

Aldo Durante

HAPSBURG  
CATHOLIC  
INTEGRALISM

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The New Europe**

In history, the unceasing struggles between peoples seems to result in an oscillation between two main forms of government, the imperial and the national.

The first tends to be universalist, multi-national and multi-religious in nature. The second is almost always characterised by a strong ethnic identity, with linguistic, religious and cultural homogeneity. The vision of the nation is seen in terms “*of arms and language/, of altar and memory/, of blood and heart*” as Alessandro Manzoni wrote.

For Europe, the two World Wars were a terrible demonstration of the limits of the nation-state, even though it was a form which had shown itself to be a potent force for growth and modernisation.

It was after the last world catastrophe of 1939 to 1945 that European countries, overcoming their individual differences, began to build a common home.

For Ulrich Beck<sup>1</sup> the way to salvation from the crisis of the entity of “nation”, a crisis only aggravated by

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<sup>1</sup> Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist, with a teaching post both at Munich University and the London School of Economics, was the inventor, with Anthony Giddens of the "third way". He takes his inspiration from the philosopher Immanuel Kant describing in his writings the path which should lead to the birth of a new planetary equilibrium capable of filling the void left by old national states. Bech states "*Kant was the first to realise that peace offers enormous advantages in economic terms and that it is not possible to obtain all the beneficial effects from revolutions in production if they are not followed quickly by corresponding institutional reforms*". He goes on to add "*The only truly effective response to the menace represented by religious fundamentalism, by unexpected financial crises or*

globalisation, is that of a trans-national co-operative state.

Robert Cooper<sup>2</sup> is on the same wave-length. In his “*The breaking of Nations, Order and Chaos in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*” he suggests the form of *benign imperialism* as a remedy for world disorder.

Cooper divides countries into pre-modern, those always on the brink of failure, modern, those pursuing their own interests at all times and post-modern, those considering co-operation and legality as their first priority.

He believes that Europe in its present form belongs to this latter category.

## **Europe and the search for a soul**

The journey towards unity between the peoples of Europe has been a stormy one. In 2003 it was possible because this time, membership of the European Union was voluntary. There was no guiding country vested with a sacred mission, imposing, as on previous occasions, unity on the others through the force of arms.

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*by a climatic catastrophe, is that of the establishment of strong and durable links between governments, in the knowledge that it is only through the globalisation of policy formation that it will be possible to reduce the risks caused by the unstoppable globalisation of the economy”. Cf. the internet site [www.lgxserver.uniba.it](http://www.lgxserver.uniba.it), last up-dated on 15/03/05.*

<sup>2</sup> *Robert Cooper, diplomat, ex adviser of British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Cf. internet site [www.magazine.enel.it](http://www.magazine.enel.it) last up-dated 15/03/05.*

The other novelty is that the ideology now justifying and guaranteeing European unity is no longer the Christian religion. Indeed, Christianity is not even cited in the Constitutional Charter and its exclusion gave rise to a heated debate.

A review (albeit an extremely cursory one) of the main developments following the fall of the Roman Empire demonstrates that the Christian message never achieved lasting success in the role of *instrumentum regni*, as a unifying force for the restless spirit of the European peoples.

The empire of Charlemagne, blessed on Christmas night of 800 by Pope Leo III, was short lived and quickly broke up under the fragmentary forces typical of feudalism.

During the Middle Ages relations between Christian monarchies and Christian marine republics could certainly not be cited as an example of Christian collaboration.; Thus, in 1204 the Christian city of Constantinople was sacked with great savagery by the highly Christian Crusaders.

The Germanic Holy Roman Empire was worn down by unending rivalries and by the struggle for investiture, with the opposing figures of the Pope (the Vicar of Christ) and the emperor (whose sovereign powers were granted by the grace of the same God).

Charles V's empire split into two halves, one Germanic and the other Latin, also as a result of the wars between the different Christian faiths. No better solution was found, particularly in Germany, as a means of bringing

an end to the decades of massacres, than the questionable principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*: Everyone practising the religion of their birth. Even so, things went no better for the “lay” Napoleon. He waved the flag of the French Revolution with all its noble principles throughout Europe, leaving mountains of corpses in his wake. The Empire he created did not outlive its founder.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a theatre of continuous fratricidal wars between powers inspired by the same sacred texts. The 1914-18 war represented one of the most extreme and tragic failures of Christianity.

The useless slaughter, as described by Pope Benedict XV, showed unequivocally that, after 2000 years, Europe’s Christian soul was not able to stop its people from calling on the same God before taking it in turns to tear each other apart. The First World War also saw the end of the last European Christian empires: that of the Tsars, swept away by the Russian revolution and that of the Hapsburgs.

My short work concentrates on the latter on two levels. The first is general in nature, looking at the laws and circulars of the Viennese government promulgated throughout the Empire up to 1866, the year in which Veneto became part of Italy. The second is a study at a local level, showing through documents almost exclusively taken from the Montebelluna records, how the government’s policies were interpreted and applied away from the centre.

## The Circulars

The Hapsburg circulars are undoubtedly characterised by an analytical and punctilious bureaucratic style. At the same time though, they are pervaded by an unmistakable moral and religious *pathos*.

Joseph II (1780 to 1790) called them “*pastoral letters*”. Emphasising the element of affection contained in them, he began the *Edict of Tolerance*<sup>3</sup> in 1781 with the salutation “*Dear and Faithful Subjects*”.

Joseph II’s Edict proclaimed religious tolerance for all German and Slav provinces while at the same time, declaring the dominance of the Catholic religion, maintaining its privileges such as that of exclusive right to public worship.

Throughout his reign Joseph II sought to infuse in his officials the awareness that they were the high repositories of a superior duty, that of serving the public interest for the purpose willed by God, the maintenance of an ordered human society.

This humanist spirit of Joseph II survived in the Austrian bureaucracy all the way through the changes that convulsed Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the First World War.

The world of the circulars constituted a manifestation of the patriotism of the Hapsburg bureaucracy, a religious type of patriotism which was to slow the inevitable decline of the Empire.

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<sup>3</sup> See the original transcription of the document in the Appendix

## **God, the Foundation of Power.**

Let us imagine that we have entered a Hapsburg court during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the subjects of His Majesty, Emperor by Grace of God etc. have been called upon to swear an oath.

The first of the Emperor's subjects is a Catholic. A crucifix and two lighted candles are placed before him. The judge warns him of the consequences of perjury. The oath-taker is then invited to hold up his thumb and the first two fingers of his right hand. After having announced the subject matter of the oath he recites the formula "*So help me God*".

The second subject is a Protestant. The scene changes slightly. There are no candles and no crucifix.

A sovereign resolution of 20 October 1832 provides as follows: "*The solemnity of the crucifix and the two lighted candles is not to be observed in the case of persons confessing to the Helvetian faith.*"

It is then the turn of one of the Emperor's Jewish subjects. He is accompanied by a rabbi. The latter is required to admonish him of the sanctity of the oath.

The Jew places his right hand up to half his palm on the Torah opened at the second book, Moses, at Chapter 20, verse 7. He covers his head and repeats the words pronounced by the person presiding over the swearing of the oath, using the following formula: "*I, N. N., after*

*due and weighty consideration, hereby make pure and sincere oath and swear by the one almighty God, omniscient and omnipresent, the sacred God of Israel who created heaven and earth, according to the intent and sense of the proceedings, without any mental restriction, reticence or ambiguity, without malice, fraud or dissimulation, without consideration or promise of reward, profit or damage, without propensity or aversion, friendship or enmity, without any purpose or intention to subvert the truth or the law. The oath-maker concludes with the words: " So God, the omnipotent Lord of hosts, Adonay, Elohe, Zebaoth, whose ineffable name be hallowed, help me in all my affairs and all my needs. Amen! Amen!"*

The third subject is a Muslim. The Court explains the importance of the oath, reminding him of the omniscience of God in whose name he will be taking the oath and the punishment to which he will be liable in the event of false testimony. He is then asked to repeat, in a language with which he is familiar, the circumstances forming the subject matter of the oath. The Court then asks him: "*Do you swear by God?*".

The oath-taker responds: *Iemin aderim (I swear)*, adding the words: *Billahi Taalla (by the Supreme God)*. He could also say *Wallahi (by God)*, and *Bismillahi (in God's name)*.

To reinforce the oath he adds some of the qualities of God and says *Bismillahi Errahman Errahim, in the name of merciful God, having mercy.*

For the validity of the oath one or other of the above formulae would be enough, that is *Bismillahi, Billahi, Taalla, or Wallahi*; but our oath-taker is very conscientious and uses them all.

As it happens the Court has a copy of the Koran available. While this is not obligatory, nonetheless in order to reinforce the validity of the oath, the Court asks the Muslim to place his right hand on the Koran while swearing the oath.

The scene described above helps us to understand two things. The first is that God was the guarantor of the oath and by the oath the religious validity of power was confirmed (*Omnis potestas a Deo*). The second is that the pluralism of religious belief was recognised within the Empire.

Muslims had not been given freedom of worship but even they called on their own God when swearing an oath.

God was called upon as a guarantee of the undertaking/promise to carry out a particular action or to maintain a particular course of conduct in the future on many crucial moments in political and administrative life.

Obviously a bishop called on God as his witness at his investiture. A lawyer would be invited to take an oath in God's name before starting his profession.

The oath taken by an official went beyond the general commitment to carry out his functions conscientiously. It involved him totally, almost like a novitiate monk taking his vows. The official promised to feel as one

with the government and with the destiny of the reigning dynasty.

The government *had the right to claim decorum and irreproachable behaviour from the servants of the state* in both their private and social life, for example, officials were not allowed to act on the stage or play any instrument in public theatres.<sup>4</sup> Above all though, anyone expressing any kind of dissent with regard to the government was immediately dismissed.

As a demonstration of the strength of the links between swearing oaths and God in popular thought it is interesting to recall an episode of daily life occurring in Montebelluna on 14 August 1844.

The Deputation wrote to the Imperial Royal District Commissioner stating that Giovanni Mazzolenis *had met a certain Angelo Padoan, known as Libri, in the afternoon of 7 April who had the audacity to insult him as a scoundrel, an unclean rogue and to add that his father died because having made a false oath.*

Mazzolenis had therefore petitioned the Deputation for Padoan to be reprimanded and required to state “*how, when, in what place and for what reason his deceased parent had sworn an oath dishonouring the name of a good citizen*”.<sup>5</sup>

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Guazzo V., “Enciclopedia degli affari” (Encyclopaedia of Affairs), Padua 1853, Crescini Printing Works, Government Circular. 28 February 1826.

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Archivio Municipale di Montebelluna (da ora abbreviato con A.M.M), Sezione “Polizia”.

## II

### **Dominant Religion and Tolerated Religions**

The Austrian Empire thus guaranteed religious pluralism.

Religious tolerance however did not signify indifference. The different religious confessions were not all put on the same level. The Monarch was convinced that the Catholic religion was the true religion (the faith professed by him and his family). Nonetheless, for the sake of peace among his peoples, he tolerated the practice of other confessions even if considered erroneous.

The faiths or churches existing legally in Austria towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were the following: Roman Catholic (22,000,000), Greek or Armenian Catholic (3,000,000), the non-united or Eastern Greek church (3,000,000), Lutheran (1,500,000), the Reformed church (1,500,000), Calvinists (500,000), the Protestant church (500,000) the Jewish faith (4,500,000).

There were also minor Christian sects in the form of the Philipones and the Nestorian Armenians and the Jewish Coraites sect.

Those of the Roman Catholic faith were the most numerous, including the sovereign and the entire Imperial family. Catholics were spread throughout the Empire but their greatest concentrations could be found in Lombardy-Veneto, Carniola, Littoral, the Tyrol and Salzburg. In these regions Protestant reforms had had little influence and there were very few Jews.

There were both Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians (the non-united Greek Church) to be found in Dalmatia. Hungary was divided between different religions although

Roman Catholics were still predominant. Among all the dominions of the Empire only Transylvania, the military borders and Bukovina had a majority of Roman Catholics in their populations.

The majority of Greek Catholics were to be found in Galicia, Hungary, Croatia and Transylvania.

