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RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN A FAILED EMBASSY  
TO CHARLES V AFTER THE SACK OF ROME\*

This essay assesses the striking similarity of arguments proffered in two documents that no one has heretofore connected: (1) the diplomatic instructions in Italian that Cardinal Giovanni Salviati gave to Jacopo Girolami on 10 July 1527 for an embassy to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who was also King of Spain; and (2) a Latin oration addressed to Charles that the Curial humanist Pietro Alcionio wrote around the same time. Both compositions appeal to the emperor to hasten to secure the release of Pope Clement VII, who had been virtually a prisoner in Castel Sant'Angelo since the Sack of Rome on 6 May. Not surprisingly, the two documents include some of the same arguments for why the emperor should order Clement's liberation. Strikingly, however, several of the talking points they share appear far-fetched to the point of being harebrained. These coincidences are so uncanny as to suggest that the two texts – one private, vernacular, and advisory; the other, public, Latinate, and exhortative – may have been composed for the same ambassadorial mission. Comparative analysis of the documents will provide support for this hypothesis. In so doing, it will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of their rhetorical strategies. Finally, it will suggest that Roman humanists could be involved in the implementation of papal policy in a way that belies old assumptions about their supposed insularity.

The task before both Salviati and Alcionio was a daunting one. The limitations of persuasive possibilities open to them may best be appreciated when the specific purpose of their mission, the freeing of the pontiff, is set against the backdrop of the preceding four years of diplomatic volatility: for, if the relationship between pope and emperor had reached a new low in mid-1527, it had been under strain almost from the outset. Upon his elevation in 1523, Clement was seen as a reliable partisan of Charles.

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Within a year, however, in an effort to counterbalance growing Imperial dominance on the Italian peninsula, the pope forged an alliance with Charles's chief opponent, Francis I of France. The dramatic Spanish victory at the Battle of Pavia (24 February 1525), in which the French king was taken prisoner, left Clement sufficiently exposed that he scrambled to come to terms with Charles. The following year, however, soon after Francis had obtained his freedom, Clement joined with France, Milan, and Venice in the League of Cognac (22 May 1526): ostensibly a defensive alliance against the Turks, but transparently a response to Charles V's increasing hegemony. Feeling betrayed yet again, the emperor dispatched into Italy a substantial army under the command of Charles de Bourbon. When the League proved ineffective at checking that army's advance down the peninsula, Clement realized that he needed to treat for peace once more. And so, on 15 March 1527, while Bourbon was encamped at the fortress of San Giovanni outside Bologna, the pope concluded an armistice with the Imperial Viceroy of Naples, Charles de Lannoy.

Clement strove to honor this truce, even withdrawing his forces from Neapolitan territory, but soon it became clear that Bourbon was either unwilling or unable to stop the progress of his army. Thus on 25 March, the very day that Lannoy had arrived in Rome to ratify the armistice, a papal legate appeared before the Venetian Senate to plead for help: a task not made easier by outrage following Clement's abandonment of his League allies in making the separate peace with the emperor<sup>1</sup>. Six days later, in flagrant violation of the truce, Bourbon was once again on the move. On 25 April Clement formally rejoined the League, but it was too late. On 6 May Bourbon's troops besieged and sacked Rome. During the initial onslaught, the pope reached safety in Castel Sant'Angelo, where he held out for a month in hope of relief from his allies. When that was not forthcoming, he capitulated under highly unfavorable terms: beyond making key strategic concessions, he promised a ransom of 400,000 ducats, for which he gave over seven hostages including Jacopo Salviati, the father of Cardinal Giovanni<sup>2</sup>. Clement was required to remain in the papal fortress under Imperial guard until he should make good on his commitments.

Our understanding of Charles V's intentions regarding the conquest of Rome remains murky. Whether or not he actually wanted Bourbon to march on the city, a struggle over precedence between Lannoy and Bourbon made enforcement of the emperor's obligations in the truce difficult if not impossible<sup>3</sup>. We do know that when

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<sup>1</sup> See especially J. HOOK, *The Sack of Rome, 1527*, London, Macmillan, 1972, p. 143. For a thorough account of Clement VII's diplomacy, including transcriptions of primary documents bearing on this issue, see M. GATTONI, *Clemente VII e la geo-politica dello stato pontificio*, Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2002. See now the accessible, innovative narrative of events in M. SIMONETTA, *Volpi e leoni: I Medici, Machiavelli e la rovina d'Italia*, Milano, Bompiani, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., HOOK, *The Sack of Rome*, cit., p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> The strongest assertions of Charles V's involvement are those of Hook, who went so far as to argue that the emperor had intentionally left ambiguous whose authority was greater, and had «mised the pope by telling him that Bourbon was to be instructed to obey the viceroy in all things» (ivi, p. 139).

Charles V first learned of the Sack, he was far from devastated. In fact, against the advice of his counselors, he refused to suspend the jousts and games in which he was participating in celebration of the birth of his son and heir, Philip<sup>4</sup>. Clement for his part took the occasion of the birth to write a note of congratulation to the emperor that also included an appeal for help. Charles, however, did not hasten to his aid. With what arguments, then, could Salviati (via Girolami) appeal for Charles's support? Surely it must have seemed unlikely that any such appeal could succeed without entailing concessions that would further weaken and impoverish the papacy.

Others besides Salviati found ways to avoid the kind of assignment that he foisted on Girolami. In mid-June, the pope had decided that he would send to the emperor's court Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, accompanied by the Portuguese envoy Don Martín, and on 11-12 July he had letters of safe conduct prepared for them<sup>5</sup>. Farnese, however, would find excuses not to venture beyond northern Italy. Meanwhile, on 11 July, Girolami had set out for Valladolid<sup>6</sup>. Salviati's instructions were meticulous: he told him to whom he should introduce himself, reminded him of the necessity of showing his credentials, and instructed him to express deference by kissing the emperor's hand<sup>7</sup>. He was told to confer as soon as possible with the papal nuncio, Castiglione, who would already have tried some of the tactics that Salviati was advising. Girolami was to approach Charles V through the nuncio, in effect redoubling earlier efforts to get the emperor to rescue Clement from captivity and to restore papal control over the Church State. The talking points with which Salviati furnished Girolami did not, however, give him much material to work with. Indeed, Ludwig von Pastor, the foremost historian of the popes, would marvel at their foolishness<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See Andrea Navagero's letter of 17 June 1527 to the Venetian Senate, in *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice. 1527-33*, ed. by R. BROWN, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871, pp. 68-69, at p. 68: «Many of the grandees were of opinion that after the news from Rome, the Emperor should have suspended these rejoicings lest they be assigned to other causes than the true one. This they mentioned to his Majesty, who did not think fit to stop what was already commenced, and so they continue». Charles's refusal to suspend the celebrations is also mentioned by F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, a cura di S. SEIDEL MENCHI, 3 voll., Torino, Einaudi, 1971, vol. III, p. 1875.

