

# Quatuor Coronati 2023 Conference

Inventing the Future: the 1723 Constitutions

Marking 300 years since the publication of the first Constitutions of the Freemasons

AT

QUEENS' COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE ENGLAND

22 - 24 September 2023

## THE LONG CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND FREEMASONRY:

### A CLASH FROM POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ROOTS

- LA PRIMA SCOMUNICA
- GLI AVVENIMENTI FIORENTINI
- LA SECONDA SCOMUNICA
- LO SCONTRO A NAPOLI
- LE RAGIONI POLITICHE E CULTURALI

RICERCA DI DOCUMENTI E TESTI A CURA  
DI ARTINI LUCIO E MARTINO CARTELLA  
TRADUZIONE A CURA DI MARTINO CARTELLA

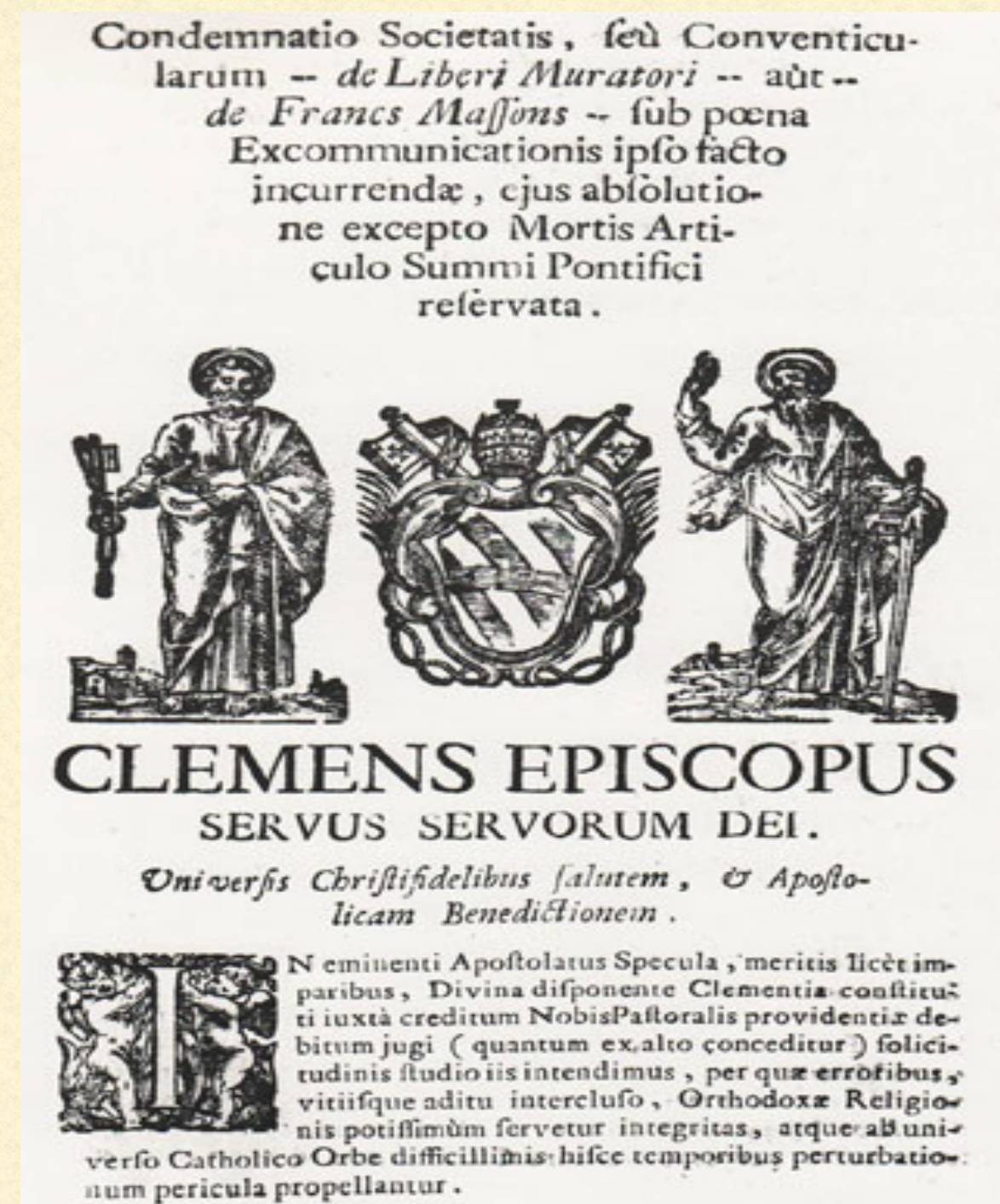


**The State of the  
Church divided  
the Peninsula in  
two**

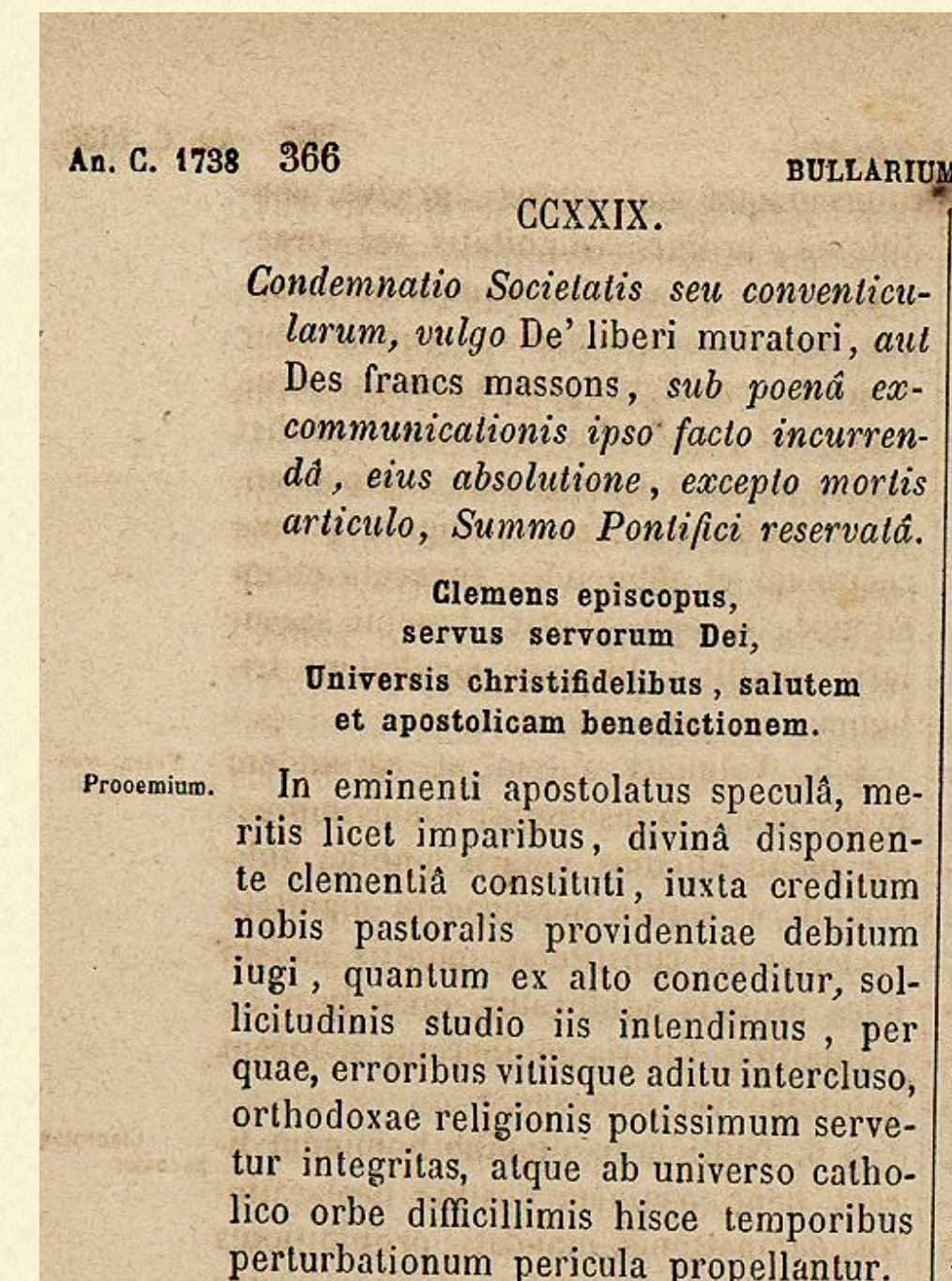


# THE FIRST EXCOMMUNICATION

“In Eminenti Apostolatus Specula” was published on the 28th of April 1738



- The first result of the conflict between the Roman Church and Freemasonry is the excommunication by Pope Clement XII (Lorenzo Corsini, 1652-1740) in 1738, a Pope coming from the Florentine family Corsini and therefore very well informed and careful about what was going on in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. This is a conflict that we can observe throughout the centuries, both inside and outside the Catholic Church. A clash regarding the relationship between the Roman Church and political powers, as well as between the Roman Church and other churches.
- Through the excommunication, Pope Clement condemned the so-called associations of “Free Masons or des Francs Maçons” by ordering bishops to act against the members of these groups as they were suspected of heresy.
- Such Papal instructions needed to be approved by kings to be applied in the several kingdoms or states. At first many Governments did not “register” the papal bull.
- His measure “In Eminenti Apostolatus Specula” was published on the 28th of April 1738; it is assumed that it was written by the pontiff in person, on the advice of some Cardinals, for there are some reasons listed below and for “some other right and rational renowned reasons”, which were never disclosed.





# THE FIRST EXCOMMUNICATION: CLEMENTE XII - LORENZO CORSINI (1652 - 1740)

Pope Clement XII, Lorenzo Corsini, was born in Florence on 7 April 1652, elected Pope on 12 July 1730, crowned on 16 July 1730, and died on 6 February 1740. He was a Florentine aristocrat, son of Bartolomeo Corsini and Elisabetta Strozzi, and at the age of fifteen he went to Rome, where he studied with the Jesuits at the Collegio Romano. Later he went to Pisa, where he became a Doctor of Law.

After his studies, he went to Rome to stay with his uncle Cardinal Neri Corsini (also Nerio - 1612 - 1678), but he died in 1678, so Lorenzo returned to Florence.

Only after the death of his father Bartholomew did he decide, no longer young, to embrace the ecclesiastical state. Returning for the third time to Rome, he joined the Prelature, where he spent his entire career, proving himself skilled in carrying out his duties and gaining the trust of Alexander VIII (1610 - 1691), Innocent XII (1615 - 1700) and Clement XI (1649 - 1721), who awarded him the scarlet on 17 May 1706.

He conducted activities within numerous religious congregations, but, despite his "institutional" duties, he also found ways to engage in patronage activities and his salon was frequented by intellectuals, nobles, and artists.

These data on his studies and religious career are taken from the book by Baron Ludovico Von Pastor: "Storia dei Papi nel periodo dell'assolutismo", Rome 1933, "Compilata col sussidio dell'Archivio Segreto Pontificio e di molti altri Archivi" - Volume XV.

**Let us look first at the contents of the Bull of Clement XII, then at that of Benedict XIV.**

The text of Pope Corsini's deed is taken from the "Bullarium Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum", which can be found in the National State Library in Rome.

The premise to the Bull is as follows: 'Condemnatio Societas seu conventicularum, vulgo De’ liberi muratori, aut Des francs massons, sub poenà excommunicationis ipso facto incurrend, eius absolutione, salvo mortis articulo, Summo Pontifici reservatà'.

**The Bull 'In Eminent Apostolatus Specula' was published on 28 April 1738, Pope Clement XII:** excommunicates Freemasonry as if it were a Christian heresy, a Catholic organisation that deviated from the correct doctrine of the Church of Rome. We believe that political and cultural reasons prevailed, which were also always connected to politics, linked to the control of educational institutions, and to the legitimisation of the power of the Pope and the Sovereigns.

