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REVIEW ARTICLE

Pietro Carnesecchi and Cardinal Pole: New Perspectives

by DERMOT FENLON

I processi inquisitoriali di Pietro Carnesecchi (1557–1567). Edizione critica, I: *Il processo sotto Paolo IV e Pio IV (1557–1561)*; II: *Il processo sotto Pio V (1566–1567)*, I: *Guigno 1566–ottobre 1566*; II: *Novembre 1566–gennaio 1567*; III: *Gennaio 1567–agosto 1567*. Edited by Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto. (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 43.). Pp. cxix + 577; Pp. clxxix + 370; 371–956; 957–1453. Vatican City: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 1998, 2000. 88 85042 30 9; 88 85042 34 1

The correspondence of Reginald Pole, II: *A calendar, 1547–1554. A power in Rome*. By Thomas F. Mayer. (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History.) Pp. xvi + 410. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. £50. 0 7546 0327 X

The judicial investigation of Pietro Carnesecchi by the Roman inquisition in the years 1546–67 constitutes a major chapter in the history of the Italian peninsula and of the Church of Rome. Thanks to the indefatigable energy of Dario Marcatto, the publication of the documents from the archives of the Roman inquisition now places all the available sources at the disposal of the scholarly world. Massimo Firpo's critical introductions to these two volumes builds securely on his previously published essays, which included an account of Carnesecchi based on the edition of 1870. What he now writes confirms and extends his earlier findings.

From the outset, in 1546, the arrest and investigation of Pietro Carnesecchi was intended to be an exemplary demonstration of Cardinal Carafa's intention to move against 'the enemy within' – those who looked to Cardinal Pole for spiritual leadership. Carnesecchi's arrest was the opening shot. It misfired. In 1546, and again in 1551–2 and 1557–60, Carnesecchi was protected by powerful patrons – in 1546 by Pole himself, by Paul III, by Cosimo I of Florence; in 1551–2 by Julius III; in 1560–1 by Cardinal Seripando and Pius IV.

Carafa's attack on Pole in the conclave of 1549–50 was none the less a clear sign of a long term aim to deploy inquisition records to 'protect' the Church from the election of a pope such as Pole. The same strategy, directed always

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with an eye to future conclaves, underlay his proceeding as Paul IV against Pole and Morone in 1557–8. To save the future of the Church from its recent past – from the influence of Pole, of Morone and of their supporters – was, as Firpo has convincingly demonstrated, the inner object of the successive trials of Pietro Carnesecchi. To build a dossier through 'disclosures' incriminating Pole and Morone was to build a doctrine of history, occluding the uncertainties and fluidity of the pre-Tridentine Church, and establishing the Roman inquisition as the true saviour of events, capable of protecting the Church of Rome from the popes: from Paul III and Julius III, from Pius IV and, prospectively, from a conclave which might elect Morone.

Carafa's 'archival' strategy was destroyed by the sacking of the Holy Office in 1559. The process had to begin again, under the guidance of his successor Michele Ghislieri. Disregarding the humiliation of Carnesecchi's acquittal by Pius IV in 1560–1, Ghislieri and his associates set themselves the target of resuming the Carnesecchi case after the demise of Pius IV. The election of Ghislieri as Pius V in 1565 set the seal on events. The Carnesecchi case was placed in the hands of Ghislieri's chosen lieutenant, Santoro. Santoro understood the mind and shared the opinions of Pius V.

The first task was to build a dossier, on the strength of Carnesecchi's confessions. This was not difficult in the case of Carnesecchi himself. His imprudent exchange of letters with the disciple of Juan de Valdés, Giulia Gonzaga, was intercepted by the Spanish viceroy in Naples and furnished the Roman inquisition with a telling documentation enabling them to break down Carnesecchi's defence, and to falsify his previous declarations. Carnesecchi was thus 'unmasked' as deceiving not only the inquisition but his own protectors: above all, Cosimo I. Firpo believes that Cosimo's surrender of Carnesecchi to the inquisition in 1566 was dictated by fear of an investigation of a Valdésian network in his own court. The discrediting of Carnesecchi in the eyes of his Florentine friends – a process complete by 1567 – was, therefore, a master stroke in the Santoro strategy. Carnesecchi's final trial revealed more than twenty years of dissimulation carefully concealed from his contemporaries and, above all, from his protectors. In 1567 the full documentation was read out before the assembled cardinals in the Church of the Minerva. Morone was not among them. He had fled the city.

But Santoro's ultimate strategy, and that of Pius V, failed. The Carnesecchi documents did nothing to incriminate either Morone or Pole. Towards the end, Carnesecchi was tortured, several times. It is terrible to find his screams carefully recorded in these documents. Terrible too, and moving, is Carnesecchi's refusal to describe Pole and Morone as anything other than completely faithful to the teaching of the Church. As he told his torturers, to get him to say otherwise would be to require him to perjure himself on the eve of his imminent judgement before the throne of God.

This was not what Santoro, or Pius V, wanted to hear. If Firpo is right, and it is difficult to think that he is not, Pius V was obsessed by ghosts in the mirror

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(the phrase is Firpo's). His past, and that of the Church, was haunted by Pole and his disciples. The future of the Church, the elimination of Morone as a figure of influence, depended upon a 'correct' understanding of the Church's, and the public's, 'memory' of the Carnesecchi generation. Carnesecchi's sentence at the Minerva achieved its object in this much at least, that it convinced the curia and the courts of Italy, that a crypto-Protestant underground had been disclosed within the Church, and that the inquisition was henceforward vindicated. The Carnesecchi verdict in 1567 was, as Firpo believes, 'the decisive turning point' in establishing the inquisition as the legitimate custodian of the Church's memory.

