

Abstract: *Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)*

This doctoral dissertation, *Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)*, developed under the direction of Professor Dr. Reverend Nicolae Chifăr, analyzes life and work of the Florentine friar Girolamo Savonarola in the socio-political and ecclesiastical history of Italy during *Quattrocento*.

His name still sparks controversy. Some see it surrounded by the aura of holiness, others do not think we can talk about this because it hit the papal institution. Some believe that it has exceeded its religious, others see great political leader who restored to city life on track. He is criticized for being a Puritan fanatic against Classicism and Renaissance, but also applauded for leading the struggle for the release of a fine arts and the Christian life of immorality, paganism and naturalistic excesses. It was seen by some Protestants as forerunner of Luther, while most Roman Catholics placed him with moral reformers who have done great church reform “in haystacks et membris”.

Drama time of Savonarola in Florence transcends time and place for connecting high political and religious activity in an epochal crisis period. His errors were the result of honest zeal and not of unbridled ambition, or a worldly greed. Undoubtedly, his eloquence is wonderful aura of light is a learned sage, but at the same time bearing the stigma of a radical and vehement orator, that Savonarola was suspended between heaven and hell.

We begin our analysis by presenting research critical reception on the life and work of Girolamo Savonarola. Thus, we highlight findings writers, historians and scholars who have dealt with life, work and personality Florentine monk, in the historical context of the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century. Research begins with contemporary witnesses monk of San Marco and goes to the XXI century, with the development of the celebration of the fifth centenary of the death of Girolamo Savonarola. After presenting the opinions of those who have crossed the events among the Florentine monk, I opted for a differential analysis, in contrast, speaking Roman Catholic and Protestant, to better reflect the truthfulness, accuracy and objectivity of opinions presented.

Second chapter deals with theology and culture in the West in the fourteenth and fifteenth: Scholars, Mystics, Humanism and the Renaissance, trying to make some connections

with the work of Savonarola. After a presentation of the main exponents of the Scholastics, Mystics, Humanism and Renaissance, we've outlined the theological and cultural discussion and analysis that will integrate Florentine monk: development and patronage of classical studies in fifteenth century Italy by the family de 'Medici and Pope Renaissance and Byzantine humanists exodus to Italy. We conclude this chapter, emphasizing the role played in promoting the Florence Academy of Christian Humanism, played in the key platonic.

The third chapter describes the general context in which they arose pre-reformatori main teachings theologians John Wyclif, Jan Hus from Bohemia and Jerome of Prague, and possible tangencies between their doctrine and that of Savonarola, then some considerations about the Council of Konstanz. We extensively presented their doctrine to find possible common with that of Savonarola, but the findings indicate that it is only a moral reformer, not a doctrinal reformer, forerunner of Protestantism.

Fourth chapter presents the socio-political and religious in Italy, respectively fifteenth century Florence, focusing on the role conciliariste councils that have led framework for the development Savonarola's reform, so the next chapter, as an extension of the previous one, will detail life Girolamo Savonarola.

How to decrypt the emergence and development of Florentine monk moral reform is necessary to design political and religious scenes details *Quattrocento*. Thus, in the Middle Ages, Italy and Germany had a similar development, meaning that their territories were divided into small administrative, whereas in France and England such division had been replaced by monarchic centralisation. Italy was a mere geographical expression as it lacked a central authority able to intervene, impose or arbitrate the political disputes arising among the numerous free communes, the real city-states, each of them seeking to impose their power and expand their sphere of influence.

This situation had multiple causes. Italy lacked economic unity, its various regions having been oriented toward centres whose frequently divergent interests. The powerful assertion of urban autonomies, which led to frequent battles for supremacy between cities, entailed a policy aiming at maintaining the balance among forces and acting independently.

The problems encountered by this historical space remain connected with the endemic social disorder, caused mainly by the competition between the former elite and the newly rich, by the revolts that crumbled Lucca, Siena, Perugia, Florence, Bologna, and Ferrara in the late

fourteenth and early fifteenth century, owing to the labourers desire to be granted a greater participation to governance and due to the citizens' opposition to the burdening tax system.

Moreover, resorting to foreign powers to solve domestic problems, installing the Arabic domination, than the Norman, Angevin, or Aragonese ones in the South of the peninsula has also contributed to the failure of any attempt to unification.

However, the assertion of papacy played a crucial role in maintaining the political division. The existence of a territorial state at the heart of Italy, headed by the Bishop of Rome, prevented until the modern times any attempt at unifying the Peninsula. The active participation to the fate of the small Peninsular states, the desire to obtain a hegemonic position and perseveringly organising a Crusade against the Turks, while resorting to the Catholic states, much too weak to stand against the powerful Ottoman army, constituted the main objectives of papal policy, which, in turn contributed to maintaining the division in the region.

The communal regime – in fact, an oligarchic regime where the evolving “bourgeois” social class substituted for the feudal leading groups – ended by leading Italy towards a microcosm of states, each of them preserving their full liberty of action. Along with the anarchic fractioning of the communal system, during the fifteenth century we also witness a tendency to concentrate forces in five main entities: the Kingdom of Naples, the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Venice, the Signoria of Florence, and the Pontifical State.

Under these circumstances, Italy provided a wide variety of state organisation and social and political regimes, i.e. urban republics (city-states that subjected to their authority vast surrounding areas), territorial principalities (duchies, marquisates, and signorias), the papal state, and the kingdom.

From the political point of view, medieval Italy (i.e. twelfth to the fifteenth centuries) knew to major political trends – i.e. one loyal to the Holy Roman Empire, represented by *gibellini* (partisans of Hohenstaufens) and the other loyal to the papacy, represented by *guelfi* – fully asserted in the mid-thirteenth century. In brief, the Northern cities were Guelf, and the ones in the centre and Tuscany were partly Guelf, e.g. Florence, partly Gibellini, e.g. (Sienna, Pisa). Still, it was quite often that these names did not mean political attitude but the struggle for power between various fractions.

The pontifical state – which, after the return of the Popes from the “Babylonian captivity,” could not regain its international prestige – restored its authority over the cities and

signorias whose territories were reinserted into the papal order pursuant to *The Aegidian Constitutions* (1357); this act, while acknowledging communal authorities under the high papal sovereignty, continued to be effective until 1815. Consequently, beginning with the fifteenth century, Italy – except the Republic of Venice – would become the object of dispute among the great foreign powers – i.e. France and Spain (and later, the Habsburg Empire).

Between 1350 and 1450, the cities and their leaders try to implement their own territorial supremacy and to create new dominions. These attempts mark the era by the stir caused by the lack of central authority. Furthermore, financial and military tension led to the alignment of the small dominions with, or under the direct control, of the five important states, i.e. Milan, Venice, Florence, Roma, and Naples. Between 1450 and 1500, the interests of the great cities were those which defined the political and economic direction in the peninsula, until the French invasion, according to the convention within the, Peace of Lodi. A sign of peninsular stability, the 1454 Peace of Lodi regulated the acknowledgement of the spheres of influence of the five great Italian powers, the more so as the stability of each power was uncertain from the political and economic viewpoint.

In 1454, the peace of Lodi ends the decades-long conflict between Milan and Venice and established the balance of powers in Italy; however, the Renaissance politicians' ambitions permanently destroys the fragile balance and until 1492, the history of the peninsula is nothing but endless wars among the great states, assisted by second-rate powers such as Ferrara, Genoa, and Mantua.

However unstable this balance of power may seem, the results of the wars never affected fundamentally the Italian states, main due to Lorenzo's prudence, as he would avoid appealing to external forces; and when Louis XI (1461-1483) offered his help, he replied that he did not want to sacrifice the safety of the entire Italy to his personal interest and hoped that the kings of France would never think of trying their powers with Italy, as it would be lost. Or, it is this very thing that happened after Lorenzo's death (1492); while the monk Girolamo Savonarola banished the Medici from Florence, installing a theocratic regime, the Milanese usurper Louis, the "Moor," contested by Ferrante, decided to call Charles VIII of France to help him, under the pretext of his claiming the Naples throne, as a successor of the Anjou dynasty; thus, the series of wars started that was to ruin Italy and to compromise its political unity for centuries to come.

Socio-political context Florentine is characterized by separation of the city, in the twelfth century, from the authority of the Tuscan marquis and organised into a free *Commune* led by the *Council of Twelve*, selected from the ranks of the urban aristocracy and the circles of businessmen. This body was under the control of *The Council of One Hundred* to which a body of citizens reunited to take important decisions. Soon, the Florentines started to lead a policy of expansion and to make territorial claims, under the guise of army incursions.

In the thirteen century, owing to the political assertion of the guilds, the city's governance is restructured allowing the representatives of the large and medium guilds to enter the Signoria, the city's main administrative body. We also notice that, unlike Venice, where the nobility-patrician regime has consolidated, Florence adopted a corporative regime in the domestic organisation of the Republic enforced by the reform of 1282. The history of Florence was darkened throughout the thirteenth century by the *guelfi* and *gibellini* conflict; the city was the stage of the church reform and one of the hot spots of the conflicts between the Pope and the secular authority, known as the Dispute for investiture.

