On Closer Inspection – the Interrogation of Paolo Veronese

On April 20th 1573, Paolo Veronese, already long established and celebrated as a painter at the time, completed a portrayal of the Last Supper in the refectory of the Dominican monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice [Fig. 1]. On July 18th of that same year, he was summoned to appear before the tribunal of the Holy Inquisition in Venice because of that picture. The only outcome of the interrogation seems to have been that after the session, Veronese added an inscription to it. The inscription refers to a passage from the Gospel of Saint Luke, which states that Christ had a meal at Levi’s house. The painting has since then been known as the Feast in the House of Levi. This article develops an argument leading to an explanation as to why Veronese had to appear before this tribunal because of that particular painting at that particular moment. The material here presented serves to refine the discussion of ecclesiastical politics concerning Veronese’s interrogation that Paul Kaplan had already opened up in 1997, focusing, however, on the two protagonists of the tribunal which Veronese had to face: the inquisitor and the nuncio.1

As far as we know, Veronese is the only painter who was ever called to account before a similar tribunal for a painting. The unique document of the tribunal records was preserved, and because it is among the most famous in the history of art, I can limit myself to the following observations.2

After the session had been opened with a few ceremonious customs, Veronese seemed unwilling to comply with the inquisitor’s suggestion, as delivered by the prior of the monastery – whose name Veronese denied knowing – to replace the dog in the foreground with the figure of Mary Magdalene. Although we may be able to sympathise with this refusal, it was the reason the interrogation was continued, entirely unilaterally, as is the case with interrogations: the inquisitor determined the course of the meeting.

The inquisitor asked a few questions about the activities of Peter and two of the table companions, but was satisfied with the brief answers given by Veronese. He was much more concerned with the addition of figures such as fools, dwarfs and German soldiers, who had nothing to do with the biblical story of the Last Supper. He did not seem to be very worried about the painting itself being heretical, or whether Veronese was a heretic, but rather whether the picture could potentially be used as ammunition by heretics in their struggle with the Holy Roman Church.

The inquisitor proved to be very well acquainted with the picture, which he evidently knew from close personal inspection. He displayed his powers of observance particularly when he questioned the meaning of the man with the nosebleed. One has to have examined the picture carefully indeed before

Dedicated to Moni Engel
one discovers the nosebleed, though there is no evidence that Veronese changed anything about it after the session. The man was only a servant whose nosebleed was caused, came Veronese’s unconvincing explanation, by some unimportant mishap, ‘per qualche accidente’.

The inquisitor glossed over various remarks by Veronese that were to intrigue later art historians. The way in which Veronese talked about the position of painters, at once both raising them to the level of poets and depicting them as harmless as fools, did not interest him, at least, he made no comment. Nor did he respond to Veronese’s repeated defence, that the nosebleeds, fools, dwarfs and German soldiers were situated outside Christ’s circle, “fuori del luogo dove si fa la cena”.

However much insight this remark may give us into Veronese’s attitude towards painting and the way in which main and subsidiary features may be contrasted in a composition, the inquisitor did not comment on it. He even ignored such evident blunders on the part of Veronese, such as the fact that the Last Supper, according to Veronese, took place at Simon’s house. The inquisitor was interrogating, not lecturing.

However, the inquisitor did respond to certain other remarks, and sharply too. When Veronese, asked about other meals he had portrayed, named the Wedding Feast at Cana in the San Giorgio Maggiore, the inquisitor warned him irritably to limit himself to meals of the Lord. The inquisitor obviously considered the meals at Simon’s house to belong to this category, such as the one Veronese had produced for the refectory in the San Sebastiano in Venice, but not the wedding feast at Cana. Clearly the inquisitor’s question referred to the meals either organised for, or by, the Lord, and not to a feast where He was a guest among many, even though this event was the setting of Christ’s first public appearance.

The inquisitor’s reaction to the utterly remarkable manoeuvre with which Veronese attempted to justify his methods using...
Michelangelo’s Last Judgement in the Sistine chapel was unexpected. Michelangelo supposedly depicted everyone, including the Virgin Mary, in the nude – an exaggeration on Veronese’s part to express how many liberties Michelangelo had taken while painting it. It is strange that Veronese defended himself with a painting that had caused so much trouble in Rome that, ten years previously, the most blatantly naked parts were re-painted by order. Veronese’s defence could only really be used against him, unless he wanted to travel down the dangerous road of speculating on dissension within the tribunal. The inquisitor responded with the comment that the nudity in a picture of the Last Judgement was not unsuitable, choosing an independent attitude that could possibly have caused him trouble in Rome. Pointing out that there were no dogs or fools to be seen in Michelangelo’s work, the inquisitor returned to the subject he meant to pursue without being diverted: Veronese had added figures to his piece that were not suitable for a portrayal of the Last Supper.