<sup>5</sup> The pope had settled on the plan at least by 20 June. See L. VON PASTOR, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, ed. and transl. by F.I. ANTROBUS *et al.*, London, Kegan Paul, 1901-1933<sup>3</sup>, vol. IX, pp. 432-434.

<sup>6</sup> The Florentine ambassador to France, Roberto Acciaiuoli, conjectured that Salviati had not wanted to undertake the mission himself because, in his view, «l'Imperatore si trovi padrone di tanti cardinali, che non sia bene aggiungervi la persona sua. E, per supplire in qualche parte al desiderio di nostro Signore, ha mandato messer Jacopo...». *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane: documents recueillis*, éd. par G. CANESTRINI-A. DESJARDINS, 6 voll., Paris, Impr. Nationale, 1859-1886, vol. II, p. 974.

<sup>7</sup> In asking that Girolami kiss the emperor's hand «on our behalf» (*per nostra parte*), Salviati may have been requesting that the kiss be bestowed vicariously on his own behalf.

<sup>8</sup> VON PASTOR, *The History of the Popes*, cit., vol. IX, p. 434, commented that the instructions «do not exactly give evidence of Salviati's diplomatic talents».

The one really strong argument at Girolami's disposal had surely already been made by Castiglione: namely, that the pope had been ruined as a result of having adhered to the terms of the armistice that Lannoy had signed on the emperor's behalf. At stake is Charles V's good faith, expressed both through his representatives (above all Lannoy, but also Cesare Ferramosca and Francisco Quiñones, the General of the Franciscan Order) and in letters to the pope in his own hand<sup>9</sup>. Clement, for his part, had honored his obligations according to the truce, including giving up Aquila and Salerno and dismissing many of his troops – with disastrous consequences. Charles, being honorable, must now make things right.

Should someone raise the awkward detail that Clement had subsequently joined in a new League with the French and the Venetians, Girolami was to respond that the pope did so only because Bourbon had marched on Rome against the emperor's orders. Here Salviati promotes a strategy that would allow Charles to save face: by coming at once to the pope's aid, the emperor would bolster his assertions that he had not sanctioned Bourbon's attack on Rome. Salviati adds that since Bourbon's troops had mutinied against their superiors, even menacing their lives, they could not rightly be called an army of the emperor. So, by forming a League in hopes of stopping them, Clement had in fact acted in Charles's interests<sup>10</sup>. Salviati suggests that Charles could now put these troops to constructive use by sending them from Rome to Lombardy, to fight against the French army that Lautrec was leading<sup>11</sup>.

A further reason adduced for rescuing the pope is that Spain's power in Italy has been owed to the Church's help and money, first under Ferdinand of Aragon and then under Charles — a tradition of papal support for Spanish kings that should not come to an end as the result of a war that the pope had advanced solely because of the contumacy of the emperor's ministers<sup>12</sup>. Clement and Charles, as Salviati implausibly presents them, had in general enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship.

Salviati notes in particular the religious consequences that might ensue should the emperor not act expeditiously. Charles and Clement share a keen interest in healing the Lutheran schism, a problem urgently requiring attention<sup>13</sup>. By saving the

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<sup>9</sup> Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Segr. Stato, Francia, 1, f. 18r: «lettere di mano propria di Sua Maestà molto amorevoli et che la confortavano ad acordare et le promettevono molte cose per la quali principalmente Sua Santità si mosse allo accordo...».

<sup>10</sup> Ivi, f. 19r: «In modo che a fare lega contro a questo exercito si faceva servitio non diservitio allo Imperadore dubitando che non obedendo alli comandamenti suoi non volessi fare cosi contro di Sua Maestà come contro gli altri».

<sup>11</sup> Ivi, f. 20r.

<sup>12</sup> Ivi, f. 18r: «di benemeriti delli passati pontefici verso Sua Maestà non debbono essere cancellati per la guerra la quale non per altra causa che per timore et mali portamenti delli sua [*i.e.* Charles V's] ministri li ha mossa Papa Clemente».

<sup>13</sup> Ivi, ff. 19r-19v. Should the issue of clerical corruption be raised, Girolami was to assert that it had been worse under other popes, and that were it not for the wars Clement would have devoted himself to reforming the Church.

pope and returning him to his rightful position, Charles would not only help their common cause against the schismatics but would gain both glory among men and merit with God. If, on the other hand, he should not act, all Christians and even the infidels might believe that he had ruined both the pontiff and the Church out of ambition and insufficient religious scruple, things that the emperor detests more than anything else<sup>14</sup>.

While this kind of conjectural argument may be seen to lack cogency, it looks compelling when set alongside the counterfactual ones that follow. Salviati asserts that had Clement not agreed to the armistice with Lannoy, the League forces could utterly have destroyed Bourbon's army<sup>15</sup>. But then, by making the truce, the pope had alienated his allies, who consequently showed themselves lukewarm and late (*tepidi et tardi*) in coming to his assistance; and, he had disarmed substantially, leaving himself still more vulnerable. These consequences were real enough, but one must recall that Clement had been driven to make terms with Lannoy because of the likelihood that the papacy and its allies were not in fact going to be effective in stopping Bourbon. Perhaps the least persuasive talking point with which Salviati provided Girolami was also contrary-to-fact: had Clement so wished, he could have loosened Charles's hold over Neapolitan territory so that it would fall into the hands of others; but instead, in accordance with the armistice, he had withdrawn his forces and placed the disposition of the Regno entirely at Charles's discretion.