These are his words:

*Already by the same public fame, it is known to us that certain Societies, Unions, Reunions, Meetings, Convents or Aggregations commonly known as Free Masons or des Francs Maçons, or by other names according to the variety of languages, extend in every direction, and from day to day are strengthened, in which **men of every religion and sect, content with a certain affectionate appearance of natural honesty**, are united with a close and secret alliance, according to their Laws and Statutes. **These Societies, with a strict oath taken on the Holy Scriptures, and with the exaggeration of severe penalties, are obliged to keep an inviolable silence about the things they secretly do... This reputation has grown so considerably that these Societies have already been proscribed by the secular Princes in many countries as enemies of the Kingdoms and have been providently eliminated.***

*We, therefore, meditating on the very serious damage that such Societies or Convents cause not only **to the tranquillity of the temporal Republic, but also to the spiritual health of souls, since they are in no way in accord with either civil or Canonical Laws**; instructed by the Divine Words to watch day and night, as a faithful and prudent servant in charge of the Lord's household, lest this race of men plunder the House like thieves, nor like foxes spoil the Vineyard; lest, that is, they corrupt the hearts of the simple and covertly wound the innocent; in order to close the way which, if opened, might allow crimes with impunity; **for other just and rational reasons known to us, with the advice of some of Our Venerable Brother Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and again motu proprio, with sound knowledge, mature deliberation and with the fullness of Our Apostolic power**, we decree that the aforesaid Societies, Unions, Reunions, Meetings, Aggregations or Conventuals of Free Masons or des Francs Maçons, or by whatever other name they may be called, must be condemned and forbidden, just as we condemn and forbid them by this Constitution of ours, to be valid in perpetuity. Therefore, we sternly, and in virtue of holy obedience, command all and every faithful of whatever state, rank, condition, order, dignity, or pre-eminence, whether Lay or Clerical.*

Freemasonry was to be condemned because it allowed '**men of any religion and sect to be united among themselves**', and this was at the same time detrimental both to the 'tranquillity of the temporal Republic, but also to the spiritual health of souls'. The condemnation was total: 'we decree that it must be condemned and forbidden, as in the present Constitution, to be valid in perpetuity', and 'under penalty of excommunication for all offenders, as above, to be incurred ipso facto, and without any declaration, from which no one can be absolved, except at the point of death, by anyone other than the Roman Pontiff pro tempore'.

Then **the secrecy**, the swearing on the Bible, the shared concern on the part of the temporal powers that had already acted against Freemasonry, a danger to secular power but also to the spirit, and finally he specifies: for other known but unspoken reasons.

Excommunication, therefore, and treatment equal to that reserved for heretics, which were the punishments and tortures of the Inquisition that could even lead to the stake, as happened to many heretics, and which freed the subjects from obedience to the Sovereign, also moving all those who wanted to replace the Sovereign himself:

*Furthermore, we wish and command that both the Bishops, the Prelate Superiors and the other Ordinaries of places, **and the Inquisitors of heretical wickedness deputed in any place**, proceed, and conduct inquisitions against transgressors of any state, rank, condition, order, dignity, or pre-eminence, and that they repress and punish them with the same penalties with which they strike those suspected of heresy. Therefore, we grant and give them, and each of them, the free power to continue and to inquire against the aforementioned offenders, and to imprison and punish them with the proper penalties, also invoking, if necessary, the aid of the secular arm.*

This was a strong appeal both to the Catholic people and to their rulers, as we know how powerful the condemnation of heresy was, both for individuals and groups; there was also the threat of excommunication against those who held secular power, which in fact meant that everyone was released from the obligation to obey the excommunicated person.

The threat against the Freemason Francis Stephen of Lorraine (1708 - 1765) is therefore clear, with an obvious choice of sides in favour of those who wanted a member of the Bourbons of Spain on the Medici throne.



# LA LETTERA DEL CARDINALE NERI CORSINI A FRANCESCO STEFANO DI LORENA

Once Francesco Stefano had entered Florence as Grand Duke, on the death of Gian Gastone (1671 - 1737) he received a letter from Cardinal Neri Maria Corsini (1685 - 1770), who, given the Pontiff's state of health, also played a leading role in Rome: Corsini stated decisively that religion was in danger in Tuscany.

He wrote in the name of the Pope 'citizen and protector of Florence announcing to him that religion in this city was in increasing danger', as reported by the historian Niccolò Rodolico in his book “*Stato e Chiesa in Toscana durante la Reggenza Lorenese (1737 - 1765) - Firenze successori Le Monnier 1910*”.

The blame for what was happening lay with the Stosch and with 'deviant' and 'corrupt' teachers and students:

*under the title of Freemasons they profess heretical doctrines of deism - they, calling themselves Freemasons, wish to keep away the suspicion of anyone who knows the honest origin of Freemasonry which arose for the purpose of lawful entertainment in England....*

Despite the excommunication that heavily condemned all Freemasonry, the Cardinal cleverly tried to divide a kind of 'good Freemasonry' from the bad Freemasonry of the Stock and Italian intellectuals.

Corsini referred to the testimonies that the Inquisitor, aided by the Jesuits, had already collected in Florence, in particular from two people who would later recant everything publicly, without naming them. When the Inquisitor requested the arrest, the names of the witnesses were not mentioned, nor were the precise accusations made against the accused, whose evidence the Inquisition should already have acquired, since the investigations should already have been conducted at the time of the request of the secular arm, i.e. by the Grand Duke's gendarmes.

The public authority had to take the Inquisitor's statements against the subjects at face value, without being able to control them in any way.

Corsini continued his missive by announcing that the Inquisitor would supply a more detailed explanation of what was happening and that the Florentine freemasons were a society:

*...which denies the mystery of the Trinity and the principle of the immortality of the soul, where the sin of sodomy is admitted as lawful...that if S.A., in order to gain the blessing of Heaven, is preparing to go to war against the Turks, he must first fight distant infidels and expel the heretics from the Grand Duchy.....*

Then he argued that the University of Pisa should be 'purged':

*The remedy would have been more effective if S.A. had purged the University of Pisa of its ancient professors, and for this he had entrusted himself, in every respect, to the Archbishop of that city and to Monsignor Cerati, the director of that University. If he had not acted according to his advice then the Holy See would have been forced to recall the Nuncio from Florence, which would not have conferred on S.A.'s honour and dignity.*

Aware of the internal and external weakness of the new Tuscan government, Corsini attacked with the intention of re-establishing the power of the Jesuits and the Inquisition in the land of Tuscany, economic and cultural power, and to create a rift between the English government that protected the Stosch and the Tuscan government.

The historian Carlo Francovich in his "*Storia della Massoneria in Italia - Liberi muratori italiani dalle origini alla rivoluzione francese*" (History of Freemasonry in Italy - Italian Free Masons from the Origins to the French Revolution), *Scandicci, La nuova Italia, 1989*", also refers to Corsini's letter, the text is taken from a summary in the Florence State Archives:

The evidence of ungodliness and sodomy to incriminate Crudeli and the other "brothers" was ready. They began to put pressure on the new Grand Duke and Cardinal Corsini took charge of this...', we see his words as reported by Francovich:

*"The Cardinal, relying on the love he always had for his homeland - which was also the homeland of the Holy Father! - he took the liberty of speaking openly to the sovereign, declaring that in his state religion was in danger. He then accused Baron von Stosch, whom he called "homme sans mores et sans religion", of keeping in his home "une École de pur déism, avere quelques professeurs des plus corrompus de l'Université de Pise, et les écoliers le plus pervers de cette Université". Stosch - according to the cardinal - for better Frammassons" [sic]. And here with sly skill, the cardinal, as if unaware that the grand duke had been initiated as a master mason in England, begins to explain what Freemasonry is, which was created "en Angleterre par forme forme de jeu ou de divertissement honeste", but which in Italy "est dégénérée et y est devenue une école d'impiété". Not that all adherents are perverse, the cardinal continued, but there was a fear that the wicked would corrupt the young. And it is precisely because of the society that gathers in the home of Stosch, that today in cafes and public places one reaches the point of "nier la Trinité, li immortalité de la lame et l'autorità de l'Eglise". So he took the liberty of asking the sovereign for some decisions to be taken personally before his departure."*

Il Gran Duca avrebbe dovuto cacciare lo Stosch e Mylord Raimond nel permettere all'Inquisizione di arrestare due otre fra i principali colpevoli: “<<pour arracher les recinse naissantes de sette sette et réduire yes actress à penitence>>.

**The Grand Duke should have expelled Stosch and Milord Raimond in allowing the Inquisition to arrest two of the main culprits: "*pour arracher les recinse naissantes de sette et réduire yes actress à penitence.*"**

**...In addition, the Cardinal recommended a purge at the University of Pisa, removing suspicious professors and replacing them according to the suggestions of the Bishop of Pisa and Monsignor Cerati".**

The letter concluded with the assertion that if the Grand Duke did not meet his demands, the Curia could withdraw the papal nuncio from Florence.

**With their attacks on Galileo's method and on the experimental sciences these Pontiffs show that they have a fragile faith: if nature is the work of God, we must not hinder the study of nature and man through the experimental method because if God created the universe, scientific knowledge of the events of nature will not distance us from God.**

**These Popes and the Jesuits are afraid that the experimental method in the study of nature will distance man from God so there are two cases: either they are supported by an immensely fragile faith, or they want to defend a certain kind of political balance and power.**

**Il cardinale, facendosi forte dell’amore che aveva sempre portato alla sua patria — che era poi anche la patria del Santo Padre! — si prendeva la libertà di parlare apertamente al sovrano, dichiarandogli che nel suo Stato la religione era in pericolo. Accusava quindi il barone von Stosch,**



## BARON VON PASTOR'S WORDS:

Una prova che la S. Sede stava sempre in vedetta dall'alto, quando si trattava di proteggere il Cristianesimo, fu data da Clemente XII colla sua condanna dell'associazione segreta dei Franchi Muratori pronunciata nella famosa Costituzione del 28 aprile 1738.<sup>s</sup>

It is worth quoting Pastor's words on excommunications, which once again confirm the real reasons for the condemnation, considering the documents to which the Baron had access to write his History of the Popes:

*The anti-Christian spirit of this society, founded in London in 1717, is clearly expressed in the constitutions published in 1723 by the Grand Lodge of London.*

*The spirit, tendency and organisation of the dangerous secret league are outlined in the Bull of Clement XII with classical brevity, as it is said, that it brought together **men of every religion or sect in a close and closed association with their own laws and statutes who were content with an afflicted belonging of natural morality, and, on everything they machined together in secret**, they committed themselves to an inviolable silence with a rigorous oath taken on the Bible and with exaggerated threats of punishment. Clement severely condemned such tendencies and inflicted excommunication on all members of the Pharaonic Order with exoneration reserved for the Pope; all bishops and inquisitors were ordered to proceed accordingly.*

*The reason for intervention was the fact that English Freemasonry soon spread across the continent and favoured by the establishment of England in the Mediterranean at that time, it also took hold in Italy, as early as 1732 in Florence and two years later in Rome. The members of the Roman lodge were for the most part personal supporters of the English pretender, Charles Edward, the son of James III. However, there is no evidence that they were politically active in the Jacobite sense, and the records of their meetings, which are still preserved, make this unlikely. After an edict in Rome enjoined compliance with the Bull of April 1738, a new order appeared on 14 January 1739, forbidding participation in the Masonic Order on pain of death and confiscation of property, and requiring everyone to report meetings to the magistrate.*

