

## SAINT PIUS V AND THE SACRED COLLEGE

AMONGST the many tasks that St. Pius V was faced with when he ascended the papal throne was the reform of the College of Cardinals decreed by the General Council of Trent. One source of abuse had been the demands made on the Holy See by secular governments for the elevation of royal children or favoured ministers to the purple, also the appointment of unworthy relatives of the Popes. Much against his will St. Pius, early in his reign, allowed himself to be persuaded by the cardinals to admit his nephew, Michael Bonelli, into their ranks; but although he had agreed to their request he insisted on the young cardinal retaining his Dominican dress, refused him permission to wear the red biretta or the silk robes of his new dignity, to use silver plate at his table, and other cardinalial privileges. He had hopes that Bonelli would prove himself another Charles Borromeo, but if this was beyond his nephew's powers St. Pius's choice was nevertheless a good one, and Bonelli remained until his death thirty-two years later one of the best prelates in Rome.

After this first creation Pius V refused to hold another for two years, although it was pointed out to him that death might surprise him before he had succeeded in filling the ranks of the Sacred College, depleted by death, with worthy successors. At last on March 24th, 1568, he appointed four men, Diego de Espinosa, Bishop of Sigüenza, who as minister of Philip II of Spain had done much for the furtherance of religion; Jerome Souchier, Abbot-general of the Cistercians; John Paul della Chiesa; and Anthony Carafa. Souchier was both learned and holy, and took the dignity most unwillingly. Its weight, he said, would prevent him doing any more work for his Order, and he was not fitted for any other. St. Pius told him that the Pope was the best judge of that; but Souchier had not long to bear the unwelcome burden, and when told of his

death in November, 1571, Pius lamented 'that a great light in the Church had been extinguished,' and 'envied him his holy death.' Della Chiesa, a lawyer and a widower, was persuaded by the Pope to give his services to the Church, and so highly did he estimate these that he conferred on him the cardinalate. Carafa, a nephew of Paul IV, had shared in the tribulations which came upon all his family under Pius IV, but St. Pius V, to restore the good name of a prelate at once holy and learned, elevated him to the purple, and never was a choice more justified. He later rendered great services to the Church in the revision of the Vulgate, for he was a profound Greek scholar.

After this wise selection Pius V again refrained for two years from creating cardinals, but in the meantime was watching closely the most eminent men in the Church, and making inquiries into their lives with a view to holding the celebrated consistory of May 17th, 1570, in which he raised to the purple sixteen prelates, all of whom were not only men of great integrity of life, but of unusual ability, for Pius did not regard sanctity alone as sufficient reason for admitting a man to the College of Cardinals. And in this consistory we cannot help but notice how he succeeded. But he was determined to brook no interference with his choice from the secular power, which in times past had proved the chief obstacle to a complete reform of the cardinalate.

A few days before the coming consistory he published the names of the new cardinals, and then, undeterred, stood the fierce storm of opposition that arose both amongst the cardinals and the imperial and royal ambassadors. Already the courts of Europe, by their privilege of veto, could and did interfere in the papal elections, and in the sixteenth century had become accustomed, not only to present their candidates for the cardinalate, but also to veto the choice of cardinals. This was going too far, and Pius was not the man to accept such an unwarrantable assumption of power. He firmly warned the ambassador of

Philip II that in this matter he would not give way. He himself, he remarked, did not presume to advise temporal monarchs as to the appointment of their ministers and generals, and therefore they had no grievance if he refused to listen to their suggestions in appointing his own principal advisers.

The storm of opposition centred round his refusal to grant the red hat to John Vincent Gonzaga, although the emperor and the kings of France and Spain united in urging his inclusion amongst the chosen sixteen. All the ambassadors in turn sought an audience and pressed their demand with the greatest insistence, and on the day of the consistory itself all the actual cardinals in Rome spent several hours in a last attempt to make the Pope change his mind. It was all in vain; he would not include any new names, neither would he exclude any of those he had chosen. For two years he had pondered over his choice, and nothing would turn him aside.