In the fourteenth century, the process of Florence's emancipation was on its way. The work of some artistic and literary personalities such as Dante, Boccaccio, and Giotto is directly linked to the notion of the golden age of the arts, and the on-going building process directly corresponded to a relative well-being. At the same time, though, the city witnessed a number of devastating crises such as the Arno bursting its banks in 1333, the famine following these floods, the plague ravaging between 1348 and 1349 (whose toll amounted to almost two thirds of the population), the military defence against Pisa in 1315 and against Lucca in 1325. Such events weakened the Florence's hegemony in the region. Moreover, we should add the collapse of the major Peruzzi and Bardi banks, dragging the city into an acute financial crisis in 1339.

Under de Medici's reign, (1434-1494) Florence played an important role in the entire Tuscany, beginning with Cosimo de' Medici (1434-1464) and his successors, who endorsed the Florentine Renaissance. Although Tuscany was rather a linguistic, cultural, and geographic concept than a political reality, in the fifteenth century, Florence extended its domination in Tuscany by conquering Pisa in 1405 and by suppressing its local resistance (1406); Livorno was also conquered (1421); Siena resisted longer, until 1555. Cosimo *il Vecchio*, a brilliant and fascinating figure of these times, acquires the unofficial title of leader of the city in 1434, controlling its political, social, and political development until his death in 1464. Called by his

contemporaries *Pater Patriae*, he is the first to have contributed to Florence's transformation into a centre of humanist erudition, by his substantial donations in arts, establishing the tradition of Maecenas that would be continued by his Medici successors.

The de'Medici enjoyed their most glorious period of governing towards the end of the fifteenth century, during the time of Lorenzo (1449-1492), Cosimo's grandson, known as *il Magnifico* for his love for opulence. Although Lorenzo de'Medici's balanced diplomacy and national policy was not regretted by everyone upon his demise, he belonged to that astonishing generation that shone in Italy, around 1490, of which Guicciardini wrote. Under the shelter of these flourishing times, between 1450 and 1478, more than thirty palaces and villas were built in Florence and the construction of the imposing Palazzo Strozzi began in 1489.

The Florentine fifteenth century inaugurates an unprecedented glorious time in the contemporary history of Europe. This is the century of Humanism, of the great breakthrough in the field of science, spirit, philology, and the arts, which have continued to influence the western outlook until this day. It would be difficult to find a single place elsewhere that would have gathered a similar variety of artistic talent except Florence under the generous patronage of the Medici.

Stirring Charles VIII of France in the hope to banish the Aragonese dynasty of Naples, Louis the Moor determines the French troops' march into the duchy of Milan on 17 November 1494. Florence capitulates without resistance before the advance of the French troops. The Medici dynasty was to start living their decline at the time of Piero's political failure. Lorenzo's son was expelled after the army invasion.

During the dramatic years of the close of the fifteenth century, the apocalyptic preacher – Girolamo Savonarola, became most influential man in the city in his attempt to enforce a theocratic form of governance. Savonarola's own fanaticism placed him in the middle of an open fight with the papacy, which led the Dominican monk to being charged with heresy and to his death.

The renunciations and penitence did not strengthened the people's discernment in exercising the choice of freedom as in 1498 the Florentines revolt against their prophet only to accept enthusiastically later on the coming of the Medici, inferior to Cosimo morally and to Lorenzo culturally; after Savonarola's death, in 1498, Florence would try to re-establish the republican governance.

Looking this brief overview of the history of Italy in general and of Florence in particular, we notice that Florence experimented political forms of governance far more diverse than those in the other Italian states and even more diverse than those in the rest of the European states. Furthermore, all these political variations were only facets of the relationships existing between various social classes and individuals, on one hand, and the entire society they belonged to, on the other.

The Byzantine Middle Ages, marked by the bipolar structure of its civilisation, asserting the Church as one of the two poles of its existence as a state while the emperor remained the pole of reference of the masses' existence. In contrast, the early Western Middle Ages substituted the weakening and the disappearing of temporal entities by undertaking their role by the ecclesiastical institutions. In the West, the Pope remains the referential element for the material and spiritual existence of the masses, fighting throughout history to preserve this position when it was threatened by the claims of secular institutions.

The reconciliation movement has its origins in the spirit of the University of Paris, and as leaders Pierre d'Ailly (1356-1420) and his disciple, Jean Gerson (1363-1429). Pope Gregory XI's demise on 27 March 1378 brought the pontifical seat to a critical situation due to the pressures exerted on the choice of the future Pope. Thus, the great papal schism broke out, an event which shook the western Christianity for forty years. Due to the perpetuated elective crisis around the papal rivals Gregory XII (1406-1409), anointed in Rome, and Benedict XIII (1394-1424), anointed in Avignon, the principle chosen by the reforming party to try to avoid the schism was the postulation of the council prevalence over the pope.

The Council of Pisa (25 March-7 August 1409) closed without having met any of its goals on the agenda: instead of two popes, the Western Church now had three rivals to the pontifical seat, hence the three-headed schism in the Western Church.

The Council of Constance (1414-1418) faced the same fate of the reconciliation theory. The Council appointed Pope Martin V (1417-1431) to put an end to the confusion of the Western Schism. Pope Martin ratified the council and managed to postpone implementing the decrees that proposed the reform and reconciliation. In addition to closing the Western Schism, the Council of Constance also condemned the heresies of John Wicliff and Jan Hus. After 45 public meetings, the pope declared the council of Constance closed on 22 April 1418; the attempt at reform seemed once again a dream much too difficult to come true.

The theoreticians of the council period produced a corpus of conclusions on the constitution of the Church and on the council's prerogatives as well. The most formal expression of such conclusions remains the decrees of the councils of Pisa and Constance. The basic principles of the reconciling conception underlined the fact that the synod may reform the papacy, that the administrative and legislative authority should be subjected to the canonical law, that it is possible to sanction the Pope's errors and that it is recommended to resort to an old form of the church constitution – dating back before *Plenitudo potestatis*, i.e. the act papacy development relied upon.

In full agreement with the *Frequens* decree, Martin V convened the next council for 1423, in Pavia, bestowing upon his delegates full powers with respect avoiding anti-papal attitudes. This is the reason why the council convened in Pavia was transferred to Siena where works were suspended due to the plague. A new council was convened in Basel, in 1431. Pope Martin V died in the same year and was replaced by Eugene IV (1431-1447).

During Eugene IV's Papacy (1431-1447), the Council of Basel touched upon the most virulent forms of anti-papal manifestation in its proceedings. However, this time, most of the attending cardinals took the side of the council, which determined the Pope to end the synod (18 December 1431), setting another one in Bologna, in eighteen months, because the Greeks presumably promised to come to Italy for unification.

Nevertheless, the Synod of Basel, being supported by Emperor Sigismund's authority and the interests of all German and French princes, plainly retorted to the Pope, stating that the Synod had no intention to change the venue and hoped that Pope Eugene show benevolence to the Synod open under his and his predecessor's protection. The Pope was compelled to receive the requests of Fathers of Basel (15 December 1433), sending his delegates to attend the Synod.

During such disputes, the Synod, of their own accord, opened negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor, John VIII the Palaiologos (1425-1448). The negotiations were cumbersome. There were new exchanges of delegation among Constantinople, Pope Eugene, and the attendants of the Basel Synod. There were also new propositions and new agreements were concluded. Eventually two fleet set anchor before Constantinople: one sent by the Pope and the other by the Basel Synod attendants. The Emperor had to decide whom he would be dealing the issue of unification with in order to avoid a naval confrontation in the Byzantine waters.

On 18 September 1437, Pope Eugene IV, in his encyclicals *Doctoris gentium* transferred the Synod from Basel to Ferrara in Italy, arguing that it is one of the cities the Greeks preferred. At the end of November 1437, the Greeks set sail to Italy with the Papal fleet and were welcomed by the Venetian Doge on 8 February 1437. Much to the surprise of the Synod in Basel attendants, the Eastern delegates decided then to answer the Pope's invitation and go to Ferrara.

With the Pope's mandate, Cardinal Nicolo Albergati came to Ferrara with several bishops and opened the Synod (8 January 1438). Pope Eugene and the Basel Synod attendants excommunicated each other. Thus, a new breach emerged in the Western Church. Meanwhile, the debates on theological issues in Ferrara reach a deadlock. The Emperor feared that the dialogue would fail and he would leave the West without any military support. The Pope was adamant in his carrying out the plan to unify the church, and some of the Greek delegates were increasingly discontent with the compromising discussions and accommodation. Under these circumstances, the Pope and the Emperor agreed to transfer the Synod to Ferrara. Eugene suggested Florence, whose wealthy citizens had promised to lend 40.000 gold florins to pay higher subsidies to the Eastern delegates, on condition that the Synod was held in their city. On 10 January 1439, in the Ferrara Cathedral the Papal Bull that announced the transfer of the Synod to Florence was read out. The reason for this transfer was allegedly the plague that, although it was winter, was still terrible in the city and promised to get worse by spring. The truth is that the plague had stopped claiming victims for two months.

