

Humanism and the Fifth Lateran Council

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JOHN MONFASANI

Humanism and the Fifth Lateran Council

For a Council that is universally recognized to have been a failure, the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517) has attracted a surprising amount of attention in recent times. Not only did Erasmus and Martin Luther view the Council as a nullity, but even one of the Council's major participants and defenders, Cardinal Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio) eventually came to treat the decrees of the Council as abrogated by force of non-observance.¹ Indeed, this non-observance had repercussions as far away as Greece a century later. The most famous decree to come out of the Council was the papal bull *Apostolici Regiminis*,² which has traditionally been viewed as aimed at the secular Aristotelians in Padua who refused to make philosophy conform to the dictates of theology. In the 1620s and the 1630s in Constantinople, the head of the Patriarchal Academy was Theophilus Korydaleus, a graduate of the University of Padua. Korydaleus caused a furor among the Orthodox because in accord with good Paduan tradition he explicitly taught Aristotelian philosophy as independent of religious doctrines.³ *Apostolici Regiminis* is in fact in large part responsible for much of the recent interest in the Fifth Lateran Council, especially after the appearance in 1968 of Felix Gilbert's article, *Cristianesimo, Umanesimo e la bolla «Apostolici Regiminis» del 1513*.⁴

Gilbert's innovation was to claim a humanist background and, paradoxically, also an anti-humanist agenda for the bull *Apostolici Regiminis*.⁵ His evidence was the reform memorandum *Libellus ad Leonem X Pontificem Maximum*, prepared by two Venetian noblemen turned Camaldulensian

¹ See MINNICH, Nelson H.: *Erasmus and the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17)*, in: SPERNA WEILAND, Jan/FRIJHOFF, Willem Th.M. (eds.): *Erasmus of Rotterdam: The Man and the Scholar*. Leiden: Brill 1988, 46–60, at 55 and 60, n. 31, reprinted as Essay X in: MONFASANI, John: *The Catholic Reformation: Council, Churchmen, Controversies*. Aldershot: Variorum 1993. See also HEADLEY, John: *Luther and the Fifth Lateran Council*, in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 64 (1973), 54–79.

² Now to be read in: LAURITZEN, Frederick/MINNICH, Nelson H./STIEBER, Joachim/SUERMANN, Harald/UHLICH, Jürgen (eds.): *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta, II/2: The General Councils of Latin Christendom From Basel to Lateran V (1431–1517)*. Turnhout: Brepols 2013, 1363–1365.

³ PLESTED, Marcus: *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012, 150–151.

⁴ In: *Rivista storica italiana* 79 (1967), 976–990.

⁵ See GILBERT, Felix: *Cristianesimo, Umanesimo*, 983 (Gianfrancesco Pico would not have “voluto eliminare lo studio della letteratura profana degli antichi” supposedly mandated by *Apostolici Regiminis*); and 987 (Pope Leo X “non approvava completamente le tendenze antiumanistiche insite nel decreto del 19 dicembre 1513”).

monks, Paolo Giustiniani and Pietro Quirini (who changed his name from Vincenzo upon entering the religious state). Giustiniani and Quirini wrote the *Libellus* in Rome around July 1513,⁶ five months before the publication on 19 December 1513 of *Apostolici Regiminis*.⁷ Gilbert apotheosized the Epicurean poet Lucretius as the prime target of the reformers' rejection of corrupting pagan literature.⁸ Little could Gilbert have anticipated the amazing scholarly fad he started. Today, we have a Pulitzer prize winning book that attributes the origin of modernity to the discovery of Lucretius' poem in 1417 and another book that speaks in its title of *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*;⁹ and yet another that finds in Lucretius virtually the *fons et origo* of Florentine unbelief in the Renaissance.¹⁰ Not to mention other recent books with titles such as *The Lucretian Renaissance*¹¹ and *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*.¹²

⁶ SCHNITZER, Joseph: *Peter Delfin, General des Camaldulenserordens (1444–1525): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kirchenreform, Alexander VI. und Savonarolas*. München: Reinhard 1926, 433, n. 2.

⁷ The text is to be read in: MITTARELLI, Giovanni B./COSTADONI, Anselmo: *Annales Camaldulenses*, IX. Venetiis: Pasquali 1773, 612–719. It is available in Italian in: BIANCHINI, Geminiano: *Lettera al Papa: Paolo Giustiniani e Pietro Quirini a Leone X*. Modena: Artioli 1995. For the *Libellus*' proposals concerning non-Catholic Christians, see BILANIUK, Petro B.T.: *The Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517) and the Eastern Churches*. Toronto: Central Committee for the Defence of Rite, Tradition and Language of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in USA and Canada, 1975, 54–86. For the Florentine millenarian and Savonarolan background, see VASOLI, Cesare: *Il tentativo di condanna del Savonarola come eretico e scismatico al sinodo fiorentino del '16–'17 al V Concilio Lateranense*, in: FONTES, Anna/FOURNEL Jean-Louis/PLAISANCE, Michel (eds.): *Savonarole: Enjeux, débats, questions*. Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle 1997, 243–261 at 247–250, 255–257.

⁸ GILBERT: *Cristianesimo, Umanesimo*, 977. See 978: "Pare dunque che gli autori del decreto non avessero in mente un unico problema, ma fossero preoccupati dei più ampi sviluppi intellettuali del loro tempo, in particolare delle tendenze laicizzanti che gli studi umanistici suscitavano. Questo certamente fu il significato attribuito al decreto tre anni dopo, al Sinodo di Firenze." See HEADLEY, John: *Tommaso Campanella and Jean de Launoy: The Controversy over Aristotle and his Reception in the West*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990), 529–550, at 534: "Yet the argument has been persuasively made that the inspirers of the decree, Vincenzo Quirini and Tommaso Giustiniani, were reacting more to the Aldine edition of Lucretius, published in 1500, than to Padua controversies; together they sought to curtail humanism and the immoral overtones of classical poetry."

⁹ WILSON, Catherine: *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008.

¹⁰ See BROWN, Alison: *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 2010, viii and 109.

¹¹ PASSANNANTE, Gerard: *The Lucretian Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2011, is concerned with Lucretius in literature, with some excursions into philosophy and science. Passannante and his secondary sources (COHEN, I. Bernard: 'Quantum in Se Est': *Newton's Concept of Inertia in Relation to Descartes and Lucretius*, in: *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 19 [1964], 131–155; and HINE, William L.: *Inertia and Scientific Law in Sixteenth-Century Commentaries on Lucretius*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 [1995], 728–741) makes much of the phrase "quantum in se est" found in Lucretius, Descartes, and

What is startling about this development is the thinness of its documentary basis and the large suppositional leaps made on the basis of the evidence. However, since my remit here is the Fifth Lateran Council, I shall confine my remarks to the evidence concerning the Council. First of all, neither Paolo Guistiniani or Pietro (Vincenzo) Quirini were humanists. Rather, both were professionally trained scholastics, graduates in philosophy of the University of Padua.¹³ Indeed, Quirini famously graduated by defending more than 4,500 theses in philosophy and theology in Rome in 1502.¹⁴ Second, none of the twenty members of the commission that wrote

Newton without appreciating that it is an enormously trite medieval formula, attested, for instance, 208 times in Thomas Aquinas alone (see <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/it/index.age>, *ad vocem*). Similarly, Passannante fails to show how Newton's inclusion of nearly 30 lines of the *De Rerum Natura* in his Classical Scholia inspired any of his core ideas, least of all when they plausibly reflected not much more than an impulse to find historical antecedents to his ideas; see HALL, A. Rupert/BOAS HALL, Marie: *Unpublished Scientific Papers of Isaac Newton. A Selection from the Portsmouth Collection in the University Library*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1962, 309. (Hine, 729, dismisses the Halls' comment, but never really disproves it; least of all when it is very clear from CASINI, Paolo: *Newton: The Classical Scholia*, in: *History of Science* 22 [1984], 1–58, that Lucretius became interested in Lucretius in the 1690s, well after he had made his major discoveries).

