni (FIORENTINO, pp. 22-23; CANALI, p. 560).
- 200) POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, *op. cit.*, p. 459 footnote 29 which cites P. SCOPPOLA, *Chiesa e fascismo*, Bari, Laterza, 1971, pp. 145-159. While Vannoni also attributes these relationships with Mussolini's Secretariat to Benigni, Forno instead excludes it: "Given the state of our current knowledge, we can with good approximation exclude Benigni's involvement in any initiatives attributed to him in the past. He was, for example, extraneous to the periodic reports on the situation of the Holy See issued during the 1920s to the Duce's private secretariat by an unspecified 'Vatican informant'. These reports, discovered over thirty years ago by Pietro Scoppola, and which he hypothetically attributed to 'an element linked in some way to Benigni', are in fact almost certainly attributable to the journalist Francesco Zanetti, a former collaborator of the newspaper *Osservatore Cattolico*, of the magazine *Momento di Torino*, and of the *Osservatore Romano* of which he would become editor-in-chief thanks to the support of Cardinal Merry del Val" (MAURO FORNO, *Comunisti, Ebrei e massoni: mons. Benigni da Londra scrive al duce*, *op. cit.*, p. 19). Forno cites FIORENTINO (*All'ombra di Pietro*, pp. 23-26) who informs us about the figure of Zanetti (1870-1938), who was however not without contact with our Monsignor, as well as with Card. Merry del Val and his right-hand man, Msgr. Canali.
- 201) SERGIO PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano dal Fondo Benigni*.
- 202) Original Latin text in *Disquisitio*, pp. 296-297. French translation in POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 604. Original Italian translation in *Di fronte alla calunnia* (April 1928) pp. 5-6 and in *Fede e Ragione*, June 3, 1928, p. 194.
- 203) *Nuovi documenti sull'Integrismo. Sodalitium Pianum e Action Française*, an extract from *Storia contemporanea*, no. 4/5, October 1981, Il Mulino. A curiosity: Vannoni speaks extensively about Coudenhove-Kalergi's pan-European plan, also linked to Briand and, in the Church, to Gasparrian circles: pp. 727-729.
- 204) ALEJANDRO MARIO DIEGUEZ, *Fondi dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano relativi al modernismo*, in "In wilder zügelloser Jagd nach Neuem", Brill, 2019, p. 29.
- 205) Ordained in 1888 for the diocese of Perpignan, archpriest of the Saint-Jean Cathedral from 1907, dean of the cathedral chapter from 1910, he was proposed for the episcopate.
- 206) Among them were Ion Motzo or Mota (1902-1937), brother-in-law and right-hand man of Codreanu, who died fighting during the Spanish war, and Alexandru C. Cuza (1857-1947). Among the friends of the Intesa, I would like to point out Eugenio Brandt, a former Tsarist officer, a partisan of Grand Duke Nicholas Romanov (others instead supported Grand Duke Cyril) and an expert, like Benigni, on cases of ritual murder. Nina Valbousquet (thanks to the Benigni Files) thus resolves a small enigma raised by E. Poulat: the identification or otherwise between E. Brandt and H. Brand, the latter a pseudonym of Msgr. Benigni (maybe after Pope Saint Gregory VII's name, 'Hildebrandus'). Poulat favors him in the identification, due to the similarity of the name and the interest in ritual murders (Brandt is the author of the three-volume work, written in Serbo-Croatian, entitled *L'omicidio rituale presso gli Ebrei*, Belgrado, 1926, 1927, 1929, recommended by Benigni in *Romana*) for which he included the volumes in Benigni's bibliography, albeit in a doubtful form (pp. 502-503). Now, however, it is clear that these are two distinct people, since there is even correspondence between the two, preserved in the Benigni Files.
- 207) All the chapters of the book are dedicated to the "antisemitism" of the Umbrian prelate, giving a false picture of his personality and his thinking, as it neglects even more important aspects to focus on only one. The work is divided into six chapters. After a chapter on the antisemitism of Integral Catholics through 1918, and a second on the publishing of the *Protocolli*, the author moves on to examine two initiatives of Benigni: the Intesa per la Difesa Sociale (Ch. 3) and the so called "antisemite International". A chapter on Christian and anti-Christian antisemitism (Ch. 5) and its relationship to nationalism (Action Française in France, fascism in Italy) closes the tendentious work.
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- 208) The same Rabbinic authorities, however, are wary of converts to Judaism, or of the children of a Christian mother, even if circumcised.
- 209) Lesly Fry, a pseudonym for Paquita de Shishamereff (1882-1970) first made contact with Msgr. Benigni in 1922. Although in Wikipedia she was “*an agent of Nazi propaganda in the United States*”, the same Nina Valbousquet, Naziphobe by profession, must admit that she was against pan-Germanism (pp. 201-202, 276).
- 210) FABRIZIO GIORGIO, *Ignis cova sotto le ceneri. Julius Evola, Arturo Reghini e l’Imperialismo pagano*, Fondazione Julius Evola and L’arco e la corte, 2022, pp. 66-67, 89-90, 105-106, 112, 127-129. Reghini and Evola met in 1923 at the Theosophical Society. Benigni’s Florentine informant friends could be those collaborators of *Fede e Ragione* who were close to Papini, who in turn respected Reghini (my guess). The accusation of Satanism is not as hyperbolic as it seems, if you consider that Reghini was behind Evola, who was also affiliated with the O.T.O. (*Ordo Templi Orientis*) by Crowley, “the Great Beast 666”, as the English magician liked to call himself. Finally, note that Reghini intended to found a “fascist” Freemasonry (the one in Piazza del Gesù of the Grand Master Raoul Palmieri which he wanted to supplant would have been enough) but his group also included anti-fascists, such as the anthroposophist Giovanni Antonio Colonna di Cesarò (son of Emmelina De Renzis, sister of the Israeli politician Sidney Sonnino); the fascism of Evola and Reghini was highly doubtful, and in any case subordinated to their anti-Christian philosophy. Fabrizio Giorgio’s book shows us a Reghini eager to have the support and Masonic recognition of the American lodges for his project! On the topic, see *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, edited by GIANFRANCO DE TURRIS, Mediterranee, 2006, especially the contributions by Del Ponte and Iacovella.
- 211) This is enough to respond to Father Nitoglia’s objection regarding Benigni’s collaboration with Preziosi (especially in the fifth episode of his series) in the magazine *La Vita italiana* (only one article, anonymous, on the Jesuits), due to Preziosi’s past (pro-modernist under Pius X, then abandoned the priesthood) and of Evola’s collaboration (stable, in his case). Not only was Benigni in the habit of using the non-Catholic press to pass off Catholic theses (already under Pius X), but furthermore the disapproval of Evola, Preziosi’s collaborator, is explicit. And to think that I still remember today the emotion of a confrere at having met Preziosi’s son... (double standard).
- 212) C. M. FIORENTINO, *All’ombra di Pietro*, op. cit., p. 28; M. BETTINI PROSPERI, *Le carte di Umberto Benigni*, Clio, XXVIII (1992) p. 298, note 20, according to which the Difesa Sociale deficit amounted to 250,000 lire at the time, the result of loans that Msgr. Benigni hoped to “pay back on the occasion of international donations for his 50th anniversary of priesthood (20 December 1934)”. Unfortunately, he died first.
- 213) N. VALBOUSQUET, *Tradition catholique et matrice de l’antisémitisme à l’époque contemporaine*, in *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 62-2/3, April-September 2015, pp. 82-83; *Fede e Ragione*, April 22, 1928, pp. 1-2: The Holy Office decreed the suppression of the association ‘Friends of Israel’. The event is then described in detail, also by VALBOUSQUET (and therefore from an anti-Catholic point of view) in *Catholique et antisémite...*, op. cit., pp. 235-243.
- 214) 19 Cardinals, 278 Bishops and archbishops and around 3,000 priests to be precise: see *Gesù non fu ucciso dagli ebrei: le radici cristiane dell’antisemitismo*, Terra Santa editions, Milan, 2020.
- 215) MARIE-FRANCE JAMES, *Esotérisme et Christianisme autour de René Guénon*, Lanore, Sorlot, 2008, pp. 235-300.
- 216) VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique et antisémite...*, op. cit., p. 237.
- 217) VALBOUSQUET, *ibid.*, pp. 238-239, who cites an article by PIERRE COLMET (abbé Boulin): *Abolition des Amis d’Israël*, in R.I.S.S., April 29, 1928, pp. 369-386.