According to Niccolò Machiavelli's account of the development of Florence council debates, the city witnessed the Greeks' fight to preserve their national being, even with the price of short-term religious compromise. The transfer of the debates of the Council from Ferrara to Florence, on 10 January 1439, contributed to the brilliance of the aura surrounding the city on the Arno. In the conclusion to the decree of the unification between the Eastern and the Western Churches, in the Santa Maria del Fiore Cathedral, on 6 July 1439, the five hundred participants sang in witness of the triumph: "*Laetentur coeli et exultet terra Nova Sion facta est Florentia*".

Despite the political victories the papacy experienced during the Renaissance (in 1459 Pope Pius II, by the encyclicals *Execrabilis* decreed the pope's superiority over the councils) and, to a great extent owing to them, the reconciliation programme was permanently invoked throughout the fifteenth century, the continuity of such traditions being an important element in understanding the Synod's appeal.

This is an outline of the social, political, and religious background in Italy and Florence during the fifteenth century. The need for reform within the Western Church that generated an anticlerical trend, anchoring the spiritual and artistic life in the culture of Renaissance and the dawns of humanism, which considered man the measure of all things, the continuously changing relationships that would mark the limits of secular and spiritual influence spheres, the experiments of diverse political governance are the major coordinates of an unprecedented social dynamics that marked the *Quattrocento* Italian city.

Toward the end of the fifteenth century, many Florentines noticed that in balanced between secular and spiritual values, the material, earthy ones seemed to weigh more. For these reasons, the message of the renowned reformer Girolamo Savonarola not only addressed the moral reform in a corrupt Florentine society but also promoted a criticism search for in all its aspects. According to Francisco Guicciardini's description, in the fifteenth century, “Florence enjoyed an great inner peace and calm and an outer fame and prestige because he had as guidance and leader a outstanding authority; as he had recently increased his possessions, as he had greatly helped to save Ferrara, and then King Ferrando, as Pope Innocent was completely under Lorenzo’s influence and as an ally of Naples and Milan, Florence did maintain the equilibrium over almost entire Italy. Exactly at that time, that misfortune turning things upside down happened [...]”.

The Dominican monk’s affirmation on the political stage occurs when he met Charles VIII, the King of France, when people thought strongly in the latter’s ability to influence the retreat of the French troops from the Florentine territories, delivering thus the people from the horrifying perspective of inherent abuses any occupation would cause.

One can also add that the Dominican monk’s success relied on the perfect harmony between his own personality and the message of his preaches. Was Savonarola a prophet? His prophecy on the coming of the new Cyrus may be a mere expression of the old and naïve Guelf sympathy of the people for the French, hence the idea of the Capetian saviour. Was Savonarola a reformer? Savonarola’s reform did nothing but change the morals for some time. Instead, it gave another look to the old things and, as far as it was possible, the old thinking. In painting, he demanded the artists to go back to Fra Angelico. To the Humanist Platonist beauty, he imposed the Thomist neo-Platonism of splendour. He bestows upon the painters the breath of the feeling of responsibility and simplicity, attacking contemporary paintings for their penchant to idolatry.

Savonarola's battle against the pope proved an irresponsible act. The example of unsubmitiveness to the higher ranks Savonarola gave would determine the masses refusal to submit to him. More efficient still was his continuing his work of reorganising the Dominican Order and the activities of social assistance, a reform started at the base of the church hierarchy, lacking the glamour of the attack on the Roman pontiff. Savonarola's diplomatic approach in opening relationships with the European princes stand for the peak of the affirmation of his personality and of his position as a leader by undertaking his mission. Burckhardt noted that a stronger individual affirmation on the history stage could only be seen a generation later, in Martin Luther.

One can ask whether Savonarola did pursue the church reform and if it was the primary motivation of his action. The fifteenth century Church reflected the contemporary Renaissance culture, its earthly vision and its material interest. Girolamo Savonarola's call for reform addressed mainly the social aspect, the Renaissance religious and cultural. The critical discourse of the Brother supports the return to the old monastic devotion. Notwithstanding, this return is mainly his deliberate choice rather than a predictable continuation of the medieval reform as such. The Dominican monk's prophetic message consists almost exclusively in the criticism of the new Renaissance form, under the guise of both social and religious life. However, this message does not offer direct solutions to institutional reform but it uses a theocratic manner of leadership, placed above the explanations and above the well-defined structures, which Florence badly needed.

All aspect of the transformation of life in Florence disappeared immediately after the demise of their initiator, whereas within a true reforming phenomenon such actions should have survived him. The individual solution becomes innovation when it succeeds in modifying the traditional constant of existence. Not even at the level of the attack on the Church hierarchy, and especially on the Pope, Savonarola did prove a true protester, as his criticism did not demonstrate – dogmatically, canonically, traditionally – the errors of the clergy and their leader, contending with exposing, apocalyptically, the more or less hidden face of morality.

In his preaches and in the *Dialogo della verità profetica*, Savonarola denounces the clergy's corruption, debauchery, rapacity, trafficking benefices, abandonment of their mission to save souls, neglect of the *Scriptures*, the *curia's* worldliness, the wrong example offered by hierarchy. The only reforming idea we can find in Savonarola's preaches is his call to organise a

Synod, which would apply reform to religious institutions. Such idea had already been a commonplace, even a commonplace, obsolete in the church culture of the time, as we have already seen. The way the message of the Brother's preaches was received by his contemporaries enables us to infer that the reform outlined had only a mystical-spiritual value and not a realistic, concrete one. Here is what Luca Landucci, the chronicler wrote "It would seem that in case the prophecy of the Brother would come true, it would have meant the renewal of the Church and of the world".

Savonarola challenged the legendary leader of Florence – Lorenzo de' Medici, whose image he succeeded in defeating and whose place managed to take, he took part in the change of governance in Florence, a managed to fully exploit the impact his message had on the masses, transforming the city where the Renaissance spirit came to light into a convent. When his fame reached beyond Florence's walls, when he was acknowledged as a saint and prophet all over Italy, Savonarola thought himself entitled to challenge even the Pope. This was not due to a genuine reforming impulse, but rather to a challenge of individual skills of imposing his challenge upon the stage of this world, and the pope replied accordingly. This can be seen mainly in the ways Girolamo Savonarola's work was censored: "27 May 1498: The papal envoy announced under the penalty of excommunication that anyone who had writings of the Brother must bring them to San Pietro Scheraggio, to be burned".

Savonarola succeeded in demonstrating how ample the ascension of an individual with a relatively modest background can be when he knows how to answer the expectations of the masses and to exploit the sensible aspects of life. In a conflict of individualities, though, he did not succeed in defeating the papacy. Its representatives could be construed the real champions of the exacerbation of individualisation by exploiting the means the Catholic society of the century made available and by putting to value the heuristic answers the Renaissance spirit was ready to offer.

As stated previously, the fifth chapter presents the life of Girolamo Savonarola, between his birth in 1492 and 1498 the year of his death by burning at the stake. Savonarola was born in Ferrara on 21 September 1452 and died in Florence on 23 May 1498, the third of the seven children of Niccolò Savonarola and Elena Bonaccorsi's family. Choosing his grandfather's profession, he started studying medicine, of which he parted due to the stronger and stronger impression the social corruption made on him. Due to the disappointment caused by the Strozzi's

refusal to give him their daughter's hand, Laodamia, at the age of 23, he crept out his father's house and left for Bologna, where he adopted the Dominican cloth.

When decided to embrace monastic life, his penchant toward St Thomas de Aquinas made him choose the Dominica order; but he joined this order with the clear intention to remain all his life a mere brother at the lowest level of the hierarchy, to avoid the mixture of profane and scholastic that studies involved. Nevertheless, took the vows at San Dominic convent in Bologna in 1475, and even overcame his aversion to teaching Aristotle's philosophy when his superiors demanded that he teach it, while carefully avoiding speculation in his sermons and highlighting whenever he could the superiority of the Scriptures to any philosophical authority. Although he wanted to "engage in the most humble and servile duties of the brotherhood," he proved shortly an "extraordinary capacity which led to his appointment as a tutor of the novices".

Savonarola started thus his monastic life in the Dominica order. An interesting choice for the young Savonarola, should we consider that the Dominicans' first and most important duty, as militant preacher monks, was to spread God's word. While the Franciscans, who stressed poverty, would have been more suitable to Savonarola's austere nature, according to his biographer, Lauro Martines. His desire to join the Dominicans clearly demonstrates that this monk was a militant fighter for Christ, from the very beginning. The Dominicans allowed him to "transform people by spreading God's word. He found in the Dominican Order the same fighting power he was to find later on in using the printing press".