The report concludes with the injunction that Veronese must improve his picture within three months, at his own expense. In the records, the remark that the improvement must be suitable to the subject matter of the Last Supper has been struck off. Shouldn’t we consider this deletion to be extremely significant? Veronese apparently understood the conclusion of the interrogation to mean that the addition of an inscription would suffice. The inscription altered the subject of the work. Was this very different to what the inquisitor wanted from him in the first place? The substitution of the figure of Mary Magdalene for the dog would have changed the subject from a Last Supper to a Feast at the House of Simon. By adding the inscription, Veronese was complying with the inquisitor’s earlier suggestion, by which we may assume that the final change was suggested by this official himself and that the said sentence was deleted precisely for this reason.

Since Armand Baschet’s introduction, in 1867, of Veronese’s interrogation document to the literature of art history, it has inspired many to add their opinions to the discussion concerning the main question: what brought Veronese before the Inquisition? When we consider the nature of the inquisitor’s questions, it seemed natural for the authors to look for the answer primarily in the iconography of the painting. Therefore, no convincing answers have yet been provided to these ques-
tions: why the interrogation took place at that precise moment and why precisely \textit{this} work by Veronese should have prompted the interrogation. These are the questions I hope to answer in the following.

Before discussing any of these questions, we must realize that both the official records of Veronese’s interrogation and the painting that occasioned it are isolated phenomena. In contrast to the situation in Tuscany, Venice did not have a tradition of portrayals of the Last Supper in monastery refectories and we know very little about the few precedents of Veronese’s painting. Bonifacio de’Pitati is supposed to have painted a \textit{Last Supper} for the refectory of the S. Andrea al Lido, but the identification is disputed.\textsuperscript{5} The only precedent for Veronese’s piece about which we know at least something, is Titian’s \textit{Last Supper}, which it was to replace, but the documentation on this work is also inadequate. Even the length of the painting’s existence is uncertain; not much can be ascertained other than that Vasari saw it and suspected that a substantial part of it was done by the studio, and that it was destroyed by fire in 1571.\textsuperscript{6}

Of course, there were other pictures in Venice depicting the \textit{Last Supper}, in particular by Tintoretto, but these were intended for very different uses. The majority of these pictures by Tintoretto flanked the place where the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist was kept. The charitable duties of the Brotherhoods of the Sacrament who ordered such paintings in numerous Venetian churches are expressed in several of these works. Such is the case in Tintoretto’s \textit{laterale} with the \textit{Last Supper} in the San Polo [Fig. 2]. This work was produced either \textit{in} or \textit{after}, but certainly not before 1574.\textsuperscript{7} Some years ago, it was argued that the disciple who is distributing the bread from the table to a needy person should be identified as Judas Iscariot. Perhaps this identification is not correct, but the fact is that there is a solid argument to support it, the argument being the purse in his belt.\textsuperscript{8} There is, at least, room for confusion, and the question arises as to why Tintoretto was never called before the Inquisition in Venice to account for this anomaly. Perhaps the \textit{momentum} had passed?

The tribunal of the Inquisition in Venice consisted of six people. First of all, there was the inquisitor, a member of the Franciscan order until 1560. After that date, this official was selected from the ranks of the Dominicans, and in the decades we are speaking of, usually came from the \textit{terrafirma}, the mainland of the Republic of Venice. The inquisitor conducted the interrogation. The chairmanship of the tribunal was divided between the nuncio and the Patriarch of Venice, who were occasionally represented by their \textit{auditori}. The nuncio was the Pope’s envoy from Rome; the Patriarch represented the diocese of Venice. Finally, there were the three \textit{Savi all’Eresia}, the representatives of the Republic.\textsuperscript{9} The tribunal maintained a balance on various fronts: between the Church and the State, between Venice and Rome and between the Church of Venice and the Church of Rome. There appears to have been remarkably harmonious cooperation within the tribunal, as no reports of internal conflict have survived. The primary reason for this harmony was the mutual objective: both the Vatican and the Serenissima, a republic that embraced Christian principles, were set against all forms of disturbances, and this most certainly included heresy.

