

Building a Duchy to the Greater Glory of God

*The Jesuits and the Farnesian Educational Policy in Parma (1539-1604)*¹

Cristiano Casalini

Università degli Studi di Parma
Dipartimento A.L.E.F.
Borgo Carissimi, 10 - 43121 Parma
cristiano.casalini@unipr.it
Boston College
casalini@bc.edu

The history of the relation between the city of Parma and the Jesuits begins even before the Jesuits had started to be an Order.

While Ignatius was waiting for the confirmation of the Society of Jesus, Pope Paul III asked him to order his closest companions, namely Pierre Favre and Diego Lainez, to follow the cardinal Filonardi in his

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Abbreviations

ARSI – Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu.

OO.NN. – *Opera Nostrorum*

mission to Parma; at the time the town was the outpost of the Church State in the North of Italy, being close to Imperial Milan. Paul III's intention was probably to establish in the town a new spiritual ground for the foundation of the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza (1545), which he was planning to entrust to his son Pierluigi.

This paper aims to describe how the Dukes (from Pierluigi to Ranuccio I) used their relationship with the Jesuits to consolidate a cultural policy aimed at imposing the Farnese family within a still medieval social framework of noble families that initially tried to resist the new power balance.

The pillars of this policy were the insertion of the Jesuits among the religious orders already present in the town, which were jealous of their *privilegia* [privileges] and didn't want competitors in their fields of activities, and the entrustment of the education of the higher classes to the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits set up the college of San Rocco, then were appointed to rule the restored University, and finally were appointed to create one of the first and most important *Seminaria Nobilium* (1604) in Europe².

The Farnesian policy of establishing cultural hegemony through the use of a recently founded religious Order can be considered an example of how an early

² See G.P. Brizzi - A. D'Alessandro - A. Del Fante, *Università, Principe, Gesuiti. La politica farnesiana dell'istruzione a Parma e Piacenza (1545-1622)*, Rome, 1980; G.P. Brizzi - R. Greci (a cura di), *Gesuiti e Università in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII). Atti del convegno di studi (Parma, 13-15 dicembre 2001)*, Milan, CLUEB, 2003; and, more recently, G.P. Brizzi, "Un modello a tutti i Studi d'Italia". *Il sistema di istruzione dello Stato Farnesiano*, in AA.VV., *Storia di Parma, I, I caratteri originali*, Parma, MUP, 2008, pp. 285-305. An interesting monograph on the restoration of the University of Parma was published last year: A. Cadoppi, *Lo Studio di Ranuccio. La Rifondazione dell'Università di Parma nel 1600*, Parma, Grafiche STEP, 2013.

modern State succeeded in centralizing power, overwhelming ancient relationships of vassalage, and refashioning the overall of functioning of a local society³.

The first question I will address is the most general: was there a “Farnesian” policy?

If we consider the period suggested in the title (1539-1604), it seems quite unlikely that a family that reached the climax of its social rise near the middle of the century, then divided and even saw the shame of an internal fight, could maintain a consistent policy towards a new religious Order for generations. And, actually, some of the Farnese I will take into consideration had contradictory attitudes towards the Jesuits.

Nonetheless, there are traces of what French historians call the *longue durée* in the relation between the most powerful Farneses and the Society of Jesus, which shows at least a convergence of both groups’ interests in the experiment of building a New Catholic State in the European panorama.

What does “new” mean? It means the modern State, a small Catholic absolute monarchy⁴. Major

³ See L. Dossi, *I Gesuiti a Parma (1564-1964)*, Milan, 1964, and G. Drei, *I Farnese: grandezza e decadenza di una dinastia italiana*, Rome, La Libreria dello Stato, 1954. I follow the path of such historians as Philippe Áries, and Paolo Prodi, on the centralization of power as one of the most important social and political features of the Early Modern State. See P. Prodi, *The Papal Prince: One Body and Two Souls. The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] - New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

⁴ As Gian Paolo Brizzi puts it: «The axiom “ruling classes-aristocracy” has reached the status of a fundamental point according to Italian historians, who dealt with the development of both the modern State and the political structures of the *ancien régime*» (G.P. Brizzi, *La Formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i Seminaria Nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 1976, p. 5).

clearly describes the shift from the Renaissance monarchy to the Absolute Monarchy, even though he does not consider the case of Parma as a Sixteenth-century precursor of the latter:

It was in the seventeenth century that notable changes began to take place that transformed the Renaissance monarchy into an absolute monarchy. By absolute monarchy I mean one in which there were no theoretical limitations on the king's authority other than those imposed by divine, natural, and a few fundamental laws, and in which the king controlled the vertical ties necessary to hold society together and had an obedient army and bureaucracy of sufficient size to enable him to impose his will under ordinary circumstances⁵.

