

Bryan Cussen

# Pope Paul III and the Cultural Politics of Reform

1534-1549

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and the Cultural Politics of Reform



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*Bryan Cussen*

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For Jane, for everything.



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# List of Abbreviations

<b>ASBo</b>	Archivio di Stato di Bologna
<b>ASF</b>	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
<b>ASMo</b>	Archivio di Stato di Modena
<b>ASN</b>	Archivio di Stato di Napoli
<b>ASPr</b>	Archivio di Stato di Parma
<b>ASV</b>	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
<b>ASVe</b>	Archivio di Stato di Venetia
<b>C.T.</b>	<i>Concilium Tridentinum: diariorum, actorum, epistularum, tractatum nova collectio</i>
<b>BAV</b>	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
<b>DBI</b>	Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani



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## Note on Transcriptions

Original orthography has largely been retained despite regional variations. Modern accents and punctuation have been introduced. Abbreviations have been generally expanded. Marginal insertions have been silently incorporated into the text.



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## Note on Money

Giving a concise and lucid statement of monetary values in Renaissance Italy is no easy matter, given that the Italian states had their own individual currencies and that the value between gold and silver fluctuated. For simplicity's sake, I have restricted money references to the two principal gold coins of the Papal States in the 1530s and 40s: the scudo d'oro in oro and the gold cameral ducat. The value of the ducat was slightly more than the scudo which was worth around 100 baiocchi, the currency for everyday purchases in Rome. In this period, an unskilled worker earned about 48 scudi a year, rent in the poorer areas of Rome was around 12 scudi a year, and annual grain consumption for an adult cost around 5 scudi.



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# Introduction

## Abstract

Throughout Europe the election of Alessandro Farnese as Paul III in 1534 prompted new hope of Church reform. In considering his fifteen-year reign, some scholars have seen Paul as a champion of reform, others as two-faced in his actions, and others as hampered by character weakness. This book offers a new perspective by taking a cultural approach. Drawing on texts of the time, it explores how the fate of reform was determined by cultural values of honour and tradition, and how honour intersected with politics. The book shows how honour led Paul to pursue reform, and how it prompted him to pull back from a reform program that would have undermined codes of honour and threatened the safety of Rome.

**Keywords:** Paul III; curia; reform; cultural history; textual style; correspondence

It was late morning on 13 October 1534 when Cardinal Innocenzo Cibo stepped up to the open window at the Vatican Palace. Looking out over the assembled crowd below, he raised his voice in proclamation of the time-honoured formula: 'I announce to you tidings of great joy: we have a pope! The Most Reverend Lord Alessandro, Bishop of Ostia, Cardinal Farnese, who has taken the name of Paul III.'<sup>1</sup> The crowd erupted. This was the first time in over a hundred years that one of their own, a Roman, had claimed the papal tiara. Soon after, the cheering rose higher as the familiar figure of Farnese was carried high through the crowd on the portable throne, the *sedia gestatoria*, to give his first blessing as pope. Church bells rang across the city and canons fired in salute.

Having been a cardinal for forty-one years, Alessandro Farnese was known throughout Rome and was regarded highly for his nobility and magnificence,

1 'Annuncio vobis gaudium magnum, papam habemus. Reverendissimum Dominum Alexandrum Episcopum Hostiensem, Cardinalem de Farnesio nuncupatum et imposuit sibi nomen Paulus III', From the Diary of Blasius de Martinellis, in *Acta Selecta Caeremonialia Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae*, ed. by P.D. Joanne Baptista Gattico, Vol. 1, p. 328.

for his learning and elegance, and for his patronage and generosity. As Dean of the College of Cardinals he was well-respected by his peers among whom he had crafted broad alliances. These had served him well going into the conclave which saw his election within two days, one of the shortest conclaves in the Renaissance. This outcome of the election had been widely anticipated and now that it had been swiftly confirmed, the excitement about the coming pontificate spread rapidly. A leader of one of the local city districts, Marcello Alberini, wrote in his diary that: 'Since he was Roman and of illustrious blood, so great was the expectation of this pontiff that the people were at a loss as to how to do him sufficient honour'.<sup>2</sup> So Romans pulled out all stops with celebrations and rituals of homage continuing for many days. They reached their high point at the papal coronation on 3 November. The ambassador for Bologna wrote that: 'The coronation of Our Lord was held last Tuesday with the greatest pomp and triumph as ever could be found. There were magnificent festivals, bonfires and fireworks throughout the whole of Rome'.<sup>3</sup>

As couriers rode out from Rome with the news, the election was received with broader approbation as Farnese was held in esteem by Italian and European rulers, had performed proficiently in high Church offices, and had publicly supported the holding of a General Council to address the ills of Christendom. Even Erasmus, a persistent and biting critic of the papacy, wrote a letter of congratulations to Farnese praising his virtues and expressing confidence that health and tranquillity would now be restored to the Church.<sup>4</sup> Erasmus was one of many whose hopes of reform now rose.