As a young Dominican monk, Savonarola became within a short while disillusioned by the wealth and ostentation he could see around him. This has its roots, partly, in his memory of his childhood at the ducal courts and, partly in the preponderance of nepotism and indecent patronage highly popular in Rome and elsewhere. He often suggested that many evil people and liars entered the holy orders and thus, in some situations, it is merely their presence that perverted the catholic faith in favour of a model of Christianity "foreign, pompous, and heartless".

In the convent, Savonarola studied Augustine and Thomas d'Aquino and acquired the teachings of the Scriptures, of which he could recite long excerpts by heart. In Florence, two copies of the Bible are preserved to this day, which contain detailed annotations on the margins, in-between the lines or on added pages made by Savonarola. After his appointment as an archbishop, he underlined the importance of the study of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek.

In 1482, he was sent to Florence, where he became lecturer in St Mark's convent. The convent had been rebuilt by Cosimo de Medici, and its walls had been decorated by Fra Angelico's brush. Upon Savonarola's arrival, the city was at the height of its glory as a cultural centre as well as a citadel of leisure, under the patronage of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The efforts the young monk made from his pulpit in Florence failed. In San Lorenzo church, where he delivered his sermons in the Lent, the crowd of believers listening to him dropped to twenty-five people. Fra Mariano da Gennazzano, a disciple of Saint Augustine, was the one most of the people in the city preferred listening to.

The Dominican won his fame for the first time with the sermons on the John's Book of Revelations in the Lent of 1486, in Brescia, pronouncing judgements with concern to the moral renovation of the Church and the sinfulness of the city.

Between 1488 and 1490, Savonarola delivered his sermons in various places in Lombardy.

In a marginal chapter preached in Reggio, in 1489, at a Dominican council, the revered Pico Mirandola was so charmed by Savonarola's eloquence and attracted to the beauty and sainthood of his spirit and character that he felt he could not live far from him. This enthusiasm determined Pico Mirandola to speak to Lorenzo de' Medici about Savonarola, immediately after this sermon, the monk was recalled to Florence and appointed a prior at St Mark's convent.

From 1 August 1490, when he climbed in the pulpit of St Mark, people thronged to listen to him preaching there or in the cathedral. In 1491, he was appointed prior of the convent. To his sermons, he added philosophical writings and minor works on humility, prayer, and love of Christ. In the beginning, his sermons were despised for being sophisticated and lacking rhetoric. As he started to preach about repentance and God's mercy and to describe, in vivid images, the judgements God would bestow onto those who do not repent, the crowds started to gather to listen to him. His reputation reached Florence before his transfer there.

The study of God's word, as it is contained in the Old and the New Testament, became the law that led all his life from then on; a few years later, his oratorical style that had lacked vigour, acquired a penetrating and triumphant power in both the pulpit and the familiar discourse.

To this refuge, under a rhododendron, the main ornament in the garden of St Mark's, he started the series of sermons, for the first time, in front of an very large audience, which shortly

became so large that it was necessary to move to the convent church. However, the church, too, became soon too small to host the great number listeners from beyond Florence's walls, which were under continuous expansion; consequently, Fra Girolamo, who had become prior in St Mark's was allowed to preach in the Cathedral of Florence.

To understand Savonarola's ascension in Florence, we should mention his apocalyptic visions. Thus is revealed and the contents of the sixth chapter of the thesis, namely the work and teachings of Savonarola, the role of printing in the spread of its work, sermons spoken and the struggle against paganism and ancient classicism excesses. Of these, the piece de resistance is the large volume of sermons supported analyzed for penitential-apocalyptic, biblical, prophetic and political struggle against paganism and ancient classicism.

He gave strength to the constant theme in Florence according to which the Florentines were a people whom God granted a special fate. He described the millennium as an era that would leave the Florentines purified and holding the top ranks in the new Kingdom. One of the numerous aspects that explain Savonarola's popularity was his erudition, which "although it was neither profound nor original, was vast enough to stir the interest of the learned humanists, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494)", and the interest of many Florentine literati.

The theme of his first sermons was the presentation of some passages in the Book of Revelations in a way that would inspire horror and anxiety; from these passages, he made his conclusions heard, with a prophet's voice and authority, with concern to the great crisis and unheard-of misfortunes that God's Church "may expected", the wrath one can escape only through repentance.

The crowds would wait for long hours at the cathedral doors for the preacher to come, and Villari estimated that the crowds that would listen to his sermons ranged between 10,000 and 12,000 people. Eisenbichler considers that in his days of glory, Savonarola would preach to crowds of some twenty thousand people. The feelings of the listeners swung at the preacher's voice just like the wheat crops that swing in the wind, here they would burn with indignation, and there they would melt in tears. "I was overcome by weeping and could not go on", the reporter wrote while taking down a sermon, and Savonarola himself felt the terrible strain and often would sink, completely exhausted, on a chair. To the crowds' enthusiasm toward the preacher, gratitude and veneration for God's messenger were added, and the effect of all these

combined feelings was so strong and so contagious that it would seem that the most beautiful age of the beginnings of the Church had been restored.

To be able to enjoy their share of miraculous manna abundantly bestowed upon them from heavens, the inhabitants of the surrounding towns and villages left their homes, and the people in the mountains came down the Apennines, heading to Florence. There, the crowds of pilgrims hurried every morning, at the crack of dawns, as soon as the gates opened and they were always accommodated with brotherly feelings. They were hugged in the streets like brothers even before anyone knew their name, and there were devout citizens that would sometimes accommodate as many as forty people in their homes.

If we pause to think that such enthusiasm lasted for seven successive years, that he had to deliver his sermons separately for men, women, and children, as it would have been impossible to have them all in the cathedral, we can understand the angry cries of the *Palleschi* faction, who would denounce him at the Roman court every day and would threaten him loudly with death by hanging. Hence, it is far from easy to decide what to admire most in Savonarola: his inexhaustible fecundity as a preacher of the Evangel, or the inexhaustible fecundity his spirit raised above the region troubled by uprising storms, or the truly superhuman confidence in the help from above, which he knew it would not forsake him.

His full of threat preaching was closely related to national events. Italy, Rome and Florence are insistently apostrophised. In a harsh and exuberant criticism, he accuses the monks and the men of the cloth that they are responsible for “this storm”, for “these evils”. He prophesied that God would send punishments upon His Church to purify it: “The Church will be reformed, but Italy will be first whipped, and the punishment is imminent”. The monk’s prophecies seemed to be close to coming true when, in Florence, in 1494, the news that the King of France Charles VIII invaded Italy. This happened while Savonarola was preaching from the text “Behold, I bring floods of water onto the Earth” (Exodus 6,17). This coincidence did nothing but increase his reputation.

The global content of his sermons focuses on three issues: The Church must be punished; by this renewed punishment; renewal will come soon. Savonarola is an impressive typical example of penitential preacher of an apocalyptic, awe-inspiring nature, but with often oscillating results. He denounces the profound contrasts of the Renaissance, of the church abuses, of the papacy aberrations, of the great monastic conflict between libertinism and

conservatism. Savonarola's case compels us to realising the essential difference existing, within the Church, between person and position. The same struggle of Savonarola's is an incisive example of a central issue of modern Catholicism, the definition of the correct relationship function, hierarchy, and individual, the Church and the individual consciousness.

Savonarola's sermons were like the light of the lightning and the reverberation of the thunder. It was his duty to chop with the axe from the root the spreading of debauchery instead of describing the consolation brought by pardon and communion with God. He insisted rather on the divine threats than on the sources of the comforting heavenly grace. There was no sermon without kind descriptions of the heavenly love and mercy, but the damnations cast on the sinfulness of his time exceeded his kind requests.

He described the method saying, "I am like the hail. Cover thyself lest it come down upon thee, and strike thee. And remember that I said unto thee, Cover thy head with a helmet, that is clothe thyself with virtue and no hail stone will touch thee". His addressed his message both the clergy of all ranks and the laity, and the arrows of his indignation would often fall upon Lorenzo's Palace. He would accuse the clergy of greed for the gold prebend and a greater devotion to the exterior of the ceremonies rather than to the soul. He would address Florence affectionately, as to an object of his love and would often exclaim "My Florence". Florence was Savonarola's city just as Geneva was Calvin's or Edinburgh, Knox's city. Portraying the insincerity of the clergy, he said: "In these days, prelates and preachers are chained to the earth by the love of earthly things. The care of souls is no longer their concern. They are content with the receipt of revenue. The preachers preach to please princes and to be praised by them. They have done worse. They have not only destroyed the Church of God. They have built up a new Church after their own pattern. Go to Rome and see! In the mansions of the great prelates there is no concern save for poetry and the oratorical art. Go thither and see! Thou shalt find them all with the books of the humanities in their hands and telling one another that they can guide men's souls by means of Virgil, Horace and Cicero ... The prelates of former days had fewer gold mitres and chalices and what few they possessed were broken up and given to relieve the needs of the poor. But our prelates, for the sake of obtaining chalices, will rob the poor of their sole means of support. Dost thou not know what I would tell thee! What doesnt thou, O Lord! Arise, and come to deliver thy Church from the hands of devils, from the hands of tyrants, from the hands of iniquitous prelates".