Up to the Edict of Tolerance, published in 1782, the Roman Catholic religion was the only religion legally recognised in the German and Slav provinces. Only limited tolerance was accorded to the Jews. In Hungary, Transylvania and Bukovina the Protestant and non-united Greek churches had already obtained the right to the free exercise of their faiths and recognition of their legal existence.

Save in Lombardy-Veneto, non-Catholics throughout the Empire obtained the possibility of exercising their faith publicly in addition to the full administration and possession of property belonging to their churches and the freedom of internal government.

The possibility of practising their faith in public included the freedom to build their own oratories (so long as not including spires or other constructions making them appear like churches), to conduct public burial under the direction of their ministers and to appoint teachers in their schools even though these latter came under the inspection powers of the Catholic Provincial Directorate so far as the teaching methods were concerned.

Non Catholics were able to choose their own ministers so long as maintained by them and having obtained

confirmation from the Catholic authorities. Non-Catholics were also given the right to purchase houses or property, the right of nationality, the power to hold academic posts and civil employment without being obliged to attend services of the dominant religion.

The fundamental unit of the Catholic church structure was the Parish.

Parishes were either rural or urban. The Government decided that it was appropriate to create new parishes as a means of promoting the spread of Catholicism in mountainous or sparsely inhabited regions, trying to ensure that worshippers could get to church without having more than one hour's walk.

To establish the right to a parish it was generally sufficient for there to be 700 inhabitants. This could be reduced to 500 if there was a sizeable non-Catholic community.

In towns the Government laid down that there should be two priests for every thousand inhabitants, with a priest for every 700 inhabitants in the suburbs.

The state applied different rules of life depending on a person's faith.

For Roman Catholics a marriage could not be dissolved. The law however permitted non-Catholic Christians, according to the principles of their faith, to request the dissolution of a marriage for serious grounds.

The grounds were identified as follows: adultery, a prison sentence of at least five years, serious and

repeated maltreatment, abandonment of the matrimonial home or unconquerable aversion.

In this latter case however, the dissolution would not be allowed if separate sleeping and eating arrangements (according to the circumstances of the case) had not been tried and repeated on a number of occasions.

In the case of mixed marriages, when one of the spouses was Catholic and the other non-Catholic, publication of the Banns was effected both in the Catholic parish church and in the non-Catholic oratory. The catholic parish priest was required to carry out the marriage ceremony and blessing while the non-Catholic minister could be present as a witness.

The parish priest was required to warn a Catholic wishing to marry a non-Catholic about duties of conscience. The non-Catholic was required to be present during the Priest's interview of the spouses to be, relating to the duties of conscience so that he or she would be made aware of the requirements and impediments imposed by the marriage. Non-Catholics could not be god-parents of Catholics but they were permitted to be witnesses at the baptism.

A catholic was not permitted to marry a separated non-Catholic while the other divorced spouse was still alive. Catholics enjoyed a number of privileges with respect to the education of their children. The child of a Catholic father was required to be brought up according to the rules of Catholic education while the child of a Protestant father followed the faith of the parent of the same sex.

As a guarantee of the integrity of Catholic education, Catholic children were not permitted to take board and lodging from non-Catholics. In general, the education of a Catholic could never be entrusted to a non-Catholic.

### III

#### **The Public Practice of Atheism was a Crime**

In a state which considered God to be its foundation, was it possible to declare one's self an atheist? It was certainly possible for someone to be agnostic or atheist in the privacy of his or her thoughts.

Hapsburg pluralism however, prepared to exercise tolerance as against religions other than Catholicism, did not extend to the public declaration of atheism, even less did it extend to atheistic propaganda.

Mocking religion and the proselytising of atheism were considered a crime.

Someone committed the offence described as disruption of religion:

- a) who blasphemed against God in word or deed, in printed works or distributed writings and;
- b) who disturbed the exercise of a religion recognised in the state or who, by the dishonouring or maltreatment of trappings and furnishings intended for divine worship or otherwise by words, deeds, printed works or distributed writings, publicly demonstrated contempt of religion;
- c) who sought to seduce a Christian from Christianity to apostasy;
- d) who sought to spread non-belief or give out an erroneous doctrine repugnant to the Christian religion.<sup>6</sup>

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a) <sup>6</sup>

Section 122 of the Criminal Code.

Any person convicted of public outrage was punished with one to five years' hard labour which could be extended to ten years if committed with great malice or danger.

In the crime of the disruption of religious practice it was certainly not necessary that the exercise of religion was materially or actually disturbed, it could be committed by laughing or joking.

An example: According to the religious prescriptions for Jews in certain religious ceremonies "*a pot with water is required. Both the pot and the water are considered as trappings intended for religious worship. To throw the water away without the respect due was considered as dishonouring the trappings concerned*".<sup>7</sup>

In the Catholic world of Veneto, particularly in the rural community, cases of disruption of religion were extremely rare. This is not to say there were no occasions when people's behaviour was considered *indecent* and hence the occasion for scandal.

In 1842 the Cardinal Patriarch complained to His Excellency the Count Governor of an obscene song which was sung by the people even in the countryside beginning "*Hurry, Hurry miller's wife, hurry, hurry, Grocer's daughter,*" *because containing the most obscene references hidden under malicious slang*".

On 22 June the Montebelluna District Commissioner issued an order to the Secretary of the Town Council stating that it was necessary to "*bring this disorder to an end and punish the transgressors*".

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<sup>7</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit. Decree of 21 April 1853

The Secretary of the Town Council sent the district Commissioner a detailed report in which he recognised that the scandal had indeed taken place in Montebelluna.

The wife of Luigi Righetto son of Barcon came to the market to make some purchases. She began singing the first two verses of the song “Hurry, Hurry miller’s wife” etc for her entertainment. A number of youngsters at the market learnt the song and it was then passed on to other young people from the Guarda parish. In this way it was spread throughout the locality.

In compliance with the Imperial Representative, the Commissioner, the Secretary of the Town Council summonsed those singers who appeared to him to be the best-informed and asked them to tell him the rest of the song. All assured him however that they only knew a few lines.

The Secretary concluded his report on the incident in this way: *“I then gave them a serious warning to abstain from singing the song in the future and was pleased to note the effect of this admonition since, to my knowledge, no-one has since been heard singing it”*. In 1847 there was another scandalous incident. A religious play was organised on the occasion of the Good Friday procession. It took the form of a re-enactment of Christ’s passion. Some Roman soldiers were wearing *“scandalous”* clothing revealing their legs.

The Town Council Administration considered it to be its duty to intervene by prohibiting such theatrical re-enactments in the future.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A.M.M., "Police" Section, 1842, Letter to the Royal District Commissariat from the Deputation, 15 July 1842.

## IV

### Changing Religion

Being a Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant or a Jew was not a matter confined to the personal realm. Belonging to a religion meant the identification of the rules according to which people were to conduct their lives. This meant that changing religion was not an event that could be carried out without the knowledge of the government.

What happened if a catholic wanted to become non-Catholic?

First of all, a Catholic *could not become non-Catholic before reaching 18 save with the prior consent of the government.*<sup>9</sup>

In any case, anyone wishing to leave the Catholic church was required to apply to the Royal Delegation either directly or through the district political authority. The Royal Delegation would carry out its own investigation whether the person concerned had made this choice for reasons of conscience or had done so too lightly.

The petitioner was invited to make contact with a Catholic carer of souls to be taught the fundamentals of the religion over a period of six weeks. If after the six weeks had passed and the petitioner remained firm in his or her convictions, the carer of souls would provide

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<sup>9</sup> Guazzo, op. cit., High Decree 21 October 1810, and Lombardy Government 1830.

the Royal Delegation with a certificate setting out the results of his teaching. This report was then communicated to the political authority, the petitioner's parish priest and his or her future minister.<sup>10</sup>

What happened if a non-Catholic wanted to become a Catholic?

First of all he or she had to be properly taught by a Curate.

The bishop had the power to permit the conversion of a non-Catholic to the communion of the Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup>

The rules for conversion from the Jewish faith to Catholicism were more complex.

When a Jewish father converted to Christianity the rule was that all his children of both sexes who had not reached the age of 7 and had been born before he had been baptised would have to be baptised as well.

If it was a Jewish mother who converted to Christianity, the children of both sexes had to be left in the father's religion so long as the latter was alive and where there was no Jewish male ascendant looking after the children. If there were no such male relatives it was then the discretion of the mother who had become Christian, to educate her children in the Catholic religion who had not reached the age of discernment, *irrespective of sex*.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Guazzo, op. cit., Sovereign Resolution of 6 May 1840.

11 Guazzo, op. cit., Decree of 14 May 1807.

12 Guazzo, op. cit., Decree of 19 February 1790.

In general those children who had not reached the age of discernment (identified as from their 7<sup>th</sup> birthday) followed the religion of their father even if this was against the wishes of their mother.

Once 7 years old, a Jewish child could only be baptised with his or her consent.

It might happen (the cases were purely theoretical but the law contemplated the possibility) that a child less than 7 years old might refuse to change religion along with his father. In such circumstances a commission made up of the parish priest and the political authorities, would be called upon to discuss and examine the question. It was necessary to establish whether the child wanted to remain in his or her religion of birth for religious reasons, without external pressures and with a sufficient understanding of his or her religion. The examination had to be repeated after six months. In the meantime the child would have to be taught Catholicism. If at this point, the child had not changed his or her mind he or she could not be forced to be baptised.

The father still had the power to arrange for the child to live in a place where he or she could follow the principles of the Jewish religion and where the father, or some other trusted person, could continue to seek to persuade the child to embrace the Catholic faith.<sup>13</sup>

What was the position if the child decided to convert to Catholicism against the wishes of the father?

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Guazzo, op. cit., Government Circular of 10 March 1817.

If over 18 then he or she was free to do so, so long as receiving the appropriate teaching in the catechism and baptised. If between 14 and 18 then the permission of the government was required. If between 7 and 14 approval was required from the Sovereign.

A child under 7 could only be baptised on request if on the point of death.

The feared danger of death (which did not necessarily have to be followed by death) had to be proved by a sworn declaration from a doctor, a surgeon or a midwife or in the absence of the above, by a trustworthy witness.<sup>14</sup>

The provisions governing the conversion of practising Jews to the Catholic religion were particularly severe to try to prevent abuse.

The Regulations of 30 January 1803 provided as follows:

1) *No postulant male or female Jew may be baptised until after four months from the first declaration or request.*

2) *During this period the sincerity and firmness of the expressed desire must be examined with caution and following the requisite formalities.*

3) *In the mean time the Jewish person wishing to convert to Catholicism will be withdrawn to live either in the catechumenate (if this exists) or in the care of a good Catholic where such person must be maintained on his own account at the expense of relatives and with*

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Guazzo, op. cit., Decree of 15 February 1765, 8 September 1768 and 30 October 1789..

*contributions from the catechumenate or from spontaneous pious collections.*

*4) The local police will ensure that no violence is committed against him in this place of retirement and that Catholic ministers may visit him freely in order to question and teach him and similarly also his Jewish relatives and friends to talk with him where he does not refuse to see them*

*5) In order to prove that such person has knowingly, freely and sincerely determined to embrace the Catholic faith, it will be possible for the Jewish community to have him presented with food in accordance with the rites of the Jewish faith, with the observance of the appropriate practices and precautions, so that it may be refused by him. On a day fixed for the purpose Rabbis and relatives may be admitted to hear him do so in the presence of a delegation of the police so that he is able to express his desire freely on being questioned both by Catholic and Jewish ministers.*

*6) So that it is then possible to confirm the spontaneous and considered perseverance by the party in the matter it will be necessary to call his parents and near relatives if he has any and in their absence, elders from the community to be present at a certain date. In the presence of the above and two other witnesses beyond reproach or objection, having confirmed by peremptory questioning his final wish to embrace the Catholic faith, this must be set down in writing by deed of a notary public also present, also in the presence of a*

*delegate of the political authority. Copies of the said Deed must be given to the interested parties as also to the Bishop's Curia and to the Prefecture to ensure the preservation of the document.*<sup>15</sup>

There were few if any Jewish communities in the Veneto countryside (things were obviously different in towns like Venice, Padua etc.).