## Calls for Reform

Since the scandal of the Avignon Schism in the late fourteenth century, when three popes contended for the allegiance of Christendom, voices had been rising throughout Europe for reform of the Church.<sup>5</sup> Although

2 'Era così grande la aspettatione di questo pontefice per essere romano e di sangue illustre che il popolo non sapeva con che poterlo tanto honorare che satisfacesse a se stesso', Marcello Alberini, *I Ricordi*, pp. 429-430.

3 'la corronatione di Nostro Signore si fece Martedi passato con grandissima pompa et trionffo come una tal cosa si ricerca, così si sono fatti per tutta Roma grandissime feste, fuochi et girandolle', Report of Antonio Maria Papazzoni to the Senate of Bologna, 5 November 1534, ASBo, Senato Lettere, Serie VII, Vol. 12, unpaginated.

4 Letter of Erasmus to Paul III, 23 January 1535, in Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, Vol. 11, Letter 2988, pp. 61-63.

5 See John W. O'Malley, 'Historical Thought and the Reform Crisis of the Early Sixteenth Century', pp. 531-548 and Brad S. Gregory, 'Christian Reform and its Discontents', pp. 590-592.

reform was much talked about as the Schism was resolved and the papacy reasserted itself in Rome, no practical reform measures were enacted. In fact, clerical abuses grew in scope and sophistication. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, there was a view throughout much of Europe that the spiritual and pastoral goals of the Church had been overtaken by goals of social advancement and personal enrichment. The three main sources of complaint against the clergy were simony (the sale of Church offices or spiritual graces), pluralism (the holding of multiple benefices to gain multiple incomes), and absenteeism (the failure to be resident in a benefice that had the *cura animarum*, the care of souls.) This last complaint was made especially of bishops who typically held many such benefices and often resided in none of them.

There was also widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of the men who were admitted to the clergy and religious orders: friars, monks, priests, bishops, abbots, cardinals and the pope himself. A lack of education of parish clergy meant that many barely knew how to say Mass or to carry out other sacramental and pastoral duties.<sup>6</sup> Because offices were sold or given to relatives who had no sense of religious calling, the duties of an office were often given only perfunctory attention and incumbency was exercised mainly in self-interest. So, while belief and practice among the faithful remained fairly stable, a strain of anti-clericalism rose throughout Christendom. The common theme in contemporary critique was that the flock had been given to the care of the wolves.<sup>7</sup>

The locus of most scandal was the perceived degeneracy at the centre of the Church, the papal court. The blatant excess and venal behaviour of the Borgia, della Rovere, and Medici popes provoked both censure and satire. A popular work from the new European printing presses was Erasmus' *Julius Exclusus*, a dialogue showing the recently deceased Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) arriving at the gates of heaven only to find them locked, then berating St Peter for not recognising the papal dignity and opening up, but ultimately being sent on his way as unfit to enter.<sup>8</sup> From within Rome the venomous epigrams on the statue *Pasquino* flayed and lampooned the pope and the curia on a daily basis. These epigrams were put up in the dark of

6 Denys Hay, *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 98.

7 See Ottavia Niccoli, 'Anticlericalismo italiano e rituali dell' infamia da Alessandro VI a Pio V', p. 923 and Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, pp. 52-57.