The Inquisition had a more secular character in Venice than anywhere else and this may have resulted in milder sentences by this court. Death penalties were rarely pronounced by the Inquisition in Venice. The jurisdiction of the Venetian state itself, however, was not so mild. For example, just a few weeks after Veronese’s interrogation, Abraam Righetto escaped from the prison of the Inquisition near S. Giovanni in Bragora, because his guard, Michiel, could not bear to miss the sight of two thieves being hanged at the Piazzetta, thus combining a profound fondness for his profession with a glorious neglect of its duties.\textsuperscript{10} Still, nobody treated a confrontation with the Inquisition light-heartedly, not even in Venice.

It is symptomatic of the lack of interest in the composition of the tribunal in the literature on Veronese that the way in which the members of the college were identified is sloppy. Since Gino Fogolari in 1935, most writers have assumed the following composition: inquisitor Fra Aurelio Schellino, a friar of the Dominican order, from Brescia; Giovanni Trevisan, the Patriarch of Venice, nuncio Giambattista Dei, the archbishop of Rossano and the three \textit{Savi all’Eresia}: Giacomo Foscarini, Niccolo Venier and Alvise Zorzi. Emeric Schaffran follows Fogolari, but disposes of Schellino without giving any explanation. He seems to assume an Inquisition without an inquisitor, an eccentric point of view that is not followed. For that matter, Schaffran reports, without naming his source, that Giambattista Dei came from Rome. Michelangelo Muraro too follows Fogolari, but he is guilty of several minor inaccuracies: Foscarini is suddenly called Contarini and Alvise becomes Andrea Zorzi. Muraro also mentions that Venier acted as the tribunal’s secretary, though he does not give a source. André Chastel and Kaplan also agree with Fogolari, but between themselves, they cannot agree on Dei’s origins. Chastel claims that he was a Roman by birth; Kaplan suggests that he was originally Florentine, considering his name.\textsuperscript{11} None of these writers paid any attention to the fact that this tribunal had undergone a drastic change just before Veronese was confronted with it; a change that seems crucial to a thorough understanding of the circumstances leading up to this confrontation: a new nuncio had just been appointed.
The best source of information about those who held the office of nuncio in Venice between 1533 and 1577 is offered by their correspondence with their contacts in Rome, the *Nunziature di Venezia*, published between 1958 and 1977 in eleven volumes. The last four volumes in particular are relevant to this study. Remarkably, in this issue, there are no references to two of the aforementioned members of the tribunal: Fra Aurelio Schellino and Giambattista Dei, the archbishop of Rossano.

If we rely merely on the notes of *Nunziature’s* editors, Schellino’s predecessor as inquisitor in Venice, Fra Valerio Faenzi, would appear to have been immediately succeeded by Fra Marco Medici from Verona. Apparently a remark, made by Giovanni Antonio Facchinetti, the bishop of Nicastro and at that time the nuncio of Venice, on September 3rd 1569, has been overlooked. In a letter to his contact in Rome, Cardinal Michele Bonelli, Pope Pius V’s *nipote* and, like him, a Dominican, Facchinetti wrote: “il padre inquisitore venuto nuovamente m’haavea dato conto che in Gardone, castello della diocese di Brescia [...]”. This new inquisitor, with his Brescia background, was Schellino.

The absence of Giambattista Dei is, however, not an omission on the part of the editors of the *Nunziature*. Facchinetti was relieved by Giovanni Battista Castagna, at the time the one and only archbishop of Rossano. Castagna arrived in Venice on July 4th, 1573, exactly two weeks before Veronese’s interrogation. Just how eminent the position of nuncio in Venice was is obvious from the fact that both Facchinetti and Castagna later became Pope, if only for a brief period. Facchinetti held the position as Innocent IX for two months; Castagna was Urbanus VII for twelve days, the briefest pontificate ever.

Fogolari undoubtedly based his identification of Giambattista Dei on a document, such as the one dated October 12th 1573, in which the Inquisition issued a verdict in the case against a lawyer accused of Lutheranism, Antonio Venier. The opening words of the verdict read: “Ioannes Baptista Dei et Apostolicae Sedis grata Archiepiscopus Rossanensis”. Presumably, Fogolari did not notice that the opening lines of older documents repeatedly state: “Ioannes Antonius Dei et Apostolicae Sedis grata Episcopus Neocastrensis”. In these phrases, no more is said other than that Giambattista (Castagna) and Giovanni Antonio (Facchinetti) were respectively, by the grace of God and the papal throne, the archbishop of Rossano and the bishop of Nicastro. Exit Giambattista Dei and along with him goes his Roman or Florentine origin.