*All souls* registered in the official records in Montebelluna in 1816 were Catholic.

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<sup>15</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., Veneto Government Circular 28 February 1817.

## V

### **The Roman Catholic Church and the Management of Power**

The collaboration between throne and altar did not finish with religion's ideological support for the monarchy. The Roman Catholic Church took active part in the management of power with its own organisation.

The bishop was appointed by the Emperor. In his investiture oath he received the property from the Monarch which he undertook to preserve.

It was particularly in the rural local councils that the ecclesiastical organisation supplied an important part of the bureaucracy. We will see further below the importance of the role of the parish priest.

The special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church should not make us forget that both rabbis and protestant ministers were also used (if to a lesser extent) as state officials. The registries of births, deaths and marriages in villages where there were significant numbers of believers in a particular faith, were maintained by their respective ministers.

If the number of Protestants was not enough to have a pastor, it was the Catholic priest's job to keep the records in his stead.

## Maintaining the Sanctity of Holidays

The laws governing the sanctity of holidays represent a clear demonstration that religious dominium was not separate from either political power or the economy and that religious practice was not a private matter.

Sunday was truly the Lord's Day.

Ensuring that this remained sacred and central to community life was one of the duties of the political authorities.

The defence of its sacred status was achieved above all by prohibiting work. All economic activities were suspended. Peasants, artisans and workers were prohibited *from working in any way at any time of the day save in the cases of urgent and recognised necessity.*

The prohibition covered all businesses open to the public and all commercial businesses except for chemists and shops selling food so long as not open during the times set *aside for divine service and for the teaching of Christian doctrine when their shops had to be half closed.*

So far as businesses dealing directly with the public, public houses and cafés were concerned, they could be open to the public but had to suspend the supply of drinks during the time for the celebration of the Mass, Vespers and the teaching of Christian doctrine in the afternoon.

Barbers were also allowed to open on Sundays but again, not during the times set aside for church services and Christian doctrine and with their doors half closed.

A similar permit was extended to the vendors of sweets for children *or of religious objects such as sacred images or statues, crowns, approved devotional books and the like.*

All entertainment, games and plays were only permitted *after the divine offices and Christian doctrine had finished. In the same way inn-keepers, tavern-keepers and shop-keepers were not allowed to stage entertainments, games, carousals or other idle meetings at times set aside for church services and Christian doctrine.*<sup>16</sup>

Working on a Sunday was thus not only a sin for a Christian but also an offence punishable with a fine.

Breach of the holiday injunction was seen as a kind of violent laceration, a laceration of infinite value because the loss to the sinner was infinite. If a Christian committed a mortal sin he or she compromised his or her salvation. Scandal was simply a logical consequence.

*“Yesterday, a Sunday, the notorious Fiorino Bordin, commonly known as Sarri, assisted by his three brothers, had the audacity to harvest wheat in a field*

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<sup>16</sup> A.M.M., “Police” Section. See in the Appendix of the transcription of original documents “Fine for opening tavern during the time set aside for afternoon service”, “for opening of a Public House during afternoon service” and for “game of bowls during afternoon service”.

*near the Castellana road, scandalising the people travelling to church”.*<sup>17</sup>

Working on a Sunday was certainly against the law but above all, it was an offence against the community. As a result the guilty were fined but the money was distributed to the poor on the basis of indications by the parish priest. It was not just an ordinary fine finishing up in the local council’s coffers.

With the distribution to the poor the money took on the character of a penitential gift in expiation of the sin committed.

### **Representation of Power. A Place in Church**

Sunday was also an excellent occasion to make the alliance between throne and altar visible. The populace had to have a clear perception that power acted on behalf of the Emperor and that the Emperor had been vested with this privilege-duty by God himself.

Attending Mass was an injunction imposed by the Church but it was also much wished by the apostolic Emperor. Those with prominent positions were required to give a good example. A series of circulars required that all representatives of the Local Council Deputation, the District Commission, the royal courts and other public offices, should attend church every Sunday.

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<sup>17</sup> A.M.M. “Police” section. See the transcription of original document in the Appendix “Fine for working on a Sunday”.

The injunction was not simply a generalised one. The government instructions allocated everyone their clearly defined place: The District Commissioner was required to occupy the seat set aside for the government representative in the presbytery. If there was no place in the presbytery both he and his Deputy were required to sit just outside the presbytery on the Gospel side. The Local Council Deputies, the tax collectors and other revenue officials were to be seated immediately behind this. Officials from the Royal Magistrates' Courts were to be located opposite, on the Epistle side of the church, always however, below the presbytery. Where there were Imperial troops stationed in the area, the commander would have a place immediately after that of the District Commissioner, outside the presbytery but at least located at the centre of the church.<sup>18</sup>

A circular of 17 April 1822 noted that “*Local Council Deputies will have the right to a distinct and visible place in the church which must be chosen in agreement with the head of the same* ».

A Circular of 4 July 1837 stated that officials took part in public services “*not in a body but according to their rank*”. This however, was amended by a Sovereign Resolution of 22 May 1838: “*The authorities will take part in public services in a body without the seat occupied by them on such occasion causing prejudice whether to their respective rank or as individuals*”.

Processions were among the religious manifestations closest to the heart of the people.

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<sup>18</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., Government Decree of 24 January 1820.

A despatch of 20 October 1827 throws light on the behaviour the authorities were required to observe during solemn processions. In that of *Corpus Domini* the authorities were required to follow or precede the litter? The circular dealt with every possible .

## **The Church**

The church, the heart of religious life, was at the centre of political and social life. In small provincial towns, without theatres or other meeting places, the church was the public place par excellence where all religious and civil holidays were solemnised. The preference of one church over another was the cause of bickering between parishes.

*“Giuseppe Legrenzi stated that the inhabitants were unhappy because rumour had it that the service commemorating the propitious birthday of Our Lady will not be celebrated in this parish but in that of Biadene”*.<sup>19</sup>

The most important political events were commemorated in church. The sermon had the same function that the broadcast news does today. The parish priest read out all public utility notices from the Central Government and of the Local Council Deputation. If there were international events of importance it was through the sermon that the common people learned of the official version of the facts.

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<sup>19</sup> A.M.M., “Police” Section 1834, Letter from the Local Council Deputation to the Government Offices in Venice, 31 January 1834.

How did the people of Montebelluna hear of the carbonari movements of 1821? From a triduum of prayers concluding Ascension Day “*to thank the Lord God for the victory achieved by the imperial army over the factious rebels of Naples and Piedmont*”.<sup>20</sup>

## **The Injunction to Abstinence**

One of the Catholic Church’s important injunctions was to abstain from meat on Fridays, during Lent and other important vigils.

On the days prescribed by the Church inn-keepers, hoteliers and tavern-keepers were required to prepare lean food for their customers. Only in exceptional cases were they permitted to provide fat food as well, when there was a special request for it so long as served in a separate room or, where this was not possible, at least at a separate table.

Every transgression was punishable on the first offence by a fine of between two and ten florins or with imprisonment for from one to five days. The second offence was punishable by a fine of ten florins or imprisonment from 5 to 25 days. The third offence was punished by a temporary bar on the exercise of the business from one to three months.

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<sup>20</sup> A.M.M., Sanctifying holidays 1821, letter of the District Commissioner to the Local Council Deputation of 27 May 1821.

The procedure was summary. The accused was allowed to set out his version of events in the presence of two witnesses and the decision was then pronounced. The fines were paid to local charitable institutions.

## VI

### **The Parish Priest: shepherd of souls and government official**

The parish priest was first and foremost the priest to whom the bishop had entrusted a parish. His main duties were to offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the people, celebrate divine offices both for the living and dead, to give sermons, administer the sacraments etc.

If a parishioner refused to appear before his parish priest for reasons regarding the care of souls, *the competent authorities had a clearly defined duty to provide means of physical compulsion* and the straying sheep would thus be forced to present himself to his pastor.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, the parish priest supervised the other priests in the parish.

In return for fulfilling his functions the parish priest had the right to receive his sustenance from the parishioners through the sources of income allocated to him, surplice fees, tithes and parish collections.

The duties of the parish priest were not however, confined to the religious sphere. He also had extremely important administrative tasks to fulfil.

He acted as an official of the civil status registry office. Indeed, it was he who kept the books recording baptisms, marriages and deaths. On the occasion of military conscription he would provide the competent

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<sup>21</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., Regulatory Instructions 9 June 1826.

authorities with the details relating to young men who were then selected for enlistment on the basis of the drawing of lots. He issued certificates of destitution, of domicile, morality, life and death etc.

He acted as a manager for health and social services, having the duty of supervising the pious institutions (as the hospitals run by religious orders were called). By the issue of a certificate of destitution he decided on those with the right to benefit from health care free of charge and those who were entitled to exemption from personal taxation.

The parish priest was also the **director of education**, he being responsible for supervising the parish primary schools and their respective teachers. He also supervised the latter's behaviour in public. Where they failed in their duties he was required to warn them and where necessary, threaten to contact the District Inspector to have them removed in the event of a repeat offence.

It was the parish priest's responsibility to oversee the children of the parish to ensure that they took part in church services, that they attended with devotion and did not neglect the holy sacraments at least during the main feast days, that is at Easter, Pentecost, Christmas and the days of the birth and assumption of the blessed Virgin and All Saints' Day.

If circumstances permitted it was desirable that children should hear Mass every day before or after school.

The parish priest was required to visit schools not only on the days of religious instruction but also at other times, frequently and without warning.

The parish priest had a right to be present at the six-monthly and annual exams *ex officio*. Through the teachers and their assistants he would invite the most important people in the locality to the exams, particularly local council authorities. He gave out prizes to those pupils who had particularly distinguished themselves.

At the end of the school year, the parish priest produced a general report to the District Inspector on how schools had progressed during the year, making any suggestions that he considered necessary for the improvement of the teaching.

## **Provision of Information**

One of the parish priest's most useful functions was that of providing the authorities with information on his parishioners.

There were many occasions for this.

In order to obtain a licence as a tavern-keeper it was necessary to present a certificate of good conduct.

*“The under-signed Parish Priest hereby certifies that Giorgio Brunetto, his parishioner, has always conducted himself as a good Christian, attending the sacraments and taking part in church services. It may therefore be assumed that if the Deputation grants him the permit to sell wine on a retail basis in his own*

*home, he will be able to deal with all disorders, maintaining order and tranquillity, closing the house at the times set aside for divine worship on feast days and not allowing persons to stay in his house at night after the prescribed time. I further certify the complete truth of what he states in his petition to the Deputation in relation to the state of indigence in which he finds himself at the moment”*.<sup>22</sup>

The parish priest was asked for his opinion before sentencing someone to prison for theft.

Don Zini, parish priest in Biadene, wrote as follows to the Deputation: *“I am extremely sorry to have to provide true information of a private nature that you have requested me, but my character and conscience do not permit me to act otherwise. Luigi Bacchecchi, son of Giuseppe, lives off unremitting thieving of firewood, he has the reputation of being a thief of farm produce and of whatever he can lay his hands on. He is also known as an inveterate gambler, rascal and stays away from church services. Finally, he is as poor as his bad conduct deserves. He would not be necessary to his family because he has other brothers”*.<sup>23</sup>

The same parish priest expressed himself differently in relation to another parishioner:

*“Francesco Poloni, son of Gaetano, has fewer vices. He steals firewood from the forest but is simpler and good-natured. He only associates with persons of his*

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<sup>22</sup> A.M.M., Biadene 5 April 1842.

<sup>23</sup> A.M.M. “Police” section. The transcript of the original document can be found in the Appendix.

*own condition, but helps his father and his little brothers and sisters in finding something to live on. In a word, he cannot be compared with the other in any way. It is moreover necessary for him to be called to account before ruining himself, following in the footsteps of those who are worse than him.”*<sup>24</sup>

In this case the benevolent assessment of the parish priest was able to save a thief from prison in that he was considered necessary for the support of his family.

The parish priest represented a point of reference of fundamental importance in the life of a small community. A brawl broke out in a public house. The different versions of what had happened conflicted with each other. Whom should one believe? The parish priest was able to give a valuable contribution in the search for the truth.