The touching appeals Savonarola addressed to the children in his audience could make a truly magnificent collection. The preacher's heart never reached more kindness than when that he spoke to this innocent part of his and highly praised part of his herd. He called for them to collect the fruits of his work and to stand vigil to their country's future; meanwhile, he prepared the path for the coming of such happy times by bringing the great dogmas of faith closer to their understanding and by making pressures on the application of some effective reforms in the education within families. He would say to mothers that they had failed in their most holy duty, when they transferred the upbringing of their children to the care of mercenary women, who conveyed their vices to the children, corrupting them ever since the cradle. He would tell fathers that they were obliged to give their sons, since a very young age, that kind of education and elementary instruction (which included the study of the dead languages), without which their natural skills could not reach their complete development later in life.

In terms of the fundamental works that the ancient people left behind, he admitted their feature of auxiliary to modern civilisation, thinking that they had been the instruments of culture for the development of imagination and artistic taste. However, the acquisition of these foreign decorations should not hinder the consideration of Christian faith the only foundation and the keystone of the structure. He agreed with the teachers in Florence in respect of training their learners so that they could understand the genius of Homer, Virgil, and Cicero. However, to his mind, the genius of the Fathers of the Church was more profound and sublime; hence, he demanded that the best works of Saint Geronimo and Saint Augustine (and especially, the treatise *De Civitate Dei*) enjoyed equal attention as the profane authors. He said, "Do not let the young receive a lesson of paganism without receiving at the same time a lesson of Christian faith, and eloquence and truth should be taught simultaneously". For the same reason, Savonarola wished the children's memory be loaded, from a very young age, with tales of the saints and martyrs who had honoured the Church with their heroic virtues far superior to the ancient philosophers. He used to say that children avoid sin; after reaching the age of free will, they acquire so much innocence of the heart and of the mind that angels in heaven often visit them.

Towards the height of his life, by means of his sermons, he dedicated himself to the desire to see the Florentines' lives free of the tiniest pagan shadow that would lead to exacerbating the humanist cult of the era. As a self-proclaimed prophet, as God's instrument for

Florence, Savonarola started a programme to cleanse the city from the long worshipped humanist vanities. Obsessed with the image of human evil he could see, he wanted to free Florence from all kinds of vices; the monk had an unshaken attitude in condemning frivolity, poetry, sex, gambling, elegant clothes, and jewellery. There would be no image of the nude and no artistic bows to pagan gods left. Such attitude culminated with the “bonfire of vanities” in 1496 and 1497.

Savonarola’s discourses abounded in exalted and stunning imaginary episodes that would substitute to the calm and logical exposition. On the evening before his last sermon in Advent, 1492, Savonarola would point to the middle of the sky a hand holding a sword with the following inscription, Behold the sword of the Lord will descend suddenly and quickly upon the earth – *Ecce gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter*. The sword would suddenly turn toward the earth, the sky grew dark, and from high in the skies swords, arrows and flames poured down onto the earth. The heavens quaked with thunder and the world became a prey to famine and death. This vision ended with the command given to the preacher to spread this knowledge. He repeatedly referred to this prophetic vision. It was passed down to us in memory and cherished on a medal that represents on one side Savonarola and on the other, a sword in the heavens, held by a hand and pointing to a city beneath. The inscription on the heavenly sword represents the outstanding style of Savonarola’s sermons, impulsive, in pictorial images, explosive, startling, unbiased, and instructive. With all these, he would leave a profound impression on the people from various walks of life. Pico della Mirandola the Elder described the wonderful effect Savonarola made on him. Once, when he announced that the text he chose was Genesis 6:17 – “Behold I will bring the flood of waters upon the earth” – della Mirandola tells of how he felt a cold shudder through his body, and his hair, stand on end. Nevertheless, the imagery of the sermon, no matter how brilliant and strange, does not fully explain the power of the Florentine preacher. The preacher himself would burn with religious passion; he would experience deep feelings and devotion. He had the eyes of a mystic and could see underneath the outer shell and the ritual of the inner emotion of the spiritual power.

Moreover, the Biblical element was a remarkable feature of his sermons. His most renowned discourses were upon the ark, Exodus, and the prophets Haggai, Ezekiel, Amos and Hosea, and John’s Book of Revelations. He would insist on the authority of the Scriptures, “I preach the regeneration of the Church,” he said, “taking the Scriptures as my sole guide”.

Unlike many theologians of his time, Savonarola did not preach much from the Holy Fathers, but from the Scriptures and in the vernacular. Consequently, people could understand him and could benefit from his sermons. Savonarola had encyclopedic knowledge of the Bible. Crawford describes Savonarola as “a fervent reader of the Bible”, as he almost knew it heart, from the Genesis to Book of Revelations”. Old is of the same opinion: “His knowledge of the Scriptures was held by his contemporaries as extraordinary. In fact, he was said to know most of the Bible by heart”. Such knowledge was to be of great help to him when, during the last days before his execution, being deprived of his Bible, he wrote his *Meditations from Prison on Psalms 30 and 50*: “the references to the Scriptures are everywhere ... minor lapses or deviations from the Vulgate suggest that Savonarola did not have his Bible at hand while writing and that he would quote from memory”.

As Old highlights, Savonarola based the authority of his sermons on the very authority of the Scriptures. Fra Girolamo used to say, “should you ask me about the authority of my sermons, I would answer like this: what I am saying comes from the Scriptures, what I am saying is the Evangel, has authority; when I say it comes from elsewhere, then you do not have to believe what I am saying”.

The eloquence of the pulpit declined at the time and turned into an exchange of scholastic arguments, and the popular preachers threw this dust into their audience’ eyes by making a diffuse mixture of the arguments based on the Scriptures and logic, and without caring about the things pertaining to faith and God. When Savonarola came, with his abundance of quotations from the Scriptures, they echoed in the souls of the commoners just as repeated thunder never heard before. Amos was to him the archetype of rough and energetic simplicity, which God likes to use to humble the knowledge of the wise with; and the shepherd of Tekoa’s prophecies seemed, through the application that Savonarola gave to them, to be designed for the intellectual idolatry Florence had plunged into at the time. When the prophet was speaking to them about the unpardonable sin of the people of Israel (Amos 2,8), he reproached to them that they had drunk from the wine of the misfortunate, “vinum biberunt damnatorum”, Fra Girolamo declares to the Florentines that this cursed wine is nothing but paganism, with its ancient memories, its lust, and profane ceremonies”. Those who swear on Samaria’s sin, “qui jurant delicto in Samaria,” are, on one hand, the youth of Florence, pride-driven in chase of logic and philosophy, and, on the other, the theology professors who can study nothing but those vain subtleties that feed the

disputes among schools. Likewise, those who shout, “Alive is the road to the city of Beersheba!” (“Vivit via Beersheba” – Amos 8,14) the scholars who make an idol of science. The ban imposed by Isaac to his son Jacob to wed from among the maidens of Canaan was a prophetic warning to Christians, to prevent them from seeking the truth in the books of philosophers.

It is easy to understand how Savonarola, with such fervour and zeal, managed to attract the crowds and move them whenever he advised his listeners to read the Scriptures, or when he would speak about the comforting teachings he himself learned from them: “What ineffable sweetness does the Christian heart find in the reading of the Holy Scriptures! The man who is wearied by the long pilgrimage of life sometimes sits down upon his way and rests himself, in order to seek refreshment and strength in this viaticum, and then he enjoys, so to speak, the presence of his well-beloved one, of Christ himself, and he solaces himself with the sweet tears which he sheds as he contemplates the mercies of God [...] O Florence, do with me what thou wilt; I have ascended the pulpit to-day to warn thee that thou destroy not my work, for it is the work of Christ. Whether I live, or whether I die, the seed which I have sown in the hearts of men will none the less bear its fruit. Yea, if my enemies should be strong enough to drive me forth from thy walls, I shall not thereby be cast down ; for somewhere I can find a solitude into which I can fly for refuge with my Bible, and enjoy a peace and rest which it will be beyond the power of thy citizens to disturb”.

Another element that conveyed vigour and strength to Savonarola’s sermons was the prophetic one. Savonarola claimed that he was a prophet revealing things, which, to put it in his words, “exceed the natural scope of any natural being. ”This element could have been a sign of weakness, had it not been associated with a great personality, inclined toward noble goals. The gravity of his warnings was often so frightening that the preacher himself would shrink from communicating. Once, he stood in vigil and prayed through the night so that he could be exempted from the obligation he undertook to spread a message, but it was to no avail. He described the sermon he did deliver as dreadful.