In 1539, the first companions of Ignatius divided their destiny. Ignatius sent pairs of them on a few European missions, which you might fairly consider to have been the most important missions from a political point of view. Francis Xavier and Simão Rodrigues were sent to Portugal, while Diego Lainez and Pierre Favre had to accompany Card. Filonardi to Parma. One fact is clear: the king of Portugal, João III, had played an important role in endorsing the Society's request for papal confirmation⁶, and so, when he asked Ignatius to send some of the Jesuits to improve the spiritual state of his realm, Ignatius could not refuse his request. The same goes for Parma. It is quite likely that the Farnesian Pope was already plotting the creation of a strategic Duchy in the heart of northern Italy, which was

⁵ J. Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy French Kings, Nobles, & Estates*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, p. XXI.

⁶ See C. Casalini, *Aristotele a Coimbra. Il Cursus Conimbricensis e l'educazione al Collegium Artium*, Presentazione di J. O'Malley, Postfazione di F. Mattei, Rome, Anicia, 2012.

divided between imperial Milan and the Republic of Venice. In 1539, Parma was still a Pontifical Legation, and chronicles report that religious ferments were boiling therein⁷. Even though we lack precise descriptions about the nature of these ferments, they were allegedly “menacing the city’s piety and faith”. This probably means that Parma had started to be polluted by Reformation ideas, which already infested the nearby cities of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

Card. Filonardi was sent there to check on and keep control of the situation, and the most educated of the Jesuits (Lainez and Favre) were chosen to accompany him. What did they do in Parma? At that time education was not a ministry of the Society, so they mostly exercised what John O’Malley called ministries of the word and piety⁸. They preached, they took care of poor and sick people (they did not go visit those who were jailed because the Capuchins were introduced to take care of them), but above all they confessed and gave the spiritual exercises⁹. Confessing and giving the exercises made them famous and very welcomed in the city. That is interesting: Parma’s society as a whole was fascinated by these two Jesuits to such an extent that, when Ignatius decided to send

⁷ See L. Dossi, *I Gesuiti a Parma*, cit., p. 5.

⁸ Cfr. J.W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993.

⁹ «Arrivati a quella città, cominciarono a predicare et leggere, l’uno nella chiesa maggiore et l’altro in S. Gervasio, hoggi detto l’Annunciata, ciò continuoando insino all’anno 1540 con molto frutto spirituale de molti» (*Beati Petri Fabri primi sacerdoti e Societate Iesu Epistolae, Memoriale, et Processus*, cit., p. 36). Favre informed Francis Xavier about their success: «De los exercicios ya no sabemos hablar en particular, porque tantos hay que dan los exercicios, que no sabemos el número. Todo el mundo los quier hazer, hombres y mujeres; subito como un sacerdote es exercitado, él los da á otros» (*Ibid.*, p. 22).

them elsewhere, the elder citizens wrote two important letters begging him to let at least one of them stay in Parma¹⁰.

Favre and Lainez spent two years in Parma and succeeded in rooting a Jesuit culture among people of both higher and lower classes, without encountering any particular problems with the religious framework already present. A visible plant that grew from these seeds was the Jesuit confraternity that they created, gathering together citizens who would later become remarkable Jesuits, such as Benedetto and Francesco Palmio (Palmia), Girolamo Domenech and so forth.