The parish priest's involvement was not confined to provision of information. He participated actively in taking decisions guaranteeing peace and harmony in the community.<sup>25</sup>

## **Reprimand**

The first form of intervention used paternalistically by the authorities was that of the reprimand. It consisted of a solemn lecture designed to make the citizen understand that he would have to change his ways.

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<sup>24</sup> A.M.M., “Police Section, Biadene, 3 April 1835.

<sup>25</sup> See the various letters from the parish priest transcribed and printed in the Appendix.

A peasant farmer or artisan complaining against a neighbour often referred to a local council deputy or the parish priest for the maintenance of his honour.

On other occasions there were parents who sought the intervention of the Authorities to help bring a disobedient child back to the straight and narrow, there were others who did not like the suitor buzzing round their daughter.

## Injunctions

Anyone who did not improve their conduct was then made “*subject to a severe political injunction*”. In effect it amounted to non-custodial supervision. The enjoined person was not permitted to leave his house before sunrise and was required to return home at the evening Ave Maria. He was required to devote himself to a stable and honest occupation, was not permitted to frequent the company of persons of “*bad reputation*”, particularly thieves, other enjoined and *banned* persons in general. He was not allowed to leave the village without “*a prior permit from the local political authorities*” and above all, he was forbidden to enter public houses, taverns and all other public places.

Sometimes this bar was qualified by permission “*to frequent public houses only on holidays for one hour between 12 noon and 1 o'clock p.m.*”

Any person not observing these rules would be liable to punishment by imprisonment for between one and three months.

The prohibition against frequenting public houses and taverns (the only lay public meeting places not directly controlled by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities) by means of the injunction was the way in which society deprived an individual of the only (if small) area of liberty available to him.

The people most subject to injunctions of this kind tended to be quarrelsome individuals, drunkards, those involved in petty theft and prostitutes. The parish

priest's duty was to inform the Local Council Deputation of possible candidates for injunction and the latter body then informed the District Commissioner whose authority was required for the issuing of the order.

If it was difficult, especially for women, to find work, the Local Council Deputation referred the matter the parish priest for him to lend a hand in "*procuring an honest occupation*".

On the completion of 6 months or the year in which the injunction was imposed, if it had resulted in an improvement in behaviour, the injunction would be lifted. Naturally this was evidenced by a certificate from the parish priest.<sup>26</sup>

## **Enforced enlistment**

If the reprimand had no effect, if the political injunction was insufficient to calm the high spirits of the most riotous young men, the local council authorities would suggest enforced enlistment. Military service lasted eight years and in the majority of cases involved removal from the village, being stationed in parts of the Empire which were very far from home.

The number of those who were forced to enlist in this way would be deducted from the contingents of the respective councils in the next conscription round.

The view of the parish priest was of decisive importance in these cases too.

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<sup>26</sup>

A.M.M., "Police" section.

## The Parish Priest as Social Worker

In a parish whose inhabitants were destitute and illiterate the parish priest represented the last hope of salvation at times of greatest need.

Thus Don Niccolò Gasparinetti, parish priest of Caerano, interceded on behalf of one of his parishioners who was unable to pay the personal tax.

The account given by the Nogarè parish priest, living during the terrible years of famine which gripped the Veneto countryside following the Napoleonic storm, is even more graphic in its description.

As a means of resolving a difficult family situation, Monsignor Angelo Dalmistro, the extremely able Provost of Montebelluna, considered it was necessary to remove Gianbattista Sanson (commonly known as “il Turco”) from the village because of his drunkenness, blasphemy and violence.<sup>27</sup>

But the parish priest was above all, the **defender of the family**.

The family was considered the main pillar of society and the Church, through its ministers, used every means in its possession to guarantee its unity.

One episode illustrates this. In 1853 Monsignor Brunello, Provost of Montebelluna, was obliged to deal with an extremely grave scandal affecting his flock.

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<sup>27</sup> A.M.M., “Police” section. See transcription of original documents in the Appendix, “Letter of Caerano parish priest, 19 January 1816”, “Letter of Notarè parish priest 1815” and “Letter of Mons. Angelo Dalmistro, 25 May 1815”.

Giulia Michielin, married to Antonio Bonsembiante, left the family home and went to live with her father.

The parish priest turned to the Local Council Administrator requesting that the woman be required, with force if necessary, to return to her husband.

The Administrator did as the parish priest had asked but after a short while Giulia Michielin fled again, this series of events repeating itself five times over two months.

When brought before the Deputation, the woman agreed to restore family unity so long as her husband left his father's house because her sisters-in-law always hit her.

The archive documents do not explain how the story ended. One thing is clear though, the decisive intervention of the parish priest and his determination to defend the unity of the family with all means available.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> A.M.M., "Police" section. See original document "Letter of Mons. Brunello to the Local Council Deputation, Montebelluna, 1853" transcribed in the Appendix.

## VII

### **Education in the Catholic Religion.**

To be sure that the education of the Empire's inhabitants produced faithful subjects, the most effective guarantee was that they should be educated from earliest childhood according to the principles of the Catholic religion.

Even in the "Sale di custodia" ("Care Rooms" - what would now be called nursery schools) the recommended intellectual exercise was the following: *daily prayers in the morning, at noon and in the evening, in Italian and not in Latin, in this way elevating the minds of the children to an intelligent awareness of God, the first religious principles were to be taught according to the small catechism used in the respective diocese.*

*It would also be useful to flavour this teaching with some very elementary extract from religious history".*

The government circulars made it clear that *all the silly, vapid songs that are generally taught to children by stupid women were forbidden. They damaged both mind and body with superstition and vain terrors".*

**Public education** was divided into higher middle and primary levels. The higher and middle schooling was the province of the state and primary education was the responsibility of the local council.

The main duty of primary school was that of giving the people a religious and moral education according to the

principles of the Catholic religion and to prepare able children for higher schooling.

Each local council was required to have at least one minor primary school for boys and one for girls.

Once it was set up attendance became compulsory for all boys and girls of between 6 and 12 who were not taught by authorised private teachers.

Parents who did not comply were subject to a fine of half a lira for each month of absence (in 1830 an agricultural labourer earned one lira per day during the summer months if not given food and half a lira if he was given a midday meal by his master).

The privileged relations between the state and Church were re-emphasised in the Concordat of 1855 under which the school system was entrusted to the religious authorities. The headmaster was thus the parish priest and supervision of the schools was the duty of the Supreme Diocesan Inspectorate.

The majority of the school teachers, above all in the countryside, belonged to the local clergy.

Often the teacher had an assistant as a collaborator. The latter was required to be well educated in religion, upholding the Church and irreprehensible in his behaviour, offering an example of morality and virtue in his conduct.

The school year began with the celebration of the Mass and with *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

Rules required that, under the responsibility of the school masters, lessons should always begin and end

with the recitation out loud of the orations habitually used in schools.

No schoolchild could pass to the next year without having showing him or herself reasonably educated in all subjects taught, especially with respect to the most important areas of Religion.

The final exam would begin with the catechist who would ask questions on religious history and the Gospels.

If the schoolmaster was not a priest a legal declaration was required of the catechist guaranteeing religious teaching without which confirmation that the related exam had been taken could not be issued.<sup>29</sup>

In the final analysis religion was of determining importance. Thus, for example, in Class I, lower section, a single mark of mediocre in Religion or Reading meant that the year had to be repeated. Two marks of mediocre in subjects of lesser importance did not prevent a pupil from progressing to the next class if he or she had obtained “Very Good” in either Religion or Reading.

In order to encourage emulation of their betters, the most deserving pupils were awarded prizes. These took the form of religious or moral books, naturally approved by the authorities.

The lives of Catholic children were arranged around their religious duties. On Sundays and religious feast days Mass was obligatory *even though it was possible*

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<sup>29</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., High Order, 25 January 1823.

*to obtain temporary exemption on request by the child's parents where this could be justified by good reasons.*<sup>30</sup>

On Sunday afternoons, after Vespers, children were required to attend catechism.

All businesses open to the public were closed and any play, popular diversion or idle entertainment was suspended during the times fixed in the parish for education in the catechism.

The Emperor's wishes were interpreted as follows by the Government Circulars: *all children who have been neglected by their families must be guided towards the Church, providing the ecclesiastical authorities with all assistance and co-operation possible so that they may be united in the Church.*

Young people lived in a disciplined, closed world into which external ideas could only obtain entrance after having passed evaluation by the higher authorities. It was difficult to come into contact with ideas differing from those saturating their daily environment. If a subject of the Emperor wished to attend a school abroad a Sovereign Dispensation was required.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Guazzo, op. cit., Ministerial Decree 24 February and 11 April 1852.

<sup>31</sup> Guazzo, op. cit., Lombardy Government Circular 2 September 1817.

## VIII

### **Order as Protection of the State, Religion and Morality**

The greatest enemy of peace and tranquillity was political disturbance. The most dramatic manifestation of this was the riot. To prevent the *possibility of riots no popular demonstrations with aims hostile to the political powers were tolerated, nor were extraordinary celebrations or unusual meetings of the people allowed.*<sup>32</sup>

What were the feelings and passions which fermented riots? Contempt of the institutions, over-excitement, hostility and fighting.

The formation of parties hostile to each other was a crime punishable by imprisonment from 3 to 6 months. In a country village even giving offence was considered as an attempt to subvert public order.

*“Anna Bortolan had her honour offended in the market on 12 April 1848 by Francesco Callegher, known as Tasan, repeatedly calling her a slut, cow etc”.*

The political authorities considered that *“in the current difficult circumstances it was absolutely necessary to suppress this licentiousness specifically committed by malicious persons with the purpose of subverting the political order and to promote confusion and disorder.”*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>

Guazzo. Op. cit., Sovereign Declaration of 9 January 1848.

<sup>33</sup>

A.M.M., “Police” section.

Moral disorder manifested itself through bad behaviour, considered *the seed-bed of crime*. Causes of bad behaviour were idleness, gaming and gluttony.

The places that nurtured such behaviour were clubs, public houses, brothels, whore houses and fences.

The most propitious time for immoral behaviour was the night-time. The night had been created by God to give men and animals a time for rest. The night was used by evil-doers for the commission of all kinds of wrong-doing and crimes.

There was little work done at night since lighting was expensive, poor and hard to come by. To travel at night was fraught with danger. Anyone travelling was well-advised to interrupt their journey at sunset.

From September to February hotels remained open until 9 in the evening and till 10 in the rest of the year.

The dark was a great adversary of morality. After the ringing of their bells for Ave Maria the churches were closed. The authorities did not even look well on nocturnal sermons and masses which encouraged licence and love-making.

Those young people who skulked around the village at night disturbing the peace with their clamour were liable to be placed under injunction.

The other great enemy of morality was promiscuity.

The family, the school, the church and government were allied in a holy crusade to keep the two sexes separated.

The government circulars recommended to young people as follows: "*If you have to travel through the*

*countryside make sure that boys are accompanied by boys and girls by girls”.*

*When you are allowed to play boys should play with boys and girls with girls”.*

There were no mixed classes at school and if there were not enough buildings then they had to be used by boys and girls at different times.

Masters were strongly urged to ensure the separation of male from female servants. All, children and servants, were strongly urged to study Christian teachings.

Where males and females were able to meet each other outside the family environment, it was appropriate to exercise strict control.

Above all in the context of entertainment, promiscuity was seen with great suspicion.

Dances came within those entertainments which were useful for the honest recreation of the population.

Since however, they were conducted of necessity in an a dangerously promiscuous atmosphere, they required the supervision of the police.

A distinction was made between public and private dancing. The first were for payment and open to all while only invitees were able to participate in the latter.

The government laid down when dance music for both public and private dances was prohibited: *during the whole of advent together with the period ending with the Epiphany, during the whole of Lent up to the first Sunday after Easter as well as all days of abstinence prescribed by the Church and Fridays and Saturdays.*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., Sovereign Resolution of 19 August 1826.