The reason for Veronese’s appearance before the Inquisition had, as previously stated, primarily been looked for in the iconography of the painting. The most recent endeavour in this direction was produced by Maria Elena Massimi, with a lengthy study aimed at showing that *Jesus Christ at the house of the Pharisee* was the original subject of the painting. This study leaves the reader wondering about the crucial question: why didn’t Veronese inform the inquisition right away that this indeed was the case?

And if the interrogation of Veronese was placed in a broader historical context, it was usually in quite general terms. One exponent of this approach is Muraro. He regarded the interrogation as a clash between, on the one hand, the triumphant atmosphere in Venice after the naval battle at Lepanto on October 7th 1571, when a fleet of the allies Spain, Venice and Rome achieved a victory over the fleet of the Ottoman Empire, and, on the other, the Council of Trent, that had issued regulations for a more stringent portrayal of religious images during the last meetings in 1562 and 1563. The celebratory mood after Lepanto must have given Veronese reason to include elements in his work that were not in accordance with Trent. Why this clash should take place years later and why Veronese should be a victim of it because of *this* painting for this location, was never explained by Muraro.

The first person to ask such pertinent questions and to attempt to answer them was Paul Kaplan, in 1997. He places the interrogation in the context of the developments and events that, as regards time, space and theme, were much closer, closer to 1573, closer to the SS. Giovanni e Paolo and closer to the biblical episode depicted by Veronese. Kaplan connects the interrogation of Veronese in particular to the separate peace that Venice negotiated with the Ottoman Empire on March 7th 1573, to the bull *In Coena Domini* that the Pope issued each year on Maundy Thursday, the celebration of the Last Supper, an annual bull that had led to friction between Rome and Venice since the appointment of the strict Pope Pius V and to the problems that the SS. Giovanni e Paolo raised when Rome attempted to reform the monastery. One must be grateful to Kaplan for introducing the *Nunziature di Venezia* into the literature on Veronese’s confrontation with the Inquisition. His argument, however, seems founded on a selective use of this source of information.

With this separate peace treaty, Venice broke the fragile alliance that had been formed with considerable effort by Pope Pius V in 1571 between Rome, Spain and Venice, to combat the heathen Ottoman Empire. Somewhere halfway through the formation of the alliance that led to the unexpected triumph at Lepanto and the separate peace treaty that Venice had concluded, Pius V died, on May 1st 1572, and Gregory XIII succeeded him to the office some ten days later. This new Pope also had every intention of fighting the Ottoman Empire, and when, at the beginning of April, the Venetian ambassador Paolo Tiepolo notified him of the separate peace
treaty, he was furious. Tiepolo's report describes how, standing with his back to the ambassador, he fulminated a ban on him. The Pope then refused to receive him for weeks. But when those weeks had passed, around May and certainly by June, his fury had cooled, he became approachable once more, and was once again willing to receive Tiepolo.19 Gregory was far from the rigidly strict figure that his predecessor had been. Particularly the understanding Spain showed for the Venetian attitude allegedly persuaded Gregory to let go of his anger. It is remarkable that there is absolutely no mention in the Nunziature that Rome considered excommunicating Venice in 1573 after the separate peace treaty, although it is reported - though only once - that Venice anticipated a ban at the time.20

The problems surrounding the bull In Coena Domini appear to have arisen before the alliance was established, mainly in 1569. Pope Pius V met with opposition, not only from Venice, but also from Naples and Milan and more especially from Spain.21 There was resistance against the greater control the Pope wanted to acquire by means of this bull over the local clergy, and against local policy pertaining to heretics and heathens. Allegedly, the clause that any party who left the alliance would be excommunicated was affixed to the version of this bull that Gregory XIII issued on March 19th 1573.22 However, the truth of this story is questionable. No trace of a bull with this appendix can be found in Venice, and the correspondence between the nuncio in Venice and his contacts in Rome do not give any reason to suspect a ban. On April 25th 1573, Facchinetti mentioned this bull, with no further comment, and copies of it were sent to him on May 9th, once again with no further comment. By that time, both parties already knew that Venice had caused the breach in the alliance.23 Facchinetti did not even feel that he needed to notify Rome that he had received the bull. There is absolutely no indication that the bull contained any inflammatory material such as the excommunication of the party responsible for breaking the alliance - that is to say, of Venice.