¹² PALMER, Ada: *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 2014.

¹³ For Quirini, in addition to CICOGLA, Emmanuele: *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, V. Venezia: Giuseppe Orlandelli 1842, 63–75; and JEDIN, Hubert: *Vincenzo Quirini und Pietro Bembo*, in: *Kirche des Glaubens. Kirche der Geschichte. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge*, 2 Bde. Freiburg: Herder 1966, 1:153–166, now see BOWD, Stephen D.: *Reform before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the Religious Renaissance in Italy*. Leiden: Brill 2002, who calls Quirini a humanist while acknowledging his seemingly exclusive scholastic training and in a section specifically devoted to his “Humanistic Studies” (32–45) is unable to specify any humanist activity beyond Quirini learning Greek and Hebrew and having an interest in vernacular literature. The latter in itself was not a humanist interest, and neither would be the former if it were exclusively religious in purpose and not joined to an interest in classical literature and languages.

¹⁴ CICOGLA: *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, 5:63. OPAC SBN (Catalogo del Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale) lists six copies in Italy of the *Conclusiones V. Quirini Patritii Veneti Romae Disputatae* (Venezia?, 1502?); WorldCat lists three (British Library; Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg; Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City). I consulted the copy in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice. In the preface to Pope Alexander VI, Quirini spoke of his ten years at Padua (f. 2v: “contra meorum desiderium qui me in patriam revocabant decem iam annos Patavii in philosophie studii iocundissime consumpseram.” The propositions are divided between theological, Platonic (*Academicorum*) and Scholastic (*Peripateticorum*), the last of which is by far the largest, covering ff. 42r–182r. The Platonic propositions, however, reveal that Quirini at this stage in his career believed that Platonism could be given a Christian reading; e.g., cf. 28v: “Plato in epistolis ingenti cum misterio tertios effectus in causam tertiam, secundos in secundam, et cunctos in unam omnium causam rettulit.” f. 38r: “Plotinus, Iamblichus, Timei Aegyptiorumque sententias secuti, potestatem praestantiorum animae esse ducem hominis atque daemonum posuerunt.”

Apostolici Regiminis was a Latin humanist.¹⁵ Third, all that the short section on education in *Apostolici Regiminis* says is that clerics should spend no more than five years studying philosophy or poetry before going on to study theology or canon law, after which they can return to philosophical or literary study if such is their interest;¹⁶ in other words, it was purely a disciplinary decree affecting the clergy and urging them to apply their training to purge the *infectae radices* of philosophy and poetry. And, lastly, the evidence for an outbreak of Lucretian terror is appallingly meager. In essence, it is the fact the Aldine edition of Lucretius appeared in 1500 – as if Lucretius were not easily available and read in manuscript and printed editions in the previous 80 years since his discovery by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417.¹⁷ True, the Florentine synod that had been called in 1517 to implement at the local level the decrees of Lateran V specified that schoolmasters were not to teach boys lascivious or impious poets such as Lucretius.¹⁸ But this stipulation is a minor, almost trivial item, taking up a mere

¹⁵ See MANSI, Ioannes Dominicus: *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, XXXII. Florentiae: Antonius Zatta 1771, 797. For the membership of the Council as a whole, see MINNICH, Nelson H.: *The Participants at the Fifth Lateran Council*, in: *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 12 (1974), 157–206, reprinted as Essay I in: MINNICH, Nelson H.: *The Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17). Studies on its Membership, Diplomacy and Proposals for Reform*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1993. PRICE, M. Davis: *The Origins of Lateran V's Apostolici Regiminis*, in: *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum. Internationale Zeitschrift für Konziliengeschichtsforschung* 17 (1985), 465–474, argues for the influence of the Scholastics on the commission. See also MONFASANI, John: *Aristotelians, Platonists, and the Missing Ockhamists: Philosophical Liberty in Pre-Reformation Italy*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (1993), 247–276, at 264–270, reprinted as Essay X in: MONFASANI, John: *Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy*. Aldershot: Variorum 2004. For one important member of the commission who came to doubt that the immortality of the soul could be proven philosophically, see WICKS, Jared: *Thomism Between Renaissance and Reformation: the Case of Cajetan*, in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977), 9–31.

¹⁶ *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta*, 1365: “ordinamus et statuimus, ne quisquam de cetero in sacris ordinibus constitutus, saecularis vel regularis, aut alias ad illos a iure arctatus, in studiis generalibus, vel alibi publice audiendo, philosophiae aut poesis studiis ultra quinquennium post grammaticam et dialecticam, sine aliquo studio theologiae aut iuris pontificii, incumbat. Verum dicto exacto quinquennio, si etiam illis studiis insudare voluerit, liberum sit ei, dum tamen simul aut seorsum, aut theologiae, aut sacris canonibus operam navaverit, ut in his sanctis et utilibus professionibus sacerdotes domini inveniant, unde infectas philosophiae et poesis radices purgare et sanare valeant.”

¹⁷ For information on the manuscript and printed diffusion of Lucretius, see PALMER: *Reading Lucretius*, 36–96, 243–249. Indeed, one of the main points of BROWN: *The Return of Lucretius*, is to show the great interest in and influence of Lucretius before the early sixteenth century.

¹⁸ Giustiniani was an active participant in the Florentine synod; see VASOLI: *Il tentativo di condanna del Savonarola*, 256–257. The text of the ordinance runs as follows (MANSI: *Sacrorum Conciliorum [...] Collectio*, 32:270A, with minor changes in punctuation and orthography): “Ut nullus de cetero ludi magister audeat in scholis suis exponere adolescentibus poemata aut quaecumque alia opera lasciva et impia, quale est Lucretii poema, ubi animae mortalitatem totis viribus ostendere nititur, contrafacientes excommunicari et in ducatis decem, carceribus Stincharum applicandis, condemnati.”

one-sixth of a column in a document that runs over 100 columns.¹⁹ Furthermore, it bans not the reading of lascivious or impious poets, but only the teaching of them to boys, which is the sort of practical disciplinary measure one would expect a local synod to take. The chapter that follows immediately after in the acts of the Florentine synod, on the other hand, is three times longer and clearly aimed at a totally different level of education, namely, the university. It mandates “all theologians [*NB: not all philosophers*] teaching philosophy publicly or privately” not to construct any *conclusio* that contradicts Catholic doctrine, and specifically concerning the immortality of the soul and the eternity of the world, and citing specifically as its authority *Apostolici Regiminis* of the Fifth Lateran Council.²⁰ This chapter is more than three times longer and clearly more elaborate and consciously based on *Apostolici Regiminis* than the section on the teaching of Lucretius and lascivious poets to schoolboys. Indeed, one of the most important findings of one of the already mentioned books, Ada Palmer’s *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, is how relatively ordinary and even banal one might say, was the way Lucretius was read from the fifteen to the sixteenth century. Instead of using this evidence to debunk the exaggerated claims made about Lucretius’ influence, Palmer preferred to view this quite orthodox circulation as preparing the way for the popularity of Lucretian atomism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²¹ More focused on the later period is another already mentioned book, Catherine Wilson’s *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*. It confirms the prominence of Epicurean ethics and cosmology in seventeenth-century discussions, but in its mono-focus it presents a distorted picture because it fails to credit other powerful currents, such as the revival of classical scepticism, and does not distinguish sharply enough between a generic atomism easily knowable from multiple sources and a specifically Lucretian inspired atomism. Hence, such central figures in the seventeenth-century Scientific Revolution as Kepler and Galileo are hardly mentioned;²² nor is it ever shown or even suggested that Newton’s generic

¹⁹ The decrees of the synod cover MANSI: *Sacrorum Conciliorum [...] Collectio*, 32:215–318, with each column running about 65 lines. The ordinance on literature (*Capitulum II*) runs for 11 lines on col. 270 if one includes its heading.