Dances and theatrical performances were banned during the *four Ember Days, on the vigils of the main religious feast days of the year, on Pentecost Sunday, on the feast of Corpus Domini, of the Annunciation and the nativity of the Blessed Virgin.*

Particularly during Lent both public and private dances were prohibited: “*since those days should be dedicated to the sanctification of souls and not to dissipation and useless entertainment, by the express wish of His Majesty.*”<sup>35</sup>

The Government set down the times for dancing.

Both public and private dances could begin one hour after the end of Vespers (dancing could not be an excuse for not going to Church!) and could not go on after midnight in the provincial towns and in government residences and not after 10 o'clock elsewhere.

Masked balls could only be organised in the city of Vienna and provincial capitals.

There were very detailed and restrictive rules governing the places where dances were to be held where an entrance fee was to be charged.

It was forbidden to dance in public premises. During religious festivals any consumption of food, wine, liquor or spirits was also prohibited.

Halls for dancing had to be on the ground floor and were required to have only one entrance which had to remain open at all times. They could not have any

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<sup>35</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., Government Circular, 8 June 1819.

doors allowing communication with other internal rooms and they had to be well lit.

We have already seen that in country villages the public house was the only lay premises not directly controlled by the authorities. When heated by wine the peasants and artisans abandoned themselves to swearing, insults and brawls.

Who was it who could guarantee that the tavern-keeper could be relied upon and was actually reliable in the observance of opening hours, the rules on the consumption of fat foods, closure during the Holy Mass and festival Vespers? As always, the parish priest.

Indeed, to obtain a tavern licence it was necessary to obtain his approval.

The most insidious period for dissipation and disorder was obviously Carnival. The masks also represented a wonderful opportunity to show disrespect to the institutions. The regulations were extremely punctilious: no more than 10 masked people could meet together in the same place. *The masks could not be shocking nor present emblems offending Religion, Decency, nations, any public body or any institution, nor should any talk damaging and ridiculing the said subjects be permitted.*”

The other place fraught with dangers was the theatre.

The authorities were aware that the theatre *was able to educate or corrupt, infuse noble and virtuous tendencies or spread the seeds of vice and rebellion in the hearts of the onlookers.*

Plays were subject to the inspection and supervision of the local political authority which watched each such entertainment in a separate place.

In the event of riots or disorder it was able to suspend the play or bring it to an end and clear the theatre. If the disorder continued it was seen as the impresario's fault who was obliged to reimburse the cost of entrance.

The danger of plays was aggravated by the fact that "*they are organised by persons who are avid for applause and so seek to mould themselves to the humour and mood of the multitude without any scruples as to the means to be used*".

Respect for religion required the greatest precautions to be taken in the approval of re-enactments of religious themes. Those which offended all decency by the inclusion of a ridiculous character, or whose lowness of style or ideas did not mirror the sublime nature of the holy theme were prohibited.

Plays were also excluded where persons living and known in the village where they were to be held were held up to malign ridicule as also those which were too bloody and ferocious or which targeted the throne, royal dignity or the rights of the sovereign..

For this reason no theatrical work was permitted which did not show a good and just king counter-balancing the bad impression of a wicked one.

At times permission could be obtained to print a work for its *celebrity or poetic beauty* even though prudence did not permit of its performance.

It was forbidden to illuminate the August Sovereign or a member of the Imperial Family on the stage except when it was an extraordinary performance in their honour and with the order and direct consent of the government.

His Majesty's uniform also had to be treated with respect in the theatre and hence characters representing Austrian soldiers were not permitted save where used to further exalt their glory.

This was also true for the priestly vestments of the dominant religion.

Plays were thus forbidden if not treating governments and the persons of living sovereigns of allied or neutral countries with respect.

Since the audience was made up of people from all levels in society it was only necessary for there to be a small number of mischief-makers to use an ambiguous passage to provoke an uproar in the crowd, exploiting them as a means to make outrageous allusions against the Government and the laws and measures emanating from it.

*The police thus carefully identified and deleted all passages capable of giving rise to such disturbances.*

The great enemy against which the Government, the Church the police and all public authorities were constantly fighting was obscenity.

Unfortunately experience showed that situations which were in themselves obscene could be acted out on the stage even though what was actually said by the characters was irreproachable. It was possible for the

scene to be rendered *highly indecent* as a result of the gestures and jokes of the play actors. Even in the case of dances it was not possible for the police to exercise control in advance because programmes were generally *obscure and incomplete*. Even when they were *clear and highly detailed* though, it was not possible to identify the force and freedom of the movements and gestures of the dancers.

It was thus necessary for a Police Commissioner to be present at the rehearsal of each new play and after each performance in order to censor every detail that proved to be equivocal. The police were required to keep actors and dancers under scrutiny even with regard to their gestures and clothing.

Once manuscripts and printed texts of plays had been approved with a given name, it was not permitted to change the main characters without the prior consent of the police.

The *punctum dolens* was that of plays improvised on a theme. By now they were confined to marionette and puppet performances. The government would have liked to abolish them though. Their great concern derived from the fact *that not only the police did not know what was going to be said, the actor did not either*.

The authorities did not look with favour on performances involving children.

Acting represented a danger for their religious and moral education.

In schools and places of education plays were allowed where *the only actors were pupils of the school with the intervention of only those invited by the head teacher in accord with government supervisors*. It was clearly understood that *scrupulous consideration had to be given to the morality of the subject matter, the purity of its exposition and the age of the pupils taking part when choosing the play, always under the direction of the government supervisor*.<sup>36</sup>

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Guazzo, op. cit., Ministerial instruction 26 September 1856.

## IX

### The Foundling Metaphor

Birth control was not a wide-spread practice. Parents who did not want or could not maintain children, would abandon them at the church door or entrust them to the “Ruota”.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the Empire (excluding Hungary and Transylvania) there was a total of 33 foundling institutions, one in each of the principal Dominions. Moravia had 2, Dalmatia 4, Lombardy 12, and Veneto 7.

In 1849 the number of foundlings held in these institutions was 28,000 of which 8,669 in Vienna, 7,172 in Lombardy and 2,562 in Veneto.

The mortality rate was extremely high.

Total deaths of those held in the institutions was 3,430 of which 834 in Vienna, 967 in Lombardy and 65 in Veneto.

Foundlings raised outside the institutions amounted to 81,446 in the Empire as a whole of which 22,227 in Vienna, 22,899 in Lombardy and 10,642 in Veneto. Total deaths among those raised outside the institutions

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The “Ruota” or “Rota” was a kind of small door positioned particularly at the entrance of some monasteries or hospitals in which mothers were able to abandon new born babies secure in the knowledge that the nuns would take care of the foundling. There are streets in present-day towns called “della Rota” as a memory and indication that the foundling “Ruota” used to be located there.

was 11,377 of whom 5,321 in Vienna, 2,143 in Lombardy and 486 in Venice.

The regulations governing the life of foundling children seem to be symbolic of Hapsburg culture and ideology. Children abandoned by parents (more often by an unmarried mother) were in effect, adopted by the state. The state thus had the opportunity to embed its image and resemblance into these children in such a way as to create an ideal future subject: a healthy, Catholic and obedient worker.

A Veneto proverb summarised the qualities of an ideal fiancé as follows: “*ch’el sie san, ch’el apie un pan, ch’el sie cristian*” (*he should be healthy, have bread, that is work, and be a Christian*).

These were the ideals propounded by the government circulars dealing with foundlings.

**The Future.** The future of a foundling was already predestined from the moment of his or her entry into the institution.

*The male child will leave the foundling hospital to be placed elsewhere either as an artisan, a servant or to learn some art or trade.*

**Supervision.** *From the moment they leave the Foundling Hospital to the age of 21, foundlings will be under the special supervision of the police.*

**Religion.** *Foundlings will follow the religion of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.*

**Wet nurses.** *Wet nurses, confirmed as having the proper faith by the parish priest, officially recognised*

by the Deputation, will be recruited from the countryside.

**Female Inspectors.** *The inspector, including through the offices of her assistant, the custodian of the foundling children, will supervise the behaviour of the wet nurses in the nurseries, ensuring that their conduct is decent and sober. She must ensure that they do not talk at the windows with strangers, that they do not sing, make an importunate clamour or shout and that they satisfy their religious purpose and duties.*

**Breast feeding.** *The inspector will act entirely impartially in the distribution of the children to be breast-fed by the wet-nurses, leaving to each the child entrusted to her until it has to go out to the country.*

*She shall take care to ensure, with the greatest possible human feelings and maternal tenderness, that the babies are kept and looked after with love and solicitude, and to report immediately to the Management if a wet nurse refuses any child its necessary nutrition. It will also be her duty to check with unceasing vigilance that the beds, including all items from which the beds are composed, together with the children's nappies and clothing are clean, that the bands in which they are wrapped are not too tight and their nappies not too loose, asking for some to be unbound if hearing them crying in order to check their bodily cleanliness.*

*The use of sweet or narcotic substances to procure the tranquillity or sleep of the babies will be forbidden without the express advice of the doctor or surgeon as*

*also its administration in a form different from that prescribed by them. It will also be forbidden to leave the babies lying too long in their beds, to carry them with their head hanging down or to expose them in the cold season to the danger of contracting colds by taking them out of the nursery room and carrying them round the institution.*

**Adoption.** *Since the institution is not intended to keep the children but where convenient, to place them with country wet-nurses, the inspectors will be required to inform the Director of the number of babies held in the nursery so that he can order the discharge of those which are healthy and have been vaccinated, as he considers appropriate, following consultation with the institution surgeon.*

**Girl children.** *As soon as a female foundling reaches the age of 7, she will leave the section for weaned children to enter into that reserved for girl children.*

*This section is managed by a governess.*

**The Governess.** *The governess will not be permitted to leave the institution premises without permission from the Director. Having obtained such permission she will only leave in the company of one or two of the most diligent girls of the institution, alternatively choosing first one and then the other, having first consulted with the Director. She will not be able to remain outside the institution after sunset. Equally she will not be permitted to leave the girls alone in a shop or with a family for any reason whatsoever, being obliged to have them with her at all times for their safe custody.*

**Daily life.** *On the first ringing of the bell in the morning, the head girl of the dormitory will get up as also all the other girls in the dormitory. Once dressed and their hair tidy, they must then take the blankets and sheets off their beds, pull up the mattresses and open the windows to ensure that both the room and the beds are properly ventilated. They will then leave the dormitory to wash their hands and faces well, then passing on, as always in silence, to the recital of prayers and to listen to Mass. At the ending of the Mass they will return to the dormitory to make their beds.*

**Work.** *The governess will direct and supervise the work to be carried out by the institution girls which will be as follows: spinning hemp, knitting, weaving, clothes making, sewing, ironing and starching whites. These different activities will be carried out in separate rooms supervised by mistresses, themselves girls of the institution and under the direction of the governess.*

*The governess is warmly recommended to train the girls well in these work activities, particularly in sewing and clothes-making. This latter skill is not so much for sewing and cutting new clothes but to patch old ones with the greatest economy. This instruction may prove to be of great use to the girls once they have left the institution.*

**Payment.** *The governess will pay the monies earned by the work into the coffers of the institution. The accountant will effect the division of these monies on the basis of the ledger kept by the governess after having deducted the expenses sustained for the*

*purchase of yarn, needles, the thread and other items required for the work. The remaining monies will be divided between the institution, the pupils and the mistresses as follows: 40 parts per hundred to the Institution, 30 parts per hundred to the girls carrying out the work. This latter sum will be divided so that the mistress receives double the profit received by each sub-mistress working under her.*

**Law requiring uniformity: clothing.** *The form and quality of clothing for all girls in the institution must be uniform and unvaried. The governess will thus be required to be vigilant that no capricious showiness or extraneous clothing is introduced by the girls, any distinguishing element being forbidden whether in clothing or in hair style. Her mistresses will only be allowed to wear a distinguishing shoulder kerchief although this must be uniform for all mistresses and may not be worn without the express permission of the governess.*

*Both the mistresses and the sub-mistresses (who are only adult girls of the institution) must submit to the laws of uniformity as all the others.*

**Education of the Foundlings.** *Every day except for holidays, the girls will attend primary school at a predetermined time divided by dormitories, some in the morning, others in the afternoon. The governess will be required to ensure with attention that the mistresses under her perform the obligations devolved on them with exactitude, inspecting not only the classrooms and places of recreation with assiduity, but also the*

*dormitories, particularly at the time when the girls are dressing to ensure that they show sufficient decency and solicitude as well as complying with the other institution regulations.*

**Punishment.** *In the case of defects which are not serious, the governess will remind the girls of their duty kindly on the first occasion. In the event of repetition she will apply some greater mortification such as requiring the girl concerned to miss breakfast or supper given out to the good girls. More serious cases must be treated with greater rigour, that is, closing them in the correction room. In this latter case however, the director will be informed who alone will have the power to decide the duration of such a punishment and whether to render it more serious by the deprivation of food.*

**Visits.** *On every occasion the intervention of the Chaplain is required for the spiritual assistance of any of the girls restricted to bed for illness, the governess should invite him by ringing the bell reserved for the purpose. She must then meet him at the entrance door of the Institution and accompany him to the patient's bedroom, then accompanying him again to the exit door, closing it with a key which she must keep safe at all times. She will be required to follow the same procedure for the entry into the Institution of both the doctor and surgeon. The latter must always be escorted by her until leaving the building.*

*In every case that the governess is not able, for good reason, to follow the instructions set out above herself,*

*she must always be represented by the wisest and oldest of her mistresses.*

**The Key.** *The governess will receive the key to the entrance door every evening from the door-keeper of the Institution. She will be required to keep it safely, returning it to the latter the following morning.*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Guazzo, op. cit., “Disciplinary and Economic Rules of the Venice Foundling Hospital, also serving as the disciplinary and economic rules for the other Foundling hospitals in the Province”.