Savonarola’s trust in the divine origin of being appointed from high above as the herald of extraordinary things found its expression not only in the pulpit but in two of his tracts as well, i.e. the *Manual of Revelations*, 1495, and the *Dialogue concerning Truth and Prophecy*, 1497. An Index introduced the second tract containing a number of Savonarola’s sermons. In the former, the author declares that he had predicted future things for a long time by means of divine

inspiration, saying that “God placed me here and told me , «I have chosen you as a guardian at the heart of Italy ... when you shall hear a word from My mouth, let them know” (Ezekiel 3, 17).

Should we be tempted to consider that Savonarola was wrong to claim he had prophetic visions, we would lightly forgive his error due owing to his fervent zeal and innocent reasons driving him. He applied Christ’s words to his prophecies so that no detail, however insignificant, be overlooked until the prophecies came true.

None of his messages was more famous than the one he received during his visit to Heaven (March 1495). Before setting on the road, several women offered to accompany him. He declined Philosophy and Rhetoric. Accepting the company of Faith, Simplicity, Prayer, and Patience, he came across the devil in a monk’s cloth on the way. The devil made several comments with respect to the supernatural character of his prophecies. Savonarola should have chosen the prophet’s virtue, should have denounced the vices and leave prophecy aside. A prophet had been always believed by way of his miracles. The true prophets were the holy people, and the devil asked Savonarola whether he thought he reached a higher level of holiness. Then he dared show that Savonarola’s prophecies did not always come true. Meanwhile, they reached the Gates of Heaven and the devil cautiously left the company. The Heaven’s walls – according to Savonarola’s description – were made of diamonds and other gems. There were ten butterflies flying over them on which Florence’s prayers were written. With the angels’ help, the visitor climbed the stairs up to the throne of the Virgin, who gave him a crown and a gem and then, holding Jesus in her arms, she implored the Holy Trinity for the Florentines. The prayer was heard and the Florentines were promised an era of prosperity preceded by a period of troubles. During this new period, the city would become stronger and richer than ever before.

People wonder whether Savonarola was truly a prophet or whether he indulged in his own illusions, taking his imagination, ardent owing to his own religious piety, for direct communication from God. Pope Alexander VI turned Savonarola’s “foolish declaration” that he “would be a prophet” into one of the charges against the latter.

In the *Manual of Revelations*, Savonarola offered four arguments to prove he was a true prophet – his subjective certainty, the fact that his predictions came true, their effect on helping the cause of the moral reform in Florence, and the fact that the people in the city accepted them. His prophecies, he would say, could not have come from astrology as he rejected astrology, nor could they have come from a sick imagination, as this was not consistent with his vast

knowledge of the scriptures, nor from the devil, as the devil hate his sermons and has no knowledge of future events.

To us, the only valid test is the historical facts. Did his prophecies come true? The two prophecies whose happening is underlines were the political revolution in Florence, which did happen, and the coming of Charles VIII from over the Alps. Savonarola saw in Charles a new Cyrus whose coming could free Florence from her political connections and could initiate a new era of civil liberty. He also predicted Charles's later withdrawal. Philippe de Commynes (a writer and diplomat at the French King's court), who visited Savonarola in the convent St Mark after the beginning of the trials that followed Charles's coming to Italy, left impressed by the monk's piety and candour. Commynes declared that the monk predicted with precision, to him and to the King, "things that no one believed at the time, but which came thoroughly true ever since".

While a number of prophetic announcements remained untrue, it would be fair to assume that the rest were mere predictions of a keen observer who would watch closely the development of the events. Many people trusted the monk as a prophet, but these people insisted on the monk's proving his prophetic allegations by means of a miracle. Even the predictions that partially came true, such as the coming of Charles VIII from over the Alps, did not fully happen, in the sense of a permanent improvement of the political situation, as Savonarola hoped.

Professor Bonet-Maury's statement expresses very well the case. Savonarola's so-called prophetic gift of was no more than political and religious intuition. Some of his predictions did not meet the requirements to classify as Christian prophecies, e.g. the new humiliation of Pisa. The Florentines were flattered by the great honour the prophet brought to their city as well as by his predictions related to Florence's earthly domination and heavenly glory. In the *Manual of Revelations* he exclaimed, "Whereas Florence is placed in the midst of Italy, like the heart in the midst of the body, God has chosen to select her, that she may be the centre from which this prophetic announcement should be spread abroad throughout all Italy".

The prophetic and penitential-apocalyptic dimension of his sermons is inferred especially by the conflict Fra Girolamo had with Pope Alexander Borgia. In fact, it is the content of the seventh chapter of the thesis, entitled *Movement savonaroliană and its consequences. Savonarola's path from heresy to holiness*, we analyze Savonarola's relationship with Pope Alexander VI Borgia (1431-1503), that Martin Luther (1483-1546).

There were many moral preachers in the Christendom who invoked curses on the abuses of the clergy, and the Pope was aware of the rumours circulating in relation with his the morality of his lifestyle. What distinguished Savonarola from them was his claiming to have a prophetic perception. More alarming for the Pope was the fact that Savonarola now linked the punishment that was to come with the French king's invasion of Italy. Alexander, like many other medieval popes, feared any threat to his power. The moral corruption and the doctrinarian derailment did not interest him as long as the Church authority, his own authority was not questioned.

To Alexander, the real issue was political. Savonarola's instigating the Florentines to believe that the French were their allies hindered Florence from joining the "Holy League". This alliance, i.e. the Pope, the Emperor, the King of Spain the Venetian Republic, and the Duke of Milan, was organised to protect Italy against the Turks and to protect the Pope's rights. His immediate goal was to chase the French from Italy. Florence refused to join the League, as the Florentines needed the support of a foreign power, i.e. France, to help them prevent the return of the de Medici, despots of the city for many generations.

The conflict began with the Pope's order, la 25 July 1495, that Savonarola proceed to Rome to answer the charges against him. Alexander's order, that summoned the monk to Roma, was based on the announcement of the fact that his predictions about future events were bestowed by from divine revelations. On the same occasion, the Pope expressed his great joy when learning the news that Savonarola was the most zealous of all the workers in God's vineyard. The Pope also promised to welcome Savonarola to the eternal city with love and brotherly affection. Invoking ill health and perils that he may encounter on his journey to Rome, Savonarola declined the Pope's summons. His old rival in the pulpit, Fra Mariano de Gennazzano, and other foes were in Rome plotting against him, and the Medici were fast winning the pope's favour.

The first of Alexander's letters, on 9 September 1495, which prevented the monk from preaching, condemned Savonarola's foolish insanity to meddle with Italian politics and his announcing that he was a messenger sent by God. Replying, Savonarola answered the charges and, upon the Signoria's invitation, he continued to deliver his sermons. On 16 October 1495, the pontiff forbade Savonarola to preach openly or privately. "It was as clear as the sun that Savonarola was guilty of rank disobedience to the papal authority, remarked Pastor".

The monk retreated in the convent for five months but on 17 February 1496, upon the Signoria's request to deliver the Lenten sermons, he returned to his pulpit. Asserting that the Pope could be wrong, he took a daring stand. "The pope," he said, "may command me to do something that contravenes the law of Christian love or the Gospel. But, if he did so command, I would say to him, thou art no shepherd. Not the Roman Church, but thou erreest".

From this moment on, he raised his voice as never before, against the corruption of the papal city. On 28 February 1496, while preaching on Amos (4, 1), he exclaimed, "Who are the fat kine of Bashan on the mountains of Samaria? I say they are the courtesans of Italy and Rome. Or, are there none? A thousand are too few for Rome, 10,000, 12,000, 14,000 are too few for Rome. Prepare thyself, O Rome, for great will be thy punishments".

Thinking that the threats would not stop Savonarola from preaching, Alexander tried bribing the monk, as the Pope was a master of this art. By means of a Dominican he sent to Florence, he offered the monk in St Mark a cardinal's hat. Little did Alexander know about the monk who rejected the offer and in a sermon on August 1496, Savonarola declared that he would have neither mitre nor a red hat, but only the gift that God would give to saints – the death, a red hat, a hat reddened in blood. Herbert Lucas interpreted the offer of a cardinal's hat not as shrewdness on behalf of Alexander, but as an allegedly good purpose, in token of his appreciation of an earnest but unfortunately misguided man.

The carnival season in as well as the following two seasons, provided remarkable evidence of the manner Savonarola succeeded in imposing his religious convictions on the Florentines. Although the carnival had been the scene of 'wild revelries', it was transformed into a semi-religious festival. Savonarola, together with his helpers, managed to substitute to the former "festival of the stones", the Signoria could not ban, a religious festival, i.e. the reform of the boys. The "boys of Fra Girolamo," as Landucci called them, would march up and down the city streets singing hymns composed by Savonarola and Benivieni and, taking their places at stands, erected for the purpose, would receive collections for the poor. On the last day of the carnival of 1497, the Florentines attended the so-called burning of the vanities.