Leaving the city to go to Spain, Pierre Favre wrote a letter to this confraternity that clearly reveals what the original inspiration of the Society actually was. I will just quote a passage from it:

You must stoutly believe that the spiritual exercises in which you have found nourishment for your spirit up to the present will still be necessary for you in the future, your essential food having been above all the heavenly bread on which the

¹⁰ They initially wrote to Ignatius: «Prima che sapiamo che sette informati de le bone opere fatte in questa città per quelli dui ven. pretti già condutti per il R.mo Legato, li quali certamente son tanto boni, esemplari, et morigerati quanto dire si puossa, et hanno ridutti molta gente alli digiuni, oratione, confessioni et comunioni, quelli invero non erano de meliori di questa città, et ancho de molti altri; di modo che invero tutta questa città ne resta molto consolata, et si spera, medianta la gratia de Iddio, che debbano far multiplicar di bene in meglio, restandone uno delli suddetti, li quali per quanto ne viene detto son per partirsi per ordine di SS. S.tà, cioè uno per Spagna, et l'altro per Franza; per il che voresimo che per salute de le anime di questo populo fussivi contenta suplicare S. B.^e se degnase concenterne almeno uno de essi a questo suo devoto populo (il nome delli quali son questi, Don Pietro Fabro, francesco, Don Jacomo Lainez, spagnuolo, predicatori) al mancho per tutta la quadragesima prossima; chè certo ne sarà cosa molto gratta, si che vi la ricomando di cuore» (P. Tacchi Venturi, *Storia della Compagnia in Italia*, I. Rome, Civiltà Cattolica, pp. 576-577).

angels and all the saints always have been and always will be fed. This bread is far more important for your spiritual life than material bread is for your temporal life. Similarly, for the other spiritual exercises: self-examination, confession, meditation, prayer, and the works of mercy¹¹.

Whether the idea of choosing the Jesuits to promote a new spirituality in Parma had originated with card. Filonardi or Paul III, the success of Lainez and Favre's mission revealed to the Pope the social power of the Jesuits ministries.

So, in 1540, he finally promulgated the Bull of confirmation of the Society of Jesus.

Was this favorable attitude towards the Jesuits confirmed by the Farnesian Dukes?

Paul III created the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza in 1545. His son, Pierluigi, took possession of it one year later and decided that the capital of the Duchy had

¹¹ «Prima, uorria che non u'ingannaste, pensando che io ce habbia a dare altro cibo per perseverare, di quel che hauete hauuto sin adesso. Questo med[e]simo ui diria il filosofo, il quale dice, parlando del nutrimento corporale, che l'istesse cose, che sono per nutrire la persona, sono ancora per augmentarla; onde rissolutamente bisogna credere che gl'esercitii spirituali, nelli quali hauete ritrovato il nutrimento del spirito uostro sin qui, ui saranno ancora necessari per l'auenire, massime essendo stato il cibo uostro essenziale quel pane celeste, nel quale gl'angeli et tutti gl'altri santi sono et saranno sempre mai nutriti: il qual pane è molto più necessario per il uiuere spirituale, che non è il pane materiale per il uiuer temporale: né più né meno quanto all'altri esercitii spirituali, come l'esaminarsi, confessarsi, la meditatione, l'oracione et l'opere de misericordia». *Beati Petri Fabri*, cit., p. 39. I quote from the English translation published by the Institute of Jesuit Sources: P. Faber, *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre*. Saint Louis (MO), Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996. See also, F. Mattei - C. Casalini, *Jesuitica Institutio. Figure e temi di una modernità pedagogica*, Rome, Anicia, 2014, in part. the chapter "Pierre Favre e l'educazione dello spirito", pp. 57-104.

to be Piacenza, mostly because of its strategic position. Yet, we do not know anything about his attitude towards the Jesuits because, unfortunately, he would very soon learn the strength of the ancient net of medieval powers' resistance to a new political balance. The nobles of Piacenza seemed not to easily accept a Duke in their backyard, and one fine day in 1547 they threw poor Pierluigi, already dead, out of the window.

Pierluigi's death was not only due, as many times has been stated, to Ferrante Gonzaga and the imperial policy of annexing Parma and Piacenza to the empire. Nor was it only a problem of taxes, even though Pierluigi seemed to be too greedy, deserving the hate of the nobility. He was insulted as "the bastard son of the Pope" and his sexual intemperance (the rape of Fano)¹² confirmed his bad reputation. Yet, the main problem was something pertaining to the social structure of the State, which was born with the aim of changing the balance between local powers by centralizing them.

Thus, the first Farnesian attempt to build their Duchy failed. Nonetheless, Paul III was adamant in claiming the Duchy for his family and, after political troubles that lasted five years, Pierluigi's son, Ottavio, became the second Duke of Parma and Piacenza.