Kaplan states that the monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo was in an awkward situation, around 1573. His text implies that the monastery was a bastion of heresy. We find this idea recurrent in other literature on Veronese's interrogation.24 Although the monastery seems to have been experiencing all sorts of problems, it may seriously be doubted whether there was much - if any - heresy involved.

Around 1570 and 1571, while Facchinetti was still a nuncio in Venice, the monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo was experiencing two major problems, both of which were related to the implementation of the decisions made at the Council of Trent. There were strong feelings of resistance against the conversion of the monastery from a Conventual into an Observant house by the external appointment of a vicar from the latter, stricter tendency, and against the introduction of a minimum age of sixteen for novices. The conflicts with Facchinetti, who wanted to enforce the observance of the Council's regulations just as fanatically as Pope Pius V, ran so high that, on November 15th 1570, Facchinetti even spoke of excommunicating the church of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo. A month later, on December 16th 1570, he reported to Rome that the monastery needed a diligent vicar "per corregere i vitii loro che si sentono grandissimi".25 However, Facchinetti did not specify the vices in question. A definitive solution to the problem of the vicariate was reached in August 1571 with the appointment of Eliseo Capys, a member of the Observants, in that capacity, a decision imposed by the general of the order.26 Reactions from the SS. Giovanni e Paolo to this appointment are not documented and so it seems the brethren resigned themselves to their fate.

The second conflict involved the regulation by the Council of Trent about the minimum age of sixteen for novices entering the monastery, to which the monastery of SS. Giovanni e Paolo objected. There were several boys under sixteen there who had taken the habit, and the brethren were frightened of losing them. Facchinetti paid a long visit to the monastery on January 12th 1571, during which this problem was addressed and solved, at least for appearances' sake, as Facchinetti held no illusions about the brethren being completely convinced by the necessity to reform.27 Again, pressure had to be exerted by the general of the order before this issue could be settled. The outcome was that the boys under sixteen were sent home, though the parents objected on the grounds that they could not afford to keep them. It would, therefore, appear that the monastery's motives to keep the boys were not financial.28

In order to get a better picture of the problems between the nuncio and the Dominican monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo a more complete picture is needed. During the Council of Trent, the decision fell to regiment the monasteries, but before this could be done, substantial opposition needed to be overcome. A large minority from the monasteries were set against it. Even during the Council, the Dominicans in particular objected, submitting written objections as well.29 The problems between the monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo and the Vatican should therefore certainly be regarded in the light of the Dominican resistance to the regimentation of the monasteries. In the letters Facchinetti wrote during his office in Venice, he does indeed occasionally refer to heresy among monks, but never in connection with Dominicans, nor with the brethren at the monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo. Shouldn't we consider it likely that these "vitii", these vices,
refer in particular to their recalcitrance to comply with the regulations laid down by the Council of Trent?

Just after the monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo had capitulated and the boys had been sent home, a fire broke out, causing substantial damage. Rumour had it, as Facchinetti remarked in a letter dated February 14th 1571, that soldiers housed at the monastery had started the fire. From other letters by Facchinetti we can deduce that they were soldiers from Switzerland.

In December 1570, some captains and their men, from both the Swiss Catholic cantons and from Graubünden, had arrived in Venice to reinforce the troops. The first group offered their services for combat on land, the latter for both on land and for the fleet. The Venetian authorities decided to send the soldiers from the Catholic regions of Switzerland back until further notice, but did not know what to do about the others. They could really use reinforcements for the fleet, but suspected at least part of the "Grisoni" of heresy. The authorities put off taking a decision, and consequently the soldiers were not paid for weeks, and resentment among the troops increased. It would appear that they were lodged in the monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo to await the decision concerning their future, and that their dissatisfaction conveniently explained the fire.

Facchinetti reported that the refectory, the grain store and the canteen had been destroyed, including a small stock of grain and wine. However, he was remarkably silent about such details as the complete loss of Titian's Last Supper, remarkable because Titian and he had known each other for some time. Some years before, Bonelli had ordered a painting from Titian, preferably a Saint Catherine, via Facchinetti. After receiving a picture with that subject, more than a year later, Bonelli had asked Facchinetti to pass on his thanks to Titian for him.