Once under the spell of the monk's sermon, the entire Florence seemed to take the path of religion. Wives left their husbands and went to nunnery. Others married, swearing nuptial abstinence and Savonarola did dream that the city could reach such a state of perfection that marriages would stop forever. People would attend masses and would receive the Eucharist

every day; Fra Bartolomeo threw his nude studies in the fire and for a while continued to believe that it was a sin to use one's hands to paint as hands should be at all times united as for prayer. There was enthusiasm but not regeneration. A reaction was sure to follow and it is a wonder Savonarola enjoyed such great confidence from people almost to the end of his life.

Alexander did not agree with neither of the Florentine reforms and was adamant to silence Savonarola at all costs.

Savonarola's attacks of the evils of the Church became more and more intense. He would exclaim, "O prostrate Church, thou hast displayed thy foulness to the whole earth. Thou hast multiplied thy fornications in Italy, in France, in Spain and all other regions. Thou hast desecrated the sacraments with simony. Of old, priests called their bastards nephews, now they call them outright sons". Alexander could not mistake the hint, nor could he tolerate such assertions. The integrity of the Holy Seat was at stake. A prophetic function superior to papacy, as in Eugene III's case, could be admitted, when it was administered by St Bernard's warnings, but the prophet in Florence was already engaged in denouncing the very the personal invectives. The prophet seemed to be losing his balance. On 12 May 1497, for "his failure to obey our Apostolic admonitions and commands" and being "one suspected of heresy", Alexander declared him excommunicate. No one was allowed to listen to the condemned man or to talk with him.

Initially, Savonarola obeyed the order of excommunication and ceased to preach. Between May 1497 and February 1498, he kept silence. The more he stood far from his pulpit, the worse people's morals. Therefore, the authorities asked Savonarola to resume preaching in order to dam the wave of misdeeds that threatened the city once again.

On 11 February 1498, in defiance of his own excommunication, he ascended the pulpit of the dome once again.

To a vast concourse he represented the priest as merely an instrument of the Almighty and, when God withdraws His presence, prelate and pope are but as "a broken iron tool". "And, if a prelate commands what is contrary to godly living and charity, he is not only not to be obeyed but deserves to be anathema". On another occasion, he said that not only may the pope be led into error by false reports but also by his own badness, as was the case with Boniface VIII who was a wicked pope, beginning his pontificate like a fox and ending it like a dog.

Out of respect for the Church, many people stood away from Savonarola's sermons as of that date. Among them, the faithful Landucci said, "whether justly or unjustly, I was among

those who did not go. I believed in him, but did not wish to incur risk by going to hear him, for he was under sentence of excommunication.” The words of Gregory the Great were turned into war cry by Savonarola’s enemies, *Sententia pastoris sive justa sive unjusta timenda est.* meaning “The sentence of the shepherd is to be respected, whether it be just or unjust”.

Savonarola’s denunciations of the widespread corruption in the Church became bolder and bolder. The preacher’s fighting a losing battle became crystal-clear. His attacks on the morals of the clergy and the Vatican stirred up people occupying high positions in the Church against him; even the factions in Florence turned against him due to his political attitude.

However, the Pope still held a weapon to break Savonarola – the interdict of Florence. Thus, he threatened the city with this interdict in case the Signoria did not send this “son of the evil one” to Rome or to prison. Should the Signoria pursue the first alternative, Alexander promised to treat Savonarola as a father would treat his son, on condition that he repented, as he “desired not the death of a sinner but that he might turn from his way and live”.

Nevertheless, while some members continued to express their confidence in the purity of the monk’s motives, most of them came to take sides with the opinion that it would have been more expedient to reduce the preacher to silence than incur the papal interdict. Consequently, the arguments in favour of efficiency prevailed during the public meeting called by the Signoria on 9 March 1498 to decide upon the course of action to be taken. As the Vicar of Christ, the Pope has to be obeyed as his authority is granted directly from God. The financial straits of the city were a second argument that mattered. On 17 March 1498, the decision of the Signoria was communicated to Savonarola: he was thenceforth to refrain from preaching. Savonarola delivered his last speech the next day.

Savonarola acknowledged, in this last sermon, that it was his duty to obey the mandate. His mind had devised a course of action: he had already made a hint to convene a general council as a last resort. However, the course of events suddenly took an unexpected turn. Florence was taken aback by the rumour that measures were to be taken to decide whether Savonarola’s claims were true. The challenge (the ordeal by fire) came from Francesco da Puglia, a Franciscan monk, in a sermon at Santa Croce, where da Puglia denounced the Dominican monk as a heretic and a false prophet. If Savonarola were not burnt during this ordeal, it would have been clear sign that Florence would follow. Fra Domenico da Pescia, a monk of St Mark’s and close friend of Savonarola’s – whose pure life was a well-known fact in Florence – accepted the challenge.

Declaring that Savonarola should be reserved for higher things, he took his friend's place. Then, Francesco da Puglia also withdrew and Julian Rondinelli, a Franciscan monk, took his place rather reluctantly. Even Savonarola disapproved the ordeal.

The Signoria authorised the ordeal and set the date on 7 April. The ordeal filled Savonarola's friends with a lot more enthusiasm. Many women expressed their desire to share the experience when he told them in sermon. Other monks in St Mark's and hundreds of young men announced their willingness to walk through fire out of respect for their spiritual leader.

The solemn event was set for eleven o'clock. When the time arrived for the procession to start, Savonarola was preaching, telling the people again that his work required no miracle and that he had ever sought to justify himself by the signs of righteousness. He also declared that, as on Mt Carmel, one can expect miraculous intervention only in answer to prayer and humility. The Signoria cancelled the ordeal due to the sudden storm that came over the city, the delayed preparations, and the darkness was falling.

Savonarola could see his power end and the spell of his name vanish. There was a feeling of farce in the air. People seemed increasingly menacing and a guardian barely managed to prevent an attack on Savonarola as the procession retreated to St Mark.

There has been much support for the view that Savonarola's political enemies, the *Arrabbiati*, made an agreement with the Franciscans and that the delay of the procession due to various objections was a trick to cancel the ordeal. Florence flew into a rage at having been tricked. The mob stormed St Mark's the following day and the Signoria voted that Savonarola be immediately banished. Upon receiving the official account on the events in Florence, the Pope sent his congratulations to the Signoria, absolved the city plenary and granted it the tenth for three years. In addition, the Pope demanded that Savonarola's trial be commenced, not neglecting, if necessary, the use of torture.

The Municipality conducted two separate trials: the one on 17 April and the one on 21–23 April. In the delirium caused by his pains, the monk made confessions, which would only be denied later on in his lucid moments. He even denied being a prophet. This confession made such a devastating impression on his admirers such as Landucci, the apothecary, for instance. Eventually, the Pope sent a commission who condemned Savonarola to death by hanging for heresy. On 23 May 1498, after having been hanged, Savonarola's body was burnt at the stake in *Piazza della Signoria*, and his ashes were cast into the waters of the Arno. This meant the

scattering of the last words in his prophetic and penitential sermon he delivered to the men and women of Florence, that to Pope Alexander.

Beyond the biblical and prophetic-penitential dimension of Fra Girolamo's discourse, we also notice the political message of his sermons.

Ever since 1494, Savonarola's prevailing influence reached its heights and even an unbiased witness as Guicciardini described the monk's influence as extraordinary. The invasion of Charles VIII and the banishment of the Medici from Florence heralded the fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the spiritual and socio-political regeneration of Florence. "He will come across the Alps against Italy like Cyrus", Savonarola had prophesied of the French king, Charles VIII. And, when the French army was approaching the confines of Florence, he exclaimed, "Behold, the sword has come upon you. The prophecies are fulfilled, the scourge begun! Behold these hosts are led of the Lord! O Florence, the time of singing and dancing is at an end. Now is the time to shed floods of tears for thy sins".

Florence was anxiously listening. In his still preserved speech, the monk reminded his Majesty that he was an instrument sent by God to deliver Italy from curses and to reform the Church. Charles marched into Florence but, moved by Savonarola's intervention, reduced the tribute and stopped the pillage of Florence by the French soldiers. The king himself seems to have listened to the unyielding words of the monk when the latter said to him, "Hearken unto the voice of God's servant and pursue thy journey onward without delay". Landucci wrote in his diary that if it had not been for Savonarola, the city would have been soaked in blood.

Now the time has come for Savonarola to fulfil in Florence his ideal of governance, a theocracy led by Christ. The banishment of the Medici allowed for a reorganisation of the state, and the new constitution, mostly Savonarola's creation, involved him in the struggle between the civil and political factions. In his magnificent sermons on Haggai, in Advent 1494 and on Psalms in 1495, Savonarola clearly embarked upon the sea of politics. "The Lord has driven my bark into the open ocean", he exclaimed from the pulpit. Remonstrating with God for imposing this duty upon him, he declared, 'I will preach, if so I must, but why need I meddle with the government of Florence'. And the Lord said, 'If thou wouldst make Florence a holy city, thou must establish her on firm foundations and give her a government which cherishes righteousness'. Thus, the preacher was committed".