The final flourish that Salviati provides for Girolami is that it would be glorious for Charles to imitate one of his distinguished predecessors as King of the Romans: Sigismund of Luxembourg, who had been the driving force behind the Council of Constance that ended decades of papal schism through its elevation of Oddone Colonna as Pope Martin V (1417). Like Sigismund, Charles could come to the aid of the papacy and promote the healing of a tear in the fabric of the Church. To the extent that the damage now is greater than it was in Sigismund's day, just that much more will Charles be exalted for remedying it.

For Pastor, Salviati's stooping to counterfactual arguments regarding how the pope could have done injury to the emperor attests clumsiness. In fairness to the cardinal, however, one may offer a more charitable reading of his predicament. Clement had already sent multiple pleas for help, both by letter and through Castiglione, and so the more compelling talking points were already well-worn. A letter of Salviati directly to Charles V, also penned on 10 July and sent with Girolami, took a less aggressive tack, appealing exclusively to the emperor's goodness and to his earlier assurance (in late 1526), voiced to Salviati, that «Your Majesty was not being vindictive» and would not «remember any injury»<sup>16</sup>. In this more private missive, he pleaded with the emperor to hear out Girolami patiently, to give him credence,

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<sup>14</sup> Ivi, f. 19r.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ivi, f. 21r. See below for text.

and to «grant him that good and merciful resolution that is appropriate to the greatness of your soul»<sup>17</sup>.

The case for Alcionio's having gone on this mission must remain conjectural. No documentation has come to light that might connect him in any way with Salviati, nor is there evidence external to his writings that he ever went to the Imperial court<sup>18</sup>. It is notable, however, that in an oration addressed to Charles V, entitled *De republica reddenda*, he presents himself as «a legate sent by the Roman senate and people (what survives of them)» to implore the emperor to plead for the liberation of the pope and the city<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, in a subsequent oration castigating Charles V (*Declamatio in literas Caesaris*), which was set and possibly delivered in Rome between 7 December 1527 and mid-February 1528, he refers to his having pled the case of the captive pope in Charles's presence in Spain<sup>20</sup>. Alcionio's appeal to the emperor in *De republica reddenda* so strongly resembles what Salviati counseled, especially in its advancement of some of the same improbable arguments, that we need to take seriously Alcionio's claims of direct involvement.

Unlike Salviati, Alcionio would show the emperor little deference, nor did his approach evidence finesse: qualities conspicuously lacking from his self-presentation in other contexts already in the years before the Sack. Space does not permit detailing Alcionio's *cursus honorum*, which his rivals gleefully strewed with obstacles; suffice it to mention just a few details. An established client of the Medici, he was in Cardinal Giulio's service in Florence in early 1523. Upon Giulio's elevation to the papacy that November, Alcionio followed his patron to Rome, where he enjoyed at least modest preferment: on Pentecost Sunday in 1525, he had the honor of delivering an oration in the presence of the pope, and in the months before the Sack he had been lecturing on Demosthenes at the Studium. Descriptions of him by fellow humanists Paolo Giovio, Girolamo Negri, and Pierio Valeriano make clear, however, that with respect to his sense of decorum he was what today might be called "challenged": in Giovio's words, Alcionio's excellent literary style was «sullied by a character utterly mean and vulgar, without a trace of the gentleman»<sup>21</sup>. When the emperor's troops besieged Rome on

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> On Alcionio's career and orations on the Sack of Rome, see K. GOUWENS, *Remembering the Renaissance: Humanist Narratives of the Sack of Rome*, Leiden, Brill, 1998, pp. 31-72, with transcriptions of the orations at pp. 179-212.

<sup>19</sup> Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (= BAV), Vat. Lat. 3436, ff. 23r-24r: «Legatus igitur missus a S.P.Q.R. (qualiscunque superstes est) hic adsum, qui te orem et per omnia iura quae Christianum principem obstringere possunt obtestor, ne patiare miseras reipublicae reliquias dissipari in ipsiusque Pontificis dignitatem amplius illudi».

<sup>20</sup> «Cur etiam Caesar, me causam Pontificis captivi agentem, in Hispania libenter audivit?». See GOUWENS, *Remembering the Renaissance*, cit. p. 51 note 92. For summary and analysis of the *Declamatio*, see *ivi*, pp. 54-57.

<sup>21</sup> P. GIOVIO, *An Italian Portrait Gallery [i.e., his *elogia* of men of letters]*, transl. by F.A. GRAGG, Boston, Chapman & Grimes, 1935, p. 152.

6 May, Alcionio found refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo, and while there he composed at least one (and probably two) of his four orations concerning the Sack. Subsequently, however – precisely when remains a matter of speculation – he left Clement VII to seek the patronage of the pope's archrival, Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, in whose household he would remain until his death, probably in 1528.

In his formal Latinate appeal to the emperor, Alcionio, like Salviati, seeks to separate the actions of Imperial troops in Italy from what the emperor had wanted. The chief culprit, obviously unable to defend himself, is Bourbon, who had died in the initial assault on Rome: according to the humanist, the pope had repeatedly reminded Bourbon of the emperor's wishes and reputation and of Lannoy's truce, but to no avail<sup>22</sup>. Alcionio does comment that it was 'surprising and ominous' (*mirabile et prodigio*) that Charles had two top commanders in Italy (*i.e.*, Bourbon and Lannoy) who were utterly at odds<sup>23</sup>. Nothing, however, could justify what Bourbon's troops have done. In fact, Alcionio says that they would have acted cruelly even toward the emperor himself had he been present<sup>24</sup>. Their crimes have been carried out against a pope who is Charles's 'friend and ally' (*amicum et socium tuum*)<sup>25</sup>. In addition, like Salviati, Alcionio points without specifics to how indebted the emperor is to Clement for past support. Here we are told that, at one time, in the capacity of a private citizen (*privatus*), Giulio de' Medici had contributed much to establishing Charles's power in both Italy and Spain<sup>26</sup>.