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- 218) FATHER C. NITOGLIA, *Stanislas Fumet, Jacques Maritain nella genesi di Nostra Ætate*, in *Sodalitium*, no. 57, July 2004, pp. 44-46; N. VALBOUSQUET, *Catholique et antisémite, op. cit.*, p. 236.
- 219) https://www.openstarts.units.it/bitstream/10077/31901/1/Pieraccini_51-82.pdf *Qualestoria*, no. 2, December 2017.
- 220) Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), Spanish theologian of Jewish origin, entered the Society of Jesus in 1564, of which he became the principal doctor (*doctor eximius*). His philosophy, which claims to be Thomist, is however influenced not only by modern times but also by the Scotist and Occamist tradition (voluntarism, nominalism). “*From the scholasticism of the 14th century S. also takes up a critical attitude with respect to the Thomistic “ways” (as regarding every ‘a posteriori’ argument), of which he indicates their limit in their inability to prove the existence of a single spiritual being*” (Enc. Treccani). Along with Scotus, he denies the fundamental principle of Thomistic philosophy, the real distinction in creatures between essence and existence, which distinguishes God from all creatures. On the question of grace, he accepts the fundamental principle of Molinism (middle knowledge). His theory on remote confession and absolution was condemned by the Holy Office. The XXIV theses of Thomistic philosophy are all against Suarez’s philosophical doctrine.
- 221) The hostility between nineteenth-century liberalism and the Company, the anti-Jewish and anti-Masonic campaign of the Company under Pius IX and Leo XIII, could only attract the esteem and trust of the counter-revolutionary school, despite slips such as that of Father Carlo Maria Curci (1809- 1891), founder of *Civiltà Cattolica*, who moved from the defense of the temporal power of the Pope to liberalism, anti-temporalism and finally to socialist openings. Having left the Company, he was readmitted before his death. EMILE POULAT (*Catholicisme...*, p. 212) recalls Benigni’s praise of *Civiltà Cattolica* in the *Correspondance de Rome* (April 11, 1910) “*applauding the valiant Roman magazine*” for its sixtieth anniversary and wishing it “*to triumph ever more in new battles against the open or hidden enemies of the Holy See and the Church*”. Father Rosa himself will bring up to Msgr. Benigni an article from 1903 in his *Miscellanea* in defense of the Jesuits and in condemnation of Pombal, as well as criticism of the 1848 hypernationalism opposed to medieval universalism (*Le nuove diffamazioni di una agenzia clandestina*, April 7, 1928, pp. 64-65): yet for Fr. Rosa that praiser of his magazine was already an astute modernist hidden under the guise of anti-modernism!
- 222) The episode is narrated extensively by M. TAGLIAFERRI, in *L’Unità Cattolica. Studio di una mentalità*, Gregorian University, Rome, 1993, pp. 130-134, and the reproduction of the document on p. 336. The controversy broke out on the occasion of a (feminist) “*women’s congress*” in which also Montessori participated. *L’Unità Cattolica* directed by Don de Töth, and also Father Chiaudano s.j. condemned the conference entirely, while Father Pavissich, in *Civiltà Cattolica*, pretended to show its positive sides. Controversy broke out not only between the integralists (de Töth, Scotton) and the Jesuits, but between the Jesuits themselves (Chiaudano against Pavissich and the C.C.). *La Civiltà Cattolica* then ended up interrupting the exchange of magazines, responded with articles by Pavissich against the integrals, and finally the General of the Company himself, Wernz, prohibited all Jesuit fathers from collaborating with *L’Unità Cattolica* and *Armonie della Fede* (newspapers directed by de Töth and supported by Mattiussi s.j.) (July 29, 1908). Pius X himself had to intervene in favor of the integrals, both by writing to the Jesuits and by congratulating *L’Unità Cattolica* (texts on pp. 134, 338-339). Tagliaferri concludes: “*Pius X encouraged and comforted L’Unità Cattolica, rebuked and dissuaded the Jesuits who opposed him; P. Wernz prohibited his followers from writing in the newspaper dear to the Pope. This remains a singular and extremely interesting fact.*” The much vaunted “*moderates*” were against Pius X, and Pius X was against the “*moderates*”: and whose side are we on?
- 223) *Civiltà Cattolica* had been founded in 1850 by Father Curci, who had then gone over to the liberal enemy. In 1866 Pius IX had established his editors as a college, and reserved the appointment of its members to the General (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 335).
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Father Giovanni Sale, s.j.

224) GIOVANNI SALE s.j., *La Civiltà Cattolica nella crisi modernista* (1900 1907), La Civiltà Cattolica-Jaca Book, 2001. The story linked to the Jesuit father Giorgio Bartoli, writer of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, is narrated by Fr. SALE from p. 238 to p. 254. In January 1904 he published in the C.C. a sympathetic article by the evolutionist philosopher Herbert Spencer. *Unità Cattolica* reacted under the pressure of the Jesuit fathers Casoli and Mattiussi, absolutely opposed to the “modernizing” line of the magazine: “*he arrogated to himself - writes Sale - without a mandate the task of censor of the ‘unofficial’ magazine of the Holy See*” (p. 245): a refrain we know well! The college of writers of *Civiltà* didn’t forget it, and in 1904 and then in April 1906, they refused to accept Fr. Mattiussi among its members (let’s remember Father Rosa was in the college in 1906!) (p. 245). And how did Father Bartoli fare? He became a Waldensian: see his letter of 1909 to his former brothers (p. 416). As for Father Sale “*the*

hardest and crudest intransigence” of Fathers Casoli and Mattiussi is the only thing to be condemned. Mattiussi in fact “*was the true éminence grise of L’Unità Cattolica, the inspirer of many hateful battles conducted even ‘against respectable authors’ and in defense of an integral Catholicism even before this role was assumed by Umberto Benigni with very other means and other perspectives, and his infamous Sodalitium Pianum*” (p. 245). This is also a refrain we know well.

225) On Father Giuseppe Chiaudano (1858-1915) and his ambivalent relationship with Msgr. Benigni’s group, see POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 335-336. Extensive information in SALE (*La Civiltà Cattolica...*, especially on p. 309). An exponent of the “Turin school”, belonging to one of the three “right-wing” houses of the Company (that of Chieri, the others were the *Leone XIII* college in Milan, and the house of Florence). Unlike the young Benigni and the “Leoniani”, he always fought the very term of “Christian democracy”, and not just its erroneous concept (p. 306), and along the mature Benigni he opposed “Catholic syndicalism”, which earned him the appointment as director of *Civiltà Cattolica* (1913-1915) by Saint Pius X.

226) “*It seems that this choice was not too pleasing to the fathers of Civiltà Cattolica, since Father Chiaudano had fought the orientation taken by the magazine on social and political matters for several years. His direction, which lasted from 1913 to 1915, gave the magazine a harshly integral approach, not shared by the majority of the fathers who were part of the College of Writers*” (SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, p. 309, note 64). In the letter of appointment as director, Pius X asked his collaborators to be models of “*sincere and integral*” Catholic journalists. In the Italian translation of the letter, the magazine “*avoided the rough term*” (i.e.: integral) by translating “*integrally*” as “*entirely*”. And this, “*not without intention and reason*”, comments POULAT (*Intégrisme...*, p. 337). Just as, not without intention, Pius X had instead used precisely that... rough term, which the Jesuits of Via della Ripetta really couldn’t stomach.

227) From the Benigni Files: “*October 30, 1914: It is confirmed that it has been thought and continue to being thought about removing Father Chiaudano from Civiltà Cattolica. He would be replaced by Fr. Rosa, whose Gladbacanist articles provoked Pius X to appoint Fr. Chiaudano. It will probably be postponed*”, in PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano*, p. 268

228) PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano, op. cit.*, p. 268; SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica nella crisi modernista, op. cit.*, pp. 244, 338 footnote 141; POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 335-337.

229) Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), a member of the Socialist Party since 1914, founded the weekly *L’Ordine Nuovo* in 1919. In 1921 he was among the founders of the Communist Party of Italy of which he became the leader from 1924 to 1927. After a time in the Soviet Union (where he met his “wife”, the Jewish Giulia Schucht) and after an experience in Parliament, he was imprisoned by the fascist regime from 1926 to 1934. Between 1929 and 1935 he wrote the *Prison Notebooks*. Particularly attentive to the peculiar Italian situation, where the influence of the

Catholic Church predominated, he also dealt with the conflict between modernists, “Jesuits” and integral Catholics with great attention.

230) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 388-398. While Pius X was still alive, the German Jesuits of the magazine *Stimmen aus Maria Laach* wrote: “*The acts of dead Popes are subject to the criticism of history. So history will one day bring its judgment on the extrinsic value and results of Pius X’s pontificate. But the acts and decisions of the reigning Pope oblige Catholics to filial and internally sincere obedience, even if we’re not speaking of mechanically blind and dead submission... In the Church no one is exempted from making use of his own reason and of all natural means. God has never promised to preserve ecclesiastical superiors from every false step and every misunderstanding. The Popes need first of all prudent and open-minded advisors; the responsibility that weighs on those around the papal throne is enormous... But however great this possibility of humanly erring and even humanly sinning, we never have the right to rebellion or to poisonous and bitter criticism.*” The criticism of the “moderate” Father Lippert s.j. wasn’t perhaps poisonous, his arguments were perhaps true in theory (but woe betide you if you apply them to Pius X’s successors! The arrogance! They only apply to Pius X and his friends!) but Pius X didn’t appreciate the article, and replaced the editor of the magazine. The reason for the “moderate” criticism of the “moderate” Jesuit? The attacks by the non-moderate Integrals: “*A similar war (on modernism, ed.) has had bothersome secondary consequences, not intended by Pius X, such as the mania for calling other people heretics, or the gossip and boring arguments, the pedantry of obtuse spirits...*” which Pius X, guess what, supported. The same old only accusations of “bitter zeal” coming from those pious people with “honeyed zeal”... and hypocritical [zeal].. As for history, it has judged Pius X, and it has proclaimed him a saint.

231) Father Léonce de Grandmaison s.j. (1868-1927), of whom Loisy wrote “*I have only heard good things about him*” (June 27, 1927) became director of *Études* in 1908. Two articles caused a sensation: the first, shortly before the death of Pius X (*Critiques négatives et tâches nécessaires*, January 5, 1914) was a very harsh attack on the integral Catholic press, which everyone knew was supported by Pius X; the second after the death of the Pontiff (*Pie X et son œuvre*, August 20, September 5 and 20, 1914) complained that under Pius X, the Integrals “*have never been disowned.*” The pontifical directives “*have been subjected to the explicit approval of the Holy Father, and just as it would be unfair to make him responsible for all the measures taken in these matters, so it would not be loyal and in accordance with the truth to make too clear a distinction between Pius X and his entourage. Some one of his servants might have exaggerated his intentions, influenced his feelings, interpreted his instructions too narrowly; but there is no doubt that the pope’s personal ideas were in agreement, especially after the Pascendi encyclical, with those of very conservative theologians who afterwards made their points of view prevail and their tendencies approved. In dubiis libertas. However, such august preferences added to them an indisputable authority especially when Pius X was still alive.*” The measures taken “*in recent years in an almost constantly restrictive manner*” mean that “*it would be premature and foolhardy to evaluate them.*” Certainly not a nice eulogy, with the body still warm! See POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 392-394, where he publishes on pp. 388-389 Benigni’s letter in which he explains the background of this first article against the integrals, supported by his [Grandmaison’s] confreres [Jesuits] also in Austria, Germany, Poland and Italy: naturally by the fathers of the *Civiltà*: Desanti, Rosa, Bricarelli, Tacchi Venturi, Leanza.

232) POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

233) Precisely as a “faithful interpreter” of the Pontiff (a year after the election of Pius XI), Benigni noted that he was “in the ‘company’ of Jesus”, see DIEGUEZ, *Fondi dell’Archivio...*, p. 28). In fact, it was said that whoever wanted access to Mussolini had to go through Father Tacchi Venturi s.j., and whoever wanted access to Pius XI had to go through Father Rosa s.j. (even when Mussolini and Pius XI were in conflict, and whatever the conflict, it was always necessary to go through the Company). This fame as an “interpreter” of Pius XI was also flaunted by his contemporaries, for example by Marc Sangnier’s disciple, Francisque Gay, of whom we have already spoken, who wrote in *La Vie catholique* (November 12, 1927) that Father Rosa was “*un des interprètes les plus autoresés de la*

pensée du Saint Père”, to make people accept, without further examination, Father Rosa's violent and slanderous articles in *Civiltà Cattolica* against Msgr. Benigni, at the heart of the controversy between them (see *Vérités*, no. XIII, *Les découvertes du jésuite Rosa successeur de von Gerlach*). The allusion to von Gerlach was based, among other things, on the fact that he too had been Benedict XV's favorite, to the point that the Pope believed in his innocence even after the conviction in court, Ambrogetti's confessions and the scandalous life of the German prelate. Luc-Verus, in *Vérités*, explained his intent thus: “*And yet for us laughter gives way to sadness, when we are told: ‘Eh, Rosa is director of Civiltà Cattolica! It is he who informs and advises the Pope!’. This is because we do not forget that Pius XI is the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the infallible guardian of Catholic dogma. This is why we suffer for everything that undermines his prestige and the authority of his word. It is to serve the Church and France that we take it out on unworthy servants who, not content with deceiving the Pope, attribute their own inventions to him by passing themselves off as his ‘faithful interpreters’*” (p. 5).

- 234) According to Father Rosa, “*accepting complaints so easily about people worthy of high regard*” meant, for a Pope, “*going beyond the limits of prudence*” (Roman ordinary Process, in *Positio super introductione causæ*, 1942, p. 299, and *Positio super virtutibus*, 1949, p. 430)” (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, pp. 336-337).
- 235) ROBERTO DE MATTEI, *Modernismo e antimodernismo all’epoca di Pio X*, in *Don Orione negli anni del modernismo*, Jaca Book, 2002, p. 68. De Mattei cites in a footnote Father G. MARTINA s.j., *Storia della Chiesa*, vol. IV, p. 100.
- 236) Father Rosa, deputy director of *Civiltà Cattolica* in 1913, boasted of having had the approval of Pope Pius X to authorize a series of articles in which the C.C. distanced itself from Integrals. The director of the *Unità Cattolica*, Father Cavallanti (ALCA) responded to him with an article entitled “*Father Rosa and Alca*”, this certainly with the approval of the Pope, through his private secretary Msgr. Pescini, who commented: “*from now on Father Rosa will be careful not to reply!*” (PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano*, p. 267).
- 237) *Nuovi libelli contro la Compagnia di Gesù*, in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1922, vol. I, March 4, pp. 417-427.
- 238) GIOVANNI SALE, “*La Civiltà Cattolica*” *nella crisi modernista (1900-1907)*, La Civiltà Cattolica-Jaca Book, Rome, 2001, Document 16, pp. 444-445.
- 239) In politics, the “Catholic” but nondenominational and hierarchy-dependent party was the Zentrum, founded in 1870 and which, starting from 1906, had taken “*inter-confessionalism and declericalization*” as its watchword. The Volksverein (People's Union for Catholic Germany) depended on the Zentrum, with headquarters in Munchen-Gladbach, near Düsseldorf, hence the term “Gladbachism”. On social issues, German Catholics were divided between the “Berlin school” (*Verband katholischer Arbeitervereine ‘Sitz Berlin’*) led by exponents of the *Sodalitium Pianum* such as the Berlin aristocrat Franz von Savigny (1859-1917), and the priest Heinrich Fournelle (1869-1923) as general secretary, supported by Count Hans-Georg von Oppersdorff (1886-1948) also of the S.P., the deputy director of the periodical *Klarheit und Wahrheit*, and by Cardinal Georg von Kopp (1837-1914), with the bishop of Trier, Michael Felix Korum (1840-1921) faithful to good doctrine, and the “Cologne school”, defended by Cardinal Fischer, a pro-modernist Christian Democrat. The former were naturally for confessional trade unions, only Catholic, which put the religious question first, the latter for nondenominational syndicates which united Catholics and Protestants, and looked to the left, putting aside the religious question to deal only with the economic side. Famous representatives of this Gladbachist current were the Bachems (hence the expression “Bachemism”): the deputy and historian Carl (1858-1945), son of the publisher Josef, and his cousin Julius (1845-1918) whose program was to “*get the Catholics out of the tower*” (1906), with his son Franz (POULAT, *Intégrisme...*, p. 199). Joseph Bachem spoke with pleasure about his father, who exhibited, during a procession, the portraits of the Pope and Luther (a forerunner of Bergoglio! See ROBLES MUNOZ, *op. cit.*, vol III, p. 14). Like today, German Catholicism was rebellious: it rose up in 1910 against the encyclical *Edita Saepe* on St. Charles (and against Protestantism) and theology professors in the universities demanded exemption, in 1911, from the anti-modernist