8 Erasmus Desiderius, *Julius Exclusus*. Note there have been claims that the work was written by Richard Pace, but the attribution to Erasmus is still held widely by scholars. See Aysha Pollnitz, *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain*, p. 71.

night on the base of the statue, then read eagerly by crowds in the morning, quickly copied down and sent off to printers for distribution throughout the city and beyond.<sup>9</sup>

It was not just clerical behaviour that provoked this critique, so did the curia's labyrinthine system of financial imposts, crafted to garner funds from benefices and from papal warrants in relation to sacramental and pastoral practices. The benefice system arose from initially justifiable practices in the Middle Ages, such as allowing clerics to hold more than one benefice when the original benefice was so small that its income was insufficient to sustain the cleric.<sup>10</sup> By the Renaissance, however, these practices had multiplied into a series of financial devices that enabled benefices to be sold not only as whole property lots but in parts, with portions of their income bundled for investment with an annual interest rate. The income could also be used to fund pensions which were usually distributed to relatives of the benefice holder.<sup>11</sup> The sales were made not only when the benefices were vacant but also in prospect of their future vacancy by a system called *reservation*. This prompted Martin Luther's observation that: 'the Romanists traffic in livings more disgracefully than the Gentiles under the cross trafficked with Christ's garments'.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries a steady stream of prominent Churchmen produced documents, called memorials, that catalogued these abuses and offered advice on how they should be corrected. Among these were Domenico de Domenichi's *Tractatus de reformationibus Romanae Curiae* (1458), Nicholas of Cusa's *Reformatio Generalibus* (1459), Rodrigo Sanchez de Arevalo's *Libellus de remediis afflictiae ecclesiae* (1469), Tommaso Giustiniani and Vincenzo Querini's *Libellus ad Leonem X* (1513), Zaccaria Ferreri's *De Reformatione Ecclesiae Suasoria* (1522) and Lorenzo Campeggio's *De depravato statu ecclesiae* (1522). Most of these memorials pleaded for the restriction of priestly and episcopal ordination to men of proven worthy character and the rigorous application of existing laws which regulated clerical behaviour, particularly the practices of the Roman curia.<sup>13</sup>

9 See Valerio Marucci, Antonio Marzo, and Angelo Romano (eds.), *Pasquinate Romane del Cinquecento*, Vol. 1.

10 See Kirsi Salonen and Jussi Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career at the Roman Curia 1458-1471*, pp. 42-44.

11 See Barbara Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform, and the Church as Property 1492-1563*, pp. 17-21. More detail on the benefice system will be given in Chapter 1.

12 Martin Luther, 'An Appeal to the Ruling Class', p. 428.

13 The reform efforts of these clerics are treated in Chapter 6 of Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, Vol. 1.

The plea of Ferreri to Pope Adrian VI resonated far and wide: 'Purga Romam, purgatur mundus!' ('Cleanse Rome and the world will be cleansed!').<sup>14</sup>

Occasionally the pressure rose to the extent that popes or Councils also produced such reform documents, but they were either not published or not put into effect in any meaningful way. Examples of these were Pius II's *Pastor Aeternus* (1464), Sixtus IV's Bull *Quoniam regnatium cura* (c.1482), and Alexander VI's *In apostolicae sedis specula* (c.1496), none of which were published. One document that had some effect was the Fifth Lateran Council's *Si summus rerum opifex* (1513) which prohibited simony in papal elections. This decree was actually implemented and prevented outright exchange of money.<sup>15</sup> But in enduring effect it meant merely that papal aspirants had to be more adroit in promises to their potential electors.

In 1517, Luther's Ninety-Five Theses opened a cleft in the Church that gradually became a chasm. But the abuses continued. It was not until after the devastating Sack of Rome by imperial troops in 1527 that a systemic and moral response was seriously entertained within the Roman curia. The murder, rape and pillage of the Sack that went on for months was widely seen as divine retribution for the decadence at the core of the Church.<sup>16</sup>

The word reform by this time, then, predominantly meant action to address the institutionalised malpractice and unworthy behaviour of the clergy, especially clergy of the curia. This represented a shift in meaning over the centuries. For the early Church Fathers, like Irenaeus (c.130-c.202), the concept of reform was one of the personal renewal of each Christian. This stemmed from the theology of St Paul which saw baptism as the beginning of lifelong acts of renewal to conform oneself progressively to the image and likeness of God.<sup>17</sup> That concept persisted throughout the Middle Ages but alongside it, especially from the time of Gregory VII (1073-1085), grew ideas of reform of the structure and discipline of the Church. These ideas became widespread after the Council of Constance (1414-1418) which, although it

14 Zaccaria Ferreri, 'De Reformatione Ecclesiae Suasoria', in Societas Goerresiana, *Concilium Tridentinum diarium, actorum, epistolarum, tractatum nova collectio*, Vol. XII, p. 27. (Hereafter cited as C.T.)

15 For the history of this decree, originally a Bull of Julius II, see Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, Vol. VI, p. 440.