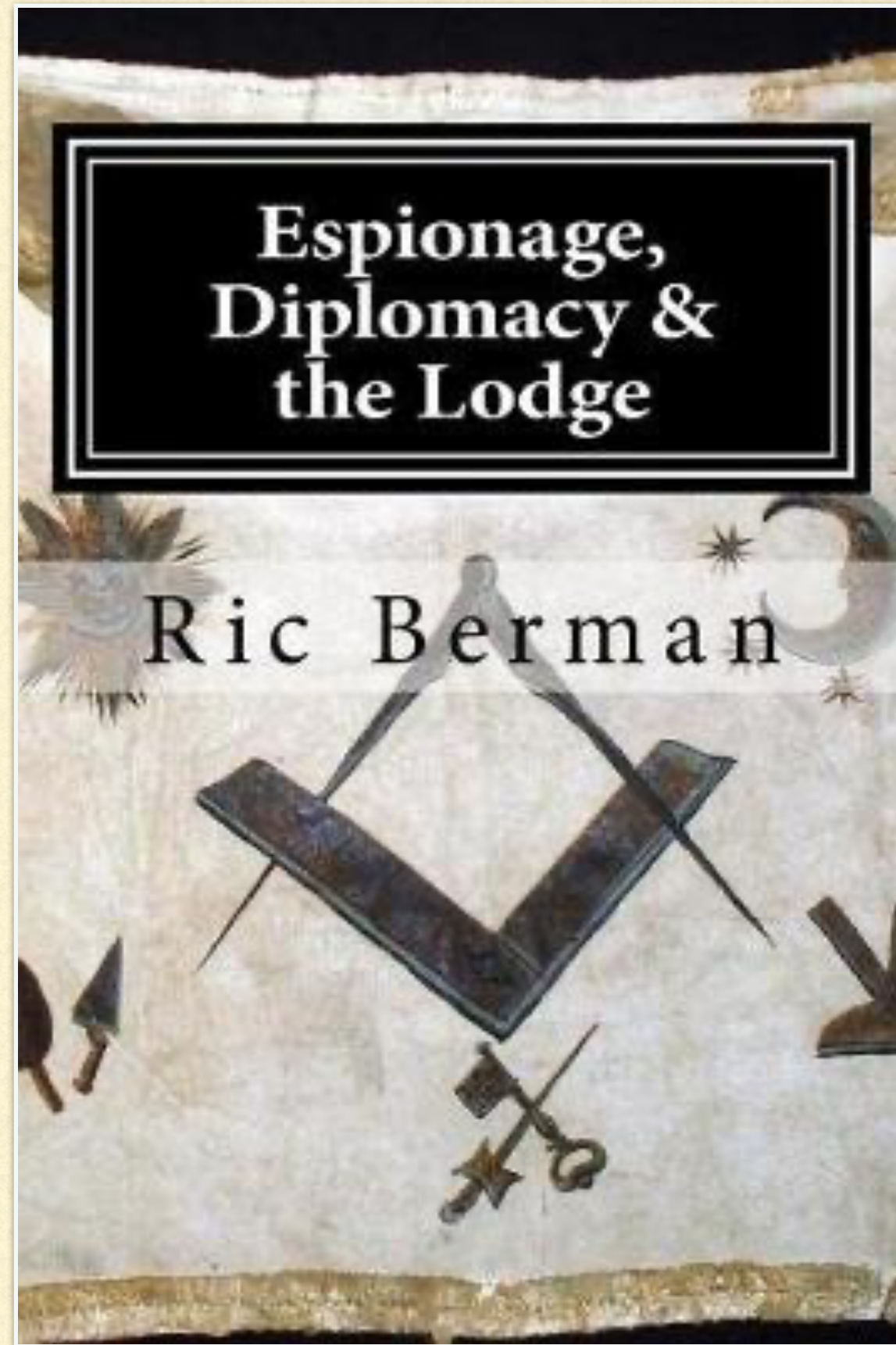
*Freemasonry seemed more dangerous in Florence, where it was believed that, after the death of the Medici, it had even found a follower on the throne in the person of the new Grand Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine, the husband of Maria Theresa.*

*Freemasonry had been introduced into the city of the Arno by the English resident and soon spread not only among the nobility and the bourgeoisie, but also among the clergy. One of its main promoters was the renowned archaeologist Baron Philip von Stosch, of Kustrin, who had been established in Florence since 1731. There was also a very active "poet", Tommaso Crudeli di Poppi, who became a friend as a language teacher of the English resident and made himself known with scathing verses against the clergy. Crudeli was secretary of the lodge when the papal prohibition led to the cessation of the Lodge's activities.*

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# FRANCESCO STEFANO DI LORENA



In Florence rules Grand Duke Gian Gastone dei Medici (1671-1737), but he has no children or other heirs, in Europe it is all a succession of wars almost always the Habsburgs of Austria often allies of England where, in the meantime, a Hanoverian has ascended the throne dynasty belonging to the reformed religions, and allied with the Austrians, against the Bourbons of France and Spain in turn supported by most of the college of cardinals and by the Popes.

Francesco Stefano (1708-1765) for various exchanges connected to dynastic conflicts and territorial possessions became the heir of Gian Gastone and took over his possessions and titles.

Francesco Stefano is a Freemason, the Pope and other Florentine majors were in favor of the inheritance being passed on to one of the sons of Elisabetta Farnese, wife of the King of Spain.

Ric Berman reports in his book “Espionage, Diplomacy & the Lodge - Charles Delafaye and The Secret Department of the Post Office, The Old Stables Press, 2017”, he explains that the future Grand Duke of Tuscany is fascinated by the public readings of Desaguliers and that “Lorraine 'professes himself a great admirer and friend of the English Nation and is learning the English tongue with such an application that he carries an English Grammar in his pocket' ”.

Berman writes: "Lorraine's initiation into English freemasonry was effected within days with a private lodge convened at Lord Chesterfield, the British ambassador's residence in the city [The Hague]. Desaguliers presided as master ... Lorraine's initiation at The Hague was a small but significant component of the preparations for the duke's visit to England ”.

The trip consolidated the relationship between London, the Grand Duke, and the Crown of Austria.



# THE LETTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GRAND DUCHY

## PARTICULARLY INTERESTING IS A LETTER OF MINISTER ABBOT GIOVANNI ANTONIO TORNAQUINCI (MARQUIS AND ABBOT, 1680-1764), STATE SECRETARY, IN WHICH HE INFORMS THE GRAND DUKE IN MAY 1739, ABOUT CRUDELI'S ARREST.

The Inquisition after the excommunication immediately moves against the English Loggia in Florence. The Father Inquisitor obtains from Francesco Stefano the possibility of arresting a group of Florentine Freemasons.

Let's see the correspondence between the Grand Duke who returned to Vienna and Florence.

Apart from the arrests, the Inquisitor asked to search Giuseppe Attias (1672-1745) the Jew's apartments in Leghorn, where "he suspected they might find bad books", aiming to attack once more the Jewish community in Tuscany by undermining a leading figure in Leghorn.

Due to his knowledge, Attias was a highly respected Jew, he was maybe the most estimable Jew in Tuscany, honored by Grand Dukes with many privileges.

Leghorn Harbor richness was derived from the big flow of people of any origin arriving there and sharing a mutual toleration in religious matters; the Inquisitor's action would have alienated merchants and trade

The German Antiquarian Baron and English spy Baron Philipp von Stosch (Von Stock - 1691 - 1757) must then be stopped, in whose study the students and teachers at the University of Pisa who are faithful to the teachings of Galileo ( Galileo Galilei - 1564-1642) and the Florentine intellectuals gather and can freely discuss. Stock is also an English citizen and in order to be expelled from Florence, the authorization of the British government is required.

The Tornaquinci Secretary of State explains to the Grand Duke that the British resident Ambassador Horace Mann (1706-1786) had suspended the arrest of Cerretesi but that, being Stosch also an English citizen, Mann's authorization was required to be able to expel him, and that this "... it was to be desired more than anything else for the Good of Religion"

*Maggio 1739*

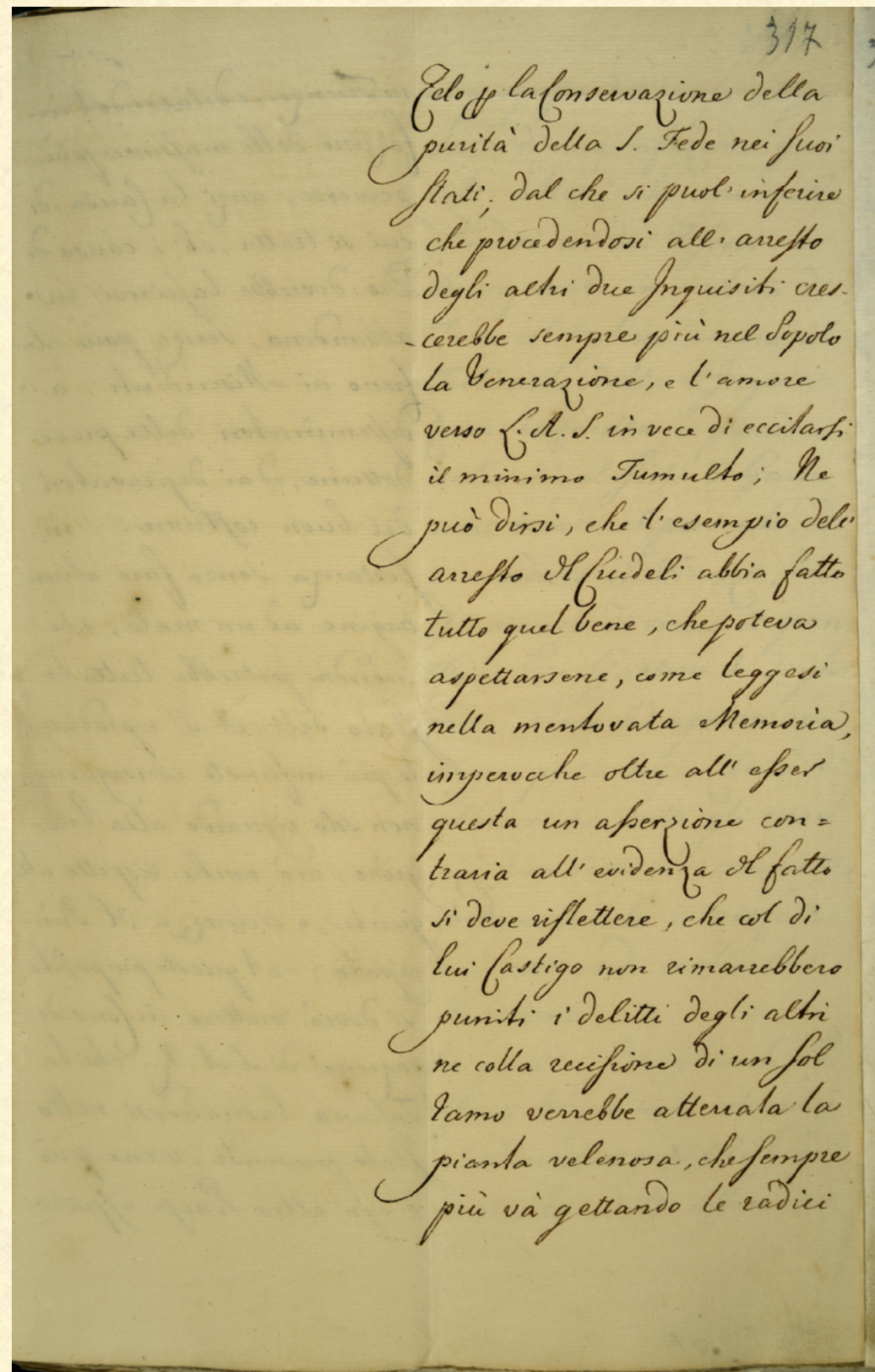
*Relaz.<sup>ne</sup> dell' Abate Tornaquinci sull'  
istanza fattagli dall' Inquisitor di Firenze  
per l' arresto dell' Abate Buonacorsi, del Dr.  
Crudeli, ed Gius.<sup>o</sup> Cerretesi, che fu eseguito  
nella persona della persona del primo, <sup>(1)</sup>  
e negato per gli altri due per essere il  
Buonacorsi ammaliato, e sospeso per il  
Cerretesi ad istanza del Ministro —  
D' Inghilterra, fintanto che non venisse  
dalla Corte d' Inghilterra la risoluzione  
sulla remoz.<sup>ne</sup> dalla Toscana del Barone  
Stosch.*

State Archives of Florence - Council of Regency running 339  
Letter from Abate Giovanni Antonio Tornaquinci (1680-1764), Segretario di  
Stato to Grand Duke Francesco Stefano di Lorena - May 1739



## FREEMASONRY IS A POISONOUS PLANT

**THE MEN OF THE GRAND DUKE THEN SUPERVISED THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ROME AND VIENNA AND ACQUIRED THEM. IT IS INTERESTING THE COPY OF A LETTER DATED 8 AUGUST 1739, THE SIGNATURE IS NOT INDICATED EVEN IF IT SEEMS TO BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE PONTIFF HIMSELF OR TO A PERSON WHO WAS VERY CLOSE TO HIM.**



State Archives of Florence - Council of Regency running 339

Written memorandum sent by the Court of Rome to the

Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna - 8 august 1739

The arrest of the Tommaso Crudeli, the last secretary of the Florentine Lodge (1702-1745) and his trial is not enough to stop Freemasonry, let's see what is written in the letter:

".. with him Punishment the crimes of others would not be punished nor with the cutting of a single branch the poisonous plant would be landed which more and more is throwing its roots in Florence and expanding the infection of the most perverse maxims, indeed the cause of which is concerned, which is the cause of God, should be abandoned, without putting any restraint on the disbelievers, to blasphemers of the real doctrines, by the depravators of morality: in essence, without doing any obstacle to an evil, which could inundate all status of the AS and produce the most dire consequences not only with regard to religion, but also with respect to the peace and security of the Principality. Tuscany left in the present state is more exposed than any other state to the danger of 'a general infection.'"