²⁰ MANSI: *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 32:270B–D (*Capitulum III*).

²¹ Having demonstrated that “the majority of early readers were indifferent or resistant to the poem’s more radical messages” (p. 234), Palmer goes in her *Conclusion* to discuss the appropriation of Lucretius by Pierre Gassendi, Baron d’Holbach, and Voltaire.

²² Kepler is mentioned not at all; Galileo only twice, apropos his atomism; see WILSON: *Epicureanism*, 23, 52–54. One may note the comment of THOMSON, Ann: *Epicureanism*, in: KORS, Alan Charles (ed.): *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, 4 vols. New York: Oxford University Press 2003, 2:7–8, at 7: “The Roman poet Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* was much admired and imitated, but the irreligious Epicurean philosophy developed in it seems to have had little impact on Enlightenment ideas.”

atomism was inspired by Lucretius.²³ Furthermore, Wilson admits that Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz were explicitly hostile to the specifically Epicurean understanding of atoms.²⁴ So, though Lucretius was unquestionably a well known classical author in the Renaissance and Early Modern period, and in the Enlightenment the classical poster child of atomism and atheism, he was not the transformative force that some recent scholarship wishes to ascribe to him.²⁵ *A fortiori*, to make Lucretius a causal factor in *Apostolici Regiminis* strikes me as going beyond the bounds of plausibility.

In his article Gilbert also mentioned another figure who is far more significant than Giustiniani, Quirini, or Lucretius in understanding the intellectual currents surrounding not only Lateran V, but also the next 150 years of intellectual history, namely, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola. But in providing this lead, Gilbert has been generally ignored.²⁶ To be sure, Gilbert cited Pico's well known oration addressed to Pope Leo X and the Council Fathers calling for reform.²⁷ Even though Pico was present at the proclamation of *Apostolici Regiminis* in December 1513,²⁸ his oration played no role in the papal bull since it was written a year after *Apostolici Regiminis* and not sent until just before the Council ended in 1517.²⁹ Rather, the key is Pico's philosophical scepticism, something Gilbert pointed out, but

²³ See WILSON: *Epicureanism*: 32, 54–55, 62. See DOBBS, B.J.T.: *Stoic and Epicurean doctrines in Newton's system of the world*, in: OSLER, Margaret J.: *Atoms, pneuma and tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic themes in European thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, 221–238.

²⁴ See WILSON: *Epicureanism*: 57 and 113 for Descartes, 127 for Spinoza, 101–105 for Leibniz.

²⁵ In this regard, see KORS, Alan Charles: *Atheism in France, 1650–1729. Volume I: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990, 203, who, remarking on his postponement of Lucretius to a later volume (now announced for publication in later 2016), pointed out the multiple sources for atheism in early-modern France. This multiplicity of sources and motives is well exemplified in the essays by various scholars found in: HUNTER, Michael/WOOTTON, David (eds.): *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. An extreme example of overemphasis on Lucretius is GREENBLATT, Stephen: *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*. London: Bodley Head 2011; see my review of this book at <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1283>. Alan Kors' second volume, *Epicureans and Atheists in France, 1650–1729*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016, appeared as this article went to press. Its arguments are that Christian commentators really saw no danger in discussing Epicurean doctrine, that clandestine literature was mainly sectarian and heterodox rather than atheistic, and that atheistic authors were either not especially Epicurean (173) or did not make much use of Epicureanism though they did agree with Epicurean atomism and materialism (200–201).

²⁶ GILBERT: *Cristianesimo, Umanesimo*, 980–983.

²⁷ Available in: ROSCOE, William: *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth in Six Volumes*. "The second edition, corrected," VI. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies 1806, 66–77. Pico complained about the *vana vestustas* of the ancient poets and philosophers, but would not prohibit priests from studying ancient literature "ne literas omnino ignorant" (73).

²⁸ See SCHMITT, Charles B.: *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola and the Fifth Lateran Council*, in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 61 (1970), 161–178, at 164.

²⁹ SCHMITT: *Gianfrancesco Pico*, 164, 166.

did not grasp the full implications of, in part because he never appreciated the significance of another humanist associated with Pico and Pope Leo X, namely, the Dominican friar Zenobi Acciaiuoli.³⁰

Both Pico and Acciaiuoli were ardent followers of Girolamo Savonarola.³¹ They were also accomplished Hellenists, each being responsible for substantial translations from the Greek.³² Indeed, Pico's well-known attack on Italian Aristotelianism on sceptical grounds, the *Examen Vanitatis* of 1520, was in many sections a straight forward translation of Sextus Empiricus' great sceptical encyclopedia, the *Pyrrhonian Dissertations*. As for Acciaiuoli, already in 1970 Donald Weinstein had called attention to the passage in Pico's life of *Savonarola*, where Pico reported that Savonarola had told Acciaiuoli and another Dominican expert in Greek, Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, the brother of Amerigo Vespucci, that they should translate Sextus Empiricus.³³ Neither made such a translation, as far as we know, but Acciaiuoli did go on to translate two patristic works against the pretensions of the pagans, Eusebius of Caesaria's *In Hieroclem* and Theodoret of

³⁰ On Acciaiuoli and his continued connection to the cult of Savonarola even after he moved to Rome, see ASSONITIS, Alessio: *Art and Savonarolan Reform at San Silvestro a Monte Cavallo in Rome (1507–1540)*, in: *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 80 (2003), 205–288, at 267–272 and *passim*. See also VERDE, Armando F./GIACONI, Elettra (eds.): *Epistolario di fra Vincenzo Mainardi da San Gimignano domenicano, 1481–1527*, in: *Memorie Domenicane*, n.s. 23 (1992), v–729; and VERDE, Armando: *Lo Studio fiorentino, 1473–1503. Ricerche e documenti*, 6 vols. Firenze: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, vol. 6, *Indice, ad vocem*.

³¹ On Savonarola and Pico, see DALL'AGLIO, Stefano: *Un breve scritto savonaroliano ritrovato. I quesiti rivolti a Zanobi Acciaiuoli*, in: *Archivio storico italiano* 160 (2002), 113–129.

³² For Acciaiuoli's translations, see VICARIO, Claudio Mario: *Zanobi Acciaiuoli e i padri della Chiesa: Autografi e traduzioni*, in: CORTESI, Mariarosa/LEONARDI, Claudio (eds.): *Tradizioni patristiche nell'Umanesimo: Atti del Convegno Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze, 6–8 febbraio 1997*. Firenze: SISMELE edizioni del Galluzzo 2000, 119–158. For a previously unrecognized translation of Acciaiuoli, see MONFASANI, John: *The "Lost" Final Part of George Amiroutzes' Dialogus de Fide in Christum and Zanobi Acciaiuoli*, in: CELENZA, Christopher S./GOUWENS, Kenneth (eds.): *Humanism and Creativity in the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt*. Leiden: Brill 2006, 197–229, reprinted as Essay VI in: MONFASANI, John: *Greeks Scholars between East and West in the Fifteenth Century*. Aldershot: Variorum 2016.