It is significant of the attitude of the European courts that the two candidates whose nomination was most opposed were the two most saintly, Paul Burali of Arezzo, who was beatified by Clement XIV in 1772, and Julius Santori. Their opponents admitted their worth, but Philip II, although honouring them for it, coolly demanded their exclusion because Burali was a Lombard and Santori a Neapolitan, and either of them, if elected Pope, would prove an obstacle to Spanish rule in Italy.

Blessed Paul Burali was, indeed, a remarkable man. First a successful lawyer, and then a judge in the kingdom of Naples, he entered the Order of the Theatines in 1558, and at the time of St. Pius's accession he was superior of the head house of the Order in Rome. In 1568 the Pope made him Bishop of Piacenza, and now cardinal. He later became Archbishop of Naples, where he died in 1578. Cardinal Santori's career was similar. He too had been an advocate, but had changed his vocation for the priesthood. He was a man of great learning, but was more renowned

for his holiness of life, in which he strove by his asceticism to emulate the ancient fathers of the desert. Pius first created him Archbishop of San Severina, and now raised him to the Sacred College. Although he never became Pope, he was a favourite candidate in no less than three conclaves. Under Clement VIII he refused the wealthy See of Naples and died in Rome, the 'father of the poor,' in 1602. Like Bonelli and Bl. Paul Burali, Cardinal Santori was an admirer and friend of St. Philip Neri, who was also his confessor.

The greatest personality amongst the new cardinals was the future Pope, Sixtus V, then, as Fra Felice Peretti, Minister-general of the Franciscans, one of the most astonishing personalities in the long list of Popes, and a most observant religious. To the severe Pius V he was a most acceptable companion and friend, and on his side he never failed to show his open conviction that Pius was a saint on earth. His inclusion in this creation was in strict accordance with the Pope's determination to choose the very best.

Two members of the Saint's own Order were likewise created cardinals at this time, Vincent Justiniani, the Master-general, and Francis Archangel Bianchi, Commissary-general of the Holy Office. The former was a man of great brilliance, so much so that he was elected head of his Order when only in his thirty-eighth year. What commended him to Pius V was his success as papal envoy to Spain in the affair of St. Charles Borromeo and the unjust Governor of Milan. The dispute had raged for some time; but St. Charles would not give way on matters which he held to belong to his spiritual jurisdiction. Hearing of Justiniani's appointment as papal nuncio, St. Charles, in a letter still extant, stated how much he relied on the Dominican General's prudence and tact. Justiniani's devotion to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas was another strong recommendation to the Pope who created St. Thomas the fifth Doctor of the Church.

The second Dominican was Francis Archangel Bianchi, Bishop of Teano, who had been Commissary of the Holy Office, and for many years confessor to Pius V when the Pope was still only a priest. They had also worked together for some years in the Holy Office. Pius IV made him Commissary of the Holy Office in 1564, and in 1566 Pius V appointed him to the See of Teano in Naples. Although it was but a small diocese, Bianchi insisted on leaving Rome to take up his residence there in accordance with the decrees of Trent, and still held to this decision after his entry into the Sacred College. It was not until Gregory XIII made him Prefect of the Congregation of the Index that he returned to Rome. This was in 1575, and he died there five years later, leaving a reputation of zeal and devotion to duty second to none amongst the cardinals.

One of the most extraordinary choices, and one most justified, was the selection of a successful soldier, Count John Albani of Bergamo, who after a brilliant career in law had turned to military occupations and had become a general in the service of Venice. On the death of his wife he came to Rome at the invitation of Pius V, who employed him in the civil administration of the papal states. At the election which chose Sixtus V as Pope it is said Albani was a favoured candidate. As cardinal he was the author of several works on ecclesiastical law. His death took place in 1591. It is interesting to note Pius's preference for lawyers. Albani was the third great lawyer created in his consistory, and, with della Chiesa and Espinosa of Pius's second consistory, made the fifth advocate in the supreme senate of the Church.