This is the main danger "a general infection" that is the spread of Freemasonry in the peninsula.



# THE 45 QUESTIONS

**AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF HARSH DETENTION, TOMMASO CRUDELI IS INTERROGATED AND THE INQUISITOR ASKS HIM 45 QUESTIONS FROM WHICH IT CLEARLY APPEARS THAT CRUDELI DETAINED FOR THE SOLE REASON THAT HE IS A FREEMASON AND THAT THE INQUISITOR SEEKS A CONFESSION WITH WHICH HE COULD ACT AGAINST OTHER FREEMASONS IF NOT THE GRAND DUKE HIMSELF:**

1 Who was the Minister

3 What is a freemason

5 How to make an invitation to participate

7 What is the colour of the gloves

9 Which metals members are asked to leave behind

11 If the one who speaks inside [the Lodge] is the

13 How many light sources are there

15 What the lights are placed on

17 What the oath is sworn on

19 The meaning of the words of the oat

21 If there is a formula for the oath

23 If there is any obscene language

25 What is discussed at the table

27 Tell us the names of the English

29 Who was the Master when he joined them

31 How many Masters changed

33 Who was the founder

35 The number and the names of Florentines

37 How long had F. been established by the

39 Its exact name...

41 What the day the meeting is on

43 Whether he knows if, or heard others say that in Florence or elsewhere there are other suc conversations

44 Why women are not allowed in.....

45 if the English leave the table all together ... and Crudeli replied “not all,” then the Inquisitor replied “I heard that in Germany .... ”

With Crudeli’s trial,the Church managed to stop the activity of the Lodges in Tuscany, except in Livorno where a consistent presence remained.

2 The name of the official

4 How the new freemason is allowed entry

6 What is the cost [of membership]

8 If the bandage is compulsory

10 How the Council is organised

12 What is the figure marked Master with chalk on the ground

14 How the lights are arranged

16 Where the Master sits

18 What is the book one swears on

20 What uniform or sign is given to the new freemason

22 Summarise the oath

24 If there is anything else

26 Tell us the names of Florentines

28 What is the total number of freemasons

30 How long has it been since he joined

32 How long since he was introduced in this circle

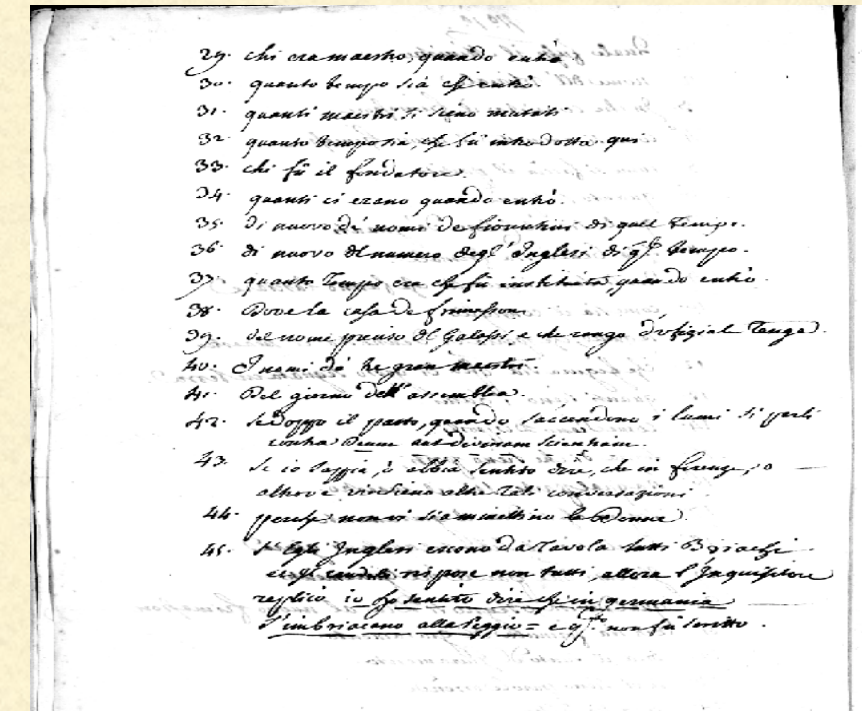
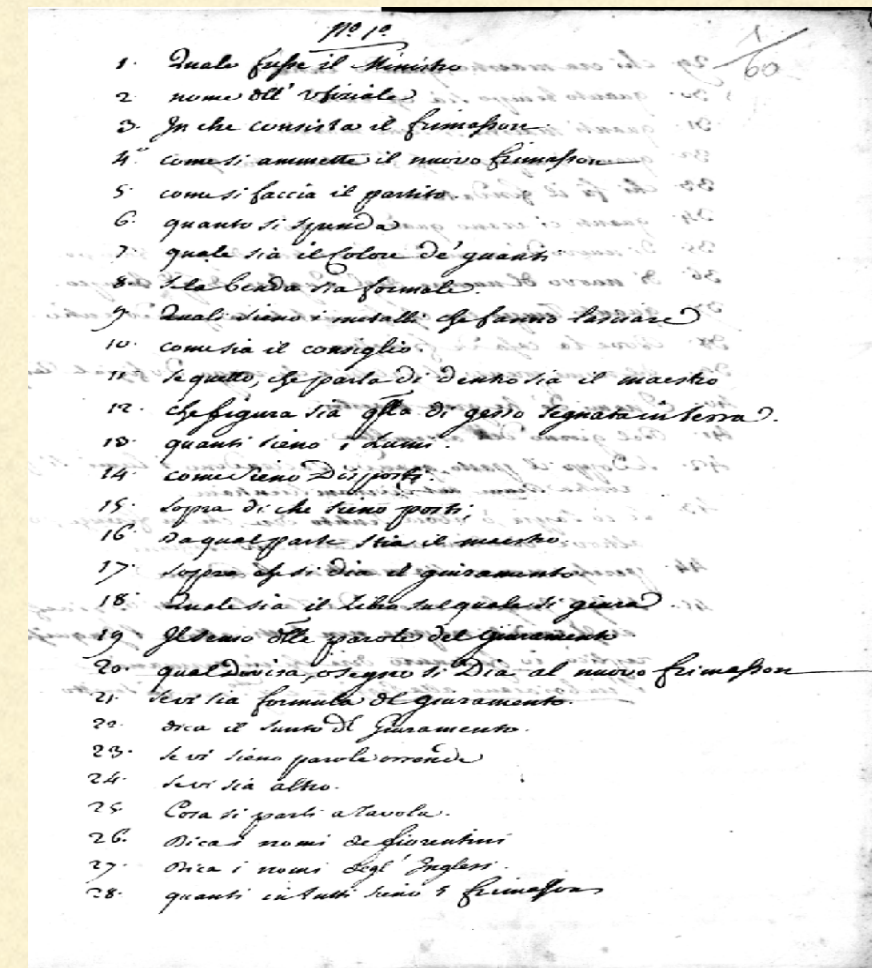
34 How many were there when he joined

36 Again, the number of English members at that time he joined it

38 Where is the Freemasons’ house

40 The names of the GrandMasters

42 If after the meal, when the lights are lit, one speaks against *Deus aut Divinam Scentiam*



Archivio di Stato di Firenze - Consiglio di Reggenza filza 339,  
Letter from Minister Emmanuel de Nay Count de Richcourt  
(1697-1768) to Grand Duke Francesco Stefano, sent from  
Florence to Vienna Firenze a Vienna - 18 august 1739



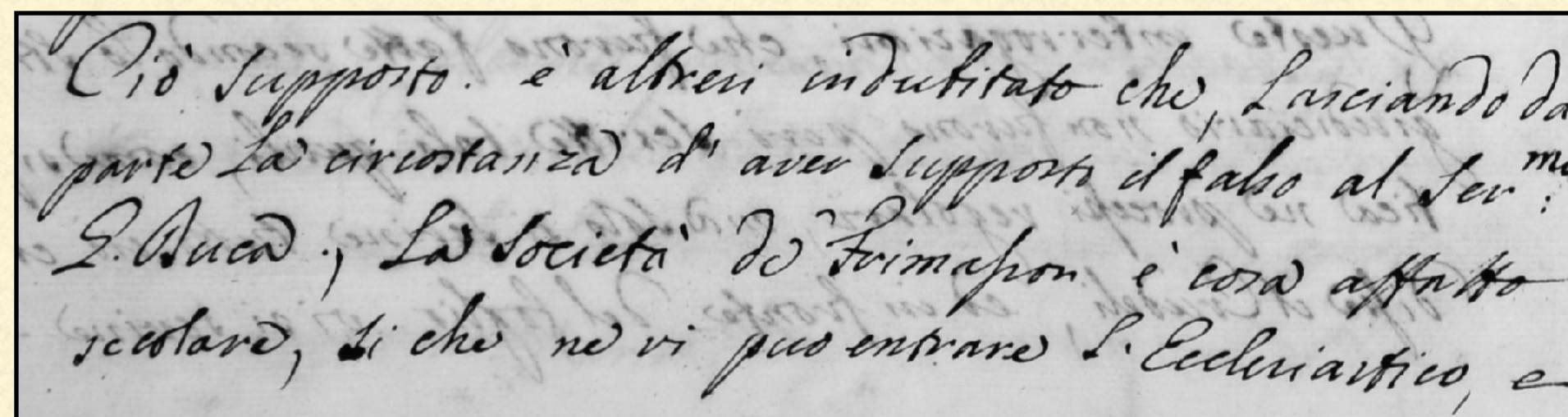
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**FREEMASONRY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
**SO WRITES THE SECRETARY OF ROYAL LAW GIULIO RUCELLAI (1702-1778, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PISA) SUCCESSOR OF MINISTER FILIPPO BUONARROTI (1671-1733) WHOSE 'DEPOSITION' HE ASKED IN VAIN, HIS REMOVAL FROM OFFICE, THE SAME POPE CLEMENT XII.**

On August 11, 1739, Rucellai wrote to the Count of Richecourt (Emmanuel de Nay Count of Richecourt - 1697-1768, President of the Council of Ministers): "finally what was conjectured up to now about the clues that had been gathered, that is, that the Crudeli is considered in the Inquisition for the sole reason of 'to be one of the freemasons....'"