³³ WEINSTEIN, Donald: *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1970, 243, n. 46; WALKER, D.P.: *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1972, 58–62; CAVINI, Walter: *Appunti sulla prima diffusione in Occidente delle opere di Sesto Empirico*, in: *Medioevo* 3 (1977), 1–20. See also CAO, Gian Mario: *L'eredità picchiana: Gianfrancesco Pico tra Sesto Empirico e Savonarola*, in: VITI, Paolo (ed.): *Pico, Poliziano e l'Umanesimo di fine Quattrocento. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 4 novembre–31 dicembre 1994*. Firenze: Olschki 1994, 231–245, at 239–240 (scheda 86); POPKIN, Richard: *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, 21–22; and GRANADA, Miguel A.: *Savonarole, Jean-François Pic de la Mirandole et l'Apologétique: un programme non ficinien*, in: *Savonarole: Enjeux, débats, questions*, 274–290.

Cyrrhus' *De Curatione Graecarum Affectionum*.³⁴ Moreover, in addition to incorporating Sextus Empiricus into his *Examen Vanitatis*, Pico translated pseudo-Justin Martyr's anti-pagan *Discourse to the Greeks*, which not coincidentally he dedicated to Zanobi Acciaiuoli, his fellow laborer in field of anti-pagan polemic.³⁵ Zanobi Acciaiuoli's preface to Theodoret's *De Curatione Graecorum Affectionum* is extraordinarily interesting in this regard. It is addressed to the Medici pope Leo X, who brought Acciaiuoli to Rome as a *familiaris* and eventually made him the Prefect of the Vatican Library. Gianfrancesco Pico had attacked pagan Aristotelianism in the *Examen Vanitatis* of 1520; in his preface of 1519 to Leo X, Acciaiuoli explained that it was none other than Gianfrancesco Pico who had urged him to translate Theodoret and that he himself, Acciaiuoli, saw Theodoret's work as especially effective against the pernicious doctrines of the Platonists. To give an example of the nefarious influence of pagan philosophy, and specifically of Platonism, Acciaiuoli then cited the example of Marsilio Ficino, whom both Leo X's grandfather, Cosimo de' Medici, and his father, Lorenzo the Magnificent, had patronized.³⁶ I quote:

Marsilio Ficino, who through the liberality of your grandfather rendered Plato and Plotinus Latin for the men of our time, used to say to me often that it was by the providential intervention Antoninus, the bishop of Florence, that he did not fall into pernicious heresy from reading Plato, whom he had become completely infatuated with from boyhood on. For when the good pastor saw that his young cleric had been excessively captured by the eloquence of Plato, he did not allow him to indulge in frequent reading of that philosopher before he

³⁴ The Hierocles translation formed part of a Greco-Latin miscellaneous volume published by Aldus Manutius in Venice 1504: *Philostrati de vita Apollonii Tyanei libri octo. Idem libri latini interprete A. Rinuccino [...] Eusebius contra Hieroclem [qui] Tyaneum Christo conferre conatus fuerit. Idem latinus interprete Z. Acciolo*. For the Theodoret translation, see n. 37 below. Aldo Manuzio wrote a preface addressed to Acciaiuoli, dated "Venetiis mense Maio, MDIII" (sign. Apoll. 2v). Acciaiuoli's own preface, addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici of Pierofrancesco (1463–1507) says that he had *nuper* entered the Dominican Order (f. 65v), which suggests a date of c. 1496, but VICARIO: *Zanobi Acciaiuoli*, 151, makes a good case for 1498.

³⁵ See SCHMITT, Charles B.: *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle*. Den Haag: Nijhoff 1967, 200, n. 50. The preface is on sign. m iv of the 1506–1507 *princeps*: *Ioannis Francisci Pici [...] de rerum praenotione libri novem*. Strasbourg: Johann Knobloch (in: SCHMITT: 204, no. 11). On Acciaiuoli's and Gianfrancesco Pico's cooperation in a campaign against pagan philosophy, see VICARIO: *Zanobi Acciaiuoli*, 135–143.

³⁶ DELLA TORRE, A.: *Storia dell'Accademia platonica di Firenze*. Firenze: Carnesecchi 1902, 518, cited this passage, but KRISTELLER, Paul Oskar: *Per la biografia di Marsilio Ficino*, in: *Civiltà Moderna* 10 (1938), 277–298, which I consulted in: KRISTELLER, Paul Oskar: *Studies in the Renaissance*, I. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura 1956, 191–211, at 200–201, viewed it as essentially fictitious. However, WALKER: *Ancient Theology*, 61, believed there was some truth to Acciaiuoli's story. MARCEL, Raymond: *Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499)*. Paris: Belles Lettres 1958, 210–11, strongly affirmed its historicity; and NARDI, Carlo: *Una pagina 'umanistica' di Teodoro di Ciro e un'interpretazione di Zanobi Acciaiuoli*, in: *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere*, La Colombaria 56 (1991), 9–63, at 44–56, argues for its plausibility.

had provided him as a sort of antidote the four books that Thomas Aquinas had written against the pagans [*Contra Gentes* according to Acciaiuoli instead of *Contra Gentiles*]. Why should we not think, however, most blessed father, that also in these days amid the enormous present-day devotion to Greek literature and the mania for a more refined philosophy, you and your officials must attend to your flock with no less intensity and the same frame of mind [as did Antoninus]. In fact, I think that you and all your officials must now exercise that much greater vigilance the more that we must fear therefore even more dangerous snares laid by the roaring devil.³⁷

Whatever the truth of Acciaiuoli's story about St. Antoninus ordering young Marsilio Ficino to read Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles*, two things are clear and certain from Acciaiuoli's preface: first, that he and Gianfrancesco Pico had joined in a campaign to combat the insidious onslaught of pagan philosophy upon Christian truth; and, second, that whereas Pico saw his task primarily in debunking Aristotelianism, Acciaiuoli chose to attack Platonism as the chief danger, even addressing the heir of the Medici tradition that supported Florentine Platonism.³⁸

If one frees oneself from the silly belief that at the time of *Apostolici Regiminis* there was an overriding fear of pagan literature in general and of Lucretius in particular, then the traditional understanding of *Apostolici Regiminis* as primarily arising from a concern with the threat to Christian truth posed by contemporary Aristotelianism becomes unavoidable. *Pace* Gilbert and his successors, *Apostolici Regiminis* is in no way an anti-humanistic document. But it is in a very particular way, however, an anti-philosophical document, at least from the perspective of Italian Scholasticism. Zanobi Acciaiuoli's and Gianfrancesco Pico's campaign against pagan philosophy fits perfectly here.