The humanist goes into greater detail regarding the common cause that emperor and pope should make against the schismatics in the north. He notes that Charles has already taken major steps «lest the contagion of evil, which took its rise from that scoundrel Luther, should slither over a larger area and spread through other provinces of your empire»<sup>27</sup>. In a strange garbling, Alcionio attributes to Luther the belief that all things including sexual partners should be held in common, and even claims that Luther was introducing into Germany the principles of Plato's *Republic*<sup>28</sup>. More to the

<sup>22</sup> BAV, Vat. Lat. 3436, f. 23v.

<sup>23</sup> Historian Judith Hook analyzed this matter extensively. See especially HOOK, *The Sack of Rome*, cit., p. 139.

<sup>24</sup> BAV, Vat. Lat. 3436, ff. 29v-30r.

<sup>25</sup> Ivi, f. 28v. At f. 24v, too, he refers to the pope as «socium tuum».

<sup>26</sup> Ivi, f. 24r. The nature of this service is not specified.

<sup>27</sup> Ivi, f. 29v: «ne mali contagio quod a furcifero illo Lutero ortum habebat latius serperet atque per alias imperii tui provincias pervaderet».

<sup>28</sup> Ivi, f. 27r. These claims are probably owed to rumors circulating in Italy. The attribution to Luther of a belief that goods should be held in common had appeared two years earlier in a problematic Italian translation of his writings published in Venice by Zoppino (*Uno libretto volgare con la dichiarazione de li dieci comandamenti, del Credo, del Pater noster, con una breve annotatione del vivere christiano, [...] Novamente stampato*, Venezia, per Nicolò Zoppino, 1525). For a modern edition of a key text from that volume, «Breve annotatione come se debbe havere et exercitare lo vero christiano verso Dio et lo proximo suo», see S. SEIDEL MENCHI, *Le traduzioni italiane di Lutero nella prima metà del Cinquecento*, «Rinascimento», s. II, XVII, 1977, pp. 31-108, at pp. 100-105.

point, he refers to the German Lutherans' desecration of holy spaces and raping of nuns in Rome<sup>29</sup>. Armed with this knowledge, the emperor has all the more reason to discipline the soldiers occupying the city. Alcionio goes farther: sovereigns worldwide await Charles's punishment of them, inasmuch as all posterity will know that they were under his aegis. By means of the Sack, God is in fact making a trial of Charles's character<sup>30</sup>. Should the emperor fail to act, «both any who live will repeat, and future generations too will acknowledge, that the praise of your [*i.e.*, Charles's] kindnesses has been somewhat disfigured, unless you raise up those things which you now see lying in ruins, overturned and made prostrate by the exceedingly serious crimes of your men»<sup>31</sup>. Finally, Charles should act promptly so as to ensure that he rescue the pope before others could do so – these “others” including the kings of France and England who, Alcionio says, have been mustering large forces with precisely that goal<sup>32</sup>.

Unlike Salviati, Alcionio actually goes so far as to point to the threats posed by the League forces newly being arrayed against the emperor: the Venetians are poised to take control of the Adriatic and to recover territory in the Regno, and near Italy's west coast Andrea Doria's fleet endangers the transport of Imperial troops. Meanwhile, he attributes only pure motives to Clement's foreign policy. The pope, we are told, never meant for his authority to support French incursions into Spain, or English aggression in the North Sea region<sup>33</sup>. While acknowledging that Clement had taken up arms against Charles's governors in northern Italy, Alcionio claims that the pope did so only in order that he might free the states there from the yoke of tyranny that those governors had imposed<sup>34</sup>. Similarly, Clement had fielded armies in Neapolitan territory specifically to put pressure on Lannoy to arrange terms of peace<sup>35</sup>.

Whereas Salviati touches lightly on the point that Clement had not done Charles all the harm he could have, Alcionio waxes eloquent regarding just what the damages might have been:

Certainly so great a mass of calamities would by no means have befallen us if he [*i.e.*, Clement] had had a mind hostile toward you; if he had alienated from you the surrendered subjects of your empire; if he had incited Christian kings against you; if he had armed free peoples and

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<sup>29</sup> BAV, Vat. Lat. 3436, f. 26v.

<sup>30</sup> Ivi, f. 32r. Similarly, in an oration addressed to Clement (*Inter maximos dolores*), Alcionio suggested that God had visited the Sack upon the pope as a test. See GOUWENS, *Remembering the Renaissance*, cit., p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> BAV, Vat. Lat. 3436, f. 24r: «Laudem igitur tuorum beneficiorum non nihil deturpatam et qui vivunt dicitabunt et posterī quoque agnoscent, nisi quae percussa nunc et gravissimis tuorum latrociniiis prostrata iacere sentis sublevaveris [...]». See also ff. 28r-28v.

<sup>32</sup> Ivi, ff. 30v-31r.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, f. 29r.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* The nature of their government and how it related to Charles's will is left unspecified.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

territories; if he had deprived you of the highest office; if, finally, he had execrated you publicly, and had with dreadful curses expelled you from the community of Christians<sup>36</sup>.

Earlier popes had engaged emperors in armed conflict, and Clement's case for doing so was nearly incontrovertible, yet he had shown exceptional forbearance<sup>37</sup>. Charles, then, should now repay (*remunerare*) the pope's *beneficium* to him by arranging his release and restoration to power<sup>38</sup>. In sum, Alcionio here offers a more elaborate version of Salviati's counterfactual argument that Clement could have hurt the emperor in ways he chose not to do; but the humanist writes without the cautiousness of the cardinal, whose instructions look tactful in comparison<sup>39</sup>.

Finally, like Salviati, Alcionio holds up for imitation one of Charles V's distinguished predecessors. Whereas the cardinal invoked Sigismund, Alcionio calls to witness Charlemagne, the first to be crowned emperor by a pope (Leo III). In an extended prosopopeia, he imagines what not only Charlemagne but also his successors might advise Charles V to do, «could their interred remains regain human senses» and should they learn of what has happened to Clement and to Rome<sup>40</sup>. They would tell him that they had always been fierce toward the popes' enemies, and that as Roman emperors they had not only conquered new territory but had spread the faith in the wake of their conquests. They would also say that Charles V must add on to his meritorious actions through succoring the pope. Cognizant that pontiffs had adorned them with copious favors, they «would beg mercy from you for the man who succeeded those who had been guardians of their salvation and upholders of their honored offices»<sup>41</sup>. By rescuing the pope and Rome, Charles V – who has been more favored by God than was any other emperor – will gain everlasting fame. Following this prosopopeia, Alcionio adds that restoring Clement could also serve Charles's interest in that he has yet officially to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor, something

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<sup>36</sup> Ivi, ff. 29r-29v: «At nimirum tanta calamitatum moles in nos minime decubisset si hostili animo in te fuisset, si imperii tui deditio a te abalienasset, si reges Christianos in te concitasset, si liberos populos et provincias armasset, si summo honore te spoliasset, si denique publice te devovisset dirisque detestationibus execratum e Christianorum communione exterminasset».