16 Cardinal Gonzaga, for example, said: 'All this did not happen by chance, but through divine justice', quoted in Marjorie Reeves, *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, p. 276. See also Kenneth Gouwens, *Remembering the Renaissance: Humanist Narratives of the Sack of Rome*, pp. 170-172.

17 There were however significant differences in emphasis between the Fathers of the East and West. See the landmark work of Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*.

ended the Avignon Schism, left many of the structural and disciplinary issues in the Church unresolved. Personal renewal as part of the faith journey retained a niche in the growth of lay spiritual movements like the *Devotio Moderna* which was popular in the Netherlands and Germany in the fifteenth century.<sup>18</sup> But the renewal that most reform writers and preachers called for was one that would address the moral collapse spreading from Rome. The principal targets of reform, then, were the clergy and clerical structures. During the pontificate of Paul III this was encapsulated in a letter from the papal legates at the Council of Trent to the pope's grandson, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, conveying through him to the pope the areas being discussed by the prelates who had gathered for the Council:

in order that this be the reform that is universally desired and waited for [...] which can be seen as addressing these principal points: collation of benefices with the care of souls, ordination of clerics without proper authorisation, exemptions from punishment, as much as for chapters as for individuals and religious, who can preach and confess in relation to who has the care of souls; to which can be added trade in indulgences for the building of Saint Peter's and for the crusades. As for the Roman court, there are two things that scandalise the world and diminish trust: one is avarice and the other is pomp and luxury, both of which need to be effectively engaged with genuine reform of the penitentiary, the chancery and the rota. Finally, what is most important in the whole of reform is that churches are conferred on persons who are able and willing to serve for service itself and not for mercenary reasons, for without this every attempt at reform would be rendered vain.<sup>19</sup>

These aspirations of the prelates are a useful summary of the agenda for reform that will be considered throughout this book.

18 See Lewis Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, Vol. 1, pp. 41-43.

19 'che questa sia quella reformatione o simile a quella che hoggi universalmente si desidera e aspetta [...] il che par che consista in questi punti principali: collatione de benefici curati, ordinazione de clerici senza licenza, punir esenti, tanto capitoli quanto persone private et religiosi, circa il predicare et confessare et quel che concerne la cura dell'anime; vi si aggiungono le queste et indulgentie per la fabrica di San Pietro et cruciata. Quanto alla corte di Roma, par che due cose scandalezino il mondo et li levino il credito: una l'avaritia, l'altra le pompe et il luxu, alle quali due cose quando si provedesse effettualmente verria reformata la penetentiarina, la cancellaria et la rota, et non restaria altro che quel che è capo principale di tutta la reformatione, cioè che le chiese si conferissero a persone che le possino et vogliono servire per se medesime et non per mercenarii, perchè senza questo ogni conato di riformatione riuscirebbe vano', Letter of the Council Legates to Cardinal Farnese, 7 March 1546, *C.T.*, Vol. IV, pp. 501-502.

## Scholarship on Paul III and Reform

Paul III's pontificate was one of the longest in the Renaissance, he oversaw the most serious attempt at reform in nearly 120 years, he called the Council of Trent, approved foundation of new religious orders such as the Jesuits, and encouraged missions to the New World. Yet most historians of the sixteenth century have only given passing attention to him. There is no biography of Paul III written in English. The only full biography was published in Italian by Carlo Capasso in 1924 and has never been translated.<sup>20</sup> A little earlier, the great German historian Ludwig Pastor had given a substantial treatment of Paul III's pontificate in his *Geschichte der Päpste*.<sup>21</sup> This was later translated into two English volumes.<sup>22</sup> Since Capasso and Pastor, most accounts of Paul III and the movement for Church reform have been limited to contextual considerations in studies whose main focus has been clerics who were reformers during his reign, such as the so-called *spirituali*,<sup>23</sup> or biographies of contemporary cardinals,<sup>24</sup> or in considerations of the Council of Trent.<sup>25</sup>

20 Carlo Capasso, *Paolo III 1534-49*, Vols. 1 & 2. Capasso earlier wrote *La politica di Papa Paolo III*, Vols. 1 & 2.

21 Ludwig Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, Vol. V.

22 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, Vols. XI and XII. When Pastor is cited throughout this book, the English volumes are intended.