**The Minister believes that in Freemasonry there is nothing against religion, there are many Catholic figures of importance even the Cardinals. The accusation of heresy is very dangerous and a part of the Florentines, fomented by the Inquisition,** believe: "that this Society is a heresy, and that it regards as heretics all those people who are ascribed to it, which gives rise to many little speeches. convenient fomented by those who have an interest in making it believe and that undoubtedly produce little good effects. "

In a subsequent letter dated 12 August 1739, again from the State Archives of Florence - Council of Regency file n.339 - letter from Minister Rucellai to Minister Richecourt, Rucellai highlights: **"The Frimasson Society is something quite secular, so that the Ecclesiastical can enter it, and much less the Inquisition, which can only belong to the causes of Faith** and this is so true that some country, where it was believed that this reasoning must be forbidden, the prohibition was made by the secular , but never that I know from the clergyman; and for this purpose, among others, the Bull in Florence was not allowed to be published. "



*Ciò supposto. è altresì indubitato che, Lasciando da parte la circostanza d'aver supposto il falso al Ser.<sup>mo</sup> S. Rucellai, La Società de' Frimasson è cosa affatto secolare, sì che ne vi può entrare l'Ecclesiastico, e*

Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo - Archivio di Stato di Firenze - Consiglio di Reggenza filza n.339 - Lettera del Ministro Giulio Rucellai (1702-1778) al Ministro Emmanuel de Nay Count de Richecourt datata 12 agosto 1739



## WHY THE JEW ATTIAS AND THE COMMUNITY OF LIVORNO?

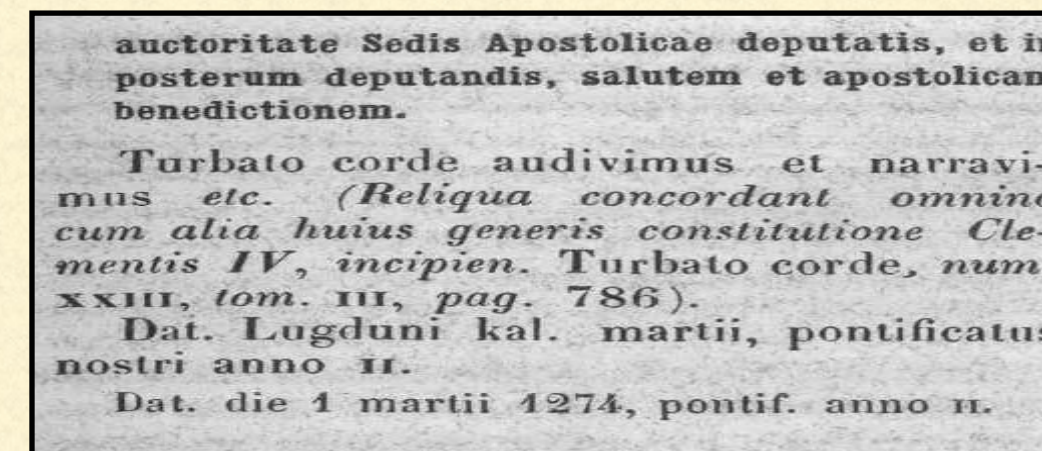
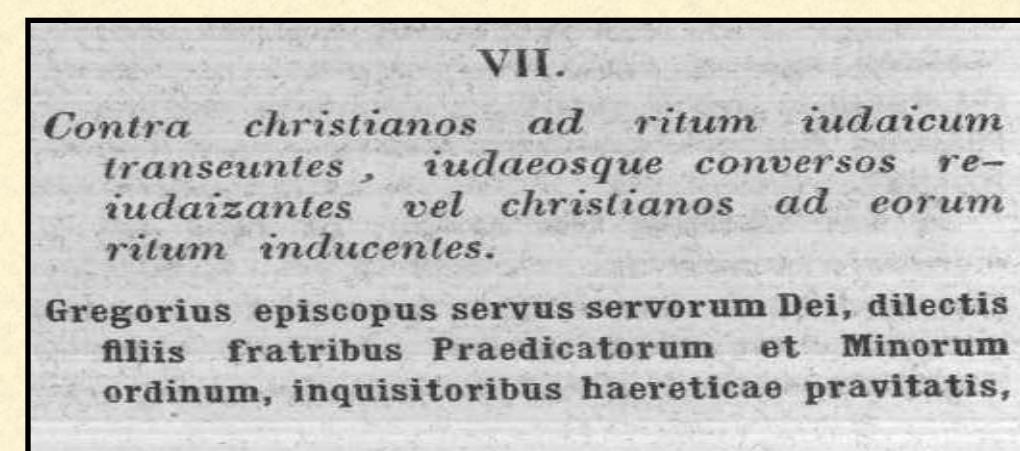
FOR CENTURIES THE JEWS WERE PERIODICALLY SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION. WE SEE THE WORDS OF A PONTIFF WHO WITH OTHERS BEFORE HIM HAD TRIED TO PROTECT THEM, POPE BLESSED GREGORY X (1210-1276). FRANCO MOLINARI WRITES ABOUT IT IN HIS ESSAY "GREGORY X AND THE JEWS" PUBLISHED IN THE COLLECTION OF ESSAYS PUBLISHED BY THE PIACENZA HISTORICAL LIBRARY ENTITLED "GREGORY X IN THE VII CENTENARY OF HIS DEATH", PIACENZA 1977.

With two bulls Gregory tries to put an end to the persecutions of the Jews in the West even if shortly thereafter a new king of France, Philip the Fair, will put in place one of the most important. The first bull is dated 7 October 1272, it is probably repeated the following year, the letter, although not having innovative content, reaffirms a series of concepts, the first of all "... the Augustinian principle of nemo invitus baptizetur: no Christian Jews at Baptism ".

Then the Pope tries to put a stop to the persecutions to which the Jews were the object, often aimed at the sole purpose of acquiring their goods and wealth: "... the Machiavellian exploitation of anti-Jewish hatred is reproved: it happens that perverse Christians hide their children and then accuse the Jews of kidnapping them for their ritual sacrifices, and thus extort sums from the Jews; it must no longer occur that Christians dare without reason to capture them, imprison them, mutilate them, torture them, usurp their goods. The pope warns against frivolous accusations and guarantees a minimum of juridical rigor to judicial actions".

Molinari continues: "Finally he intervenes to preserve the Jewish cemeteries from profanations by fanatic people and expresses a severe prohibition on Christians to disturb the celebration of their feasts with stones and sticks."

Molinari concludes: **"Between the protective bulls of the popes, which inspired Gregory X, and the principle of tolerance, expressed by Vatican II, there are seven centuries, full of terrible tensions and passionate polemics certainly not useful for the serene historical reconstruction and even less conformed to the meekness of the Gospel."**





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## ***POLITICAL REFORMS AND SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES: A NEW AREA OF CONFRONTATION***

After the arrests in Florence and the subsequent trial, there were no more active lodges in Tuscany and in the Papal State.

This was despite the fact that the Ministers linked to British Freemasonry remained in power and the reforming action of the Grand Dukes of the Lorraine dynasty was intense.

The only exception was the city of Livorno, where the lodges remained active due to the presence of foreigners who settled in the port. Livorno had a special status and was one of the main trading ports in the Mediterranean.

The Hapsburg, with Francis I of Lorene, husband of Maria Theresa , a freemason, and his son Joseph II (successor of Maria Theresa to the Austrian throne), showed a great toleration towards Freemasonry and the National Grand Lodge of Austria, which was a natural ally against Catholic Church privileges and temporal powers.

This toleration could apply in those Italian territories, that passed from Spanish domination to the Austrian one, especially in Lombardy and in Veneto, which was under the Republic of Venice.

In Southern regions, the presence of Queen Maria Carolina (1752 - 1814), daughter of Francis I and Maria Theresa, was a most relevant one. She was married to Ferdinando I (1751 - 1825).

In attempt to reinforce the bound between the Kingdom and Austria, she contributed to establish and boost Freemasonry in the Neapolitan area and in Sicily.

Thanks to the scrutinized documents, we could ascertain that Freemasonic activity was particularly intense in the Neapolitan area: there was a National Grand Lodge and other Lodges connected to the recognized group in London, even though the groups in London had never been informed about all the Lodges formed in Southern regions.

It was precisely this development in Campania and the rumours that Pope Lambertini was tolerant of Freemasonry that led to the second excommunication.

In both Naples and Vienna, attempts were made on the one hand to control the Masonic phenomenon, and on the other to use it for their own ends, with the ecclesiastical apparatus periodically intervening to renew the persecution.

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# THE SECOND EXCOMMUNICATION

“**PROVIDAS ROMANORUM**” IS AN ANTI-MASONIC BULL BY POPE BENEDICT XIV (PROSPERO LORENZO LAMBERTINI, 1675-1758) PUBLISHED ON THE 18TH OF MAY 1751;

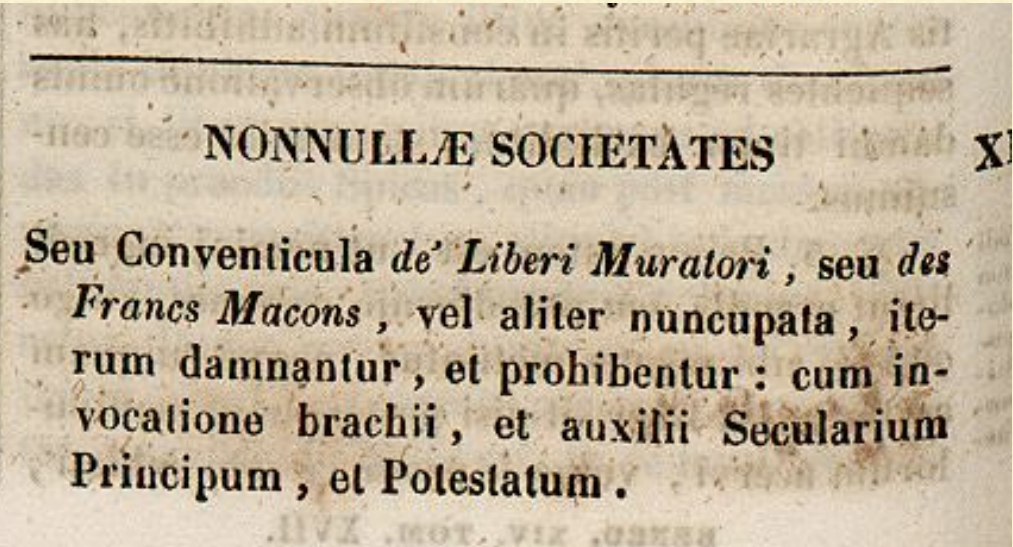
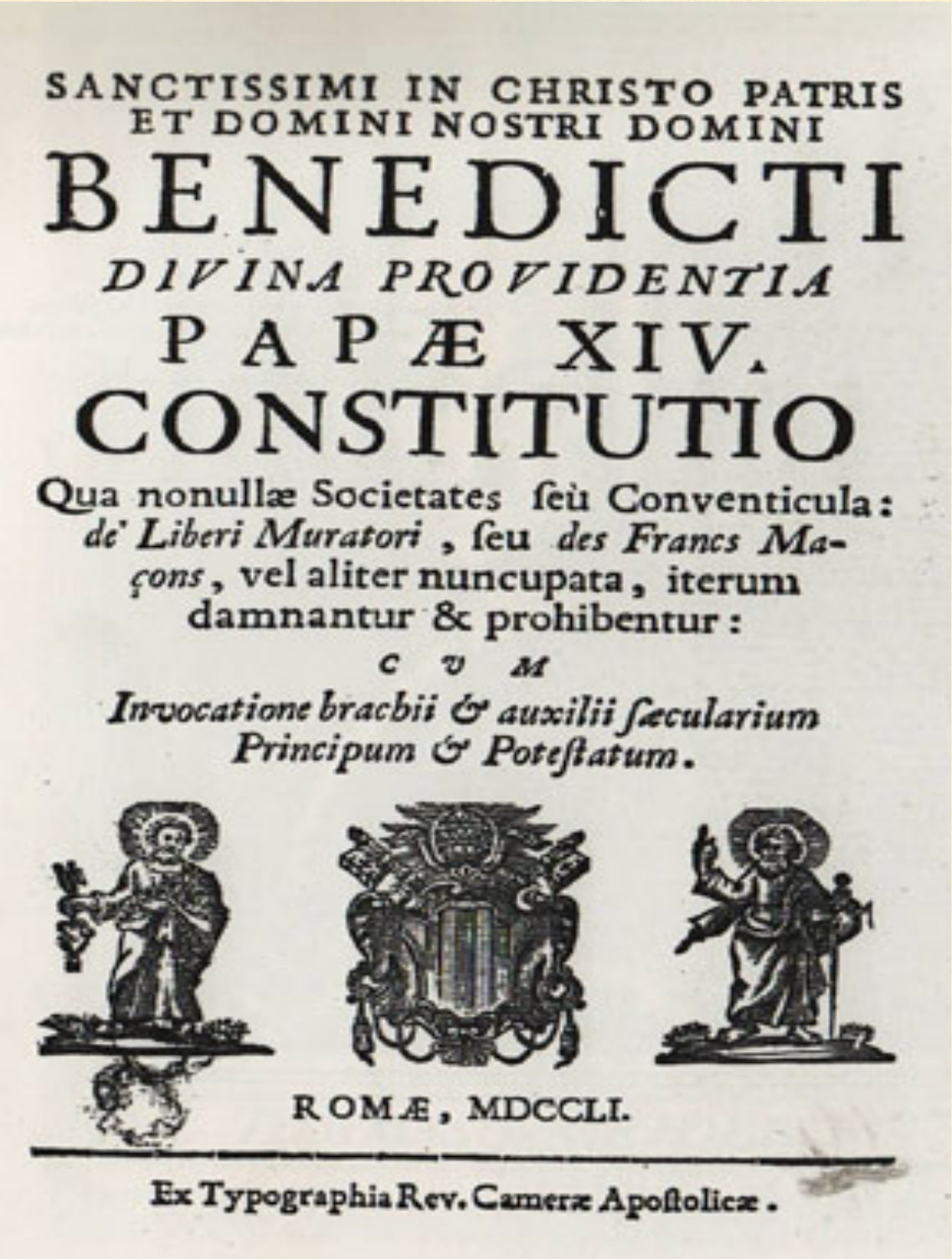
"*Providas romanorum*" is an anti-masonic bull by Pope Benedict XIV (Prospero Lorenzo Lambertini, 1675-1758) published on 18 May 1751.