¹² In 1537, Pierluigi Farnese allegedly raped Cosimo Gheri, 24 years old Bishop of Fano, who died shortly after the crime. Then, Pierluigi was targeted by a number of *pasquinate* in Rome, and a lot of pamphlets addressed against the Farnese Pope Paul III by the several Italian Reformers, such as Pier Paolo Vergerius and Francesco Negri. See P. Hanbridge, *A scurrilous Letter to Paul III. A Transcription and Translation of Ms. 469 (f.101r-129r) of the Vadianische Sammlung of the Kantonsbibliothek of St. Gallen*, 2010), and F. Negri da Bassano, *Tragedia intitolata Libero Arbitrio. 1546 / 1550*, a cura di C. Casalini e L. Salvarani, Rome, Anicia, 2014, in part. p. 156 n. 248.

Ottavio was known as a rough and tough man, but he had surely learnt the lesson of Piacenza. The very first decision he made was to switch the capital to Parma, where the nobility was probably more divided than in Piacenza, and less influenced by imperial policy. Curiously, Ottavio's wife was Margherite of Austria, an illegitimate daughter of Charles V. Despite his relation to the emperor, Ottavio had to struggle a lot in order to finally get the whole Duchy under his control. He ruled the Duchy for a very long while (he died in 1586), giving him the opportunity to create the basis for the new state I mentioned before. In marked contrast with his father, he governed with temperance, trying to dilute the centralization of power in a policy that lasted several years.

It seems that education was not one of his main concerns in reaching his goal, since he barely promulgated some measures to restore the ancient University of Parma, which had not given any classes since the end of the 15th Century. His attitude toward the Jesuits was also quite different from that of the Pope. Thanks to Scaduto we know that he changed his mind regarding them thanks to the favor the Society gained from Margherite (even though her endorsement could be not decisive, as the marriage was known to be an unlucky one) and marches Sanvitale, Ottavio's favorite at the court.

This change followed Ottavio's decision to implement a new educational policy in Parma. And this fact also sheds light on the Society of Jesus' introduction of "education" among its ministries. Ottavio did not help Jesuits to settle down in Parma in order to foster the city's spirituality, as card. Filonardi had done earlier. He decided to appoint them as teachers of a *collegium* that Parma lacked at that time. The objective

was not yet to have university classes, but to teach noble pupils in the lower courses from grammar to humanities.

Was Ottavio aiming to turn the medieval landed nobility into a nobility of function? This is not unlikely. The most important thing for my paper is that, even though the Jesuits were not established in the city, Ottavio finally decided to commit them to this strategic task.

After the discussion that usually preceded the foundation of a college (aimed at getting money and guarantees from the Duke), the Jesuits opened the college of San Rocco in 1564. An oratory devoted to San Rocco was under construction at that time, in the very center of the city, so the Duke decided to entrust it to the Jesuits¹³. This decision corresponded with a radical change in public opinion about the Society of Jesus in Parma. As a matter of fact, the Duke pressured the City council to pay extra taxes for the college, but the elder citizens strongly opposed the Duke's will. The Jesuit Giovanni Gurrea mediated between the Elders and the Duke, who presented the foundation of the college as a "common service and good", aimed at "giving the saintly exercises and teaching children". A supposed long-lasting implantation of a new religious order also provoked opposition from the other orders, and from the bishop too. Rumors started to circulate in town about the dangerousness of the Society, and the Jesuits had to face each accusation that was commonly made about them, as O'Malley described in his *The First Jesuits*: they had communion too frequently, they did

¹³ A. Cardinali - T. Galanti, *Attività del collegio gesuitico di S. Rocco fino alla cacciata del 1768 alla luce della documentazione d'archivio*, in «Archivio Storico per le province parmensi», XLIII (1991), p. 117.

not believe in saints, they claimed to be the only true Christians because of their name, and so forth. There was also an incident that was used to demonstrate the Jesuits' immorality. A pious and devoted woman was allegedly capable of performing miracles and curing diseases by praying intensely to God. She did not pretend to be an illuminate, nor did she claim to be separate from the Church. However, the Church took this case very cautiously, because the gap between sanctity and witchcraft was – as you know – very narrow at that time. She agreed to live in a monastery, but she was not (nor did she became) a nun. As soon as the Jesuits became her confessors, rumors were raised about their proximity to her. The chronicles do not report exactly what the charge was, but they report something that was too bad to be written.