To be sure, the first great humanist, Francis Petrarch, had condemned contemporary Aristotelians as neopagans,³⁹ but his criticism reflected dis-

37 THEODORITUS CYRENSIS: *De Curatione Grecarum Affectionum Libri Duodecim*. Trans. Zenobi Acciaiuoli. Paris 1519, f. 3r: "Marsilius Ficinus, qui proavi tui liberalitate adiutus Platonem seculi nostri hominibus ac Plotinum Latinos fecit saepius mihi dicere inter loquendum solebant factum providentia Florentini praesulis Antonini quo minus e Platonis lectione quam inde a pueris summopere adamavit in perniciosam heresim prolapsus fuerit. Bonus enim pastor cum adolescentem clericum suum nimio plus captum Platonis eloquentia cerneret non ante passus est in illius philosophi lectione frequentem esse quam eum divi Thomae Aquinatis quatuor libris contra gentes conscriptis quasi quodam antipharmaco premuniret. Cur autem non his quoque temporibus, in tanto literarum Graecarum studio politiorisque philosophiae desiderio, abs te, beatissime pater, tuisque a ministris pari aliqua ratione consulendum gregi tuo existimemus? Ego vero tanto nunc maiore studio tibi tuisque omnibus evigilandum puto quanto maiores diaboli rugientis insidias idcirco formidare debemus."

38 See NARDI: *Una pagina 'umanistica' di Teodoreto di Ciro*, 40–48, who stresses the anti-Platonic aspect of Acciaiuoli's activities.

39 See PETRARCA, Francesco: *Invectives*. Ed. and transl. David Marsh. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 2003, 266–268, par. 52 (*De Ipsius et Multorum Ignorantia*).

ciplinary rivalry and philosophical ignorance.⁴⁰ He could not read the Plato whom he proposed as a counterweight to Aristotle. In the Quattrocento, humanists such as Niccolò Niccoli, Leonardo Bruni, Lorenzo Valla, and Ermolao Barbaro continued the disciplinary attack on Scholasticism;⁴¹ but apart from Valla's *Retractatio Totius Dialecticae cum Fundamentis Universae Philosophiae*, which mainly concerned logic,⁴² Quattrocento humanists did not offer a serious alternative to Scholastic philosophy and science. Indeed, the vast majority of humanists had no interest in doing so, and some humanists, such as Lauro Quirini and George of Trebizond, proclaimed their admiration for Scholasticism.⁴³ Moreover, again, apart from Lorenzo Valla, Quattrocento humanists did not attack philosophy *per se*. So Acciaiuoli's and Gianfrancesco Pico's wholesale attack on pagan philosophy was a new development.

Acciaiuoli was a humanist without philosophical pretensions while Pico was a humanistically trained philosopher, who engaged in humanist battles, such as the controversy concerning Ciceronianism and stylistic imitation,⁴⁴ while at the same time promoting philosophical scepticism. The common denominator between them was Girolamo Savonarola, a follower of Thomas Aquinas,⁴⁵ we need to remember, as well as the religious reformer of Florence. Acciaiuoli and Pico were aggressively asserting Christian truth over against pagan philosophy. Marsilio Ficino had pro-

⁴⁰ For the competition between the rhetorical and philosophical traditions, see the classic essay of KRISTELLER, Paul Oskar: *Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance*, in: *Byzantium* 17 (1944–1945), 346–374, a theme he expanded upon in subsequent years, most notably in his *The Classics and Renaissance Thought*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 1955; see also his *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, in: MOONEY, Michael (ed.). New York: Columbia University Press 1979.

⁴¹ The *locus classicus* of this criticism is the attack Niccolò Niccoli launched against the scholastics in *Dialogus Primus* of Leonardi Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histum*, now to be read in the edition by Stefano Ugo BALDASSARI. Firenze: Olschki 1984, especially 243–249. Bruni's criticism mainly concerned the medieval translations of Aristotle; see HANKINS, James: *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance, I. Humanism*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura 2003, 193–239 (ch. 8: *The Ethics Controversy*). For Lorenzo Valla, see now NAUTA, Lodi: *In Defense of Common Sense: Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 2009. The clearest expression of Ermolao Barbaro's criticism is his preface to his translation of Themistius, to be read in: BARBARO, Ermolao: *Epistolae, orationes et carmina*. Branca Vittore (ed.), 2 vols. Firenze: Bibliopolis [Olschki] 1943, 1:9.

⁴² See VALLA, Lorenzo: *Dialectical Disputations* (= The I Tatti Renaissance Library 49). Brian Copenhaver/Lodi Nauta (eds.), 2 vols. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 2012.

⁴³ See MONFASANI, John: *The Humanists and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the Fifteenth Century*, in: CONTINISIO, Chiara/FANTONI, Marcello (eds.): *Testi e contesti per Amedeo Quondam*. Roma: Bulzoni 2016, 79–94.

⁴⁴ See SANT'ANGELO, Giorgio (ed.): *Le epistole "De imitazione" di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo*. Firenze: Olschki 1954.

⁴⁵ On Savonarola's religious culture see now TROMBONI, Lorenza (ed.): *Inter omnes Plato et Aristoteles. Gli appunti filosofici di Girolamo Savonarola*. Porto: FIDEM 2012.

pounded Platonism as a *pia philosophia* in opposition to the Averroistic Aristotelianism of the Italian universities.⁴⁶ But, as we have seen, Acciaiuoli explicitly and Pico implicitly treated Platonism as one more pagan philosophy that contradicted Christian truth.

Some years ago, an American graduate student, Eric Constant, became the first to argue unequivocally that the doctrinal purpose of *Apostolici Regiminis* was not the assertion of the immortality of the soul since that had already long been a Catholic doctrine, but rather the condemnation of the theory of a double truth, i.e., the theory that a philosophical or scientific opinion that contradicted Christian truth could also be viewed as true.⁴⁷ In short, the Fifth Lateran Council taught: *Omne verum vero consonat*. Thus, though neither Acciaiuoli nor Pico participated in the commission that produced *Apostolici Regiminis*, the bull in essence endorsed their vision that the conflict between Christian truth and pagan philosophy was the central issue of the time. Ironically, as Luca Bianchi has taught us, Martin Luther, while staunchly condemning the corruption of the Roman Church, would twenty years later endorse the theory of a double truth condemned by *Apostolici Regiminis*.⁴⁸

The General of the Augustinian Order, Giles of Viterbo, began the Council with a celebrated oration calling for moral reform.⁴⁹ The *Libellus* of Paolo Giustiniani and Pietro Quirini, save for one relatively brief section,⁵⁰ was not a complaint against humanists teaching pagan

⁴⁶ See LEINKAUF, Thomas: *Philosophie und Religion bei Marsilio Ficino*, in: *Accademia* 4 (2002), 29–57; MARIANI ZINI, Fosca: *La pensée de Ficini: Itinéraires néoplatoniciens*. Paris: Vrin 2014, 18–20, 104–110. Ficino's famous condemnation in the preface to his translation of Plotinus of the two impious sects of Aristotelians, the Alexanderists and Averroists, is now most easily available in O'MEARA, Dominic J.: *Plotinus*, in: BROWN, Virginia /KRISTELLER, Paul Oskar/CRANZ, F. Edward (eds.). *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries. Annotated Lists and Guides*, VII. Washington (D.C.): Catholic University of America Press 1992, 55–73, at 69–70.

⁴⁷ CONSTANT, Eric A.: *A Reinterpretation of the Fifth Lateran Council Decree Apostolici regiminis (1513)*, in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002), 353–379. See also MARTIN, Christopher: *On a Mistake Commonly Made in Accounts of Sixteenth-Century Discussions of the Immortality of the Soul*, in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995), 29–37, who shows that the Council did not assert that the immortality of the soul was philosophically demonstrable.

⁴⁸ BIANCHI, Luca: *Pour une histoire de la "double vérité"*. Paris: Vrin 2008, 24–31, 54–56.