<sup>37</sup> Ivi, f. 29v.

<sup>38</sup> Ivi, f. 28v.

<sup>39</sup> Alcionio's oration to Clement VII regarding the disposition of Bourbon's body, written early in the Imperial occupation, evidenced a willingness to use contrary-to-fact conditionals to launch significant criticisms even of the patron he was addressing: see GOUWENS, *Remembering the Renaissance*, cit., pp. 45-50. Sadly, Alcionio's ham-handed approach to Charles V in *De republica reddenda* is in keeping with what we know of his temperament and rhetorical strategies.

<sup>40</sup> BAV, Vat. Lat. 3436, f. 32r: «Crede, o Caesar, crede optimum et sanctissimum illum Carolum qui primus ab Leone Tertio Pontifice Maximo Caesar appellatus est, et veteres tuos Germanos, tanta fortitudine tanta religione tanta pietate homines quanta omnes norunt, tecum ita locuturos fuisse si sepultae illorum reliquiae sensus humanos recipere et huiusmodi rerum intelligentia uti possent [...]».

<sup>41</sup> Ivi, ff. 33r-33v: «His tantis beneficiis a pontificibus ornati, a te deprecarentur hominem qui suffectus esset iis qui custodes salutis suae, fautores honoris fuissent».

that his grandfather Maximilian never managed to do. Surely it would be better for Charles to be crowned by a free pope rather than a captive one<sup>42</sup>.

What accounts for the extensive overlap of talking points, including the feeble ones, between Salviati and Alcionio? Perhaps both authors were drawing upon suggestions that were already being tossed about in the papal Curia. One might even imagine Alcionio's oration, or at least a description thereof, reaching Salviati along with the pope's request that the cardinal go to Valladolid. Salviati, having nothing new of his own to offer by way of instructions, might then as a last resort have made use of some of Alcionio's weaker arguments. It seems far more likely, however, that the documents were more closely connected. Alcionio's oration cannot have predated 24 June 1527, when Clement received notice of the birth of Prince Philip<sup>43</sup>. Its *terminus ad quem* is harder to fix down. Probably it was completed before 10 July 1527, when the bulk of the occupying army left Rome for the summer<sup>44</sup>. For several months thereafter, only 2,000 imperial troops remained in the city. At the least, then, we can say that the depredations and torments that Alcionio describes as ongoing were no longer so pressing a concern after 10 July. Thus, the timing of composition of the documents is consistent with Alcionio actually going to France and then accompanying Girolami to Valladolid. One should not be too ready to dismiss as mere rhetorical conceits his claims to have delivered the oration in the emperor's presence. Probably he did not ghost-write his speeches on the Sack of Rome for someone else to deliver: Giovio, though a virulent enemy, not only mentions that Alcionio had composed orations on the subject but describes them as superb (*splendidissimi*), and several of the surviving copies of the *Declamatio* bear Alcionio's name<sup>45</sup>. Might he, then, actually have made the trip?

The case is complicated by the unclarity of how he could have done so. Our only source external to Alcionio's orations that sheds light on his career following the Sack of Rome is a brief account in Valeriano's *De litteratorum infelicitate*, a dialogue set during Lent of 1529 that its author left unfinished. According to Valeriano, Alcionio quit the papal fortress when the siege was first lifted, whereupon, «with a heart rebellious against the prince who had undertaken to protect him» (*i.e.*, Clement), he shifted his

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<sup>42</sup> Ivi, f. 33r: «Tum etiam illud cogita: sic te caesarem designatum ut a pontifice libero, non captivo, augustus appelleris».

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, f. 32r, explicitly mentions Philip's birth.

<sup>44</sup> GOUWENS, *Remembering the Renaissance*, cit., p. 50.

<sup>45</sup> Manuscript editions include: Rome, Biblioteca Corsiniana, 33 E 26 (perhaps the *editio princeps*); Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, 67 R 4 (3); Bologna, Archivio Isolani, F 6.75.1; Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. 2022, ff. 189r-207r; Vatican City, BAV, Urb. Lat. 1027-1028, ff. 169-230; and one now in private hands, sold by H.P. Kraus of New York (Phillipps 5702), verified by Joshua Lipton in 1996. Printed editions include: D. MORENI, *Illustrazione storico-critica di una rarissima medaglia rappresentante Bindo Altoviti: opera di Michelangiolo Buonarroti*, Firenze, Magheri, 1824, pp. 246-296; and C.G. HOFFMANNUS, *Nova Scriptorum ac Monumentorum Partim Rarissimorum, Partim Ineditorum Collectio*, 2 voll., Leipzig, Lanckisch, 1731, vol. I, pp. 550-588.

allegiance to the pope's archrival, Pompeo Colonna<sup>46</sup>. Probably in late February of 1528, he wrote a panegyric of Colonna, crediting him with having saved Rome<sup>47</sup>. Commenting on Valeriano's account, Julia Gaisser has suggested that Alcionio went over to Colonna on 7 June 1527, when the papal garrison had left Castel Sant'Angelo to be replaced by an Imperial one<sup>48</sup>. That dating, however, does not fit with the composition thereafter of *De republica reddenda* on behalf of Clement.

It may well be the case, then, that Valeriano, writing years after the event, collapsed the time frame of Alcionio's change of patrons. This in itself does not document his having gone to Valladolid. News of Salviati's instructions surely made its way back to Rome, and it would not be at all unthinkable for a humanist of limited originality then living in the city to draw upon them for his own composition. But if that were so, then why and for whom did he write it? I would submit that the likeliest scenario is that in late June or early July, the pope actually did send Alcionio abroad, probably to Salviati, who then sent him on to Spain with Girolami<sup>49</sup>.