Benedict XIV, Prospero Lambertini, was born in Bologna on 31 March 1675 to Marcello Lambertini and Lucrezia Bulgarini. In this case, too, we follow his biography taken from "*Storia dei Papi nel periodo dell'assolutismo*", Rome 1933, "*Compilata col sussidio dell'Archivio Segreto Pontificio e di molti altri Archivi*" - Volume XV, written by Baron Ludovico Von Pastor. Lambertini was educated in Bologna by the Somaschi Fathers and continued his studies in Rome. He was first appointed Bishop of Theodosia, then of Ancona and Numana. At the age of fifty-three he became cardinal, on 30 April 1728 (in pectore since 1726), and from 1731 he was appointed Archbishop of Bologna. He was elected Pope on 6 February 1740 after 254 ballots. Let us see how Wikipedia describes the conclave:

On 6 February 1740, Pope Clement XII, who had been ill for many years, passed away. The conclave that opened on 19 February was one of the harshest in modern history: the pro-French-Austrian and pro-Spanish factions continued to clash and failed to agree on a candidate acceptable to both sides. After the fall of the candidatures of Neri Corsini and Annibale Albani, the College of Cardinals tried to find a candidate in the figure of Pompeo Aldrovandi, but he was unable to pass the quorum necessary to be elected supreme pontiff. Cardinal Lambertini, who had not yet been considered as a candidate, tried to stir things up by telling the cardinals, in his characteristic joking manner: "*You want a saint? Choose Gotti. You want a statesman? Elect Aldobrandini. You want an honest man? Elect me.*"

Whether this anecdote is true or not, the cardinals agreed to converge the votes on the neutral archbishop of Bologna. He was elected to the papal throne on 17 August 1740, despite not wanting that office. At the time of his election, in fact, he gave the cardinals the following three reasons for his reluctant acceptance of the throne of Peter: "*The first: so as not to despise one of your favours; the second: so as not to resist the manifest will of God, since I believe it to be so, never having wished for such lofty vanity; the third: to end these meetings of ours, which I believe serve as a scandal to the world for their duration.*"

He is considered the most learned and cultured Popes of the century. We find him engaged in the struggle for succession to Emperor Charles VI of Habsburg. In addition to the excommunication, he was characterised by strict measures against the Jews. He died at the age of eighty-three on 3 May 1758. At first, with the nuncio he sent to Florence, the situation improved and the sentence for Crudeli's trial arrived.





## PROSPERO LAMBERTINI - BENEDETTO XIV

*This measure confirmed Pope Clement XII's bull and condemned once more Freemasonry, furthermore it prohibited all Catholic Christians to be part of it or to associate with its members.*

*Benedict XIV was pushed to publish one more excommunication due to a renewed masonic presence in Italy, this time in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. So, after denying that Pope Corsini's bull was no longer valid, he confirmed and adopted it, by listing one by one all the reasons mentioned by Clement himself, commenting and reiterating them: the existence of members devoted to different religions, the secrets and oaths, the threat to the governmental laws, the fact that other Kings banished such organizations already.*

The political and cultural reasons that drove Pope Corsini to his measure come to mind:

- *Helping the Stuarts to gain back the crown of England;*
- *Stopping the intellectual Reformers in the University of Pisa;*
- *Reducing British Anglicans' power in Tuscany;*
- *In Pisa, Galileo's (Galileo Galilei 1564-1642) inheritance is still visible and new ideas are spreading which need to be stopped. That was the main goal of the Society of Jesus, that practiced Orthodoxy;*
- *At the same time, the Inquisitor from Florence wanted to strike Baron Philipp von Stock (1691-1757 - Prussian antiquarian, Scholar and English spy) in Florence and of the Jew Giuseppe Attias in Livorno (dates unknown - International Trader, Scholar and Exponent of the Jewish community of Livorno)*



[Pierre-Hubert Subleyras, Papa Benedetto XIV](#), olio su tela, 1746, Metropolitan Museum, New York  
**IMMAGINE TRATTA DA WIKIPEDIA**



# CONFIRMS THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF CLEMENT XII

**Providas romanorum** is the anti-Masonic bull of Pope Benedict XIV, published on **18 May 1751**. In it, confirming the Bull of Clement XII, Lambertini once again condemns Freemasonry and forbids all Catholics from being part of it or associating with its members.

Benedict XIV is driven to the new excommunication by a renewed Masonic presence, this time in the two Sicilies. Freemasonry was brought to Naples by the Austrian troops, who for about twenty years were present in the southern kingdoms. It was widely argued that the new Pontiff was if not favourable, at least tolerant towards the presence of Freemasons in the Catholic kingdoms, and it was even argued that he was himself a Freemason. This series of circumstances led to the renewal of the excommunication of Pope Corsini events and rumours to which the same Pontiff refers in the Bull.

The violators of the Pontiff's provisions were announced the excommunication ipso facto.

Again, one of the reasons given is tolerance in religious matters, namely the fact that: *'in such Societies and Covenants, **men of any religion and sect can unite with each other; it is clear what damage can be caused to the purity of the Catholic Religion***', with all that follows from it on the role of secular powers.

Benedict XIV reports the text of the Bull of Clement XII in order to confirm and validate it in its entirety:

*But since, from what has been reported to Us, some have had no difficulty in stating and spreading publicly that the said penalty of excommunication imposed by Our Predecessor is no longer operative because the relevant Constitution was not confirmed by Us, as if the explicit confirmation of the successor were necessary for the Apostolic Constitutions to remain valid.*

He then goes on:

*Nevertheless, lest it should be said that We had imprudently omitted anything, in order to easily remove the pretexts for the lying calumnies and shut their mouths, having first heard the advice of some of Our Venerable Brother Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, We have decreed to confirm the same Constitution of Our Predecessor, word for word, as set forth above in a specific form, which shall be considered as the most extensive and effective of all: **We confirm, validate, renew and will and decree that it will have perpetual strength and efficacy for Our sure science, in the fullness of Our Apostolic authority, according to the tenor of the same Constitution, in all and for all, as if it had been promulgated with Our motu proprio and with Our authority, and had been published for the first time by Us.***





# REITERATES ITS REASONS

Benedict XIV lists step by step the reasons indicated by Clement, commenting on, and reiterating them:

-In the first place, Benedict says: *'In truth, among the most serious reasons for the aforementioned prohibitions and condemnation set forth in the above-mentioned Constitution there is one, by virtue of which **in such Societies and Covenants men of any religion and sect can unite with each other; it is clear what damage can be caused to the purity of the Catholic Religion***'.

-Benedict continues: *'The **second reason** is the narrow and impenetrable promise of **secrecy**, by virtue of which one hides what is done in these meetings, to which deservedly, one can apply the sentence that Cecilio Natale, at Minucio Felice, adduced in a very different cause: 'Honest things always love the public light; wickedness is secret'*.

-The third reason is the oath *'by which they undertake to observe inviolably the said secret, as if it were lawful for someone, questioned by a legitimate power, under the pretext of some promise or oath to evade the obligation to confess all that is sought, in order to know if anything contrary to the stability and the laws of Religion and of the Republic is done in such Conventicles'*.

-As a fourth reason, he indicates the fact *'that these Societies are no less opposed to Civil Sanctions than to Canonical ones, bearing in mind, precisely, that under Civil Law all Colleges and meetings formed without public authority are forbidden, and the Pontiff cites in support of his reasoning the Pandette (book 47, tit. 22, De Collegiis et corporibus illicitis), and the letter (no. 97 of book 10) of C. Pliny Caecilius, who reports that it was forbidden by his Edict, according to the Emperor's commandment, that the Eterie were held, that is, that Societies and meetings could exist and meet without the Prince's authorisation'*.

-The fifth reason is *'that in many Countries the aforementioned Societies and Aggregations have already been outlawed and banned by laws of the Secular Princes'*.

-He ends his analysis by pointing out the sixth reason: *'Finally, the last reason is that among prudent and honest men, the aforementioned Societies and Aggregations were blamed: in their opinion, anyone who enrolled in them incurred the charge of prurience and perversion'*.

The previous Pontiff, Clement XII, included in his excommunication, among other reasons, reasons known only to him, but he did not state them explicitly but wrote: 'for other just and rational reasons known to Us'. These are motives that were most likely linked to paths that the Holy See proposed to put in place, but could not say explicitly; we can deduct from the documents in our possession, both political and cultural motives:

- encourage the return of the Stuarts to the English throne.
- block the action of reforming intellectuals within the University of Pisa,
- reduce the influence of the English and Anglicans in Tuscany.

In Pisa, Galileo's legacy was still alive and new ideas were spreading that had to be stopped. The Society of Jesus, which professed Orthodoxy, was pushing for this. Just as Baron Philipp Von Stosch (1691-1757) and the Jew Giuseppe Attias (1672-1745) must be hunted down and investigated, the former with his salon where people study, read and discuss freely, the latter with his library and his knowledge, as Professor Pruneti writes in his book *"La Tradizione Massonica Scozzese in Italia"*, Nei-Edimai editions, Rome, 1994:

***'The Lodge retained a decidedly rationalist character, and the works were aimed at renewing scientific and philosophical research, according to Galileo's experimental method and the indications taken from the thoughts of Leibniz, Descartes, Gassendi and Locke.'***

It is this Freemasonry that the Church condemns in its first excommunications: religious pluralism, the new cultural currents Locke, Gassendi, Leibniz, stood for a way of thinking and understanding the social and political relations that the Catholic Church opposed. After all, it will be less dangerous for Napoleon to proclaim himself noble, Emperor, and go to the Pontiff to try to be crowned, just as for centuries the Kings of France had sought legitimacy in the Catholic Church.

And from the dawn of speculative Freemasonry, the action of the Jesuits against the new ideas took shape, traces of which can also be found in the following centuries up to the Second Vatican Council.



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# THE NEAPOLITAN SITUATION

Some notes in the Archives of the Grand Lodge of England list the English Lodges present in Italy in 1700 and, above all, identify the Provincial Grand Masters. The most important note was written by the archivist and historian J. M. Hamill and provides us with a useful indication of the Italian Lodges included in the registers of the U.G.L.E. We indicate only the Lodges present in Livorno in Tuscany and those under the rule of Naples, which are by far the most numerous.