Four high officials in the papal curia were also honoured with the red hat, Aldobrandi, Maffei, Cesi and de Grassis. John Aldobrandini was the first cardinal of a family that did so much for the Church in the seventeenth century, and provided, in John's younger brother, Hippolytus, one of the greatest of the Roman Pontiffs, Clement VIII. Car-

dinal John had been a most exemplary Bishop of Imola, to which see he had been appointed after a singularly successful career in canon law, and as an Auditor of the Rota. Pius recalled him to Rome from Imola and appointed him Grand Penitentiary and later Prefect of the Segnatura. He died the year following the death of Pius, 1573.

Mark Anthony Maffei, Archbishop of Chieti, deserved his promotion on more than one count, but his chief claim lay in his success as nuncio to Poland and as head of the Datary; and Pius held the greatest opinion not only of his work, but also his conduct. As Datary he was a very great success and assisted the Pope in reforming that department against which in times past so many charges of simony had been made. Maffei had also been one of the three prelates appointed to examine all candidates for bishoprics in Italy.

Peter Donatus Cesi, Bishop of Narni, had been a successful governor of several cities and districts in the papal states and was regarded as an extremely capable diplomat. Like Cardinal Santori, he was a particular friend of St. Philip Neri, and together with his brother, Angelo Cesi, built for him and his Oratorians the magnificent church of St. Maria in Vallicella. This was in keeping with his known spirit of charity which earned for him the gratitude of the poor in Rome whom he fed in times of famine, and added to his benefactions by building a new aqueduct to bring fresh water from the mountains.

Charles de Grassis, a prelate who held the post of governor of Rome, was also included amongst the cardinals for his success in serving the papal government, but unfortunately only survived his appointment one year.

The last two cardinals were young men, Jerome Rusticucci and Octavius Aquaviva. Rusticucci was only thirty-three, but had already occupied the position of private secretary to the Pope for nine years, five of them when Pius was only Cardinal Ghislieri. Rusticucci's life in the Sacred College showed the Pope's good judgment of charac-

ter. He afterwards became Cardinal Vicar and held that post until his death in 1603.

Aquaviva was only in his twenty-fifth year, and some exception was taken to his extreme youth, but Pius knew his sanctity and appreciated his extraordinary high intelligence. His death in 1574 when he was not yet twenty-nine, was a great loss to Pius's successor, Gregory XIII.

This, then, was the great promotion of 1570; a promotion that even the Pope's most determined adversaries found it difficult to criticize. The Spanish Ambassador, when he went to remonstrate with His Holiness for not accepting his master Philip II's candidates, and for insisting on the choice of Cervantes and Aquaviva, admitted that he had never met a man less ambitious or of more exemplary life than the former, and paid a high tribute to the latter's learning and holiness.

Pastor's words may be quoted here as witness to Pius's success: 'Pius V had long and carefully sought for suitable cardinals, and, in spite of every attack, had firmly insisted upon the men whom he had chosen. If the Council of Trent had exhorted the chief shepherd of the Church to include in the ranks of its supreme senate none but the most eminent men, and if, in so doing it, as well as in the appointment of distinguished bishops, it had put its finger on the thing most needed for the reform of the Church, Pius V had done his best to act up to that exhortation. The next papal election seemed to be assured . . . For this reason the renewal of the Sacred College of 1570 was, in the best sense of the word, a great act of reform.'<sup>1</sup>

If we add to these sixteen Pius's first five cardinals, he certainly had ensured a majority who would conscientiously choose him a saintly and capable successor, a thing that they did in fact, when, in the conclave following his death, the cardinals in *one day* agreed on a splendid Pope in the person of Hugh Buoncampagni—Gregory XIII.

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