⁴⁹ See MINNICH, Nelson H.: *Concepts of Reform Proposed at the Fifth Lateran Council*, in: *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 7 (1969), 163–251, at 168–173, reprinted as Essay IV, with addenda, in MINNICH: *Fifth Lateran Council*.

⁵⁰ Even in this unique section much of the criticism is directed against Scholasticism rather than humanism; segment [1] would prohibition logicians and segment [7] would suppress Scholastic theology, while segment [2], prohibiting commentaries, segment [3], calling for censorship, and segment [4], demanding that the *auctores* and not their *expositores* be read, apply to Scholastic as well as humanistic texts. Only segment [5], condemning the reading of pagan literature if not directed towards sacred studies, and segment [6], proposing the substitution of Christian literature for pagan, are really directed against

literature, but rather an immensely detailed program of the moral reform of the Church and the educational reform of the clergy. Indeed, the educational section of their *Libellus* was a massive attack on Scholasticism very much along the lines of the reform that Erasmus was calling for, that is to say, the intense study of Scripture, the reading of the Fathers and the end of the whole system of Scholasticism (*haec Parisiensium cavillosiorum disciplina*).⁵¹ And even Gianfrancesco Pico, when he addressed his oration

humanistic texts. See *Annales Camaldulenses*, 9: 677–678: “Quae [*studia*] quidem reparari et meliorem familiam instruere poterunt [1] si, praeter eos qui gentilium litteris incumbunt dialecticorum cavillationes ingeniorum certe depravationes quae sophistes ars appellari solet, in qua sine aliqua utilitate iuniores et tempus et ingenium conterunt, te iubente, ita prohibeantur ut nullus sit qui deinceps eam valeat publice profiteri; [2] si tot modernorum hominum commentaria, quae nihil aliud sunt quam illa quae a veteribus auctoribus diligentissime conscripta sunt novis voluminibus deterius explicata, in ea potissimum disciplina quae per quaestiones traditur, locum omnino habere non permittantur, sed et veteribus auctoribus, his, scilicet, qui legitime res ipsas pertractant, aliquis locus honoreque concedatur; [3] si nemini, non dicam scribere sed edere scripta liceat nisi ea fuerint ab aliquibus doctioribus qui a te instituti sint, approbata atque digna ut edantur iudicata; [4] si in omnibus studiis non expositiores auctorum, sed ipsi auctores potius legantur (Mirum enim est et miserabile quantum temporis consumimus dum expositores omnes perquirimus et nihil addiscimus de his quae facilius addiscere poteramus si in auctorum potius quam in expositorum lectione insudare voluissemus). [5] Haec, sanctissime pater, aliaque huiuscemodi plurima, quae tua omnibus prudentius excogitare sapientia potest si institueris, gentilia etiam ipsa studia multum iuvare poteris, quamquam, nisi ad divina studia et ad sacras litteras haec gentilia studia dirigantur nihil omnino curiosius, nihil vanius, nihil sine fructu laboriosius, nihil denique a Christianis hominibus magis alienum existimari debet quam haec ipsa poetarum oratorum gentiliumque auctorum studia. [6] Unde tunc maxime recte studia instituere te iudicabimus cum pueris et ipsis pro gentilibus oratoribus, pro gentilibus fabulis Christianam veritatem Christianosque scriptores proponi iusseris. Habet enim et suos Christiani historiographos, habet et suos oratores, quos in utraque pariter lingua, Graeca, scilicet, et Latina, cum gentilibus conferre non erubescimus. Si enim hoc a te iussum fuerit, incipient Christiani homines non linguis addiscendis sine aliquo fructu aetatem omnem conterere sed et linguam Graecam et Latinam ac Christianam simul disciplinam addiscere. [7] Proderit ad hoc si antiqua illa sanctorum patrum sacrorumque canonum decreta instaurari curabis, quibus cautum est ut in locis ubi studia litterarum vigent, sint semper qui Christianam theologiam non hanc Parisienium cavillosiorum disciplinam sed puram illam sanctarum canonicarumque scripturarum doctrinam doceant.”

⁵¹ See [1] and [7] in the previous note; and *Annales Camaldulenses*, 9:676: “[Of the educated clergy] rarus quippe est qui non poetarum potius mendacia aut philosophorum impietatem quam Christianam pietatem amplexus sit [...]. Vix unum aut alterum invenies qui non inanissima recentiorum scriptorum argumenta, simultatum sane odiorumque irritamenta potius quam Sacrarum Scripturarum antiquaque patrum documenta sectetur, qui non inanibus quaestionibus, quae ad nihilum quidem utiles sunt, potius quam sanctorum Evangeliorum lectionibus occupetur.” *Ibid.*: 9:678: “Decet enim summum pontificem et veram illam iamdiu neglectam Christianam theologiam, cavillationibus inutilibusque modernorum scriptorum quaestionibus expulsis et antiquioribus tam Graecis quam Latinis Christianis auctoribus introductis, ornare atque illustrare.” *Ibid.*: 9:679: “Nam indecens indecorumque est multos esse in ecclesia dei religiosos, multos presbyteros qui nunquam sacram Evangelii historiam, que admodum brevis est, legerint, cum tamen fabulas multas inanesque plurimas perlegerint quaestiones.” *Ibid.*: 9:680: “[Let preachers preach the Bible] gentilium philosophorum rationibus modernorumque scriptorum cavillationibus penitus dimissis.”

to Leo X after *Apostolici Regiminis*, focused almost exclusively on the moral reform of the Church, though he did get in a brief dig against the vain illusions of the pagan poets and philosophers and did call for a new edition of the Old and New Testaments.⁵² Nonetheless, despite the widespread need for moral reform, as exemplified by the oration of Giles of Viterbo, the *Libellus* of Giustiniani and Quirini, the oration of Gianfrancesco Pico, and, outside the Council, by Erasmus, the one consequential decree to come out of the Council was that condemning the theory of a double truth.

This paradox brings us to the two issues that will take up the final part of this paper, namely, humanist views of truth and humanist attitudes toward moral reform before and after the Council.

The large scholarly literature of the last few generations on humanist moral and religious thought has completely destroyed the myth of Quattrocento pagan humanism. But this literature masks an important lacuna, namely, an almost complete lack of writings on religious reform by humanists. To be sure, the humanists wrote about human happiness and misery, on Aristotelian ethics, Stoic ethics, Platonic ethics, and even Epicurean ethics. They wrote on the virtues, on the sacraments, on the saints, and on the Scriptures, but not on moral reform. The closest they came to such a theme were works of anti-clerical criticism, such as Poggio Bracciolini's oration at the Council of Constance attacking the hypocrisy of the clergy⁵³ and his dialogues *De Avaritia* and *Contra Hypocritas*,⁵⁴ and, of

⁵² ROSCOE: *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth*. 6:72: "[Happiness of heaven] omnino superet captum humanae mentis nec, nisi deo docente hominibus patefiat, nihilque omnino sint, si ei conferantur foelicitati quae vanae vetustatis illustratores poetae atque philosophi commenti sunt di fortunatis insulis, de fluminibus nectaris, de via lactea, de reditu ad compares stellas et caeteris quae ad veritatem hallucinantes suis lucubrationibus inservere;" and 6:76: "Non in vestibis modo et sumptibus, sed in studiis sacre literae utriusque instrumentis recognoscendae, et cum antiquis et castigatis primae originis exemplaribus conferendae ut ab erratis quae vitio temporum et librorum incuria in illas irrepserunt omnino purgentur." See also Pico's letter to Santes Pagnini, which, as pointed out by GILBERT: *Cristianesimo, umanesimo*, 982, confirms his interest in the editing and publishing of the Bible in the original languages (*Opera*, 2:880–883). See also MINNICH: *Concepts of Reform*, 202–205.