oath (*ibid.*, p. 236). The encyclical *Singulari Quadam* of September 24, 1912 expressed the Pope's preference for confessional unions also in Germany, but the Cologne school clung to exceptions to the rule to make the exceptions become the rule. The “*peace of Metz*” (1913) did not last long, and the war was in full swing in 1914 at the death of Saint Pius X. In Italy, Cardinals Maffi and Rampolla (*ibid.*, p. 407) and the *Civiltà Cattolica* (SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, pp. 185-187, 206-207, 222-232, 446-447) obviously supported Cologne, while Merry del Val and De Lai were opposed. A recent study by FRANCESCO TACCHI, *La Curia romana e la Germania durante la crisi modernista*, edited by Viella, delves into the theme and vicissitudes relating to Christian trade unions from 1900 to 1914, when, with the death of Cardinal Kopp, the closest to school of Berlin, and that of Pius X, the (Integral) Catholic cause was definitively compromised. The system of episcopal appointments in force in Germany, election of the bishop by the canons of the cathedral with heavy interference from the imperial Protestant government, explains the impotence of Rome, even then, in Germany, and the defeat suffered in the “*last battle of Pius X*” (POULAT), the one on Christian trade unionism. The reader must not believe that the matter concerned only Germany. *L'Action Populaire* and the Reims school of Jesuit Father Gustave Desbuquois – as mentioned – followed the same line as Cologne (see the long chapter V, *Les luttes, la querelle du syndicalisme 1912-1914*, in P. DROULERS, *Politique sociale...*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 231-392). Again in 1922, under Pius XI, Cardinal Chollet, Bishop of Cambrai, secretary of the A.C.A. (Association cardinaux et archevêques) “*with a courteous, but no less inquisitorial tone, questioned Father Desbuquois on the trade union question: why ‘Christian’ and not ‘Catholic’ (i.e. confessional) trade unions? Why ‘unions’ and not rather ‘professional associations’, to which religious activities were not prohibited by law (unlike trade unions), in which the ecclesiastical authority would have had the role it deserved, and ‘within the framework’ of which, groups or unions could ‘pursue material interests’? (in a word, the formula of the ‘Berlinerichtung’ of yesteryear). It was the entire orientation of Rerum novarum developed by social Catholics that was once again called into question by the Archbishop*” (P. DROULERS, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 134-135). Actually, it was the ‘social Catholics’ who, by developing the doctrine in their own way, betrayed Leo XIII and *Rerum Novarum*, Pius X and his *Singulari Quadam*.

- 240) Much has been said about this “*banker Simon*”, about whom Father Rosa would write extensively in his subsequent articles, calling him “*the Parisian Croesus Simon*” (*Civiltà Cattolica*, no. 1831, October 2, 1926). EMILE POULAT (*Intégrisme...*, pp. 593-594) does justice to this fable by identifying him with the war maimed proprietor Alfred Simon (1866-1946), who was anything but a banker, friend of Abbé Boulin and Henri Merlier.
- 241) “*It goes without saying that someone questioned his morality. Twice. (...) The least that can be said is that similar stories also abounded about many other and much more illustrious characters: is it worth mentioning the two nuncios in France, Cerretti and Maglione, the famous Montagnini, Merry del Val himself and – even worse – the future Pius XI, treated like Benigni?*” (POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, pp. 37-38; one could add, in relation to the von Gerlach case, Benedict XV himself, not to mention more recent and perhaps, just perhaps, more well-founded cases).
- 242) P. DROULERS, *op. cit.*, p. 137, footnote 93.
- 243) *Disquisitio*, pp. 32 and 40; VANNONI, *Massoneria, Fascismo e Chiesa cattolica*, pp. 186-187; *Conduite de Saint Pie X dans la lutte contre le modernisme*, *Courrier de Rome*, 1996, p. 75. In the same testimony, Father Saubat alluded to the *Civiltà Cattolica* as “*the magazine that propagated these calumnies...and has never retracted them*” (*Conduite...*, p. 74).
- 244) *Disquisitio*, *op. cit.*, p. 26, the French version is quoted, p. 63: “*He shows himself to be not only well informed, but also quite fair in his judgments..*”
- 245) NINA VALBOUSQUET, ALEJANDRO MARIO DIEGUEZ, *Il complottismo di un nostalgico integralista. Guido Aureli e il suo memoriale su Monsignor Benigni e Pio X*, in *Modernism*, anno 2018, p. 195.
- 246) Poulat and Pagano report the rumors made by the modernists against the morality of Msgr. Benigni, rumors regarding a previous period, that of Pius X and even Leo XIII. Buonaiuti to Piastrelli: “*I know – with certainty –*

that the Vicariate once started a trial against him for some complaints about his morality; the trial, however, had a negative outcome. Benigni has a woman at home whom he calls a housekeeper, and who in fact (I was able to verify this because I frequented his house for two years) acts as a lady and is served by a maid. Until four or five years ago Benigni kept a little boy at home, whose attitude towards Benigni was precisely that of a valet. One fine day this boy disappeared. As for ideas, I can say with certainty that when it comes to Benigni, one should be skeptical” (no trace of the aforementioned trial). Oratorian Federici to the same: “There have been many rumors about his sudden departure (from Genoa, ed.). Some said that moral reasons were not unrelated to his departure, that is to say that the Archbishop’s Curia would have fired him based on unflattering information, etc.” (to have him be called to Rome by the Pope? n.d.a.) (PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano*, pp. 226-227, footnote 5). Paul Sabatier to Paul Imbart de la Tour: “There are some sexual stories against him that I preferred not to delve into” (December 20, 1907); A. Houtin, more picturesque: “Benigni had a son by a Russian lover, and there was a trial for his conduct by the Roman ecclesiastical court” (handwritten note, 1911); even for a certain ‘Karl von Aretin’, in 1970, Benigni and his collaborators (Brunner, Schoppen, Kaufmann, Vercesi) would have abandoned the priesthood (false for everyone; moreover Vercesi was pro-modernist and anti-integrationist) (see POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 37). “*N’importe quoi*” from “*n’importe qui*”... [whatever from whoever...].

- 247) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, once praising Msgr. Benigni, began to attack his anti-modernist activities in 1914, the year of the death of Saint Pius X, in the climate of the clash over the non-denominational nature of the trade unions, and of the end of a pontificate which was now poorly tolerated: vol. I, p.454, and vol. II p. 582. Following the dissolution of the *Sodalitium Pianum*, in which the Society played, let us remember, an important role, we highlight two articles against the publication of the anti-Jesuit pamphlets signed I. de RÉCALDE: *I gesuiti, studi e libelli* (1921, vol. I, p. 568) and *Nuovi libelli contro la Compagnia di Gesù* (March 4, 1922, vol. I, notebook 1721, pp. 417-427). The most violent *ad personam* attacks, however, began after the condemnation in 1926 and the subsequent search.
- 248) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, vol. III, quaderno 1829, September 4, 1926, *Ultimi episodi di modernismo*, pp. 420-425.
- 249) Buonaiuti incurred excommunication as early as 1907, an excommunication decreed against the anonymous author of the “*Program of the Modernists*” in response to the encyclical Pascendi. In 1916, the first nominal censorship: the suspension *a divinis* for collaboration with the journal of the science of religions, resolved by Cardinal Gasparri with the farce of an anti-modernist oath which we have spoken of. Rehabilitated, he incurred nominal excommunication for the first time on 12 January 1921 due to his book on the last supper in Saint Paul. Once again Gasparri intervenes on his behalf and has him acquitted of the censure. He could do nothing on March 24, 1924, when he was again excommunicated. On January 30, 1925 he was stripped of his ecclesiastical habit, and on January 25, 1926 he was declared excommunicated *vitandus* (major excommunication).
- 250) Monsignor Ricardo de Samper (1873-1954) was appointed privy chamberlain by Leo XIII in 1899, Cup-bearer to His Holiness (1905), Canon of the Vatican Basilica and supernumerary Proto-Apostolic Notary (1910) under Pius X. Benedict XV appointed him Master of the Chamber (from 1914 to 1921) and then Majordomo to His Holiness (1921). This position was not only honorific (Palatine prelate, he was one of the four ‘small tassel prelates’) but put him in continuous contact with the Pope as an important member of the Papal Family and the Papal Chapel, being responsible for the Apostolic Palace, the ceremonies, and hearings. In 1922, he was governor of the Conclave that elected Pius XI. Below him, and next to the Pope, was the Master of the Chamber, Msgr. Camillo Caccia Dominioni.
- 251) This is probably Father Lorenzo Tommaso Regattieri, author of some hagiographic, devotional or scholastic books (the latter are generally translations from French). He is sometimes called a Dominican religious, sometimes just a tertiary: probably from a tertiary he then became a religious.
- 252) The fact is told in detail by Alberindo Grimani (*op. cit.*) but also by Father Giovanni Sale s.j. who publishes an unpublished document by Father Rosa, undated but probably contemporary with the meeting of Msgr. Bevilacqua