23 The *spirituali* were a loose-knit group of elite intellectual clerics and lay people who, through study and dialogue, explored inner renewal through faith and grace and institutional renewal through correction of abuses. Their group dynamics and theological positions attracted significant attention in the 1960s and 70s prompted by the work of Delio Cantimori, for example, his *Eretici italiani Del Cinquecento: Ricerche storiche* and *Prospettive di storia Ereticale Italiana del Cinquecento*. There have also been some new explorations in recent times: Gigliola Fragnito, *Cinquecento italiano: religione, cultura e potere dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma*; Camilla Russell, 'Religious Reforming Currents in Sixteenth-Century Italy: The *Spirituali* and the Tridentine Debates over Church Reform'; and chapters in Philip Benedict, Silvana Seidel Menchi and Alain Tallon, *La Réforme en France et en Italie*. The *spirituali* will be considered here principally in Chapter 4.

24 See Elisabeth Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome, and Reform*; Francesco Cesareo, *Humanism and Catholic Reform: The Life and Work of Gregorio Cortese (1483-1548)*; Richard M. Douglas, *Jacopo Sadoletto, 1477-1547: Humanist and Reformer*; Thomas Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet*; Kate J.P. Lowe, *Church and Politics in Renaissance Italy: The Life and Career of Cardinal Francesco Soderini*; William V. Hudon, *Marcello Cervini and Ecclesiastical Government in Tridentine Italy*; Paul V. Murphy, *Ruling Peacefully: Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga and Patrician Reform in Sixteenth-century Italy*.

25 See Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*; John O'Malley, *Trent: What happened at the Council*; Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular*; Paolo Prodi, 'Riforma interiori e disciplinamento sociale in San Carlo Borromeo'. The substantial biographical entry in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 'Paolo III, papa', Vol. 81 (2014), by Gigliola Fragnito is also a useful resource.



Outside of reform scholarship there have been a few works about Farnese politics, art and architecture that have provided some biographical context on members of the family.<sup>26</sup> There has been little in depth about Paul III with the exception of two excellent monographs by the art historian Roberto Zapperi.<sup>27</sup> The output of shorter contributions in scholarly articles specifically on Paul III and his pontificate has been similarly modest, again most in Italian or German a century or more ago and, in recent times, a few in English and a handful in Italian by art historians.<sup>28</sup>

Of the scholars who have written on Paul III's role in Church reform, most credit him with initiatives that went beyond those of any other Renaissance pope saying, though, that these initiatives would have had greater impact but for his complex character that also restrained reform at critical points. In his supposed contradictory actions, some historians see Paul juggling spiritual and worldly motivations, others posit a personality enigma that is difficult to unravel, and others see him as weak in character, particularly in indulging his family, and thus two-faced on reform.<sup>29</sup>

The contention of this book is that Paul III is not so difficult to understand if greater attention is given to the culture of the time, the culture that shaped Alessandro Farnese on his way to the papacy and that surrounded him as pope, both in Rome and on the wider European stage. Most scholars acknowledge his humanist education as a young man, but there is little attention to how his humanist orientation developed over the years, nor of

26 See for example Helge Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy* and Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts*.

27 Roberto Zapperi, *La leggenda del papa Paolo III: Arte e censura nella Roma pontificia and Tiziano, Paolo III e i suoi nipoti*.

28 Recent examples are Guido Rebecchini, 'After the Medici: The New Rome of Pope Paul III Farnese'; Bernice Davidson, 'The Decoration of the Sala Regia under Pope Paul III'; Antonella de Michelis, 'Villeggiatura in the urban context of Renaissance Rome: Paul III Farnese's villa-tower on the Campidoglio'; Richard Harprath, 'La formazione umanistica di papa Paolo III e le sue conseguenze nell'arte romana della metà del Cinquecento'.

29 Pastor says of Paul that: 'during the whole of his pontificate he was the moving spirit in Catholic reform and the pioneer of Catholic restoration', Vol. XI, p. 40, yet: 'Things old and new contended within him so that to his contemporaries his character was always somewhat of an enigma', p. 50. Elisabeth Gleason says: 'He alternated between support of spokesmen for reform of the papal court and marked foot-dragging and even stone-walling. Not only modern historians have been puzzled by his inconsistent behaviour, but even contemporaries were at a loss how to understand it', 'Who Was the First Counter-Reformation Pope?', p. 183. Jedin says: 'The sharp ear of this superior man heard the call for Council and reform, but the delicate, aristocratic hands of the old prelate which we admire in Titian's painting of 1543, lacked the strength to cut the threads which linked his whole being as well as the interests of the Curia with the Renaissance period of the papacy', Vol. 1, p. 445.

how the humanist ascendancy at the Roman court influenced his aspirations for the papacy and his governance of Rome. Humanist intersections with the culture of honour, long integral to Italian social transactions, and its intersections with the ecclesiastical culture and theology of tradition have hardly featured in the literature at all.<sup>30</sup> Paul III's actions in regard to reform have also too often been considered in isolation from relevant political events that confronted him, particularly the conflict between the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and the French King, Francis I, which threatened Rome.