# X

## **The Ideals of the Circular and local Reality**

In Kafka the bureaucratic world becomes the symbol of the inability to communicate between men, and above all, between man and God. What strikes us when looking at a small outlying area of the Empire, is the lack of communication between the ideal world described by the circulars and the real world.

Let us consider Montebelluna in the Province of Treviso.

On the entry of the Austrian army in 1814, it had a population of 5,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom worked on the land as farm labourers or tenant farmers. Industry was still in its infancy: three spinning factories provided work for 30 or so women for about two months.

In 1816 one inhabitant in five was affected by pellagra and over the decade from 1845 to 1854 one out of every 2 babies born during the winter died during the first year of its life.

In the great cities of Lombardy-Veneto life was throbbing with novelty. Liberal ideas were beginning to circulate, Verdi was applauded, demands were made for a constitution and the struggle had begun for the independence of Italy.

In the small centres like Montebelluna, experience had brought the rural inhabitants to the same conclusions as

in Ecclesiastics: the sun rises, the sun sets, masters come and go, there is nothing new under the sun.

The peasant's mentality was forged by the constant and deep relationship with nature. Nature does not know short term evolution or progression, only working in cycles, the change of night and day and between the seasons.

Novelty, the spring and catalyst of industrial society was almost entirely absent. Technological development had an extremely long time frame. Habit had established the conviction in the peasant farmer that the way of working employed by him was the only possible one and hence not open to change.

Libraries, theatres or other shows or entertainments? There was nothing of the kind. When asked by the prefecture at the beginning of the century what their most urgent need was, the response of the local authorities was a new, more spacious prison (country theft was a running sore in the society of the time).

In compensation there was a wonderful cathedral fitted with a precious Callido organ, in which 10 priests officiated overseen by the Monsignor Provost. There were 48 premises open to the public, 9 public houses, 31 taverns and 7 cafés and spirit sellers. The only entertainment at Carnival was a trip to the tavern.

This was a million miles from the amusing, gay life in Vienna, swept along by the sparkling music of Strauss. Legitimacy and power were founded more on customs than the law. Traditions had been transformed into an

immutable structure by society, sometimes even in contradiction of the law.

**The use of the Foundling Hospitals.** Although the Austrian government had established that the Foundling Hospitals “*were to be used to receive children whose parents were unknown, secretly abandoned by them*” it was not uncommon for mothers to send their illegitimate children to Treviso.

*“It has come to our notice that in some places in this Diocese and Province the parish priest, moved perhaps by the fear that should the child stay with the mother, it being of illegitimate conception, this might create a serious scandal among the majority of his parishioners and hence perhaps motive and example for some new misconduct, not only encourages but, as it were, obliges the mother, her parents and family to send the new-born baby to the Foundling Hospital. He has apparently stated that such Institutions had been intended and founded in order to receive all illegitimate children without distinction”.*<sup>39</sup>

The attempts to combat these abuses, preventing a possible acknowledgement of her fault by the mother and imposing an extra burden on state funds, did not achieve significant results. At the mid-point of the century habits had not changed.

*“Giosuè Tocchetto of Montebelluna and soldier on leave from Busta having maintained illegitimate*

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<sup>39</sup>  
512.

Guazzo, op. cit., Government Circular of 27 July 1832, Vol. 8, page

*relations with Teresa Quaglioto... became father of a girl child at 9 o'clock this morning which, as is the rule in such cases, was sent to the Foundling Hospital in Treviso*".<sup>40</sup>

**Primary Schooling.** The gap in comprehension between the world of government circulars and the outlying provinces was particularly marked in the case of education.

Primary education, as we have seen, was compulsory both for males and females. The good intentions of the Central Government were not shared by the local authorities and even less by the local population.

There were few schools, attended mostly by boys and these latter only in the winter months. At the beginning of the spring peasant children replaced the pen and exercise book with the hoe and the rake.

In 1833 out of 398 male children "*capable of attending school*" in Montebelluna only 273 began the school year. At the beginning of March this number reduced to 187.

In their annual reports the schoolmasters wrote that "*the reason for the difference could be attributed to the size of the local council and the rural occupations taken up by children of peasant families during the summer*".<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> A.M.M., "Police" section, 1858, letter of the Altivole Local Council Deputation to the Montebelluna Local Council Deputation, 14 October 1858.

<sup>41</sup> Guazzo, op. cit., Public education 1833, state of the minor primary schools.

At the start the first two primary school classes were functional then the third was added. Children of 5 or 6 could be in the same schoolroom as adolescents of 14 or 15 sprouting their first beards. Classes were enormous with up to 70 pupils.

A certain number of boys thus could, in some way, take a sip of the nectar of culture, girls were however, totally excluded.

The repeated solicitations from the government in relation to the “*advantage of giving girls primary education*” regularly fell on deaf ears.

The Province of Treviso appears to have been more backward in this than Veneto. By the middle of the century there were 231 boys’ schools against only 5 for girls with 234 schoolmasters and assistants for boys and 5 schoolmistresses for girls. In Venice there were 18 girls’ schools, 17 in Udine, 14 in Padua, 14 in Rovigo and 11 in Belluno.

Girls’ schools were always opposed in Montebelluna.

In response to a Delegated Order of 1835 the Local Council Deputation stated “*the majority of the population is made up of workers on the land and small artisans with very few other inhabitants spread throughout the council area for whose daughters education would perhaps be necessary. Even if it were appropriate to set up a school, they would certainly not let their daughters wander all day through the countryside*”.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>

Guazzo, op. cit., Public Education 1835, letter from the Local Council Deputation to the District Commissioner of 23 May 1835.

Montebelluna had to wait until the academic year of 1869-1870 before its first girls started to attend school.

### **Charity. The meeting point between those in power and their subjects**

The area where there was a real meeting of the Emperor, the Government, the powerful and the people was that of charity. The world was what it was. There were the rich and the poor but with a good heart stimulated by religious feeling, the luckier ones could come to the aid of the less fortunate.

On 20 April 1816 His Majesty Francesco I “*honoured the local council of Montebelluna with his presence*”, the powerful were invited to distribute grain and money to the poor. In this way they were not only fulfilling their “*duties to languishing humanity which has every right to make a claim to piety for what was possible by way of charitable endeavours*” but were also giving a proof of “*the sentiments felt by the excellent and most august Sovereign who gives with such beneficence and loving paternal affection to his children and subjects*”. One of the first concerns of the most gracious Sovereign was that he should be “*informed of the results of the voluntary collection of alms and largesse for the benefit of the indigent*”.<sup>43</sup>

In this way the beneficence of the powerful in Montebelluna appeared as an emanation and reflection

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<sup>43</sup> A.M.M., “Police” Section, 1816, letter from the District Chancellor to the Political Authority in Montebelluna.

of that much greater generosity of the Emperor whose faithful subjects thus felt themselves even more closely tied to him by bonds of heartfelt and undying gratitude. In 1854 Francesco I married Sissi-Elisabetta. Numerous celebrations were organised throughout the Empire. Sacks of flour were distributed to the poor on the occasion together with a number of dowries to girls who were about to be married.

Beneficence was an ideological model in which there was perfect agreement between the social doctrine of the Church and the paternalist policies of the government. Each local council had its charitable congregation presided over by the parish priest.

This was a further confirmation of the central role of the parish priest in the life of such small communities.

## **Integration of Church and State: a Necessity**

The concept of two powers, or rather, the double allegiance of citizens on the one hand to the state and on the other the God's reign, was the great novelty introduced by Christianity.

This dualism, founded on the idea of "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's" proved to be an important critical instrument against every attempt to render power sacred, particularly those attempts using oaths as a sacred bond.

The church-state dialectic in the history of the West thus opened those areas of liberty representing its most typical trait with respect to other traditions.

Undoubtedly, Christianity's role has not been unequivocal. It is no accident that Giovanni Prodi talks of Christianity's "*substantial ambiguity*" in its relations with power and politics. It maintained this "ambiguity" in a structural rather than evaluative sense, where "dual allegiance" is certainly not a peaceful unity but a dialectic tension, a conflict which remained unresolved by every attempt at rational definition as also by any Concordat.

In Hapsburg Austria there was no lack of discussion on the division of powers. This became particularly heated after the revolutions of 1848.

I have quoted below a number of reflections on this theme taken from the Report of the Conte Thun, Minister of Religion and Education, on the

arrangements made with the catholic bishops to regulate ecclesiastical affairs.

There is, in particular, a preliminary consideration of the fundamental importance of religion in the survival of the state:

*Those nations and those states where religious conviction has lost its power over people's minds experience a state of internal dissolution. So long as it retains this power however, ecclesiastical matters exercise a penetrating and irresistible influence in a multiplicity of spheres in civil life.*

There then follows this observation:

*The state and the Church are concerned with the same people.*

*The Church is able to provide a system of rules applying to the human conscience with the influence of religion. The power of the state has been entrusted with the weighty office of defending the legal order, where necessary even with the use of external coercive means. If however, the laws are not supported by a sense of duty in those who have to execute them, their power is weakened. On the other hand the Church also has need of external resources to assist it in its action and for this, it requests the protection and preservation afforded by the power of the state. The interests of the state and the Church thus meet at every point.*

## The two powers

The integration of religion into the state appears to be a necessity. He was not unaware of the existence of a debate on the separation of powers

*At the times of ferment voices made themselves heard from different parts which, for completely opposing reasons, demanded separation of the state from the Church. These voices indeed, have not altogether fallen silent.*

It was admitted that such a separation exists.

*It is true that there are countries which have this, where there is a regular connection only between the Church and local communities, but not between the Church and the Government, where indeed, care is taken to keep them apart. There is no lack of supporters of this form even though there is no place where it has borne the test of history over the centuries. In any case it is so contradictory to the historical development and the general state of things in Austria, that it would be impossible to put it into practice.*

He recalls that there is freedom of religion in Austria:

*Section 2 of the Edict of 4 March 1849 guaranteed every church and religious association the right to regulate and administer their own affairs and the right of common public religious worship. This represented a confirmation in law that the Government of the state recognised the churches and religious societies as such and was prepared to protect them.*

The bishops observe that the Catholic Church cannot be treated as just any other religious belief.

It received the principles of its foundation from God and cannot change them arbitrarily.

*The Catholic Church rests on the solid foundation of its belief that it has received not only its doctrine of morality and faith but also the fundamental principles of its constitution from divine revelation. It cannot, as other associations, arbitrarily change its laws.*

*Every state which wishes to reach an agreement on its relations with the Catholic Church, must therefore recognise those laws. His Majesty's government has always been aware of this necessity.*

## **The appointment of Bishops**

The bishops recognised the Emperor's right to appoint bishops but suggested that it would be best if the Monarch did not exercise it without consulting the views of the Catholic bishops first.