⁵³ See FUBINI, Riccardo: *Un'orazione di Poggio Bracciolini sui vizi del clero scritta al tempo del Concilio di Costanza*, in: *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 142 (1965), 24–33; and FUBINI, Riccardo: *Il 'teatro del mondo' nelle prospettive morali e storico-politiche di Poggio Bracciolini*, in: *Poggio Bracciolini 1380–1980 nel VI centenario della nascita*. Firenze: Sansoni 1982, 1–135, at 93–132.

⁵⁴ See VASOLI, Cesare: *Poggio Bracciolini e la polemica antimonastica*, in: *Poggio Bracciolini 1380–1980 nel VI centenario della nascita*, 163–205; FUBINI, Riccardo: *Poggio Bracciolini e s. Bernardino: Temi e motivi di una polemica*, in: *Atti del convegno storico bernardiniano in occasione del sesto centenario della nascita di s. Bernardino da Siena. L'Aquila, 7–8–9 maggio 1980*. L'Aquila: Comitato aquilano del sesto centenario della nascita di s. Bernardino da Siena 1982, 155–188; BAUSI, Francesco: *La mutatio vitae di Poggio Bracciolini*. *Ricerche sul De avaritia*, in: *Interpres* 28 (2009), 7–69; and GUIDI, Remo: *Il di-*

course, Lorenzo Valla's dialogue *De Professione Religiosorum* and his *Declamatio* on the Donation of Constantine.⁵⁵ Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's *De Curiae Commodis* contains specific criticisms of the corruption at the papal Curia.⁵⁶ But these works offered no broad program of reform nor any general condemnation of corruption in the Church. So Giustiniani's and Quirini's *Libellus* as well as Gianfrancesco Pico's oration to Leo X were real departures from the pattern of moral and religious writings by Quattrocento humanists. Their text did not emerge from traditional humanist ethical interests, but rather from independent religious developments, i.e., the influence of Savonarola in Florence in the case of Gianfrancesco Pico, and the spontaneous religious commitment of a small group of educated Venetians in the case of Giustiniani and Quirini.⁵⁷ The Christian humanism of Erasmus seemed to have exercised no formative influence, and, indeed, originated quite differently, out of Erasmus' distinctive combination of moral reform and humanist scholarship.

But if Quattrocento humanism as a cultural and as a moral force was essentially extraneous to *Apostolici Regiminis*, what about humanist views of truth? I know only one Quattrocento humanist who explicitly took up the question of philosophical truth and religious truth: George of Trebizond in his *Comparatio Philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis*, completed in Rome in 1457.⁵⁸ To compare Plato and Aristotle, George needed a standard of truth. As he explained in chapter 1 of book 2:

For he certainly should be considered and proclaimed a true philosopher who more adheres to truth, while he who wanders further from the truth should be considered and proclaimed more alien to philosophy. For the truth of nature is sovereign; and everything depends upon it, and it is upon that truth, as if upon a final end, that everything casts its gaze. For it is nothing else that the first

battito sull'uomo nel Quattrocento, 2nd ed. Roma: Tille Media 1999, 709–746 (repeated in: GUIDI, Remo: *Frati e umanisti nel Quattrocento*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso 2013, 349–90).

⁵⁵ See FOIS, Mario: *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla nel quadro storico-culturale del suo ambiente*. Roma: Libreria editrice dell'Università Gregoriana 1969, 261–350; FUBINI, Riccardo: *L'Umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: Origini rinascimentali – critica moderna*. Milano: FrancoAngeli 2001, 163–183; and MONFASANI, John: *The Theology of Lorenzo Valla*, in: KRAYE, Jill/STONE, M.W.F. (eds.): *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy*. London: Routledge 2000, 1–23; reprinted as Essay XI in: MONFASANI: *Greeks and Latins*.

⁵⁶ See CELENZA, Christopher S.: *Renaissance Humanism & the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1999.

⁵⁷ Interestingly enough, Giustiniani was hostile to Savonarola and the religious movement he had inspired whereas another member of Giustiniani's circle, Gasparo Contarini, was favorably inclined; see VASOLI, Cesare: *Il tentativo di condanna del Savonarola come eretico e scismatico al sinodo fiorentino del '16–'17 ed al V concilio Lateranense*, in: *Savonarole: Enjeux, débats, questions*, 243–261; and GILBERT, Felix: *Contarini on Savonarola: An Unknown Document of 1516*, in: *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 9 (1959), 145–149.

⁵⁸ See MONFASANI, John: *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic*. Leiden: Brill 1976, 166–170.

cause of things. If what a philosopher holds agrees with it, he cannot but know the nature of the things he is promising to teach [...]. But it is in the Christian religion through the preaching of our lord Jesus Christ and his apostles that truth has made itself visible. Hence, he who agrees more with Christian piety is to me the more learned and truer philosopher, while he who is more removed from this piety, i.e., from the dogmas of the Church, the further he diverges, the more is he joined to the father of lies and the more is he alien to philosophy.⁵⁹

In short, George saw no conflict between true philosophy and Catholic doctrine. The latter was the standard of truth. Plato contradicted it; Aristotle, properly interpreted, agreed with it as much it was humanly possible *ex puris naturalibus*. The supposed double truth theory condemned by *Apostolici Regiminis* would have been seen in his eyes as a false problem as far as Aristotelianism is concerned since it condemned a false interpretation of Aristotle.

Now, humanists did speak about truth in a context outside of a possible conflict between philosophy and Christian dogma, namely, in treatments of logic. In a well-known, but still problematic passage of his *Retractio Totius Dialecticae*, Lorenzo Valla argued that truth is knowledge of something; it is the light of our minds; it resides in our minds; it is not external as light is to our eyes. Yet, though truth and falsity are in us, “the source of our truth is in God, just as our light comes from the Sun. The source of falsity is the blocking of the divine source.”⁶⁰ Whether Valla held to some sort of theory of divine illumination or was simply incoherent, I am not prepared to argue here. The essential point is that he firmly asserted that truth exists and that we can and do attain it. Contrary to a once popular view, Valla did not espouse Academic or Pyrrhonian scepticism; nor did he

⁵⁹ The text is from the critical edition of George’s *Comparatio* that I am preparing: “Nam is verus profecto philosophus haberi predicarique debet qui veritati magis adhaereat, is alienior a philosophia qui longius a veritate aberret. Veritas enim nature dominatur, et inde omnia pendent, et illo, quasi ad finem ultimum, tandem respiciunt. Non enim aliud est quam ipsa rerum causa prima, cui si philosophus consentanea sentit, naturam rerum, quam docere pollicetur, ignorare non potest. Vestigia enim et sicut imagines quaedam rebus insunt, quae ab effectibus ad causam mentem philosophi traducunt. Preterea veritas sapientia est. Philosophus sapientie studiosus est; quare veritatis quoque. Qui ergo longe absit ab ipsa, is verum philosophi nomen prestare non potest. Sed veritas in Christiana religione per domini nostri Iesu Christi et apostolorum suorum predicationem perluxit. Quare qui Christiane pietati magis congruat, is mihi philosophus eruditior atque verior; qui ab hac pietate, idest, a dogmatibus ecclesiae, remotior sit, quanto longius abest, tanto mendaciorum auctori coniunctior et a philosophia est alienior.”