Whatever may be the precise relationship of the documents to each other, their consequences were similarly disappointing: neither succeeded in persuading Charles V to come to Clement VII's rescue. On 14 August, the Florentine ambassador to France, Roberto Acciaiuoli, reported from Amiens that Girolami had returned there from Spain the previous evening, relaying many gracious words and honorable promises but no concrete commitment<sup>50</sup>. Three days later, Cardinal Salviati, also at Amiens, wrote that Girolami had brought with him the emperor's response: Charles was dispatching a representative to Rome with the goal of securing the pope's freedom, but was not about to give up the fortresses he

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<sup>46</sup> J.H. GAISSER, *Pierio Valeriano on the Ill Fortune of Learned Men: A Renaissance Humanist and His World*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1999, p. 181.

<sup>47</sup> For analysis of this oration (*De urbe servata*), see GOUWENS, *Remembering the Renaissance*, cit. pp. 57-62. For the text, see *ivi*, pp. 206-212. The setting of the oration is evidently after 13 February 1528, when the Imperial troops made their final exit from Rome (see HOOK, *Sack*, cit., pp. 227-228). Mario Rosa's *DBI* entry on Alcionio incorrectly places his death in late 1527: see *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-, vol. I, 1960, pp. 77-80. Rosa appears to have done so solely on the grounds of Valeriano's statement that Alcionio had died just a few months after joining Colonna's household («ad Pom. Columnam Cardinalem transfugit, apud quem pauculos commoratus menses vitam morbo finivit»: GAISSER, *Pierio Valeriano*, cit., p. 180).

<sup>48</sup> *Ivi*, p. 181 note 89.

<sup>49</sup> Sending a humanistically trained orator with a diplomatic mission was a time-tested practice. Marcello Simonetta has noted instances of humanists delivering orations for political purposes, e.g., when Francesco Filelfo spoke on behalf of Francesco Sforza at the Diet of Mantua in October 1459. According to Nelson Minnich, in Renaissance Rome an oration usually accompanied the presentation of an obedience or the credentials of an *orator*/ambassador. Alcionio was not, however, sufficiently distinguished to have merited the title *legatus* with which he describes himself.

<sup>50</sup> Acciaiuoli to the *Dieci*, 14 August 1527: «Messer Jacopo Girolami che andò in Ispagna, tornò iersera; e ne riporta per la liberazione del Papa molte graziose parole, e onorevole promesse, ma incerta e varia resolutione»; in *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, cit., vol. II, p. 990.

had gained or to order the release of the seven other hostages (including Salviati's father)<sup>51</sup>.

Alcionio, for his part, went on to compose his declamation, taking as his pretext an unsympathetic letter that Charles V had written to the Romans on 26 July. Delivered before an assembly on the Capitoline at some point after 7 December (when the pope, aided by Cardinal Colonna, had escaped from Castel Sant'Angelo), the declamation launches withering criticisms against the emperor. No longer is Charles given an easy out for the Sack: if Bourbon approved the attack on Rome, he did so only «in the name of Caesar, and with clear authorization»<sup>52</sup>. Thereafter, Charles had used his position of strength to extract the concession of strategic port cities, while making no effort to liberate the pope. Such actions have given the lie to his protestations of not having intended the Sack<sup>53</sup>. In short, no illusion remains that the emperor could be moved by appeals such as those of early July.

The comparative analysis above suggests three conclusions that may warrant further consideration. In the first place, on balance the evidence supports the conjecture that Alcionio did in fact accompany Girolami on the July 1527 embassy to the emperor's court in Spain. If so, then contrary to Valeriano's account Alcionio was probably still employed by Clement VII as late as mid-July. Second, the similarities between the instructions and the oration evidence just how little rhetorical room for appeal to Charles V remained for the pope's advocates following the Sack of Rome. Not for nothing did Cardinals Farnese and Salviati dodge having to make the trip to Valladolid. Finally, juxtaposition of the two documents suggests that Curial humanists could be far more attuned to papal politics than has at times been supposed<sup>54</sup>. Far from be-

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<sup>51</sup> Cardinal Salviati [to Cardinal Cybo], Amiens, 17 August 1527, in *Lettere di principi* [...] nuovamente mandato in luce da G. RUSCELLI, 3 voll., Venezia, appresso Giordano Ziletti al segno della Stella, 1581, vol. II, cc. 78r-78v, at c. 78r: «E ritornato Messer Giacomo Girolami, il quale per commissione di sua Santità mandai in [S]pagna, a procurar la detta liberatione, & sollecitare la speditione, la quale io desiderava ch'egli portasse, per poterla mandar con maggior prestezza a Roma, che fosse possibile. Hammi portato una risposta dall'Imperatore, della quale con questa le mando copia; et altra ispeditione non ha potuto havere, affermando l'Imperatore non confidar le sue genti, non vuole, che passino per Francia, et ha mandato a Roma Monsignor di Migliaut; & dicesi, con commissione, che 'l Papa sia liberato. Indrizzalo spazzo al Vicerè, & per quel ch'io posso ritrarne, la liberatione sarà con alcuna sicurtà, & conditione, cioè è di ritenere le fortezze, & gli ostaggi, & altri ancora credo ricercherà gran forze di crociate, le quali non sarebbero trista spesa, pur che sua santità fosse in libertà». A manuscript copy of the letter, with small variants, appears in ASV, Segr. Stato, Francia, 1, ff. 31r-32r.

<sup>52</sup> ALCIONIO, *Declamatio*, in HOFFMANNUS, *Nova Scriptorum* [...] *Collectio*, cit., vol. I, p. 551: «qui [Borbonius] nomine eiusdem Caesaris, certaque auctoritate in Nos invadere probabat».

<sup>53</sup> Ivi, pp. 576-577. In his final oration, the panegyric to Cardinal Colonna for having "saved" Rome, Alcionio avoided entirely the subject of the emperor's responsibility – appropriately so, given that throughout the events of 1526 and 1527 Colonna had been a staunchly loyal client of Charles V.