The favor with which the Society had been welcomed by the citizenry 25 years earlier had by 1564 turned into hostility. Who was fanning the flames? As far as we can figure out, a portion of the local nobility and clergy saw the official introduction of the Society of Jesus as a weapon of the Duke that would be used to hinder their interests and root the Duchy where it had not existed before.

Nonetheless lessons at the college started and they were crowded. The college had more than 300 students; most of them came from the local upper-level classes. Was it a success, then? Not at all. The Jesuits had opened only four classes (literacy, grammar, rhetoric, and Humanities): too few to give the community what it had paid for. Soon, as Scaduto reports, people started to blame the Jesuits, withdrawing their kids from the college and persuading others to do the same. The now firm support of the Duke allowed the college to overcome these first difficulties and to gain a very

good reputation throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Thanks to Ottavio, the Jesuits settled down in Parma and began to influence the cultural environment in town, increasing their political weight thanks to their presence at the court, from where they changed the nobility's hostility into a more complex and positive attitude towards their Order.

So, when Ranuccio I became Duke of Parma (1592), the Jesuits were already operating as a useful political tool for the idea of the State he had in mind: the absolute monarchy. Quite differently from his grandfather (Ottavio died in 1586 and was succeeded by his son Alessandro, who spent his days fighting in the Dutch Revolt and finally died in 1592), Ranuccio I seemed to consider education a pillar of his policy from the very beginning of his reign.

Since he decided to restore the University of Parma, he asked the Jesuits to open a college with a full curriculum where classes of Philosophy, Mathematics, and Theology would be taught. He had to negotiate with General Claudio Acquaviva, who was extremely cautious in opening new colleges or universities. It seemed that the first offer by the Duke, 1000 *scudi* (écu), would not guarantee the university's future. Acquaviva thought that in order for the college to survive, it needed to host a certain number of internal students, that is, students who would have to join the Society and replace the teachers afterwards. Thus, Ranuccio changed his offer to 1000 *ducatoni*, and the Jesuits agreed to start lessons.

The discussion between the Duke and Antonio Possevino about how to start up the university was transcribed in two different documents. One of them was published by Gian Paolo Brizzi, the other one is still manuscript among Possevino's documents conserved at the *Archivum Romanum*¹⁴. I have checked it hoping to find incongruence and inconsistencies but, unfortunately for the curious historian, the secretaries made a good job. What did a University need, according to both Possevino and Ranuccio?

Firstly, it needed to be owner of a building. Rentals were a problem. The Duke promised to buy from the Boselli's family a building named San Rocchino, which today is exactly in front of the University (it was built by the Jesuits ten years later).

Secondly, a good university should be attractive for students. In order to be so, it should be well-ordered, and respect discipline and morality. Weapons should to be banned inside the building, since their presence would have hindered students' frequency. Students who would have shown the will to live heretically should be not accepted and, if already accepted, chased away. Similarly, Possevino suggested the example of the rules followed at the University of Salamanca in order to keep control of students with a bad behavior. It seems that Possevino had a great esteem of Salamanca, since it quoted its rules as a high example of education even in his *Cultura ingeniorum*¹⁵. He was also concerned by the opening of other public schools and lay universities, because students there were used

¹⁴ ARSI, *OO.NN.*, 333.

¹⁵ A. Possevino, *Cultura degl'ingegni*, a cura di C. Casalini e L. Salvarani, Rome, Anicia, 2008.

to keep a goliardic life (walls were painted with obscenities, lessons were often interrupted by shouts, songs, and so forth. There is also a chapter in the *Cultura ingeniorum* about these problems, whose title is significantly: how Satan is used to disturb classes and lessons.

The most interesting suggestions that Possevino gave to the Duke regard what, today, we would call the marketing of the University. In order to be attractive, the University should be known to be in a city endowed with a good climate and healthy food. According to Possevino, Parma had both of them. He tells that Parma has «a healthy air, and high quality foods. Both of them concur to help wits and talents to work better». Since this was true, Possevino recommended the Duke to spread all around Europe the quality of living in Parma. He also suggested remedies for the cleaning of cities, taking examples – of course – from German and northern Europe cities (Augsburg, Mons Henau). There was a waste collecting system, streets always cleaned, and every citizen must keep cleaned the sidewalk in front of his house.