*The memorandum of the meeting of the Bishops of 30 May of the Pastoral Year stated: "that they respect all the rights that the civil power may exercise over the Church, both in relation to those arising from the nature of civil power and those others which the Monarch has acquired by virtue of special title. Faithful to this declaration, they also recognise the right of the Sovereign to nominate the person to be exalted to Episcopal rank. They nonetheless firmly believe that this right must be considered as purely*

*personal in nature. They therefore feel themselves inspired by the political bond to make the following, highly respectful but urgent petition: that His Majesty be pleased to declare that he is ready not to exercise his above mentioned power without having sought the opinion of the Catholic Bishops generally and not to prefer that of the bishops in the ecclesiastical province where the vacant seat is located.”*

The bishops emphasise in particular, the personal relationship that has existed from time immemorial between the Church and the Emperor of Austria.

*“This important right undoubtedly derives from the personal relations existing between the Catholic prince and the Catholic Church since it has never been recognized at any time or in any place as the entitlement of a non-Catholic prince.”<sup>44</sup>*

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Guazzo, op. cit., Ministerial Report 7 April 1850 and Sovereign Resolution 18 April 1850

# APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS

## 1- The Appointment of a Bishop

*I, ..., confess publicly by means of this letter and give notice to all that His Imperial, Royal and Apostolic Majesty Francesco I, by Grace of God Emperor of Austria, King of Jerusalem, Hungary, Bohemia, Lombardy, Venice, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Galicia, Lodomeria, Illyria, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Lorraine, Salzburg, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Upper and Lower Silesia, Grand Prince of Transylvania, Marquis of Moravia, Prince Count of Hapsburg and the Tyrol etc. ..., our most gracious lord, by his particular grace and sovereign and benign volition, having nominated me as bishop..., has conferred this bishopric on me together with all its revenues, usufructs, benefits and rights and has extended the letter of presentation thereof having also in his dignity, commanded that possession of the said bishopric be delivered to me with a proper inventory, with all appurtenances to the same. I hereby humbly and knowingly submit and promise to His Royal and apostolic Majesty, by virtue of this letter, that I wish to dedicate myself to the spiritual and temporal administration of the bishopric as aforesaid and to the amplification of the Episcopal ministry in conformity with our ancient, true and holy Catholic religion and also according to the order and use of the Universal Holy Roman Catholic Church and not to neglect or change any of the income, property, revenues, or usufructs of the bishopric from those that have been delivered to me without the knowledge and consent of his Royal, Imperial, Apostolic Majesty, indeed, so far as I am able, to regain control over anything that might have been removed or subtracted*

*previously and also to maintain the Episcopal residence and all the other property appertaining to the same in good order and repair, dealing with it according to the laws of the country, paying taxes and encumbrances promptly and precisely and to both dutifully and willingly dedicate myself in all I do in accordance with my vocation in spiritual matters in a manner which is befitting to, and the entitlement of, a catholic bishop obedient to the Holy Christian Church.*

## **2 - The Sovereign Edict of Tolerance (1782)**

*Dear and Faithful Subjects! We are convinced on the one hand, of the damage deriving from any violence inflicted on conscience and, on the other, of the advantage redounding to Religion and State from a true Christian tolerance. We are therefore determined to permit those professing the Augsburg and Helvetian Religion as also the non-united Greek Religion, the private exercise of their religion in all places without regard, whether or not the same has been in use on other occasions or introduced. The sole Catholic Religion will remain pre-eminent in public worship, but both the Protestant religions and also the non-united Greek church will be permitted to exercise their worship in private in all those places where this has been rendered possible, either because of the number of individuals as indicated below or the decision and capacity of the inhabitants, and where non-Catholics are not already entitled to public worship. In particular we grant permission as follows: 1) non-Catholic inhabitants may erect an oratory of their own together with a School where there are 100 families of their faith and this even when the same are not all in the place where their oratory is located and where their ministers live, some of such families living several hours distance. Those however, who live a greater distance from their oratory will be able, if they so wish, to move closer to the oratory so long as it is situated in the Austrian states. In the same way their ecclesiastical elders who are Austrian citizens, may visit those united with them in the same faith, educate them, provide bodily and spiritual sustenance to their infirm without ever however preventing, under their grave liability, the calling of a Catholic priest should one or other of the infirm so desire. With regard to the oratories, we hereby*

*expressly command, that these, where not already built in such a manner, must not have bells, steeples or towers or entrances from the road giving them the appearance of a church. Catholics will remain free to erect and build their oratories in the way and with the materials best pleasing them. Similarly they must be fully permitted to exercise divine worship and administer all sacraments both in the oratory itself and in minor places of worship including for the assistance of the sick. They will likewise be permitted to carry out the public burial of their dead with the accompaniment of their ministers. 2) Non-Catholics will have the power to appoint masters for their schools which must be maintained by the Community. Our own Provincial Directorate of Schools must moreover be empowered to inspect the same in all matters concerning the method and order of teaching. We likewise hereby accord 3) the right to the non-Catholics of a place, to choose their own pastors so long as they themselves make provision for the keeping and maintenance of the same. Whenever however, the dominions wish to take on such cost themselves, they will be unanimously entitled to the right of presentation (just presentandi). We moreover, reserve the right to confirm the pastors chosen or presented in such a way. Where Protestant Consistories exist, the confirmation will be conducted by means of the same and where not existing, by means of the Protestant Consistories already existing in Hungary up to such time when circumstances make it necessary to set up their own Consistories in the provinces. 4) Surplice fees will remain, as in Silesia, the entitlement of the Ordinary Parish Priest. 5) In those matters and disputes regarding the religious affairs of the non-Catholics, we hereby graciously wish and order the judgment of the same to our Provincial Political Authorities which will charge one*

*of their pastors or theologians with the power of intervention to pronounce a judgment or effect the decision in accordance with the principles of their Religion, it however remaining possible for the further referral of the matter to our high Political Ministry. 6) The practice which has been in force up to now will cease from the date hereof by which some non-Catholics have had to issue certificates on their marriage in relation to the education of children born under the union in the Roman Catholic Religion. If the father of children, whether male or female, is a Catholic, they must without more be brought up in the Catholic Religion, this to be seen as a prerogative of the dominant religion. In the contrary case, the children will follow the religion of the parent of the same sex if the father is Protestant and the mother Catholic. 7) Non-Catholics may in the future be entitled by way of dispensation, to acquire houses and goods, and skills in any art or profession, they will have the right to citizenship, to academic appointments and civil employment. They will not be required to swear an oath in any form other than that in conformity with the principles of their own Religion. Likewise they will not be obliged to attend religious processions and services as also they will not be obliged to attend processions and services of the Dominant Religion if they do not wish to take part in the same. The elections to employment and the concession of the same must be conducted without regard to difference in Religion, with a view solely, as is currently the daily practice in our military forces with great benefit and without the slightest difficulty deriving therefrom, to the probity and ability, and indeed, the Christian conduct, of the component staff. The above-mentioned dispensations allowing the acquisition of immoveable or rural property as also, for obtaining rights of citizenship and professional skills must*

*be issued without difficulties in our subject towns, the central government offices and royal cities where there are Provincial camerlengos and where these do not exist, by our respective governments. Should difficulties be encountered in obtaining such dispensation leading to their being denied, a reasoned report will have to be made, case by case, to our Government which it will submit to Us for our Sovereign resolution. Where it is a question of contract of lease (jus incolatus) for the highest level in society, it will be for our High Bohemian-Austrian Chancellery to agree to the dispensation having heard the respective government authority (Sovereign Edict of 9 August 1817).*

### **3 Fine for Working on a Holiday**

*To the Local Council Deputation of Montebelluna*

*Proceedings over one day with the imposition of a fine ... Giovanni Torresan, known as Zamprognin was fined 3.00 Lira for having had wheat cut last year on a holiday. He undertook to deliver the fine to the Local Council Deputation on Wednesday next, submitting to fiscal enforcement procedures in default.*

*The Deputation received report no. 1006 of the 6th of this month, noting its conformity with requirements, at the same time ordering that the sum was to be distributed to the poorest in the parish with the assistance of the reverend Priest with responsibility in that regard, and to send the note of the beneficiaries, signed by the distributors, to the normal place to be added to the papers.*

*Montebelluna, 12 August 1844*

#### **4 - Fine for Opening Tavern during afternoon Church Service**

*To the Royal District Commissioner of Montebelluna*

*The Council officer Angelo Morellato presented the enclosed report from which it emerges that on Sunday last, the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month, during the time set aside for afternoon holy services, there were various persons in the tavern of Bortolo Garbujo in Posmon, who were discussing business with great clamour and hence causing scandal to those passing close to the said tavern. Having entered the said tavern and reaching the room in which the business was being discussed the same Morellato reproached those present. A certain Fiorino Monchera, a reckless and insolent fellow, had the impudence to insult him with disrespectful expressions, even mocking the vigilance of the Public Authorities in enforcing the sanctity of religious observance. In the document that this Deputation therefore sends with the original report of the Council Official to the Royal Imperial District Commission, it is proposed that both the tavern keeper Garbujo and those indicated in the Report, should be fined 3.00 Lira each and that Monchera should be sentenced to three days imprisonment for his reckless conduct.*

24 January 1845

*The Deputies*

## **5 - Fine for the Opening of a Tavern during the Time set aside for Afternoon Services**

*To the Local Council Deputation of Montebelluna*

*I hereby state that, yesterday, in fulfilment of my duty, I ordered a group of my subordinates, under the direction of the acting deputy commander Luigi Sampietri, to go out into this local council area in search of matters for which the group had been formed.*

*The group proceeded to the public house of Lorenzo Michielin at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and found it fully open to the public at the time set aside for afternoon church services. There were many people in the said public house including Agostino Dal Chin, Grazzotto, known as Salata Giacomo, Luigi Morello and Angelo Santin, all from Montebelluna who were playing at cards.*

*Sampietri justly decided to remove the cards from the players. He took them away with him, now producing them to this Local Council Deputation. The keeper of the public house is also charged with contravening the current provisions in force prohibiting such abuses at the times set for church services. I have produced the above in fulfilment of my duty and discharging all my responsibilities in that regard.*

*7 November 1825*

## **6 - Fine for the opening of a Tavern and playing Bowls during the times set aside for Afternoon Service**

*To the commander of the Satellitium squadron of Montebelluna.*

*I, the undersigned, on the orders of the commander of the district guards squadron together with the undersigned members of the guard itself, carried out an inspection of the market of this Local Council...*

*In the sworn deposition concurred to, and made by, all of the group we agree that opposite the public house of a certain Giovanni Pellizzari we discovered a group of persons playing bowls belonging to the said inn/keeper at the time when the afternoon church service was being conducted.*

*Following the above, the individuals noted below were given a formal notice and were stopped from continuing the game by the removal of the balls. The players included a certain Antonio Rizzo, known as Canevin, Angelo Specie, the son of a certain Tordo Stagliere, Giuseppe Gajo and other unknown persons.*

*Giuseppe Gajo, leader of the players, however, insisted that he would not obey the rightful orders given, continued to vomit out foul/mouthed abuse against the whole force, particularly the head of the party. In fact, even with the exercise of prudence it was not possible to calm his fierce assault. He added the strongest expressions besmirching our office in the following terms: "Dirty scum, thieving shit-faced pigs, I couldn't give a shit for any of you and if we were all of my opinion we would have disarmed you by now and chased you out of the market." In a further gesture of contempt he then hurled the ball he had in his hand into the tables of the said inn-keeper Pellizzari, known as Sbrega.*

*The wife of the above Gajo then arrived and herself began to threaten the public force, raising her hands with the same kind of abuse uttered by her husband.*

*We have reported all the above to you, the commander of the force so that this report can be given to the competent authority, effected both for yourself and the said authority, pursuant to law. In the mean time I am honoured to declare myself to be your obedient servant.*