⁶⁰ VALLA: *Dialectical Disputations*. Copenhagen/Nauta (eds.), 1:35, with some adaptation of their translation; the Latin runs (1:34): “fons veritatis nostrae in Deo, sicut nostrae lucis in Sole. Falsitatis vero in obstructione divini fontis.”

argue for probabilism as a substitute for truth.⁶¹ Not only does the above cited passage refute such an interpretation, but so does also Valla's extensive discussion of *sorites* and other forms of dilemmas, the main purpose of which was to defeat sophistical argumentation and to arrive instead at truth.

The most popular humanist logics before the rage for Ramism in the later sixteenth century were George of Trebizond's *Isagoge Dialectica* and Rudolph Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*.⁶² George's *Logic* was a relatively straight-forward adaptation of Scholastic logic. He even talked about late Scholastic *consequentiae*⁶³ and discussed the rules of Scholastic *obligationes*.⁶⁴ He took it for granted that logic dealt with the truth value of propositions. As he said at the start, "a proposition is speech that signifies what is true or false."⁶⁵ Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*, as its title suggests, was concerned with the finding of arguments and, as he himself says, with "speaking in terms of probability" (*probabiliter dicere*),⁶⁶ and therefore was not concerned with discovering or proving the truth. Theoretically, Agricola was not a sceptic nor a probabilist, but operationally he was a probabilist since he was teaching persuasion even if he insisted that dialectics was itself the art of teaching.⁶⁷ As Juan Luis Vives, the most important early sixteenth-century writer on logic, put it in his *De Ratione Dicendi*, "In sum the most probable things are in fact things that are true [...] but sometimes certain false things will be made to be the more probable by certain people."⁶⁸ While insisting that his purpose was the search for truth, Vives would go on to argue in the *De Censura Veri* that "the specialist in any field] will apply himself either to how he may aptly bring

⁶¹ See MONFASANI, John: *Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola*, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990), 181–200, at 192–198, reprinted as Essay V in: MONFASANI, John: *Language and Learning in Renaissance Italy*. Aldershot: Variorum 1994.

⁶² See MONFASANI: *George of Trebizond*, 328–337.

⁶³ GEORGE OF TREBIZOND: *Ioannis Argyropuli Dialectica ad Petrum De Medicis*. M. Inguanez/G. Müller (eds.) (= *Miscellanea Cassinese* 25). Montecassino: s.n. 1943, 42–43.

⁶⁴ GEORGE OF TREBIZOND: *Ioannis Argyropuli* [sic] *Dialectica*, 28, 64–65.

⁶⁵ GEORGE OF TREBIZOND: *Ioannis Argyropuli* [sic] *Dialectica*, 25: "Est enim propositio oratio que verum vel falsum significat."

⁶⁶ MACK, Peter: *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*. Leiden: Brill 1993, 168–181. Mack believes that Agricola's *probabiliter* should be rendered in the strong sense as "convincingly."

⁶⁷ Agricola was not consistently rigorist in separating the plausible from the necessary; see the comment of MACK: *Renaissance Argument*, 141: "One aspect of the discussion which is awkward is the truth status of the arguments being described. The topics are supposed to generate plausible arguments as well as necessary ones, but Agricola's discussion of the topics often slips into talking as though all arguments have the force of certainty."

⁶⁸ VIVES, Juan Luis: *Opera Omnia*. 8 vols. in 7. Valencia: Benedictus Montfort 1782–1790, 2:213 (*De Ratione Dicendi*, Bk. 3, c. 4: *Narratio Probabilis*): "In summa quidem ea sunt maxime probabilia quae et vera. [...] sed aliquando falsa quaedam quibusdam veris fiunt probabiliora."

to expression the truth that needs to be revealed or to how he may rightly investigate truth by means of probabilities.”⁶⁹ What the Renaissance humanist rhetorical tradition would not admit was that since rhetoric aimed at persuasion, not truth, falsehood was just as valid for its purposes as truth as long as a particular falsehood was probable and therefore credible.⁷⁰ Consequently, Renaissance humanists never admitted that their goal was not truth, but rather purely persuasion; and so they never developed a theory of probability, as in fact the medieval Scholastics had begun to do in various ways,⁷¹ and which would become such an enormous intellectual force in early seventeenth-century France. As Richard Popkin has famously contended, it was René Descartes’ rejection of probabilistic theory in 1628 that started him off in his quest to find a new method of establishing truth.⁷² But already in the late fifteenth century, in a famous letter to Ermolao Barbaro, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola had framed the challenge that Renaissance humanists never really answered. The challenge, as the *philosophus* in Giovanni Pico’s letter put it, was as follows: “There is such an enormous opposition between the job of an orator and the job of a philosopher that they could not be more in opposition. For what else is the task of the rhetorician except to lie, to deceive, to circumvent, and to trick.”⁷³ Renaissance humanists tried to answer the charge that rhetoric trafficked in falsehoods by following Quintilian and defining the orator as a *vir bonus*, but already, before Quintilian, Cicero had rejected the obvious sanitizing moralism of the definition of the orator as a *vir bonus*.⁷⁴ Consequently, in respect to *Apostolici Regiminis* and the theory of a double truth, the Quattrocento humanist tradition entered not at all into background or preparation. Not only was the commission that wrote the bull devoid of humanists, but the issue itself was a controversy revolving about strictly philosophical instruction. More importantly the Quattrocento

⁶⁹ VIVES: *Opera Omnia*, 3:142 (*De Censura Veri in Enuntiatione Liber Unicus*): “Adhibetur enim a quoque artifice, dum in materia sua inquit, quam apte enuntiatum sit ad veritatem expromendam aut quam recte veritatem per probabilia investigarit.” On Vives’s method of arriving at truth, see PERREIAH, Alan: *Renaissance Truths: Humanism, Scholasticism and the Search for the Perfect Language*. Farnham: Ashgate 2014, 112–118.

⁷⁰ See SCHUESSLER, Rudolf: *Probability in Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/probability-medieval-renaissance/> (05.11.2016).

⁷¹ SCHUESSLER: *Probability*.

⁷² POPKIN, Richard: *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*. Revised and expanded edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, 145–146.

⁷³ BAUSI, Francesco (ed.): *Ermolao Barbaro – Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Filosofia o eloquenzia?* Napoli: Liguori 1998, 40: “Tanta est inter oratoris munus et philosophi pugnantia ut pugnare magis invicem non possint. Nam quod aliud rhetoris officium quam mentiri, decipere, circumvenire, praestigiari?”

⁷⁴ See MONFASANI, John: *Episodes of Anti-Quintilianism in the Italian Renaissance: Quarrels on the Orator as a Vir Bonus and Rhetoric as the Scientia Bene Dicendi*, in: *Rhetorica* 10 (1992), 119–138, reprinted as Essay III in: MONFASANI: *Language and Learning*.

humanist tradition had not up to that point explicitly faced the issue of two competing truth claims outside of a rhetorical or dialectical context. Hence, humanism played no significant role in the central issue of *Apostolici Regiminis*.

Abstract

This article seeks to debunk the exaggerated claims made for the influence of humanism and Epicureanism and to show the more real influence of anti-Aristotelianism and philosophical Scepticism on the origins of the bull Apostolici Regiminis, highlighting in the process the views of Zanobi Acciaiuoli and Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola. At the end, the failure of Renaissance humanism to develop a theory of truth and probability is brought out.