Thanks to the suggested waste collecting system, we know Ranuccio's feelings about how his ancestor had ruled the Duchy. He lamented indeed, that Ottavio had made a rule that bounded Ranuccio to maintain privilegia to the ones that collected the waste, even though they did a bad job. Ranuccio lamented the fact that these rules «makes me not to proceed with an absolute power regarding this fact»¹⁶. Once again, ancient

¹⁶ Ranuccio pledged to solve the situation as follows: «Della nettezza delle strade io l'ho tentata alcune volte, et passati due mesi è ritornata come prima, ma per ogni modo voglio trovar modo, che si

privilegia against Ranuccio's absolute monarchy. Even in the waste collecting.

Finally, Possevino recommended the Duke other ways to make a good marketing (publishing catalogues, renowned professors, and so forth) and even to pondering the possibility to open a military seminary in order to teach history, geography and mathematics to noble pupils. This recommendation is the seed of a plant that would sprout a few years later, the College of Nobles.

In conclusion, Possevino makes clear that Parma should stand as a high educational example:

By following these recommendations, that is, taking care of sciences and piety, as well as taking care of the military talents, your Majesty will see this city flourishing, children growing well, trade growing as well, taxes increasing too, and finally, your Majesty will see Parma standing as a model for every University in Italy, and you gaining merit in front of God¹⁷.

In 1602 Ranuccio I promulgated the *Sanctiones ac privilegia Parmensis Gymnasii*, with which the *Studium*

faccia. La difficoltà da una parte è che sono da 18 gentiluomini, i quali per privilegio hanno questa cura, e i miei Predecessori, che mi hanno lasciato ch'io mantenga i privilegi a coloro che gli hanno fanno ch'io non proceda con potestà assoluta in questo fatto, ma il modo che terrò sarà questo, ch'io assegnerò uno, il quale dipenda, da me stesso, et le multe o pene che si essigeranno da' trasgressori, farò che vadno in emolumento di detti Privilegi, acciò che non dicano che io voglio imborsare i premi» (quoted in A. Cadoppi, *Lo Studio di Ranuccio*, cit., pp. 35-36).

¹⁷ «Co' i quali modi l'Altezza Vostra havendo dall'una parte la cura delle scienze congiunte con la pietà, dall'altra, la cura dell'armi bene indirizzate vedrà fiorire questa Città con comodo de' suoi figlioli, spaccio per le mercantie, auemtno per le gabelle, essemplio a tutti i Studi d'Italia, et merito di lei appresso Dio» (*Ibid.*, p. 38).

was definitely restored.¹⁸ During negotiations, the Duke guaranteed the Jesuits that the university of Law and Medicine would be officially separated from the university of Arts and Theology, as had been pretended elsewhere (in Portugal, for instance)¹⁹.

Furthermore, the *Sanctiones* were written according to suggestions by the rector of the College of San Rocco, in such a way that the Jesuits' mindset shaped even the lay university.

Was Ranuccio's educational policy completed? Not actually. He decided to make the Jesuits open another educational institution, which would confirm the Duchy as a European cultural vanguard, that is, the College of Nobles²⁰. General Aquaviva's response to the Duke's request was cold as usual, but thanks once again to Antonio Possevino, Ranuccio's purpose became reality. In 1604 the college of nobles started classes, gathering in Parma a remarkable number of noble pupils from northern Italy and beyond²¹. Among the

¹⁸ See G. Gonzi, *Sanctiones ac privilegia di Ranuccio I Farnese per lo Studium parmense*, in «Archivio storico per le province parmensi», 50 (1998), pp. 225-239. And S. Di Noto Marrella, *Il Collegio dei dottori e giudici e la Facoltà legale parmense in età farnesiano-borbonica (1545-1802)*, Padua, Cedam, 2001.

¹⁹ C. Casalini, *Aristotele a Coimbra*, cit., p. 56.

²⁰ A. Mora, *Il Collegio dei nobili di Parma: la formazione della classe dirigente (secoli XVII- XIX): atti del Convegno nazionale : Fornovo, Sala Baganza, Fontevivo, 22-24 maggio 2008*, Parma, MUP, 2013. M. Turrini, *Il "giovin signore" in collegio: i gesuiti e l'educazione della nobiltà nelle consuetudini del Collegio ducale di Parma*. Bologna, CLUEB, 2006; and, S. Negruzzo, *Gesuiti educatori della nobiltà a Parma. A proposito di un recente volume di Miriam Turrini*, in «Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu», 81, 161 (2012), pp. 310-319.