*Montebelluna, 21 March 1824*

*Acting deputy commander*

## **7 - The Parish Priest Don Giovanni Zini's Assessment of a group of his parishioners.**

*“I have always known Anna Cervi, of the late Domenico, as an excellent daughter in all her relations. I can say nothing against her character, reputation or conduct and as for her credulity, I believe she is no different from any other woman alive.*

*I can sincerely state the following with reference to the witnesses based on my first-hand knowledge of the same. Gio. Batta Volpato, a servant of Garioni, is a good man, attends church and has little to do with worldly affairs.*

*Giuseppe De Favari, known as Fregona is of a peaceful disposition but he is a drunkard, lazy around the house and sometimes driven to rage by gambling. He does not however neglect the sacraments and he cannot be said to be bad unless heated with wine.*

*Giovanni Bussolini, a foul-mouthed imprudent, is a prodigal. He has only recently become so with a spontaneous return to the sacraments in this Jubilee. It is to be hoped that there will be a complete change of his mad and impetuous character. Even in his madness however, he shows a sense of honour and sincerity, giving proof of this on diverse occasions in the conduct of his affairs.*

*His wife Giacoma Innocente is miserly and deceitful, of little faith, a time server and a gossip.*

*Maria Michellin, was once a prostitute and is now a pimp, she attends church but with true indifference steals grapes, grain etc. from other people's land and thus is of no reputation.*

*Maria Raveane, She pretends to be an honest woman but is sacrilegious, scandalous and foul-mouthed. She covets the property of others and misappropriates it. She spreads*

*gossip about everyone and it would be a good thing if the village were rid of her being of no reputation and having an insolent tongue.*

*Antonio Boschieri is an excellent husband, a good Christian and peaceful citizen. He is a little curious but his curiosity derives from stupidity and not a bad character.*

*Antonio Gatteller, known as Petentin, good in everything but as garrulous as a woman. His female chatter harms no-one though.*

*Luigi Binotto is a young fool, silly and in love with Anna Cervi. It is for this reason that he is flighty and blown by any wind whether it be friendly or unfriendly. I cannot consider him reliable but he is not a bad person. If he had money he would be a prey to gambling and idle pursuits, becoming over-assertive.*

*Osvaldo Raveane is an old and lecherous ape, lacking judgment in the running of his home and addicted to gambling, women and wine as well as being over-indulgent to his daughter Maria, the foul-mouthed one. His poverty is his own fault . For the rest however, he is sincere and his word can be relied on, as well as being reasonably Christian.*

*Angelo Costantin, known as Sbornia is a good son to his family. He has a weakness for wine and gambling when he has money. He is a friend to the Church and does not brawl. On the whole his good parts are greater than his bad.*

**8 - Letter from the Parish Priest of Caerano. 19 January  
1816**

*To His Worship the Mayor,*

*Your Worship,*

*My parishioner, a certain Gioachin Pastro, is accompanied by my feelings of sincere compassion. His wife has now been infirm and confined to bed for a whole year. He is in a state of absolute poverty and he has been forced to beg for alms because unable to find work. All his tools were taken away for his personal tax which would have allowed him to earn a living in the coming season. He is now unable to obtain replacements or to recover those which he has lost. If you were able to help him in some way it would be an action of great merit. I would therefore warmly recommend him to your pious charity. I ask pardon for this intrusion, and I remain, believe me.*

*Your most obedient Servant*

*Niccolò Gasparinetti*

## 9 - Letter from the Parish Priest of Nogarè, 1815

*To His Worship the Mayor  
Your Worship,*

*While the circumstances of the unhappy inhabitants of the mountainous areas of this Department are such as to evoke compassion and truly to move one to pity, the conditions of our own parish of Nogarè, where I have had the honour to serve in my capacity as parish priest for only 20 months, are certainly no less bad, deserving of all feelings of humanity as well as effective and ready assistance. My position has allowed me to be a first hand witness to these circumstances and hence I have dared to inform your Worship in company with the honourable persons serving with you in the Central Directorate.*

*After the unfortunate year of 1812 when this parish was battered by eight successive storms, it has never had resources to spare, indeed, with the worsening of the seasons, it has continued to experience ever more ruinous conditions which have caught it up in real poverty and daily indigence. The scarcity of provisions in the two years following the storms, the disasters of the war, the lack of the most basic supplies and the complete lack of means or resources for industry or transport, have meant there is no trade by which money can be obtained. The whole has reduced them to the most deplorable state. Thus it is that out of one hundred families in this parish, barely twelve can count on even necessities for the whole year. To this one should add a large number of sick and those suffering Pellagra who live purely on charity, lacking even the wherewithal for their daily life. Then in addition there is an almost constant flow of large numbers of poor beggars*

*coming from bordering parishes in the same, literally besieging the roads and doors of these inhabitants.*

*This then, is a brief description of the situation of my parishioners who present to you, through myself, their true poverty, as can be seen from the picture I have provided on the orders of the higher authorities, praying that they be treated and considered in the same way as the mountain inhabitants, placing their hope in the Sovereign magnificence and the beneficent and generous soul of their most gracious Sovereign, for the receipt of that comfort which would remove them from the terrible state of wretchedness in which they have been languishing for more than four years and from the awful and most deplorable necessity to end their days in poverty and tears.*

*May Your Worship be pleased to receive my repeated declarations of my true esteem and consideration.*

*Nogarè, 14 March 1815*

## **10- Letter from Mons. Angelo Dalmistro, 25 May 1815**

*To his Worship the Deputy Mayor*

*Your Worship,*

*Of the evil-doers of this parish, Gianbattista Sanson, known as Turco, should certainly not be left to the last before being taken into consideration. He is an enemy to hard work and labour, the only source of subsistence for the poor. He lives out his life in taverns to the scandal of clean living folk, returning home every evening drunk and incapable. Then it is that he becomes a beast, disturbing the neighbourhood, a place of the greatest tranquillity, shaking his house with unruly noises and maltreating his unfortunate wife and daughters with blows. These latter are often so frightened that they are forced to take refuge in their neighbours' houses almost naked.*

*I can only leave you to imagine, dear Sir, the words and horrible curses that issue from his mouth at those times. From what I am told by reliable witnesses the curses that come from that hellish mouth are all the more disgusting because of new coinage, scandalising to the highest degree those present. In short, the true abomination of that man's conduct is not easy to describe. Far from giving thought to the support of his family, he takes away what his poor wife has been able to earn with her honest labour for the maintenance of their daughters.*

*For the above reasons I consider that it would be a good action to remove an evil wretch of his ilk from the area, knowing nothing of natural honesty, religion or the sacraments, in order to avoid further scandal and gossip.*

*With the above, assuring you, Your worship, of my greatest  
esteem, I remain, Sir,  
Your most obedient servant*

*Angelo Dalmistro*

## **11 - Letter from Monsignor Brunello to the Montebelluna Local Council Deputation, 1853**

*It is a matter of great regret to me that after all our prayers and exhortations to the spouses Antonio Bonsembiante and Giulia Michielin to try to ensure their cohabitation, I have been forced to apply to this Deputation as follows:*

*That the wife Giulia Michielin who is currently living with her father be conducted, should it be necessary, with force, to live with her husband.*

*That she be enjoined not to frequent her father's house at least for some time, since he has always seemed to me to be over fiery in supporting his daughter, making her daring and insolent.*

*I will, in the mean time, advise the Bonsembiante family to treat the said Giulia with all due regard so that she will no longer have any reason for complaining.*

## **12 - Speech of Abbot G. B. Rambaldi, made during the first war of independence in 1948**

*“People of Montebelluna, your flag is sacred. All peoples unite Religion with their arms. The prayers of the Church for our flag are truly pleasing to Heaven. Why is it, moreover, that God seems to have left so many centuries pass by before giving Italians this sacred rite if not to see it begun and completed in all the force and greatness of the magnanimous Pius! The national standard has been entrusted to your hands. For it to be like a religion you must be brothers, free and equal. Do not believe those sad souls who affirm that Religion only makes people base and cowardly. Were Moses, Gideon, Matthias and Judas base and cowardly? The armies of the Hebrews went into battle lead by the snake and those of Constantine by the Cross because the God of armies loves the clash of arms and enjoys the battle. Brothers, you must love your priests! Pardon their ignorance and prejudice of the past. Austria bastardised almost all of them. The followers of Pius IX want and must be worthy of you and generous like you. If the God of battle is with us who will be against us”*

## Postface

Thus it was that the integration of church and state, that expression of alliance between throne and altar, was not the ally that the Hapsburg Monarchy had hoped for. It did not save the Empire from disintegration.

The true enemy, the fatal worm, for the Hapsburg Empire was nationalism.

Although it was hostile at first, Austria became increasingly conciliatory, prepared to meet the demands of nationality. This increased flexibility came too late though.

Lombardy and Veneto were part of the Empire for only a few decades. In 1859 first Lombardy, and then in 1866 Veneto, joined Italy.

The compromise (*Ausgleich*) of 1867 under which Francesco Giuseppe was forced to grant wide-ranging autonomy to the Hungarian population established a point of equilibrium of sufficient strength to reinforce a historic link previously precarious and characterised by conflict.

It was not long before the forces of national autonomy regained their strength. The Czechs claimed an arrangement similar to that conceded to the Hungarians. The Italians of Trent and Trieste started an irredentist movement proposing forms of administrative autonomy which, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century became more radical, a movement for independence. The 1915-18 war marked union with Italy for Trentino and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

## **Bureaucratic Centralism**

One of the boasts of the Hapsburg Empire was the efficiency of its bureaucratic system. In order to govern so many peoples with different languages, cultures and religions, Austria adopted a rigorous bureaucratic centralism. The riches that it has passed on to us in this field are truly remarkable.

In addition to its many merits though, there have always been hidden traps in the system based on bureaucratic centralism. These dangers were noted, for example, by Alessandro Bach, the Interior Minister who wrote in relation to the bureaucracy following the disturbances of 1848:

*“Officials must be removed from their rigid isolation from ordinary citizens”.*

He also recommended *“the greatest simplicity and expedition in dealing with affairs, eliminating any over-abundance of red tape”.*

He requested that greater zeal and effort be devoted *“to understanding and encouraging the autonomy of local councils”.*

The same dangers Bach identified for Austria still apply today to Europe.

Even though Brussels has restated its wish to decentralise power and give responsibility to all countries forming part of the Union with espousal of

the principle of subsidiarity, there is an increase in dissatisfaction, criticism and incomprehension which the true supporters of Europe would do well not to underestimate.

The new Europe, suffocated by rules and regulations imposed by the enlightened policies of Brussels may find itself imploding from an excess of bureaucratic centralism in the same way as the Hapsburg Empire.

## **More on the Christian Soul**

Those defending Europe's Christian soul argue that if the Europeans do not call themselves Christians they will lose their identity.

My own belief is that the decision not to include Christianity in the European Constitution is, in fact, the best recognition that it has accepted the Gospel message of the separation of the two powers.

Paolo Prodi emphasised how the end of the overlap between the sacred and the political, of religious and civil laws, was the truly innovative aspect of Christianity.<sup>45</sup>

And then again, is Christianity more useful to Europe as a foundation of the state or as a critical conscience? When a state embraces the crucifix too closely, may not this be because it has some skeletons lurking in its cupboards?

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<sup>45</sup> In "Identità Storica e Costituzione dell'Unione Europea" (Historical Identity and the European Constitution), published in the magazine "Il Mulino" no. 414, July-August 2004.

I am convinced that we Europeans must stop thinking of ourselves as the depositaries of Christianity. Firstly because our history has not been so limpidly attached to the Gospels. Secondly, because a universal religion like Christianity should avoid any geographical connotation. In Christianity there should not even be a difference between believers and non-believers (what is more anti-Christian than a Crusade?) because the Christian God is Father of all, including those who do not believe in him and indeed, those who fight against Him. But this is a question which could take some time to resolve.

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- To read further records from the archives you should visit the Internet site of Montebelluna Sportsystem District and of the Museum of boots and sports footwear at [www.museoscarpone.it](http://www.museoscarpone.it) and click on the link “conoscere la Storia di Montebelluna” (The History of Montebelluna).
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