Veronese finished his Last Supper, which was to replace Titian's version, on April 20th 1573, two weeks after Facchinetti had informed the Pope about the separate peace, and he was interrogated on July 18th 1573, two weeks after Castagna had assumed office as the new papal nuncio. White smoke did not just proclaim a new Pope, but a whole new papal court as well. Some changes were made immediately, but others needed a little more time. Throughout the Counter Reformation, the Vatican underwent drastic transformations whenever a new pope assumed office.

The most striking example of changing fortunes as a consequence of this succession of popes was Cardinal Giovanni Gerolamo Morone. During the last meetings of the Council of Trent, which took place during the pontificate of Pius IV, Morone had so much influence that he is called the architect of the Council. Under Pius IV’s predecessor, Morone would never have been given the opportunity, as Pope Paul IV had accused him of heresy and Pius IV’s successor, Pius V, would also have made the same accusation, if it had not discredited the Council of Trent – and this Council was sacred to this saintly Pope. By contrast, Gregory XIII allowed the aging Morone to perform delicate missions. The conclusion that the Holy Roman Church could not form a united front during the Counter Reformation seems quite accurate.

For Facchinetti too, the succession of Popes had consequences. After Gregory XIII assumed office, he no longer reported to Bonelli, Pius V’s secretario del stato, or, when Bonelli fell ill, to Girolamo Rusticucci, but to the new secretario del stato, Tolomeo Galli. On May 24th 1572, just a few weeks after the death of Pius V, it was reported that Facchinetti himself was to be replaced. However, he remained in office until, at the beginning of April 1573, the reports of Venice’s separate peace hit Rome like a bombshell. And when he had to take to his bed for several weeks after that, his career as nuncio was over. He was accused of providing Rome with information that was too optimistically worded. To justify himself, in his remaining weeks in Venice, he maintained his scepticism about the size of the peace party in Venice and he attempted to depict his reaction to the Doge’s announcement of the peace as more indignant than it really had been. It was to no avail. On June 6th 1573, he was told that Castagna was to replace him as nuncio, and immediately after introducing his successor to the Senate, Facchinetti left the city.

Veronese painted the new picture of the Last Supper for the SS. Giovanni e Paolo, but, unfortunately, we do not have the contract. We do not know who commissioned the work. Carlo Ridolfi has suggested that Fra Andrea de’Buoni, about whom we know next to nothing, commissioned it, but perhaps the prior is more plausible. Fogolari identified him as Adriano Alvari, a rising star in the Dominican sky. Veronese said, during the interrogation, that he did not know his name. I will not comment on the probability of this statement. Veronese said that the prior had been “here”, meaning the spot where he now stood, in the San Teodoro, where the Inquisition met in the summer months. Had the prior been formally questioned? Why were no records made of this interrogation?

Who actually brought Veronese’s Last Supper in the SS. Giovanni e Paolo before the Inquisition? Most cases were submitted by the Savi all’Eresia, but is that the case here? Who actually had access to the refectory of the Dominican monastery, besides the brethren themselves? We know that Vasari had been there once, when Titian’s version of the painting was still there. If they so wished, private individuals could visit the refectory, and Vasari evidently wished to. Who else wanted to visit it?
if he had not visited the most prestigious monastery of his order in that city. Isn’t it likely that, on that occasion, the prior’s “interrogation” was held, in front of the picture itself? That might explain why there are no records of it: these notes were never made. Isn’t it likely, too, that Schellino himself brought the case before the Inquisition? The question remains: why?

We don’t need an in-depth understanding of psychology to realise that Schellino wanted to prove himself to the nuncio who had arrived in Venice only two weeks earlier, especially when everything points to the fact that this session must really have been the very first that Castagna attended in the city.39

In view of the precarious situation in which Venice found itself, so soon after the separate peace with the Ottoman Empire, which was deeply regretted by Rome and which was the reason for Castagna’s arrival, the independent attitude that Schellino took towards Michelangelo’s fresco, so disputed in Rome, was frankly admirable.40 Schellino did not only show personal valour, but he also immediately made it very clear to Castagna that he was no longer in Rome, but in Venice. By working towards a solution of the described problem, Schellino also proved his efficiency and his tolerance. But in the end, and perhaps most importantly, Schellino proved, by summoning the famous painter Veronese before the Inquisition to question an ambitious work for the prestigious Dominican monastery of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo, that he spared no one, not even the order to which he himself belonged.