## The Cultural Approach

Looking at history from a cultural perspective necessarily turns the field of enquiry away from the quest for hard facts to interpretations of collective modes of thought and areas such as meanings in symbols, human subjectivity and agency.<sup>31</sup> Peter Burke has been at the forefront of research in cultural history and in drawing history into dialogue with other disciplines.<sup>32</sup> Burke says that culture is 'essentially attitudes and values and their expressions or embodiments in texts, artefacts and performances'.<sup>33</sup>

The texts and other symbols are part of a socializing process that acts on us from our earliest days. Burke calls on the anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, who says that we are born 'unfinished animals', inserted into a pre-existing culture that enables us to complete ourselves and provides us with a shared compass with which to navigate everyday life.<sup>34</sup> Inherent in the system is an expectation that we conform; in fact culture can be seen as a set of control mechanisms or rules for governing of behaviour.<sup>35</sup> The literary historian, Stephen Greenblatt, picks up this thread saying that culture 'creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment'.<sup>36</sup> Both Geertz and Greenblatt have a tight conception of the governing process, saying that we are 'cultural artefacts'.<sup>37</sup> Burke

30 A notable exception in regard to a contemporary cardinal is Paul V. Murphy's study, *Ruling Peacefully: Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga and Patrician Reform in Sixteenth-century Italy*, in which he explores Gonzaga's understanding and pursuit of honour in management of his diocese.

31 See Anna Green, *Cultural History*, p. 6.

32 Among Burke's many works are: *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* and *What is Cultural History?*

33 Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, p. 2.

34 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 49.

35 Ibid., p. 44.

36 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 3.

37 Geertz, p. 51; Greenblatt, p. 3.

sees more agency. While he admits the constraining potency of culture, he adds an important qualification. Taking Botticelli as an example, Burke says that: 'Romantic notions of the spontaneous expression of individuality were not available to him. The role of the painter which he played was the one defined by (or at any rate in) his own culture.' But Burke goes on to say: 'At the same time, there are societies, and Renaissance Italy was one of them, where alternative definitions of the artist's role – and of much else – were available'.<sup>38</sup> Dialogues in Renaissance works like Leon Alberti's *Libri della Famiglia* or Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* show indeed that many cultural values were contested. The interlocutors in Alberti's work, for example, spend much time debating idealised concepts of virtue or friendship over against more pragmatic, self-interested responses to everyday life situations.<sup>39</sup> Cultural contestations meant that most people had to make some choices. They also created spaces for creative individuals to push the cultural boundaries, albeit while weighing up the limits of social safety so as not to go too far. That is generally the way culture develops. To break way beyond the cultural boundaries, as Martin Luther did, is rare and one needs powerful social (and in the Renaissance physical) protection to do so. Overall most people do not take that path, they make modest choices within the surrounding suite of cultural codes and leave them largely intact after navigating life with them.<sup>40</sup>

Burke sums up the culture of early modern Italy as being that of 'a "theatre society" where it was necessary to play one's social role with style, *fare bella figura*, to work hard at creating and maintaining as well as saving "face"'.<sup>41</sup> Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* is an example of the popularity of literature that resonated with lives played out on the stage. A humanist work, it is a dialogue on how a gentleman should craft his behaviour in a way that will maximise admiration and thus advancement at court. It gives ample advice about designing one's social performance to manage people's impressions: 'so you see how important are first impressions and how hard a man must strive to give a good impression at the beginning if he is ambitious to win the rank and name of a good courtier'.<sup>42</sup> One of the most effective impression management devices Castiglione offers is the famous *sprezzatura*, the appearance of nonchalant spontaneity that needs to be rehearsed.<sup>43</sup>

38 Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, p. 3.