One may question that verdict. But it is impossible to question the magnitude and gravity of Marcatto and Firpo's achievement in placing before the world of learning the material which must inform any future attempt to arrive at a more historical understanding of the Church's response to the challenge of the Reformation. In that story the 'Sommario' concerning Cardinal Morone, carefully culled from the Carnesecchi trial by Santoro, formed the nucleus, if Firpo is correct, of the inquisition's 'history' of the 'Church in danger' from within. But the strategy failed. Morone survived. And the 'memory' of Pole was never, as it happened, shaped by its would-be custodians in the Roman inquisition.

On the contrary, in the Catholic world Pole was remembered as a saint. Beccadelli's *Life* of Pole helped to shape a long tradition which, in recent years, has been historiographically redescribed as a 'mito di santità'. It is interesting to find Pietro Carnesecchi testifying under torture (in language which has been thought to belong to a later decade) to Pole's 'heroic sanctity'. Was he the victim of an illusion?

The publication of the second volume of Thomas Mayer's calendar of Pole's letters throws significant light on this question. Carnesecchi was not alone among contemporaries in considering Pole a saint. Those who looked to him for spiritual guidance, whether as bishops, military men or writers were the recipients of letters and sometimes of treatises which, especially after the execution of Pole's mother in 1541, achieve a religious depth which, centuries later, retain a legitimate claim on our attention. Pole's letters contain, too, a view of contemporary history, and of his own role in that history, as in his letter to the privy council in 1549, detailing an account of the English schism which was to shape the outlook of future Catholic generations. As Brian Wormald was the first to recognise, Pole stands at the source of the English recusant historical tradition.

But it was not only English Catholics who looked to Pole. His ability to comfort friends in bereavement shines through these letters. His authoritative account of prayer as 'the one remedy' must surely have reached the heart of his readers. It was spoken from experience. His long account of the conclave of 1549–50 moved contemporaries to look beyond the calculations of the political world to see the hand of God at work, and recognise in the one who

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wrote thus someone who spoke from inward knowledge. Again, on Good Friday 1552, when the Council of Trent was suspended by war, Pole could translate the disappointed hopes of his contemporaries into a theology of the cross, ensuring the reformation of the Church as the action of the ascended Christ in glory 'weaving the cloth' of the Church's reformation from the grief of His disciples. It was, he wrote on another occasion, the 'tears of the bishops' which made for the renewal of the Church. Such a perspective left no doubt about the identity of the Lord of History. Charles V, Granvelle, Francis I, were not among the ultimate actors. Neither was Carafa.

Pole's exchange of correspondence with the Dominican Girolamo Muzzarelli in the early 1550s pulled no punches. What must impress us is Muzzarelli's acceptance of Pole's verdict: the direction now undertaken by the Roman inquisition, in Pole's view, as in Muzzarelli's, was satanic. That, too, constituted a doctrine of contemporary history to redress what was in reality the inquisition's 'myth of history'.

What was at stake was the policy to be adopted in the face of heresy. What Pole proposed (and, as Foxe rightly understood, practised), in England as in Italy, was a policy protective of life. Volume ii of Mayer's calendar closes with Pole's peace mission to the Catholic princes, and his re-entry into Tudor history. His understanding of England in these years drew from Morone the admission that Mary's Habsburg marriage was, as Pole had predicted, distinctly impolitic. The Wyatt rebellion vindicated Pole. But policy remained policy. So too, with respect to Church property: in Habsburg politics, and papal policy, nothing must be done to disturb those in possession. Again and again Pole's stature emerges in his ability to accept politically 'correct' but religiously 'wrong' policy, and to find in humility a way of overturning it peacefully from within, in the hearts and consciences of his contemporaries. That is what emerges from these letters and it is unquestionably the action of holiness, and the action of a great pastor. Carnesecchi, and a generation of contemporaries who echoed his opinion, were not mistaken. Pole's sanctity was not a 'myth'. It was the real thing. It is evident in the depth and quality of his everyday utterance and actions. The publication of his correspondence, now so meticulously calendared, should be taken as an incentive for a critical edition of his works on the scale of the Yale edition of the works of Thomas More.

Something of the kind was envisaged in the eighteenth century by Pole's first editor, Angelo Querini. The project was supervised by Prospero Lambertini. Mayer has uncovered fresh material which suggests that Querini's labours were supplemented, possibly under papal direction, by the ecclesiastical historian Domenico Giorgi. Mayer considers that Querini's 'egotism' may have moved Benedict XIV to look for an alternative editor for Pole. Perhaps. But it seems more likely that Benedict wanted to enlist all the available talent to put Pole into print. The important question is why? Could it be that the failure of the Roman inquisition, and the persistent 'memory' of

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Pole as constituting its most impressive critic, found in Prospero Lambertini, as in Angelo Querini, a generation that understood that Pole, not Carafa, had spoken in accordance with the mind of the Church? Could it be that the canonisation of Pius V in 1712 was a concession to the Roman inquisition as a dying institution which would henceforth require a heavenly patron in a time of growing recognition that Pole, not Pius V, was the truly prophetic voice, recalling the Church to its credentials?

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