To summarise, the immediate reason for Veronese’s interrogation was the iconography of his painting, but the underlying reason was that the inquisitor felt the need to prove himself to the newly appointed nuncio. We might even conclude that the crucial dynamics in the entire proceedings had very little to do with Veronese but everything with internal ecclesiastical politics.

Until 1867, when Armand Baschet chanced upon the records in the archives, no one had even a suspicion of Veronese’s interrogation. And yet, if anyone could have known about it, it would have been in the building adjacent to that of the SS. Giovanni e Paolo, the Scuola Grande di San Marco. They were not merely neighbours; this rich Scuola also had the rights to the main chapel in the SS. Giovanni e Paolo itself. On August 10th 1573, scarcely three weeks after Veronese’s interrogation, the Scuola sent three paintings that had been hanging in the Sala Capitolare back to the person who had commissioned them [Fig. 3]. These works by Tintoretto, depicting episodes from the legend of Saint Mark, the patron saint of the Scuola, had been manufactured in the years after 1562 and were commissioned by the Guardian Grande at that time, Tommaso Rangone, who was granted this office again in

During the proceedings, it became evident that inquisitor Fra Aurelio Schellino was very well acquainted with Veronese’s picture, even better than Veronese himself, who apparently suffered a lapse of memory when he remarked that one of the soldiers was drinking and another was eating. As the interrogation was not held in the SS. Giovanni e Paolo, both the inquisitor and the painter would have had to speak from memory. The inquisitor had a detailed knowledge of the work, as is obvious from his question about the nosebleed that Veronese had painted. He knew the painting and so he must have visited the monastery, which might well be expected, of course, from a Dominican friar. Actually, it would have been more surprising

3) Jacopo Tintoretto, «Saint Mark Saves a Saracen from Being Drowned», 1562 or later, oil on canvas, 3.98 x 3.37 m; Venice, Gallerie dell’Accademia. Photo: Collection CKD/RU Nijmegen.
1568. Rangone, in turn, returned the paintings to the Scuola from where they were transported to Tintoretto a little under a month later, on September 8th. Tintoretto promised the Scuola to complete them and to remove the figure of Rangone “et in loco di essa mettendo altra accomodata”. Rangone’s prominent place, central to the action in the pictures, had presumably become a problem for the Scuola. Dolce had already criticised Tintoretto, in terms that can hardly be called implicit, because he had included a number of senators in a painting of the Excommunication by Pope Alexander III of Frederick Barbarossa in the Sala del Gran Consiglio: “ne hanno punto da far con la storia”. After the Council of Trent, the inclusion of contemporaries in religious pictures was felt to be even more of a problem, certainly if they were included in the action. In April 1571, a conflict had arisen between the Scuola and Rangone, but what induced the Scuola to delay the return of these paintings until about two and a half years later, until exactly that moment, in 1573? Were they taking advantage of the tense situation that had arisen just around the corner at the SS. Giovanni e Paolo? In the end, it looks as if Tintoretto has altered nothing at all in the paintings, an oversight that does not seem to have had any unfavourable consequences for him. Again, had the momentum, by the end of 1573, already passed?

The question is whether or not the display of Venetian independence that Schellino put on during Veronese’s interrogation was actually necessary. Just one week before Castagna left Rome on June 20th 1573, Facchinetti was informed that the Pope’s wrath incurred by Venice had cooled a few days earlier. Castagna must have left Rome realising that his position was less precarious than it had formerly appeared. Schellino would not have known that yet, and the character of the new nuncio would have been unknown in Venice. However, it must soon have become obvious that Castagna differed greatly to Facchinetti. In his letters to Rome, Castagna worries about the delicate missions of Cardinal Morone. Would the old man manage to reach his destinations in Genua and, later, Vienna safely? It is almost touching to read Castagna’s concern and his relief in response to positive reports in his letters. Touching is a word that we would never need to use in reference to Castagna’s predecessor, Facchinetti.

If the facts do not lie, Dei is a false lead, Facchinetti a zealot who, at times, needed to be curbed by the Curia itself and Castagna particularly human, however dedicated he too was to the cause of combating heretics and heathens. And Paolo Veronese was, even more so than Tintoretto, for a while, very much in the wrong place at the wrong, wrong time.