«*La Massoneria Inglese in Italia*

*Gran Maestri Provinciali d'Italia:*

*1740 Marchese des Marches per Savoia e Piemonte*

***1766 Niccolò de Manuzzi per l'Italia***

***1770 Cesare Pignatelli, Duca della Rocca [e di San Demetrio] per Napoli e la Sicilia***

*1773 Conte de Berney per il Piemonte*

*Logge italiane presenti sui Registri Inglesi:*

*Prima Gran Loggia*

*1768 Lodge of Perfect Union N. 433 nel Reggimento della Fanteria di sua maestà del Regno delle Due Sicilie, Napoli*

*1769 Well Chosen Lodge N. 444, Napoli*

*1771 Lodge of Perfect Union N. 410, Livorno*

*1771 Lodge of Sincere Brotherly Love N. 412, Livorno*

*1778 Loggia N. 510 (senza nome), Messina*

*1780 Loggia n. 525 (senza nome), Napoli*

*1781 La Loggia della Verità N. 440, Napoli*

*Antica Gran Loggia*

*1763 Loggia N. 117 (senza nome) a Livorno*

*1765 Loggia N. 138 (senza nome) presso Salutation Tavern, via Grande, Livorno.»*

In another note, it is specified that all these Lodges would be removed from the English registers in 1813, but some would cease their activities following entry into the Gran Loggia Nazionale in Naples or the provisions of the various sovereigns.

Certainly, most of these lodges stopped working during French rule or adapted to the new Freemasonry subservient to Napoleonic rule.

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# THE ENGLISH LODGES IN NAPLES

In a correspondence of 1886 between the U.G.L.E. and the Loggia Anglia in Naples, the Capitular Lodge "*Perfetta Unione*", also in Naples, is mentioned as the first lodge constituted in Italy to have sought English recognition.

The Loggia Anglia had been recognised by the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite of Turin through the aforementioned Loggia Unione, and authorised to work in English with the English Rite:

***"NB The Capitular Lodge Perfetta Unione was first constituted in the year 1728 under warrants from the Gr. L. of England as a result from the r... of the Trial of its members guilty of Freemasonry, before the Neapolitan Tribunals - existing in the state archives in Naples - it is believed to be the first Lodge regularly constituted in Italy."***

In another note in the English archives, it is described as follows:

***"Perfect Union Lodge. Authorised on 2 December 1768 with no. 433 at the Infantry Regiment of Her Majesty of the Two Sicilies. It became no. 368 (1770), 283 (1781) and 237 (1792). It remained in the Register until 1813 but joined the Gran Loggia Nazionale delle Due Sicilie in 1776."***

But it is almost certainly not the same Lodge constituted in 1728 among the Austrian soldiers present in Naples; even then the name and perhaps some members remained, so much so that it obtained English recognition again in 1768.

According to this note, there were three other lodges in Naples:

***"Well Chosen Lodge. Authorised on 26 April 1769 with no. 444 in Naples. It became 379 (1770), 293 (1781) and 245 (1792). It remained on the Register until 1813 but became an affiliate of the Gran Loggia Nazionale in 1776."***

***Loggia di Napoli. Authorised on 6 March 1780 under no. 525. It became no. 431 (1781) and no. 346 (1792). It remained on the Register until 1813, but probably ceased to operate following the Royal Edict of 1783."***

***La Loggia della Verità. Authorised in 1781 with no. 440 in Naples. It became no. 354 in 1792."***

***It remained on the Register until 1814, but probably ceased to operate following the Royal Edict of 1783."***

In Naples, the first Masonic lodges began their activities during the twenty years in which the city was under the control of the Austrian Crown, which began in 1713 with the Treaty of Utrecht, which had assigned to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI, the Spanish Low Countries, the Kingdom of Naples and the Duchy of Milan, to which Sicily was subsequently added. In 1734, the War of the Spanish Succession marked the end of the Habsburg presence, with the defeat of the Austrian troops and the subsequent peace, in which Naples and Sicily were assigned to Charles of Bourbon, son of Elisabeth Farnese, the second wife of the King of Spain.

When analysing the lists, it at once appears that in the pre-unity States there were four English Provincial Grand Masters recognised in Italy, one of which was for the entire peninsula; these were in Naples and Turin.

After national unity, no similar recognitions would be issued in favour of Italian Freemasonry.

So in the 1700s and in the Pre-Unification Kingdoms, there were Grand Lodges recognised by London.

It should be borne in mind that the Grand Orient of Italy applied for English recognition in 1862 and only obtained it in 1972. In 1700, four Grand Masters were recognised, then none again until 1927.

Already in 1993, England recognised the Gran Loggia Regolare, removing the recognition from the GOI, which has thus been recognised by London for 28 years.

There must be some reason for these events. One certainly relates to the fact that after the French occupation and with national independence, the Lodges remained culturally linked to the Napoleonic experience; the same tradition of English lodges in Italy would be lost between revolution and restoration.

In 1700, the major Italian Masonic centres were located in Piedmont, in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and in Lombardy-Venetia. In Tuscany, the role of the Port of Leghorn was central. The city had already had a special statute since 1591, at the behest of Ferdinando I dei Medici, who had promulgated the Leghorn Laws. Later, this situation was consolidated by the Leghorn Constitution, and the port and city of Leghorn became a multi-racial, cosmopolitan, and multi-religious frontier town.

In 1700, the enlightened and reforming rulers of the pre-unification kingdoms, intent on improving the economic and living conditions of their subjects, saw Freemasonry and England as an element of development. However, this propensity to reform led them to clash with the main element of conservation of the peninsula: the Catholic Church.

The Church was and will always be divided within between a "spiritual" part and one more aimed at temporal, profane power. One was open to dialogue with prelates and even cardinals who were members of Masonic Lodges, the other was closed and dogmatic, aimed at maintaining privileges and temporal power.

The Church was a spiritual power, but also a political and economic one, thanks to its goods and possessions, properties that were generally managed in a static and uneconomic manner (this was known as ecclesiastical “manomorta”); it claimed control of cultural and educational institutions, and with the Jesuits it supported Aristotelian orthodoxy with regard to the new experimental sciences and the heirs of Galileo.



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## CARLO FRANCOVICH: HISTORY OF ITALIAN FREEMASONRY

### From the origins to the French revolution 1728 - 1751 - the government of Charles III (1716-1788), King of Naples (1734-1759) and the second excommunication.

The historian Carlo Francovich has succeeded in reconstructing the history of Italian Freemasonry in the 1700s through various sources, but he is only in possession of some data concerning the English presence in Italy.

Francovich divided the history of Neapolitan Freemasonry in 1700 into two phases.

He correctly identifies the characteristics of the English lodges with respect to the others that will more or less refer to the "*high degrees*" and to Ramsey's *Scottishism*: rationalist, deist, theist, democratic and open to the new bourgeois social classes that are spreading, renewing the ruling classes by linking them to mechanisms of ability and competence and not to membership, as in the past to the clergy or the class of nobles.

The Scottish Rite, on the other hand, looks to France and in part retains the characteristics of the three English degrees, but adds the presence of degrees higher than the third, thus appealing more to the continental aristocracies with its references to crusaders and knights, attracting nobles, exotericists and occultists, and expressing elements of pre-romanticism.

It is not proper here to analyse the Scottish degrees, partly because these are experiences that have to be lived in order to be understood, but in any case, they hold a vast cultural experience resulting from the knowledge and contamination of elements that cannot be traced back to the European and Christian Catholic experience.

The first phase of development concerns the transition from Austrian to Bourbon rule with the children of the King of Spain and Elisabetta Farnese ascending the throne of Naples.

With Charles III (Charles VII of Naples 1734/1759 and Charles III of Sicily 1735/1759, later to ascend the Spanish throne), freemasonry initially developed, as it did in Tuscany.

Francovich confirms that the first presences are linked to the presence of Austrian troops in Naples from 1707 to 1734. The main reference text is a pamphlet signed by "*a curious amateur*". Activity resumed with a group of officers from the Bourbon army, a French cloth merchant ran the Lodge, Larnage. The Lodge then came under the control of a soldier, Zelaia, and members of the nobility began to take part, so much so that Larnage created a new Lodge, which was joined by foreign merchants, particularly Calvinists, and low-ranking officers. The admission of several princes, including Gennaro Carafa (1715-1767), the Prince of San Severo and the Prince of Calvaruso, marked a development and change in the Neapolitan experience. On the initiative of Zelaia, Raimondo di Di Sangro (1710-1771), Prince of Sansevero, was proclaimed Grand Master of the order. The prince was a complex figure, devoted to the study of science, chemistry, but also magic and alchemy. We move from the rationalist, democratic and bourgeois Freemasonry of the English to the pre-Romantic and spiritualist Freemasonry of France. Di Sangro favoured the establishment of new Lodges. The other important figure was the Swiss Baron Henri Thedor Tschudi (1724 - 1769), cadet of the Swiss Regiment commanded by his uncle. It was, however, a Freemasonry like that of Tuscany - cosmopolitan and tolerant, even if alongside the rationalist commitment and the defence of Enlightenment thought and the heirs of Galileo, it saw the emergence of romantic and spiritualist currents.

While the Catholic Church had thought that it could use Freemasonry linked to the Stuarts to restore a Catholic dynasty to the English throne, with the Battle of Culloden (16/04/1876) and the defeat of Charles Edward Stuart (1720 - 1788), its ambitions for the British throne ended. Thus began the campaign against Freemasonry, and with it the initiatives of the Bishops against the Lodges. There was also a rumour, for which perhaps Tschudi himself was responsible, that Pope Lambertini had dropped the excommunication.

This set of events led to the issuing of the second excommunication.

As always, contingent political reasons, the need to defend a political and social balance that placed the Catholic Church at the centre of the cultural legitimisation of the power of the Sovereigns and the balance between the social classes, were added to concepts considered dangerous from a religious point of view.

On 15 January 1751, the Pontiff informed Charles III's ambassador in Rome of his concern about the spread of Freemasonry in the Kingdom, and Charles replied that he shared this concern.

The Pontiff sent the text of the bull to the Neapolitan Sovereign through the Jesuit Francesco Maria Pepe (1684-1759), a figure who had enormous influence on the King, the Court, but also on the people as he was a skilful preacher, as Francovich recalls, known for having stirred up the crowd against the King's proposal for an edict of tolerance in favour of the Jews. The King provided the priest with the draft of the edict against Freemasonry, and the Pope praised the proposal, reiterating the need for an agreement between Church and Throne against Freemasonry.

Meanwhile, the Jesuit had begun to preach against the "sect", starting a real popular movement. Di Sangro, who had a reputation as a magician and heretic, was thus targeted.

Di Sangro had a feeling of what would happen on 26 December 1750 and had presented the King with a list of affiliates, explaining what the society consisted of.

On 2 July 1751, the King issued an edict against Freemasonry. On 1 August, Di Sangro wrote to the King defending the organisation, trying to minimise the facts, and ridiculing the Rites and Ceremonials.

Thus Di Sangro managed to save the Freemasons from further persecution.

The King sent the confiscated documents containing part of the rituals, statutes, and ceremonials to the Pontiff.

Esoteric and magical cults and heresies were highlighted, but the political problem was also clear, says Francovich, alongside religious tolerance there is political democracy and liberalism.

Charles shared the Pontiff's analysis of the group's danger, even though he had no doubts about the loyalty of the subjects who were members, and strictly forbade its existence, while imposing the abjuration of the princes.

As often happened, however, however, marginal figures from low social backgrounds were targeted: primarily the Frenchman Louis Larnage, a modest bourgeois textile merchant, who was arrested and then deported.

The other Freemason who suffered persecution was Theodor Tschudi, a Swiss, whom we have already mentioned.

According to Francovich, Pope Lambertini complained directly about his actions.

None of the princes and nobles suffered any consequences. Charles III did not fully understand the Masonic organisation but was sensitive to the dangers of liberal democracy.