with Father Regatieri. After having traced a chronology of the “errors” made by Msgr. Benigni while he was in the Secretariat of State from 1908 to 1911 (in particular those concerning the “German Catholics”, or the Christian Democratic “Centre”), Father Rosa adds the following anecdote taken from Regatieri: “*It is notable that the priest Regatieri, a Dominican tertiary (living near San Domenico in Turin), a student of the University of Fribourg, who came to Rome at that time to report some suspicious manifestations in that University to the Holy Father Pius X, was directed by the same Pontiff to Msgr. Benigni. The Rev. Regatieri, negotiating for several days with Msgr. Benigni was somewhat scandalized by his lack of piety and the way in which he celebrated the Holy Mass. Having reported this to the Holy Father Pius X, he replied: ‘I sent you to Msgr. Benigni so that you might inform him about Freiburg, and not to examine his piety’*” (in *La Civiltà Cattolica nella crisi modernista*, La Civiltà Cattolica/Jaca Book 2001, p. 447). The document ends here, without (explicit) comment from Fr. Rosa. We cannot know what is true in the Regatieri story reported by Rosa (and also by Brunatto): certainly, at least here, there is no mention of any bad habits of Msgr. Benigni. However, the text of Regatieri and Rosa’s thoughts are revealing not only regarding Msgr. Benigni, but on Pius X himself, who unlike them, was not so easily scandalized (whether it was the scandal of a ‘pious’ soul or a Pharisaic one) and who had full trust in Msgr. Benigni. Finally, note that it is possible that the connection with Regatieri was due to the fact that Fr. Rosa was Piedmontese, and knew well the Turin environment where Regatieri lived.

- 253) Carlo Perosi (1868-1930), brother of the famous musician, was called by Cardinal De Lai, in 1908, to be substitute of the Consistorial Congregation, where he remained until 1911. Named Regent of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary, he became a consultant to the Holy Office in 1916 (under Merry del Val and Benedict XV). Upon the death of Cardinal De Lai, in 1928, he was called to succeed him as pro-secretary and then, created cardinal on June 24, as secretary of the Consistorial Congregation. In 1928 he was a bitter enemy of Msgr. Benigni.
- 254) CARLO M. FIORENTINO, *All’ombra di Pietro. La Chiesa Cattolica e lo spionaggio fascista in Vaticano 1929-1939*, Le Lettere, 1999, p. 22.
- 255) “*In my book, among other events of the years 1927-1928, there are also explanations as to why Msgr. Umberto Benigni was sullied by the infamous accusation that you know about, thanks to the testimonies of his former valet Domenico Bordi and the Dominican friar Lorenzo Regatieri of Turin. The principals were the Jesuit Father Enrico Rosa and Card. Carlo Perosi, and the executor Msgr. Felice Bevilacqua. This, in summary, is the result of my research, if I have drawn the right conclusions*” (email from the author Alberindo Grimani, director of the Emanuele Brunatto Archive, Rome, to Father Ricossa, September 11, 2014).
- 256) MAURO CANALI, *Le spie del Regime*, Il Mulino, 2004, pp. 289 and 769.
- 257) Propositions condemned by Blessed Innocent XI: proposition 30: “*For a man of honor it is permissible to kill an aggressor who tries to attack with slander, if this shame cannot be avoided in any other way; (...)*” DS 2130. Proposition 44: “*It is probable that he who brings a false accusation against another to defend his righteousness and honor does not sin mortally. And if this is not probable, then there is no probable opinion in theology*” DS 2144. They were the theses of Becanus (1563-1624), Vasquez (1549-1604), Escobar (1589-1669), Moya (1610-1684) etc. all Jesuits.
- 258) “*Brunatto is a total scoundrel and, among other things, he wants to make the Vatican pay for his having missed out on the position of head of the pontifical secret police, which had been promised to him*” Rome, July 14, 1933, information from No. 42 (Benigni-D’Ambrosio), Emanuele Brunatto file, cited in SERGIO LUZZATTO, *Padre Pio. Miracoli e politica nell’Italia del Novecento*, Einaudi, pp. 215 and 227 (we warn against this author). Alberindo Grimani, faithful to the memory of Brunatto and custodian of his archives, in “*146, Boulevard Hausmann*”, Rome, 2013, (pp. 61-63) believes that this judgment is revenge for the 1928 investigation against Benigni, and he is surprised that this was not Bianca D’Ambrosio’s opinion; in his later “*Per il Duce o per il Papa*” he instead takes a stand for Msgr. Benigni’s total innocence (see previous note on the issue), which is difficult to reconcile with

Brunatto's 1933 book (*Gli anticristi...*). More likely is that Msgr. Benigni was disgusted by the unexpected pages about him in "*Gli anticristi nella Chiesa di Cristo*", which dates back to 1933, and which however obtained the "liberation" of Padre Pio. Without a doubt Brunatto "blackmailed" the Vatican, but only to have the measures against Padre Pio removed, and without a doubt he was a man devoted to the stigmatized friar, but, in his life, he was often unscrupulous.

- 259) "*Padre Pio crocifisso dalla Chiesa degli anticristi (romanzo infernale)*" di ALESSANDRO GNOCCHI, in *Riscossa cristiana*, September 28, 2018, taken from the website of the *Confederazione dei Triarii*. "*Gli anticristi nella Chiesa di Cristo*" and can be found on the site "*Totus tuus*" of Father Alfredo Morselli.
- 260) "*Le modernisme catholique*" of E. Buonaiuti, in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, vol. III, no. 1850, July 16, 1927, p. 147.
- 261) In the articles he raised against Benigni and Buonaiuti, of 1922 and 1927, he is instead very indulgent for "young" Milanese modernists of the Rinnovamento (among whom was Gallarati Scotti), "*astonished at the blasphemies that the sect leader of Roman modernism sent to them for publishing*" (p. 142, year 1927), and indulgent for Maruice Blondel "*dangerous philosopher but sincere Catholic*" (ibid, p. 147). It is this strategy that saved modernism and enabled Vatican II.
- 262) "*Fede e Ragione*" and the "*Civiltà Cattolica*" regarding "*I fanciulli alla comunione*" by Fr. Semeria, in *Civiltà Cattolica*, quaderno 1852, August 20, 1927, pp. 324-328; very violent article against *Fede e Ragione* to defend the old modernist. The following article (*Il 'libro giallo' di una pretesa potenza. L'Action Française et le Vatican*) does not apply the same "charity" used with Semeria to Maurras' disciples, but takes advantage of it to lash out again against Benigni, although not naming him (pp. 330-331 and note 1): "*those of the Récalde gang and one of its Roman agencies, who abuse the episode of the A.F. for their sordid intentions, profit, revenge and private malice, trying to muddy and confuse the issues*" etc. etc.
- 263) "*Father Rosa's political action in this period consisted of pressing the fascist regime through his articles in Civiltà Cattolica (...). Father Rosa's journalistic activity had shown itself to be hostile to fascism since Mussolini's rise to power, so much so that it aroused the apprehensions of the Pontiff. In August 1929, the Holy See, to avoid embarrassment with the government, was forced to temporarily exile the Jesuit to Spain*" (C. M. FIORENTINO, *All'ombra di Pietro*, Le Lettere, 1999, pp. 178-179).
- 264) Information on this subject in POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 501. In *La Ronda* Benigni wrote only two articles, none on Benedict XV, obviously, and Poulat recalls that Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton collaborated on the magazine, whom Father Rosa does not dream of reproaching. In 2015-2016, following the publication of Bruno Pischedda's book, *L'idioma molesto. Cecchi e la letteratura novecentesca a sfondo razziale* (publisher Aragno), all the national newspapers talk about the relationships between Msgr. Benigni and the famous Italian writer Emilio Cecchi (1884-1946), father of Suso Cecchi D'Amico and Dario Cecchi. A collaborator at *Ronda* and *Corriere della Sera*, Cecchi also collaborated with Msgr. Benigni: "*This is where we find the delicate relationship with Monsignor Umberto Benigni, a scholar and ecclesiastical professor who was first a reformer and then increasingly reactionary, of whom Pischedda reconstructs well the growing manifestation of ethnic hostility and his career as a secret plotter, as well as the patronage he exercised on Cecchi after the war. Under Pius X, Benigni will start an 'information service', with a news agency and a weekly newspaper, designed to discredit any heterodox expression. It is a complex and protean organism, whose censorship mission, extended at an international level, will be implemented around 1920 in an 'anti-Semitic bulletin' and in other organically racist sheets. It is a secret anti-modernist and anti-Jewish plan which envisages a network of militant informers of whom Cecchi, like other Rondistas, does not fail in providing writing contribution or operational support in terms of proselytism: a double level of militancy demonstrated by the unequivocal traces contained in the correspondence*" (*Osservatorio Antisemitismo*, December 28, 2015). See also the article by Gabriele Rigano (*Note sull'antisemitismo in Italia prima del 1938*) published in the journal *Storiografia* (no. 12, 2008, pp. 215-267) with a beautiful description of Msgr. Benigni from Emilio Cecchi,