<sup>54</sup> For a classic statement of Roman humanist ideology before the Sack as stale, uncreative, and insulated, see J.F. D'AMICO, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation*, Baltimore-London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, p. 23.

ing shut off from the realities of Rome's precariousness, at least some of them were well-informed<sup>55</sup>. Alcionio's *De republica reddenda*, for all its shortcomings, evidences his intimate acquaintance not only with the diplomatic situation but with the particulars of an embassy to Charles V, and he himself may well have gone on that mission. Roman humanists in the early Cinquecento were not confined to an ivory tower. At least on occasion, they could partake knowingly and actively, albeit not always successfully, in the implementation of papal policy.

## APPENDIX

In the texts below, material in square brackets has been supplied by the editor. Words within broken brackets appear in the draft as insertions either from the margin or from between lines. The parentheses are in the original. Capitalization has been modified slightly, and abbreviations have been expanded silently.

ASV. Segreteria di Stato. Francia 1, ff. 17v-20r [mechanical numeration]

[17 v] Instruotione a Mr. Jacopo Girolami

M. Jacopo. La causa principale di questa vostra andata in Hispania è come voi sapete per operare la liberatione della Santità di Nostro Signore. Però è necessario che con quella più diligentia che possete vi conduciate dallo Imperadore. Giunto in quella corte farete capo al nuntio di Nostro Signore [*i.e.*, Castiglione] et li conferirete la causa della andata vostra et la commessione che da noi havete pregandolo a indirizarvi et favorirvi secondo la fede che io ho in Sua Signoria. Dipoi informarete se il Signore Don Ugo sarà venuto d'Italia con Sua Signoria l'Arcivescovo di Capua o altri per la Santità di Nostro Signore et essendo arrivato l'Arcivescovo o forse el Datario conferirete con loro Signorie et farete quanto vi ordineranno sollecitando la expeditione.

Quando non fussi arrivato alcuno visiterete prima tutti li Signori di quella corte alli quali darete le nostre lettere credentiali che portate raccomandandoci molto strettamente a tutti et specialmente al S. Don Giovanni Emanuel a chi faret[e] capo. Et pregherete loro Signorie a volere favorire apresso lo Imperadore le cose di Nostro Signore della fede et religione christiana et soprattutto [18 r] a fare ogni opera perché Sua Maestà faccia celere deliberatione di quello che vuole faccia Sua Santità perché stando in questo termine patisce non poco et le cose della fede di Christo se ruinano interamente come sapete.

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<sup>55</sup> Jacopo Sadoletto, who conveniently departed for his diocese in France just weeks before the catastrophe, had written to Marcantonio Michiel on 15 April 1527: «Questa corte hormai è divenuta un cortile da galline. Ogni dì stiamo più chiari della iniquità de' tempi et della pessima stagione». *Lettere di Principi*, cit., vol. II, cc. 72v-73r.

Saria buono che per mezo del Signor Nuntio et con Sua Signoria vi presentiate dallo Imperadore et dato a Sua Cesarea Maestà le lettere credentiali nostre et baciatali la mano per nostra parte li esporrete la causa della andata vostra et la persuaderete con le migliori ragioni che potrete alla liberatione di Nostro Signore et restitutione dello stato <eclesiastico>. Mostrando che la grandezza prima del Re Catholico bona memoria et dipoi di Sua Maestà in Italia è stata in gran parte causata dalli aiuti et danari della chiesa, et che li benemeriti delli passati pontefici verso Sua Maestà non debbono essere cancellati per la guerra la quale non per altra causa che per timore et mali portamenti delli sua ministri li ha mossa Papa Clemente: et questa parte potrete tochar più o manco secondo che parrà al S. nuntio che già doverrà havere tentato el tutto.

Havete ancora molte altre ragioni da persuadere a Sua Maestà Cesarea questa cosa mostrando che Papa Clemente non ha voluto torre el Regno di Napoli a Sua Maestà come poteva (il che non possono negare li suoi medesimi e quali a molti altri l'hanno confessato) anzi ha più presto voluto acordare et rimettersi in tutto a discrezione di Sua Maestà che volere patire venga in mano d'altri.

Donde ne è nata la Ruina di Roma et di Sua Santità perché si disarmò subito et offese tanto li confederati che andarno tepidi et tardi a soccorrere Sua Santità tanto che fu trovata senza presidio alcuno come ognuno sa: che se non si disarmava senza dubbio poteva non solo difendersi ma in tutto ruinare l'exercito di Mons. di Borbone el quale haveva tanto patito di fame et d'ogni altra cosa che col temporegiarlo solo si ruinava non havendo dove volgersi et trovandosi alle spalle uno exercito potente.

**[18r]** Ma sopra tutte le altre ragioni ha a muovere Sua Maestà Cesarea la fede sua la quale è stata data a Sua Santità dal S. Viceré [Lannoy] dal S. Cesare Feramosca et il Generale di Santo Francesco [Quiñones] e quali non solo da Sua Maestà havevono mandati et commissioni amplissime ma anchora lettere di mano propria di Sua Maestà molto amorevoli et che la confortavano ad acordare et li promettevono molte cose per le quali principalmente Sua Santità si mosse allo acordo: pensando per tale mezzo potere venire alla pace universale la quale era el desiderio et fine di Sua Beatitudine né si può negare che l'accordo non tenga essendo stato osservato interamente da Sua Santità et dal S. Viceré con l'havere subito revocate le genti del regno, lasciata l'Aquila et Salerno et molti altri luoghi quali haveva presi l'armata di mare et licentiate subito tutte le gente da guerra che haveva come quella che confidava solo nello acordo havendo visto che el viceré per il mandato suo poteva comandare a mons. di Borbone et tutti li altri capitani di Sua Maestà in Italia: e quali se non hanno voluto obedire, non è dubbio che l'hanno fatto per loro interesse et malo animo et non per commissione di Sua Maestà la quale è osservantissima della fede sua. È adunque honesto che essendo Sua Santità stata sotto la fede ingannata et ruinata da chi ne ha portate le pene sia restituita et conservata da Sua Maestà come si spera.

Et se qualcuno allegassi che havessi dipoi fatta nuova lega con li Franzesi et Vinitiani et che per questo non si ha ad essere osservata l'altra, havete a rispondere

che questo non fu fatto se non poi che per ogni verso et modo hebbe tentato di contentare Mons. di Borbone che tornassi adrieto al quale furno oferti a Firenze 150,000 scudi <più che non s'era capitolato et furno acceptati>.