**The French Revolution re-established relations between the Crowns and the Catholic Church, which had broken down in 1700.**



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## CARLO FRANCOVICH: HISTORY OF ITALIAN FREEMASONRY

**from the origins to the French Revolution 1728-1751 - Ferdinand IV of Bourbon (1751-1825) and Maria Carolina Habsburg Lorraine (1752-1814)**

*Charles III left the Kingdom of Naples and became King of Spain, he was succeeded by his brother who took over as Ferdinand IV (1751-1825), the latter marrying the daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria and Francis Stephen of Lorraine, Maria Carolina (1752-1814).*

*Francovich speaks of a real political assignment: Maria Carolina was supposed to reduce the influence of Spain on the Kingdom of Naples, bringing it closer to Austria.*

*Maria Carolina succeeded in her endeavours and also encouraged the resumption of Masonic activities and herself belonged to a women's Lodge.*

*With Charles gone, his prime minister Bernardo Tanucci (1698-1783) remained, keeping his ties with the sovereign who had by then reached the Spanish throne.*

*Instead, opponents of Spanish control, reformers and intellectuals gathered around Maria Carolina.*

*The French revolution and the subsequent conquest of Naples put an end to these developments; the English lodges stopped operating, struck off the London registers in 1813, but had already ceased their work.*

*The old Neapolitan Freemasonry would be replaced by a "new" Freemasonry that was a direct expression of French rule and support.*

*From my point of view, this French presence represented a real break with the Masonic tradition of the eighteenth century throughout the peninsula and marked the end of the activities of the English Lodges; this French Freemasonry influenced the future Italian Freemasonry in a decisive manner and is conditioning it even today, especially from a cultural point of view - in the Italian temples, we find written the revolutionary motto: liberté, égalité, fraternité. The characteristics of the new French Freemasonry would deeply mark the destiny of Italian Freemasonry.*

*Prime Minister Tanucci was not hostile to Freemasonry, he did not consider it a danger to the State. Francovich confirms the English appointment as Grand Master of Niccolò de Manuzzi of Naples and the subsequent appointment of Prince Cesare Pignatelli, duke of Rocca and San Demetrio. It confirms the existence of the Perfect Union Lodge, even though it appears to be a different Lodge from the first, the one created within the Austrian regiments in Naples. The memory and name of that first Lodge recognised by London probably remained.*

*It confirms the existence of the Well-Chosen Lodge of which Venerable Francesco d'Acquino, Prince of Caramaico (1738-1795, Ambassador to London and Paris, then Viceroy of Sicily) was a member.*

*It testifies to the existence of three other lodges linked to the Netherlands: the Loggia dello Zelo, the Loggia della Vittoria, and the Loggia “alla Stella.” These lodges then came under the control of the Grand Master dependent on London in 1770 and in the same year the Grand Master became Prince Pignatelli.*

*The reading is always also political: Maria Carolina's task was to bring the politics of the Kingdom of Naples closer to the Habsburg government. The Prince of Caramaico, with the support of the Queen, detached the Loggia dello Zelo from London and founded a Gran Loggia Nazionale: the Grand Master was Caramaico himself, the Deputy Grand Master was Giovanni Gironda, Prince of Cannito, the First Grand Overseer was Diego Naselli, Prince of Aragon, the Second Grand Overseer was Eugenio de Sora, and the Secretary was the Lawyer Felice Lioy.*

*The Prince of Ottajano then obtained from the Duke of Luxembourg a licence to find a new Lodge, also open to women, where it seems that the Queen herself became a member.*

*The members were nobility who adhered to the principles of the Enlightenment - bourgeois, intellectuals, and scientists - all of whom were close to the traditions of the more famous English Lodge in Florence. In this way, Freemasonry spread to the southern Kingdoms. It was a different Freemasonry from the English one - it looked to the "high degrees" and to the Scottish experience, which, however, coexisted with English Freemasonry; later, everything would be swept away by the Napoleonic conquest and by the construction of a Freemasonry subservient to the new government, against which Maria Carolina herself would lash out.*

*Thus ended the season of enlightened reformism, on the one hand reinforcing the power of the Catholic Church, on the other spreading revolutionary myths; meanwhile, Napoleon returned to the past, recreating an Empire, crowning itself in the presence of the Pontiff, creating a new nobility "of belonging", but nevertheless nobility and often not very "enlightened".*

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## CARLO FRANCOVICH: HISTORY OF ITALIAN FREEMASONRY

From the origins to the French Revolution 1728-1751 - Ferdinand IV of Bourbon (1751-1825) and Maria Carolina Habsburg Lorraine (1752-1814)

*Maria Carolina was affected by the death of her sister Marie Antoinette (1755-1793), Queen of France, and contributed to the repression of those who had supported the French government.*

*The sectors of the ruling houses most closely linked to the Catholic Church thus had the upper hand over the circles more inclined to innovations and reforms. Italian historiography, largely pro-French, does not highlight these passages, aiming as it does to identify Freemasonry with that which developed linked to the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic rule, which was evidently closer to the historical traditions of the Italian ruling classes, where the reforming party was a minority, influential but still a minority, which prevailed only thanks to the support of the sovereigns.*

*The spread of Freemasonry in the Kingdom of Naples alarmed the Church, but also the sovereign of Spain and Prime Minister Tanucci.*

*At the centre of their concerns was the closeness to, if not adherence to, Freemasonry, and there were fears that the Sovereign himself may be drawn closer to it.*

*In 1774, Freemasonry spread within the "Royal Ferdinand" cadet battalion and action was taken against a French-speaking master, Thomas Peyrol. Tanucci, in agreement with the King of Spain, had Ferdinand issue a new edict dated 12 September 1775, reaffirming his condemnation of the 1751 edict and his desire to proceed against the members.*

*The Grand Master and the Deputy Grand Master, the Prince of Caramaico and the Prince of Feroleto, publicly repudiated, but all the other exponents remained silent.*

*So Tanucci commissioned a certain Gennaro Pallante to investigate. The latter, unable to attend a Masonic meeting to catch the adherents in the act, invented one, using provocateurs.*

*The meeting was held on 2 March 1776. The meeting was attended by some members of English Lodges, almost all foreigners and members of the middle class, traders, doctors, and teachers. The defendants were arrested, imprisoned in solitary confinement, and charged with lese-majesty. The Queen, the French ambassador and other members of the European nobility related to Ferdinand at once intervened on behalf of the arrestees.*

*Already at the end of 1776, Tanucci was replaced by the Marquess of Sambuca (Giuseppe Beccadelli of Bologna and Gravina, Secretary of State from 29.10.1776 to 18.01.1786), whom Francovich indicates as being close to the Masonic cause.*

*So the repression ended and once again neither the princes nor the dukes were involved in the trials, but professors, lawyers, and shopkeepers.*

*Francovich points out that the repression affected the third state, the professor of Greek, the lawyer and the shopkeeper: "Scapegoats of course, but also exponents of that bourgeois class who saw in the lodges not only the possibility of organising themselves in view of a possible rise to power, but also a model of democratic life determined by the equality of all members, by the eligibility and temporariness of the offices.*

*Even if worldly aspects and rituals had the upper hand in most cases, there was a new spirit within the lodge that was destined to make Freemasonry the progressive party of the century. Although the promoters of progress, the illuminists, the reformers, lived mostly outside the lodges, the lodges were the best vehicle for their ideas and gave an organisation to the party fighting against the privileges of the Church and the structures of civil society".*

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# FRENCH FREEMASONRY EXPANDS AND IS MORE IN TUNE WITH THE ITALIAN RULING CLASSES

## AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE NAPOLEONIC WARS, IN ADDITION TO CHANGING THE VERY NATURE OF FREEMASONRY IN ITALY, THE ENLIGHTENED PRINCES REALIGNED THEMSELVES WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We have seen that the Lodges continue to spread in some areas where there were sovereigns linked to Francis Stephen of Lorraine, namely his son Joseph II and daughter Maria Carolina, who was to marry Frederick IV of Bourbon, King of Naples.

A presence remained in Lombardy and nearby Venice, where Austrian influences arrived, but also in Piedmont and Savoy, where the cultural currents from neighbouring France could be felt.

Italy was divided into several kingdoms, most of which were subject to a domination, or rather a foreign ruling house, perhaps a cadet branch connected to the homeland. Freemasonry in the kingdoms was therefore influenced time after time by English, German and French traditions, depending on the political events and the related influences on the associations, of which from time to time the states were often only spectators if not victims, since they were decided by conflicts and agreements involving the major European powers.

From the English Galilean rationalists to the knights and aristocrats of the Scottish rite, to the democratic and progressive groups from which the first Jacobin clubs would arise: intellectuals, nobles, merchants, liberals, bourgeois, scholars of occult sciences, alchemists, reformers, and many military men.

As we have written, the first presence in Naples was linked to the presence of imperial officers from 1707 to 1734, and to military lodges; we have said that there is a text written under the pseudonym "a curious amateur" that traces these early presences.

It ended with the passage of the Kingdom to the Bourbons with Charles III, then resumed with the wife of his successor Ferdinand IV, Maria Carolina, daughter of Francis Stephen of Lorraine, just as in Austria another son of Maria Theresa and Francis Stephen, King Joseph II, favoured the creation of the Austrian Grand National Lodge. Venice felt the influence of neighbouring Austria while Savoy felt the influence of neighbouring France, especially the centre of Lyon where there was a large masonic presence.

The subsequent diffusion is linked to the French presence due to the conquest of Napoleon, the formation of the Republics first and then of the Kingdoms.

In his book "La Massoneria e l'Italia dal 1800 ai giorni nostri, Edizioni Paoline, 1957", Father Pauline Esposito Rosario Franco speaks of these events in a skilful and passionate way.

Esposito argues that the first major development of Freemasonry in Italy was due to the presence of Napoleon's troops:

"The Order had followed the Napoleonic chariot loaded with caparisons, living a prosperous and brilliant life behind the Emperor and his Ras, who, more or less, had been linked with Freemasonry. In those days it was neither safe nor risky to spout inflammatory aphorisms in the lukewarm quiet of the perfumed salons.

"*With the advent of Napoleon,*" attests Ulisse Bacci, official interpreter of the thought of the Italian Lodges, "*Freemasonry was a tamed instrument. The Lodges became the antechambers of the Prefectures and the Army Commands*". Several times the same writer lumps together all secret societies with the epithet "*instrument of government and vacuous academies*".

Thus Freemasonry expanded in size in Italy in support of French domination and of the various republics and kingdoms that were created by Napoleon; **this link with politics and the related relationship between careers within the Napoleonic apparatus and Masonic membership will remain as a sort of mark of origin on Italian Freemasonry and will evidently attract the Italian ruling classes that will find continuity with the previous regimes.**

However, the Masonic and French presence in Italy produced many, albeit temporary, positive effects: a freedom of thought and speech previously unknown, or rather harshly repressed, as we have seen with the English Lodge in Florence and the University of Pisa; the role of relations between the State and the Church regulated by a concordat; the rebirth of the idea of Italianisms to which many events contributed.

In the same book, Father Esposito quotes Adolfo Omodeo with his text "*Difesa del Risorgimento,*" where the author reiterates the role of Freemasonry under the French troops:

"*The history of Italian Freemasonry,*" he writes, "*except for that of Naples in 1794-1799, is not brilliant. Under the Napoleonic regime, it was an unofficial association, supported and controlled by the government, subservient to the point of espionage. It was ruined and reduced to nothing by the Restoration. Nothing could be more miserable than the ruin of the plethoric Freemasonry of the Italian Kingdom than the swarming of spies, renegades, abject penitents, and whiners. It was the consequence of its recruitment by compelle-intrare, with enticements of quick careers and political success. After its collapse, the Carboneria flourished*".

In many cases, therefore, entry into Freemasonry did not derive from the desire to undertake a path of initiation and individual growth, the adherence to values, but was directly linked to the possibility of enriching oneself through privileges and political appointments in an attempt to maintain them in the years of the Restoration, acquiring merits towards the "*old*" - "*new*" rulers.

THE RULING CLASSES GATHERED IN BOURGEOIS OR ARISTOCRATIC CIRCLES AND DECIDED ON LOCAL POLITICS, COORDINATING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHURCH; NOW THE SPHERE SHIFTED TO MASONIC LODGES.

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL SUPPORT BECAME CENTRAL - AN UNDERLYING ANTICLERICALISM, DILUTED BY NAPOLEON'S OWN QUEST TO BE CROWNED AND LEGITIMISED BY THE POPE.

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