in 1924: “*I know of only one major Catholic journalist, but I will have to be content to leave him unnamed. For him journalism, his journalism, is a mission; military no less than religious (...). In his poor house, where silent, dark-clad characters gather from all parts of the world, he really has the air of an old commander, now, outwardly, a little apart, but in reality very active. (...) A strategist, but with a face lined with scars; and with that unstoppable impetus to go back down and fight, which reveals the old man-at-arms. The noise of the conflict thunders in the room, even more dramatic and mysterious than the original. During the pauses, stories, memories and anecdotes from past campaigns multiply. At that moment, the ears of many people must be ringing, in the most distant and guarded Legations, Secretariats and Chancelleries. And if it weren't for the crucifix that opens its arms wide from the wall, I fear that sometimes it would end up in the far-off world, ringing in the ears of even some Popes.*” The influence of Msgr. Benigni on the culture and politics of the time was profound as well as unknown: see what VALBOUSQUET writes about it, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

- 265) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, April 7, 1928, vol. II, quaderno 1867, pp. 55-68.
- 266) In this article there is a quote (p. 66) from Msgr. Benigni who, it must be honestly acknowledged, seems in favor of the Risorgimento, but there are so many points of interruption that I reserve the right to verify their source.
- 267) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, vol. II, quaderno 1869, May 5, 1928: “*L'assoluta incoerenza del modernismo*” *confessata da Ernesto Buonaiuti* (pp. 235-245).
- 268) Buonaiuti himself states this in his autobiography: “*and I remember, like today, the intimate sense of voluptuous satisfaction with which on the first night of the twentieth century I wanted to spend the hours of darkness sleeplessly, immersed in the reading of that masterful work (l'Action) and overflowing with the 'spirit of finesse', in which Blondel tried to identify trace by trace the path along which our indomitable and worldly unsatisfiable need for Eternity and Absolute rises to God in life. Kant, however, left me hostile and refractory*” (*Pellegrino di Roma, op. cit.*, p. 36). More than his “*Kantian poison*” (quote from Mattiussi), it was therefore the poison of the “*good Catholic*” Blondel (quote from Fr. Rosa) that ruined the young seminarian Buonaiuti. That same Blondel who will later be shamelessly praised by Karol Wojtyła (message to Monsignor Panafieu, archbishop of Aix, February 19, 1993; in the audience with the participants of the international conference *Blondel between “L'Azione” and “La Trilogia”*, November 18, 2000; see *Sodalitium*, no. 34, June-July 1993: *Wojtyła una cum Blondel...*, and no. 66, April 2013, *Genealogie*).
- 269) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, vol. III, quaderno 1874, July 21, 1928: *Risposta ad “una polemica senza onestà e senza legge”* (pp. 158-167); see BUONAIUTI: *Una polemica senza onestà e senza legge. Lettera aperta al padre Enrico Rosa S.J. direttore della Civiltà Cattolica*; UMBERTO BENIGNI, *Di fronte alla calunnia*, by the author, Rome, April 1928.
- 270) *La Civiltà Cattolica*, May 7, 1910, p. 349 citato da POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 212.
- 271) SERGIO PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo Romano, op. cit.* pp. 235, 246, 253-256, 260-261, 285-290; L. BEDESCHI, *Un episodio di spionaggio antimodernista (Documenti inediti sul caso Benigni-De Stefano-Buonaiuti)*, in *Nuova rivista storica*, 66, 3-4 (1972) pp. 389-423; POULAT, *Intégrisme, op. cit.*, pp. 588-589; G. SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica nella crisi modernista, op. cit.*, p. 360.
- 272) G. SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 371-375. Father Sale writes of Buonaiuti: “*he was a man of faith*” “*always faithful to his priesthood*”, he praises “*the love he had for the Church of Rome*”, so that “*his adherence to modernism did not affect his personal faith*” while admitting his heterodoxy. “*As regards the ‘modernist movement’ in general, it should be remembered, however, that not all the theories supported by the innovators (especially the more moderate ones) are to be rejected (as unfortunately happened in those years): in them were not only errors to be condemned, but also new and truly evangelical demands, which the Second Vatican Council would subsequently make its own*” (*op. cit.*, p. 374, footnote 249). Giordano Bruno Guerri, who is not bound to the prudence of the reverend fathers, is not afraid to declare that “*Pope Francis*” has implemented all of Buonaiuti's requests (*Eretico o santo*.

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- Ernesto Buonaiuti, il prete scomunicato che ispira papa Francesco*, La nave di Teseo, 2022) with a sly revision of his previous work on the same character (*Eretico e profeta. Ernesto Buonaiuti, un prete contro la Chiesa*, Utet, 2001).
- 273) G. SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, p. 372, footnote 372. The author believes that the letter precedes 1921, but it is much later, since it cites the denunciation of Domenico Bordi, Msgr. Benigni's valet.
- 274) G. SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 442-443. Father Rosa, who writes from Montecatini, is all in love with the integralist Carlists, who were generally not well-regarded in Rome: but Benigni had to be destroyed.
- 275) He participated, like Fracassini, in the modernist conference in Molveno. In the FUCI, he became a close friend of G.B. Montini. The Umbrian diocesan newspaper *La Voce* remembers him fondly, and writes of our Benigni: "I have a photo of Msgr. Umberto Benigni here in front of me, the founder of Sodalitium Pianum: a stocky priest, a gnarled weightlifting physique, clearly ready for a fight. And in Perugia he hit hard. Piastrelli, Fracassini, Brizio Casciola and above all the very great Don Francesco Mari, who was from Nocera, one of those small dioceses which were then considered a bit like the closet of the archdiocese of Perugia: it was thanks to Don Dante Cesarini that his greatness as a priest and passionate Bible scholar has been recovered." (Angelo M. Fanucci, May 13, 2018).
- 276) E. BUONAIUTI, *Pellegrino di Roma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-46 the 2008 edition, pp. 39-40 in the 1964 edition cited by Pagano.
- 277) POULAT, *Catholicisme...*, p. 188.
- 278) See the entire chapter: *Quel est cet homme?* In *Catholicisme...*, pp. 25-55
- 279) N. VALBOUSQUET-A.M. DIEGUEZ, *Il complottismo di un nostalgico integralista...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196 and footnote 83, and p. 201. On Molajoni, see POULAT, *Catholicisme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 471-472.
- 280) This was an oversight by Father Saubat: when he left the Secretariat of State in 1911, Gasparri was no longer there. It is true, however, that he could easily have changed coats after 1914, and returned to Gasparri's good graces, as many did (but not him).
- 281) C. M. FIORENTINO, *All'ombra di Pietro...*, *op. cit.*, p. 23 footnote 55.
- 282) Together with the German government, the French government was among the most hostile to Msgr. Benigni, for which, as the *Disquisitio* makes clear, the Secretariat of State, for reasons of State, had to sacrifice the Umbrian prelate who, however, had already asked for some time to leave his post to dedicate himself full time to the S.P. Aristide Briand (1862-1932), the anticlerical socialist, was initiated into Freemasonry: for details on his turbulent Masonic career see HENRI COSTON, *Dictionnaire de la politique française*, Flanant, Limoges, pp. 170-173. Father Saubat attributes Benigni's removal from the Secretariat of State to Gasparri (who was no longer in the Secretariat of State) because of the ties between Gasparri and Briand. It is precisely from France and Germany that the maneuver that will lead to the dissolution of the S.P. will come.
- 283) GIOVANNI SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, p. 482. This is not the only blunder of the Jesuit historian, as I have documented. Still on pseudonyms, for example, he writes that Paolo de Gislumberti was a pseudonym of Father de Töth, while it was the real name of a truly existing journalist (*Popolari e destra cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 135 and 171).
- 284) The Catholic University of Father Gemelli lend a hand to *Civiltà Cattolica* in the insults to "Récalde, with an article by Pio Bondioli published in *Vita e Pensiero* (vol. 1, 1928) entitled: *Una campagna contro i gesuiti. Lo pseudo I. de Récalde contro San Ignazio di Loyola*. The article can be purchased online and does not add much to Father Rosa's invectives.
- 285) PHILIP EANDEN s.j., *Ignazio e Lutero*, in *Civiltà Cattolica*, January 23, 2016, quaderno 3974, pp. 140-150. For his unacceptable comparison, the author relies on the closeness between the first Jesuits and the circle of Card. Contarini, that is, those who "wanted to maintain within Catholicism what was good in Lutheranism" (p. 144), and
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on the trials suffered by St. Ignazio during the Inquisition (pp. 148-149) and the suspicions from which St. Ignatius had to defend himself again in his letter to the king of Portugal, John III (March 15, 1545).