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2. Integral transcriptions in P. Fehl, “Veronese and the Inquisition. A study of the subject matter of the so-called ‘Feast in the House of Levi’”, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 58, 1961, pp. 325–354 and M. Muraro, “La Cène de Véronèse: les figures, l’interrogatoire, l’histoire”, in Symboles de la renaissance, III, Paris, 1990, pp. 185–221. Veronese was not the only painter who was interrogated by the Inquisition. Just a few years before, Riccardo Perucolo had even been sent to the stake, but not because of a painting.


During these years, it was usual for only two of the Savi all'Ere-

tia to be present at the interrogations.

Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Santo Uffizio, Busta 36 (Abraham

Righetto).

G. Fogolari, "Il processo dell'inquisizione a Paolo Veronese",

Archivio Veneto, 5/7, 1935, pp. 352–386; E. Schaffran, "Der Inqui-

sionsprozess gegen Paolo Veronese", Archiv für Kulturgeschichte,

1960, pp. 178–193; Muraro 1990, pp. 185–221; A. Chastel, "Dibattiti

con l'inquisizione (1573)", in Chronique de la peinture italienne à la


F. Gaeta & A. Stella, eds., Nunziature di Venezia, I–XI, Rome,


volume XI by Adriana Buffardi (1972).

Giovanni Antonio Facchinetti to Michele Bonelli, d.d. 3-9-1569.

Nunziature di Venezia IX, p. 119.

Giambattista Castagna to Tolomeo Galli, d.d. 4-7-1573. Nun-

ziate di Venezia XI, pp. 48–49.

Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Santo Uffizio, Busta 33 (Antonio

Venier).

M. E. Massimi, "La cosidetta Cena in casa di Levi di Paolo

Veronese: descrizione preliminare all'identificazione del soggetto

come Cena in casa del fariseo", Venezia Cinquecento, 14/27, 2004,

pp. 123–168 and "La regola e l'eccezione: le argomentazioni della

Cena in casa del fariseo e le ragioni della committenza domenicana",


Kaplan 1997, pp. 100–105. I'll ignore the Emortuale by Urban

Urbani, mentioned by Fogolari, Gemin and Kaplan, because it con-

cerns events that took place well before 1568.


453.

Stella, "Prefazione" in Nunziature di Venezia IX, pp. xii–xiii;,

Kaplan 1997, p. 103.

Kaplan 1997, pp. 104 and 121 (note 96).

Letters between Facchinetti and Galli, d.d. 25-4-1573 and 9-5-


Facchinetti to Girolamo Rusticucci, d.d. 16-12-1570.

Nunziature di Venezia IX, p. 409.


Facchinetti to Bonelli, d.d. 12-1-1571. Nunziature di Venezia IX,


Facchinetti to Bonelli, d.d. 7-2-1571. Nunziature di Venezia IX,

pp. 442–444.

H. Jedin, Krisis und Abschluß des Trienter Konzils 1562/63,


Facchinetti to Bonelli, d.d. 14-2-1571. Nunziature di Venezia IX,

pp. 445–446.

Letters between Facchinetti and Rusticucci or Bonelli, from 13-

12-1570 onwards. Nunziature di Venezia IX, pp. 407, 410, 413, 417,

424, 427–428 and 449.

Facchinetti to Bonelli, d.d. 22-3-1567, and Bonelli to Facchinet-


M. Firpo, Inquisizione romana e Controriforma. Studi sul cardi-

nal Giovanni Morone (1509–1580) e il suo processo d'eresia, Brescia,

2005, passim.

Facchinetti to Galli, d.d. 24-5-1572. Nunziature di Venezia X,

pp. 197–199.


441–442.


xxii–xxiii.

Castagna to Galli, d.d. 11-7-1573. Nunziature di Venezia XI, pp.

51–54.


In the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Santo Uffizio, Busta 33–36,

no other sessions of the Inquisition between Castagna's arrival on

July 4th and the interrogation of Veronese on July 18th 1573 are docu-

mented.


E. Weddigen, "Thomas Philologus Ravennas. Gelehrter,

Wohltaeter und Mäzen", Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte, 9, 1974,

pp. 15–18 and 61; R. Pallucchini & P. Rossi, Tintoretto. Le opere sacre


Weddigen 1974, p. 57.

Galli to Facchinetti, d.d. 13-6-1573 and 20-6-1573. Nunziature

di Venezia X, pp. 475 and 479.

Nunziature di Venezia XI, passim.