Per il S. Viceré et mons. della Motta huomo <di Borbone> che haveva el mandato <et promesso che tornerieno indrieto> [19r] Mons. di Borbone adunque giunto che fu el S. viceré et l'huomo suo in campo con questa resolutione in cambio di osservare quanto havevono promesso mosse lo exercito et volò per ruinare Roma come quello che non haveva altro disegno se non dare parole et ruinare el papa el quale trovandosi ingannato et destituito fu forzato tornare in lega per essere soccorso di che non credo che huomo alcuno lo possa imputare ma è più presto imputato dell'essersi fidato troppo. Oltre a di questo tornò in lega per difendersi contra questo exercito el quale non si poteva chiamare exercito dello Imperadore non obedendo alli capitani di Sua Maestà anzi volendoli amazare.

Et donde s'erono partiti el marchese del Guasto et altri capitani che erano fideli et obedienti a Sua Maestà et dove Borbone era restato come capitano di ventura et forse per qualche disegno suo, in modo che a fare lega contro a questo exercito si faceva servitio non diservitio allo Imperadore dubitando che non obedendo alli comandamenti suoi non volessi fare così contro di Sua Maestà come contro gli altri. Per tutte queste ragioni potete mostrare che questa obiectione non val niente anzi che Sua Santità restava nella medesima fede che haveva stabilita col S. Viceré et quella ragionevolmente li doverria essere osservata: maxime havendo patito tanto quanto ha Sua Santità della quale tutto el mondo come buoni Christiani debbe havere pietà.

Potrete anchora proporre a Sua Maestà quanta gloria appresso di tutti li Christiani li resulerà conservando et restituendo un pontefice buono et la chiesa di Dio et quanto ne sarà laudato dalli huomini et harà merito appresso di Dio perché egli <S. Maestà> è membro della chiesa et ne debbe essere protettore. Et se fussino opposti li cattivi costumi delli <eclesiastici> potete rispondere che sono stati peggiori sotto tutti li altri pontefici et che questo haveva dato buono principio [19r] di reformarli et l'haria fatto indubitamente se non sopravveniva la guerra et che Idio ha voluto dare a Sua Santità queste tribulationi nel mondo per gastigarlo di qua se alcuno errore haveva non quali là come forse li altri.

Da altra parte si può proporre a Sua Cesarea Maestà quanto carico li saria ruinando la chiesa et Sua Santità appresso tutti li christiani et anchora li infedeli perché lo faria senza causa et non si potria imputarlo ad altro che ad ambitione et a poca relligione che sono quelle cose che Sua Maestà ha mostro di havere più in odio che tutte le altre.

Oltre a di questo quanti scandali et abusioni ne resulterìa facendo qualche non buona deliberatione di Sua Santità o tenendola sospesa o nelli termini che è adesso che oltre al prevalere li lutherani li quali si è conosciuto essere parimente adversarii di Sua Maestà et della chiesa si susciterieno discussioni scisme et inobedientie tali che actum esset penit[us] de fide christi et già come voi sapete se ne vede qualche segno manifesto.

Faccendo adunque Sua Maestà come io spero questa buona et celere deliberatione observerà la fede data dalli suoi farassi memoria et gloria eterna mostrerrassi grato delli beneficii ricevuti Sua Maestà et li sua prodecessori dalla chiesa et remedierà a infiniti mali et scandali et sarà vero imitatore dello Imperadore Sigismondo suo predecessore el quale per levare la scisma et restituire la chiesa venne in Francia et in Hispana et ordinò et fu presente al concilio di Constancia dove fu creato el buon Papa Martino che restituì et exaltò tanto la chiesa di Dio per mezzo di tanto buono imperadore anzi molto maggiore gloria sarà a Sua Maestà quanto [20r] questa Ruina è maggiore che quella et se ne vede preparare una che saria dipoi irrimediabile.

È da insistere adunque che Sua Maestà si risolva et mostrare che Nostro Signore è per fare in tutto quello che piacerà a lei et per darli ogni sicurtà che vorrà perché non ha altra speranza né fede che in Sua Maestà. Mostrando anchora che el deliberare presto et bene è a proposito per le cose di Sua Maestà in Italia perché quello exercito che è in Roma potrà venire a soccorrere le cose di Lombardia le quali sono in manifesto pericolo per l'andata di mons. del Autrech [*sic*] con tante forze quanto ha.

Havendo la resolutione, la potrete mandare o portare voi subito et <el nuntio o l'arcivescovo> mandarne un duplicato a Roma per mare. Queste medesime ragioni potrete usare con tutti li signori del consiglio di Sua Maestà.

Allo imbasciadore fiorentino potrete conferire quanto vi parrà expediente.

Allo Auditore della Camera [Girolamo Ghinucci] conferirete ogni cosa et vi varrete molto dell'opera sua perché è molto affectionato a Nostro Signore e potrete fare opera per la liberatione di mio padre [Jacopo Salviati] con cautione o in altro modo desidero non lasciate a fare niente.

Ivi, f. 21r [mech. num.]

Sacrae Caesareae Maestati X. Julij.

Serenissime ac Invictissime Caesar post humillimam Commendationem et manuum oscula.

La bontà et religione che io ho conosciuta nella Cesarea Maestà Vostra è quella sola che in tanta ruina della Santità di Nostro Signore et della fede di Christo mi dà assai consolatione et speranza et mi fa confidentemente mandarvi questo mio gentilhuomo a procurare la liberatione di Nostro Signore come Sua Santità mi ha commesso. Prego adunque Vostra Cesarea Maestà che voglia udirlo patientemente et prestarli fede et darli quella buona et misericordiosa resolutione che è conveniente alla grandezza dell'animo suo et alla sua bontà et degna di quelle sante parole che mi disse al mio partire che facessi intendere a Sua Santità che sua Maestà non era vendicativa né si ricorderia di alcuna iniuria le quali ho molte volte fatte intendere a Sua Santità in che Sua Maestà Cesarea si debbe persuadere consistere interamente la conservatione et exaltatione della fede di Christo.

Bene valete etc.