- 286) For example, in the volume *Autour d'un Bref Secret de Clément VIII*, Récalde writes: “Once again: nothing, in these documents, can be considered as contrary to Ignatius’ sanctity. What is clear is the Company’s subterfuge. Its founder is in Heaven, since the Church has proclaimed him Saint; but all the reasons invoked for placing him on the altars are not entirely innocent” (p. 99) (the author refers to the historical fact of knowing whether the Saint died with the sacraments or not). Many traditionalists (including, I think, the contradictor of Monsignor Benigni) recognize the legitimacy of John Paul II, Benedict XVI or Francis, but deny certain canonizations decreed by them (such as those of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II himself).
- 287) I report the entry dedicated to him by Miguel Mir Noguera in the Treccani Encyclopedia (1934): “*Historian and writer, born in Palma de Mallorca in 1841, died in Madrid in 1912. Having entered the Society of Jesus at the age of sixteen, he was expelled from Spain with his brothers in 1868 and took refuge in London, where he received holy orders. Returning to Madrid in 1871, he worked with his brothers Cabré and La Torre on the reorganization and publication of St. Ignatius’ papers. In 1891 he left the Company. A tireless worker, he published numerous historical, literary and apologetic works; among them deserves special mention Santa Teresa de Jesús: su vida, su espíritu, sus fundaciones (Madrid 1912, vols. 2). But his work which made the greatest noise was the posthumous Historia interna documentada de la Compañía de Jesús (Madrid 1913, vols. 2); it was immediately attacked by a pseudonym, F. Venzel Pronta, with the Defensa de la Compañía de Jesús (Barcelona 1913) and by the Jesuit Ruiz Amado (D. Miguel Mir y su historia, Barcelona 1914). A French adaptation of the Historia interna was widely distributed throughout Europe (Paris 1922), the author of which hides under the pseudonym of I. de Récalde. Both M.’s work and the French adaptation were put on the Index.*”
- 288) The author writes in the introduction to “*Autour d'un Bref Secret de Clément VIII*”, in 1924: “*It was not this little pamphlet of documentary notes that we intended to offer to the public for the moment, but the important translation of the second volume of the interior history of the Company of Jesus, by Father Miguel Mir. It was ready, and we were busy with the final touches to put it to the press, when the decree of the Holy Office was published, dated May 2, 1923, condemning the learned work of the former Spanish Jesuit, together with our attempt to adapt his first volume to the French public. Now, we have only one way to demonstrate our deference to the Sacred Congregation. The Index does not give the reasons for its opinion; it is therefore impossible for us to submit to his sentence except in generic terms, but we accept, without any reticence of principle, this severe measure, as it was taken, according to the spirit of the Church. We implicitly reprove it in the most absolute way, down to the last inadvertent error or inappropriate word that it is difficult for us to specify better, until we deem it appropriate to designate them precisely. In practice, however much it may cost us materially and morally, we will leave our French edition of Miguel Mir pending until the competent authority authorizes us to continue it. Without a doubt, the Apostolic See does not commit, with a decision of this kind, its doctrinal infallibility, nor its full disciplinary responsibility. In this case only the legitimate exercise of his right of spiritual administration is exercised. But this is enough to bow to the most filial docility, to profound respect for a judgment whose data we do not need to know to admit its conclusions. We will even avoid the temptation to take pride in the thought, perhaps misleading or disappointing, that among the many pamphlets dedicated by us to the Society of Jesus, the only one that has incurred a reproach is precisely one of the last ones published, a simple translation in which we have put very little of our own. God save us from seeking in this a patent of orthodoxy in favor of our writings! We will not even underline the completely new fact, that of the two recently condemned volumes – Mir and a reprinting of the Secret of La Salette – it is not ours, despite its being placed on the Index, of which the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition makes an explicit and special obligation on the Ordinaries to collect from the hands of the faithful. In fact, it could be an unjustified distinction between two equal formulas. We will not even point out that the documents published by Mir cannot be rejected or canceled by a judicial*

decision, and that the Sacred Tribunal certainly did not intend to rule on the material accuracy of the texts. Clearly, its goal was an indiscretion, or some inappropriate comments. That Mir may have been displeased is not without reason, and we had conscientiously taken care to warn the reader! But there is no reason, nevertheless, to fear that he has made any attack on the Faith. It is therefore better, as we will see (in this pamphlet, ed.) to have written the *Historia interna documentada* than to have written the *Ordinationes*, so praised, by Aquaviva (general of the Jesuits, ed.) once convinced (by Clement VIII, ed.) of having attacked natural law and Papal Bulls!" (pp. 5-7).

- 289) Site of M. l'abbé Pivert, *La Fidélité catholique, La méthode Montessori est-elle chrétienne?* November 20, 2002 (www.abbe-pivert.com).
- 290) LUCETTA SCARAFFIA, *Emancipazione e rigenerazione spirituale: per una nuova lettura del femminismo*, in L. SCARAFFIA and ANNA MARIA ISASTIA, *Donne ottimiste. Femminismo e associazioni borghesi nell'Otto e Novecento*. Il Mulino, Bologna, 2002, p. 89. La Scaraffia, who later became Ratzingerian, is of Freemason extraction.
- 291) LUCA IRWIN FRAGALE, *La Massoneria nel Parlamento*, Morlacchi, 2021, p. 54.
- 292) *In Città di Castello a meeting is dedicated to the Baron Leopoldo Franchetti, a free-thinker and Freemason - the Grande Oriente d'Italia - Sito Ufficiale* (June 21, 2014).
- 293) Literary pseudonym of Marta Felicina Faccio (1876-1960). Bisexual, militant feminist, she frequented Julius Evola and Giulio Parise in the esoteric Gruppo di Ur. Earlier an antifascist and then later a fascist, she entered the Communist Party after the war.
- 294) The author of "*Il Santo*" and "*Malombra*" practiced spiritualism, was influenced by Towianski, and had strong contacts with the Società Teosofica: see "*Antonio Fogazzaro e la Teosofia. Una ricognizione sulla base di documenti inediti*" by Prof. Marco Pasi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WitW3tEfp34>
- 295) De Giorgi rightly points out that Don Cavallanti was supported by the "integral" part of the Company: "*the Fathers Guido Mattiussi, Alfonso Maria Casoli and Bellino Carrara, of the Leone XIII college in Milan, the Tivoli Father Alfonso Cerasoli, of the residence in Florence (hard accuser of Giacomelli and Fogazzaro and collaborator of the Scottons' Riscossa), and the already mentioned Father Giuseppe Chiaudano, rector of the theological faculty of Chieri, stronghold of the most extreme anti-modernism*" (DE GIORGI, p. 41). However, they did not enjoy the support of the General, Father Wernz, and of the majority of the college of writers of *Civiltà Cattolica*.
- 296) All the citations were taken from the volume *Il destino di Maria Montessori*, edited by RENATO FOSCHI, ERICA MORETTI and PAOLA TRABALZINI, in the chapter by MORETTI E DIEGUEZ *Il difficile equilibrio tra cattolicesimo e Teosofia*, pp. 103-112, Fefè editore, Rome, 2019.
- 297) CHRISTOPHE CARICHON, *Un scoutisme catholique est-il possible? L'affaire Jeoffroid-Sevin (1924)* in *Le scoutisme. Un mouvement d'éducation au XXe siècle. Dimensions internationales*, edited by Gérard Cholvy, Publications de l'Université de Montpellier 3, 2003, pp. 107-122. I thank Yves Chiron for communicating to me, at my request, C. Carichon's study and other documents relating to the matter. My work had then been finished when Editions Saint Remi announced the publication of the hitherto unpublished text by Father Jeoffroid, with the title '*Notes sur le scoutisme*'. Unfortunately, the introduction is not up to the standard of Father Jeoffroid's text, and even less so is the dedication to Msgr. Lefebvre, who was never hostile to scouting (in fact the opposite). Excellent author (father Jeoffroid), terrible editor...
- 298) On the issue, see also JEAN-JACQUES GAUTHÉ, *Le scoutisme, école initiatique inventée par a general maçon?* in *Histoire du christianisme magazine*, no. 7, pp. 106-112; as well as another article by Ch. CARICHON, *Scoutisme et théosophie*, in *Politeia Hermetica*, no. 17, 2003, pp. 217-137, communicated to me by Stefano Vitali. In the traditionalist movement many are faithful to the scout method; however, there is no shortage of opponents. The magazine *Matines* (no. 33, April-May-June 1983 and no. 34, July-August-September 1983), for example, published