²¹ «L'origine del collegio parmense ci conferma poi che i Gesuiti nell'assumere nuovi incarichi seguivano con coerenza una precisa

Jesuit *Seminaria nobilium*, that of Parma would reach great fame in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, and a number of European noble families committed the education of their pupils to the Jesuits of Parma²².

Curiously, Ranuccio intervened even in the educational program of the college, urging the Jesuits to add to their regular classes some specific courses pertaining court life, such as riding, dancing, and fencing. Local Jesuits supported his request, endorsing his will with letters to the General that reveal how extensive and tight the relation between Ranuccio and the Jesuits had become.

What was the Jesuit interest in supporting Parma's policy? To answer to this question, one has to refer to the problems with Venice that the *Provincia Veneta* was facing at that time²³. An Interdict would follow two years after the foundation of Parma's college of Nobles, even though the relation between the Society and the Republic had been problematic for ten years, at

strategia, accettando quei soli impegni che avrebbero garantito loro di operare un controllo diretto ed esclusivo sull'intero ciclo educativo (...) Il 27 Gennaio 1604 il duca di Parma sottoscriveva i *Capitoli* di un accordo col gesuita Virgilio Cepari; in base ai *Capitoli*, la Compagnia di Gesù vincolava la gestione diretta del collegio al rispetto di precise clausole» (G.P. Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente*, cit., pp. 27-28).

²² G.P. Brizzi, *Educare il Principe, formare le élites. I Gesuiti e Ranuccio I Farnese*, in G.P. Brizzi - A. D'Alessandro - A. Del Fante, *Università, Principe, Gesuiti*, cit., pp. 133-201.

²³ See P. Pirri, *L'interdetto di Venezia del 1606 e i Gesuiti; Silloge dei documenti con Introduzione*, Rome, Institutum Historicum S.I., 1959. A pioneering investigation on the same issue is F. Scaduto, *Stato e Chiesa secondo Fra Paolo Sarpi e la coscienza pubblica durante l'Interdetto di Venezia del 1606-1607, con Bibliografia*. Firenze, C. Ademollo, 1885.

least. Benedetto Palmio, a parmesan Jesuit who became the superior provincial, also had a bad relationship with Acquaviva. Meanwhile, we find Antonio Possevino, who was neither a zealot like Palmio nor a friend of Acquaviva, managing with the Farnese to turn Parma into an educational competitor with both Padua and Bologna. Possevino was working to create a European center for the education of the higher classes in a place where an absolute monarchy was phasing out the old social and political resistances to the power of the Sovereign.

Thus, the convergence of interests between Ranuccio and Possevino was perfect. Yet, the defect of this project lay in the fact that a greatly ambitious idea was tied to the destiny of a very small Italian state, even though this state was growing to fit it perfectly. Unfortunately, Ranuccio's political ability to manage the internal affairs of his Duchy was matched by his inability to maintain a balance in foreign affairs. After the episode of the *gran congiura*, when he accused a Sanvitale and other nobles of plotting against him, no other noble family in Italy would agree to a marriage for Ranuccio's son, Odoardo, since Ranuccio had indicted both the Gonzaga of Mantua and the Este as conspirators in the Sanvitale incident²⁴. It was evidently a false accusation, and the Italian noble families blamed him for that. It is quite a remarkable fact that a Jesuit preached during the solemn execution of Sanvitale, reminding everyone of Ranuccio's piety and jus-

²⁴ A. Cadoppi, *La gran congiura. Il processo di Ranuccio I Farnese contro i feudatari parmensi*, Parma, Grafiche STEP, 2012. See also P. Grendler, *The University of Mantua, the Gonzaga, and the Jesuits. 1584-1630*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

tice. Furthermore, the Duchy of Parma was too small for the political idea of absolute monarchy, which would have more success in nations such as France.

In conclusion, even though his ancestor Pierluigi had not shown himself to be interested in pursuing a particular educational policy, Ranuccio finally succeeded in building the Farnesian Duchy by means of the powerful educational instrument provided by the Jesuits, confirming his family's historically positive attitude towards the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits, in turn, found in Ranuccio not a tyrant worthy to be killed (as had been the case with the kings of France), but a great ally in reaffirming their cultural supremacy in Northern Italy, finding a sort of promised land after the venetian interdict.

In an expression, they both concur to build a Duchy to the Greater of God.

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