39 See for example, Alberti, *I Libri della Famiglia*, pp. 43–44, 247–254.

40 Geertz, p. 45.

41 Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*, p. 10.

42 Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 57.

43 Castiglione, p. 67.

The theatre metaphor has particular currency for the central city of Italy where the ritual of the papal court, the grand processions on feast days, the *posse* of a new pope, solemn entries of dignitaries, displays of *Carnevale*, ceremonies of guilds and confraternities, and street performances in the Campo de' Fiori were woven through daily life in what Peter Partner calls the 'great Roman Show'.<sup>44</sup> This theatre not only entertained the populace but shaped and maintained the social order, framing personal identity within that order.

Drawing on these understandings of the dynamics of culture, then, this book explores the cultural context and contemporaneous events that shaped Paul III and his engagement with reform. To do so I examine the way Paul and those around him expressed themselves, the attitudes and values they espoused, and the symbols they used in projecting themselves socially. In this, I principally examine letters of the time and orations at the Roman court. The letters include the dispatches of ambassadors who were privileged observers of the papal court, the correspondence of cardinals who were protagonists in reform activity, and letters of Paul III himself.<sup>45</sup> The value of letters is that they record events, reveal attitudes and, through their textual style, point to cultural codes. The other principal body of texts I call upon are those of orations at the funeral of a pope, at the liturgy prior to the subsequent conclave, and at the Fifth Lateran Council. The orations chosen are ones which Alessandro Farnese would have

44 Peter Partner, *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance*, p. 112.

45 While there are thousands of Briefs, Bulls and letters that bear the name of Paul III, it is curiously difficult to find personal letters to family and friends that he wrote himself during his time as cardinal and pope. I have found only few such letters in the Farnese collections which are housed in each of the Secret Archives of the Vatican and the State Archives of Naples and of Parma. In fact, there are more autograph letters of Paul in collections other than the Farnese archives. Of significance, in the Royal Library of Copenhagen, there is a manuscript book in which Farnese copied fifty-three letters to and from himself when he was in his twenties. These were published by the Italian scholar, Arsenio Frugoni, in 1950. A handful of correspondence to and from the young cardinal, regarding his sister Giulia, is in the Archivum Arcis, Arm. I-XVIII of the Vatican Archives, rather than in its Carte Farnesiane. There is also a series of letters regarding everyday matters, mainly from Farnese to members of the Pucci family, in the Carte Stroziane of the State Archives of Florence (Carte Stroziane, Series 1, No. 340). It seems that, if there are other remaining letters of Farnese, they are likely to be in the collections of those who received them. It could be that, if there were once other collections of his letters, they were lost when the Parma archive was broken up by King Charles VII of Naples, son of Elizabeth Farnese and King Philip V of Spain, who inherited the Duchy of Parma and transferred the majority of the archive, art and library to Naples in the mid-1730s. It could also be that some of Paul's correspondence was destroyed in the Nazi burning of some of the Naples' collection in 1943 (see Riccardo Filangieri, 'Report on the Destruction by the Germans, September 30, 1943, of the Depository of Priceless Historical Records of the Naples State Archives'). Nevertheless, the letters discovered so far provide valuable insights into how cultural codes impinged on Farnese and how he willingly appropriated them.

heard during his time as a cardinal and which express expectations in the curial culture of the role of the pope in this period, in particular his role in regard to reform. A scholar of these texts, John McManamon, says that the funeral and pre-conclave orations help 'delineate the relationship between the cultural ideals of the papal court and the broader cultural movements of the era'.<sup>46</sup>

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When Paul III set up his first reform Commission in 1535, he called all the cardinals together in consistory and, along with urging the Commissioners to be diligent, he exhorted them to 'consider well the circumstances of the times'.<sup>47</sup> It was a caution to them to take a clear-eyed view of present realities and of the limits those realities imposed on change. This book explores the cultural and political realities of the time and how those realities both promoted reform and constrained it. At its core, this is an exploration of the Renaissance culture of honour, how it shaped Paul III, how it led him to pursue reform, and how it prompted him to pull back from a reform program that he believed would undermine codes of honour and threaten the safety of Rome. Far from showing weakness of character or internal vacillation, Paul conducted his papacy with astuteness, resolution and strength, qualities that enabled him to save Rome and the Church from significant social and political peril. He had the perspicacity to see that the time for sweeping reform was simply not right. Nevertheless, he prepared the ground for seeds of reform that eventually grew and became central to the Counter-Reformation.

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