- a dossier (*Le scoutisme vu par la Franc-Maçonnerie*) taken from the Masonic magazine *La chaîne d'union*. The great thing is that the dossier is published by a chaplain of the Catholic scouts, Abbé Veuillez.
- 299) Statement from the Superior General of the Society of Saint Paul, Sir Agenzia Sir, June 5, 2007; see also the obituary of Father Esposito from the same superior, Don Giuliano Saredi, dated November 24, 2007.
- 300) ROSARIO F. ESPOSITO, *Le grandi concordanze tra Chiesa e Massoneria*, Nardini, 1987, p. 388; see also by the same author, *Chiesa e Massoneria. Un DNA comune*, Nardini, 1999, p. 218: present were Grand Master Giordano Gamberini (1915-2003), a gnostic bishop with the name Tau Julianus, the assistant Grand Master Roberto Ascarelli (1904-1970), Israelite, and Augusto Comba (1923-2009), Waldesian; on the side of the “Catholics” were Father Vincenzo Miano, of the Pontifical Secretariat for non-Catholics, Father Esposito, and Father Caprile, Jesuit from *Civiltà Cattolica*. See also: R.F. Esposito. *La riconciliazione tra la Chiesa e la Massoneria. Cronaca di alcuni avvenimenti e incontri*, Ravenna, Longo, 1979, which I was unable to consult.
- 301) Father Joseph Berteloot, Jesuit (1881-1955), first a sympathizer and then an active member of the *Action Populaire* of Father Gustave Desbuquois s.j. which we have talked about so much. “*Desbuquois encourages and advises him in his very secret contacts until then with honest (sic) freemasons, in particular the historian Albert Lantoiné*” (1869-1949), high degree freemason (PAUL DROULERS, *op. cit.*, p. 45, footnote 24). Father Desbuquois's “dangerous friendships” were numerous: the modernist philosopher Maurice Blondel, the Jesuit father - his close friend - Teilhard de Chardin (*ibidem*, pp. 89, 96, 168, 177, 205, 241, 265, 269, 318 -319, 353, 398, 414, 425). For an accurate biographical information, see the entry “Berteloot, Joseph” in MARIE-FRANCE JAMES, *Esotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, Lanore, Paris, 2008, pp. 35-36.
- 302) R. F. ESPOSITO, *Le grandi concordanze...*, p. 42, *Chiesa e Massoneria...*, pp. 69, 139-140, 156. By the same author see also: *Il padre Gruber e la conferenza di Aquisgrana*, in *Santi e massoni al servizio dell'uomo. Vite parallele*, Foggia, Bastogi, 1992, pp. 173-192 and *P. Hermann Gruber. È l'inizio del disgelo cattolico-massonico*, in *Palestra del Clero*, Rovigo, a. 68, no. 2, April 15, 1989, pp. 471-500, which I have not consulted.
- 303) “*Eugen Lennhoff (1891-1944), Jewish, journalist, has been a Freemason of the Großloge von Wien since 1920 of which he becomes Grand Secretary, and is chief editor of the magazine Wiener Freimaurer-Zeitung (1923-1933). Raised to the 33rd degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (RSAA), he is the founder and Sovereign Grand Commander of the first Supreme Council of the RSAA of Austria from 1925 to 1931*”. He is co-author of the “*Internationales Freimaurerlexikon*” (abbreviation: IFL; trad.: “International Masonic Dictionary”) by the freemasons *Eugen Lennhoff and Oskar Posner*” considered “qualified sources” (“qualifizierte Quelle”) for knowing Masonic thought. The IFL (Wien 1932) was the subject of a republishing (1975ff.), plus a new edition in 2000 and a sixth reprint in 2011. Father Paolo Siano, in *Corrispondenza Romana*, April 1, 2020: in this article, with the usual expertise, Fr. Siano demonstrates that, according to Lennhoff's dictionary, there is a magical cult given to Lucifer in Freemasonry; I refer you to the article, which can be found on the *Corrispondenza Romana* website.
- 304) Much later, Reichl adhered to National Socialism.
- 305) G. SALE, *La Civiltà Cattolica...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-229.
- 306) S. PAGANO, *Documenti sul modernismo romano*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
- 307) On Cardinal Bea see the biography of his secretary, STJEPAN SCHMIDT s.j., *Agostino Bea, il cardinale dell'unità*, Città Nuova, Rome, 1987; on his support for the liturgical movement under Pius XII, pp. 224-249, on his ecumenism in the same period, pp. 250-270; see also the episodes of “*The Pope of the Council*” on *Sodalitium*, starting from no. 37 (April-May 1994). It should be noted that Bea, a contemporary of John XXIII, was ordained a priest in 1912, that is, in the midst of the modernist crisis, under the pontificate of Saint Pius X.
- 308) It was Saint Pius X who wanted the Biblical Institute and entrusted it to the Society of Jesus, not trusting the Jerusalem school of Father Lagrange, o.p. In a biography of the Dominican exegete (BERNARD MONTAGNES,

Marie-Joseph Lagrange. Un biblista al servizio della Chiesa, Edizioni Studio Dominicano, 2007, translation of the French edition of 2004: *Marie-Joseph Lagrange. Une biographie critique*, especially pp. 337-361) the opposition continually shines through not only between the conservative school (at that time represented by Father Fonk, a Jesuit) and the progressive school (Father Lagrange), but also between religious orders (Jesuits and Dominicans) and different nationalities (Germans and French). It was the Jesuit Father Bea who "rehabilitated" Father Lagrange by inspiring the encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu* of Pius XII.

309) Read the criticism of this mentality in no. 1 of the *Cahiers de Cassiciacum* (May 1979), pp. 29-30, 63-64, 76-77, 88-90 etc.). In fact, both "sedeplenism" and "sedevacantism simpliciter" (with attached "conclavism") are indebted to this mentality.

310) ALEJANDRO MARIO DIEGUEZ, *Fondi dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano relativi al modernismo, 'In wilder, zügelloser Jagd nach Neuem'. 100 Jahre Modernismus und Antimodernismus in der katholischen Kirche*, edited by HUBERT WOLF, JUDITH SCHEPERS, and FERDINAND SCHÖNINGH (Römische Inquisition und Indexkongregation, 12), Paderborn-München-Wien-Zürich 2009, pp. 13-31.



Fraternal Prayer of Sodalitium Pianum

Composed by Msgr. Umberto Benigni

Jesus Christ Our Lord and Redeemer, that Your holy Cause may triumph against its enemies and false friends we implore You. That You may gather together her faithful, her soldiers in the good fight dispersed throughout the world, we beg You, so that they know each other and find accord in their souls and in their work. Deign to provide them with the material and moral means necessary and providential for this purpose. And we ask You in accordance with Your divine promise, that you always remain among them, blessing them and aiding them in life and in death. Amen.



Coat of Arms of the Sodalitium Pianum (Dieta Sodalitii Piani Romæ)

The shield with the cross made up of five rings represents the various sections of the organization. The inverted red cross is that of Saint Peter. The gold and silver colors are those of the Church; red and gold are also those of the city of Rome.

(Our elaboration from POULAT, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral*, Casterman, 1969, p. 144).

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