From the point of view of Savonarola's involvement in the political life of the city, these were important sermons, as they marked the beginning of the great period of Savonarola's prophetic sermons. These sermons were entirely dedicated to securing a way – for the “high and middle-ranking citizens of Florence” – out of the institutional decay of the city to assure the help of divinity”, declared Gian Carlo Garfagnini. Speaking to the Florentines for the pulpit of the city cathedral, the dome Santa Maria del Fiore, Savonarola became the central point of a debate about governance and the reform that was to continue the following years.

Based on a careful reading of over 200 sermons delivered between 1495 and 1497, when the city conducted the experiment with a more popular type of governance Paolo Prodi's conclusion is that this monk was actually, in his prophetic mission, rather a political man than a learned one in the traditional meaning.

Noticing that before 1490 Savonarola paid little interest to social issues, Lorenzo Polizzotto trails the change the monk's preaching style underwent after 1490, giving a stronger immediate nuance and references closer to the political circumstances of the city.

The volume *Se Tu Non Hai Carita, Tu Non Sei Vero Cristiano: Tre Prediche*, with an introduction signed by, gravitates around the charity theme, which, as the author highlights, is one of the fundamental themes in all Savonarola's writings – mentioned by Polizzotto as well in the observations above. Indeed, this theme seems to be appropriate to Savonarola's mission. As Viti shows, charity is the highest of the three theological virtues, and Savonarola constantly returns to it as to a fundamental aspect of people's life, as to “a fully Christian vision of the availability and love for God and for our neighbor”.

The first sermon, preached in the cathedral on 15 December 1494, shortly after Piero de' Medici's flight from Florence, argues in favor of finding a better and fairer system of political governance for the city. The second, delivered on 24 February 1496, still in the cathedral, focuses on the tyrant's sins and tells about the need to find a better leader. The third, delivered to the brothers in the convent of St Mark's, on 15 February 1498, outlines the virtues of the ideal priest who could involve in such governance.

In the arrangement proposed, he took the great council of Venice as his model, leaving aside its head, the doge, who was chosen for life. Savonarola gave to God himself the position of the doge or the leader. “God alone,” he would exclaim from the pulpit, “God alone will be thy king, O Florence, as He was king of Israel under the old Covenant”. “Thy new head shall be

Jesus Christ”, – this was the ringing cry with which he closed his sermons on Haggai. Savonarola’s biographer, Villari, emphasized “the masterly prudence and wisdom shown by him in all the fundamental laws he proposed for the new state”. He had no seat in the council and yet he was the soul of the entire people.

In the sermons before 23 December, the Dominican had shown that spiritual regeneration, the new moral awakening and improvement of the civil institutions of the Florentine Republic should be construed as inseparable aspects. He insisted repeatedly on the necessity to give form to an organic and balanced constitutional reform, which would warrant the citizen’s freedom and social consensus. He did not hesitate to offer politicians listening to him, the example of the Venetian governance, as a model of order from which they would have better took their inspiration. Savonarola approaches the issue of renewing the Florentine institutions mainly in the most “political” homilies in his entire preaching career known to us, the thirteenth in the Advent 1494 cycle. In that sermon, he intervenes in exhorting his audience to bestow upon the *Gonfalonieri delle Compagnie* the assignment to gather the best propositions for the government inspired from the citizens’ experience. The aim was to signal such propositions to the Signoria, adding immediately after that he would prefer the direct nominal election for the major public offices and drawing of lots for the other offices.

The enforcement of the act of 23 December 1494 marks Girolamo’s personal success, which in Florence is acknowledged as the true inspiration and founder of the political reform. The Supreme Council, regarded by most citizens as an “instrument and expression of regaining liberties”, becomes the institutional centre of the renovated Republic that offered to act as defender of the regulations and primary source of the much-needed improvement of the “enlarged” constitution, while waiting for the times when Florence would be granted the promised divine reward. Savonarola then explicitly refers to the corps of magistrates of the *Serenissima* (a name attributed to the Republic of Venice during the Renaissance). Such warning is contained in the homilies dedicated to the Psalms in 1495. The last significant reference to the *Serenissima*, contained in the sermons, dates from 18 February 1496. Addressing to the personified Florence, he declares, “I told you that where there is a good leader, there is a good government, and this is the best government of all. The closest to this one is the one of the nobles, such as the one in Venice; the other one is civil and political as your government, that as I have told you is the best suitable for you and God gave it to you”.

Shortly after his arrest, Savonarola recalls eventually the Laguna constitution in the first of the three trials. Fra Girolamo “confesses” that he had judged the republican state structure as an “optimal instrument” to meet his goals: “as it were in my mind the city of Florence would constitute that civil government according to the Venetian example, as it could have been done.” Savonarola asserts that he had thought thus to encourage either the foundation of Great Council (which he managed to do as he intended), or a *Gonfaloniere* of Justice, that would have to stay in office for life or a long term (but he would not have been able to see this reform carried out). In the report on the first “examination” he signed, he clarifies in these words his own point of view as to the possible creation in Florence of a magistrate body similar to the one of the Doge’s, which was present in St Mark’s Republic: “In order to make the civil government more stable, so that it does not shuffle every two months, I must tell you that we should have followed the Venetian example, that is to create a life-long or a long-term doge or a *gonfaloniere*, as we would have agreed [...]. I would have wished for a doge one that did not have many children, or many kinship, as they themselves should have be subjected to the law and he would not have been able to become a tyrant. But I could find no one in the city I would have like”.

When the trial ended and Fra Girolamo was condemned to death, the monk’s prophetic mission and preaching ended as well, and Florence entered a new stage of its history. Savonarola’s discourse was amazing, the fate of his sermons having a decisive influence on the fate of his fellow citizens. This was due, largely, to the early development of the printing press. The press reached Florence only eleven years before Savonarola started to preach of the first time within the city walls.

Within eight or nine years (1491-1500), Savonarola’s writings could be seen in the offers of at least six different publishing houses in Florence, e.g. Bonaccorsi, Libri, Miscomini, Morgiani, Petri, and Tubini; all of them had under the print, at some time, his work in the Italian incunabula era. In 1513 and 1516, in Ferrara two editions of Savonarola’s sermons were printed; the foreword of the former referred to the monk with the phrase “Christ’s trumpet” and “the honorable citizen of our Ferrara” – an enormous interest for that period in Savonarola’s discourse.

The exalted tone of his fanatical sermons, the invectives addressed to the high Church hierarchy, the call to the original purity of Christianity, the proclamation of Florence as the kingdom of Christ, or of the invasion of Carol VIII as a punishment from the Heavens, – all these

ideas and attitudes were ones of a medieval preacher. The meaning of his activity that exceeded by far the scope of religious life and his more than active involvement in the social and political life of Florence – which he dominated for four years, – made from Savonarola, the preacher, a political character of far-reaching proportions who would aim at reforming society in its complexity.

Indeed, it is confirmed, his sermon was both awful and extremely enthusiastic, anchored in the word of the Scriptures, with a prophetic opening, penitential, and apocalyptic, with numerous political insertions, a discourse that weakened the very foundations of the Florentine society, generated love and hate alike, touched hearts, gave hope, and crumbled ideals, a question mark of the mentality of the people in the era.

In relationship with Pope Alexander at first he tried to be subject, as we have seen, and the tone is reverential to the Holy Father was full of submission. Even when it dispute vehemently monk maintain a tone of deep respect for the High Seat of St. Peter, with faith in the inviolability of the Papacy. Church of Rome was for him the mother of all churches and the pope its head. In his book, *Triumph of the Cross*, he argues clearly that the seven sacraments and that Christ is "wholly and essentially every component of the Eucharist". He did not stand against Papal institution, but against a person who wrongly consider unworthy of high office. He was convinced that Alexander was elected pope by fraud and bribery. In the most serious allegations against the evils that dominate society and corruption in the Church, we find no disrespectful word against Christian teachings or at the beginning divine papal institution.

You must compare this attitude with words that Luther addressed them Leo the Tenth, says J. L. O'Neil (*Jerome Savonarola. A Sketch*): "Among the latter, the dispute was a wholly theological doctriens and mysteries Church were dragged into dispute. Luther was summoned to Rome to account. What was his reaction? "You know what I think about Rome? It's a confusing hodgepodge of crazy, stupid, naive, evil characters square heads! Pope and callousness are the same"! And then, he says Pope Leo X century that would like to wash their hands 'in the blood of corrupt teachers, cardinals and popes of the Roman Sodom contaminated with the Church'? What would have to add? Clearly, not only in terms of insolence German monk, but also in terms of events and their consequences followed that historical truth is shaken and name any devout Catholic can not stand next to the name and teachings of Martin Luther. Luther Monument, erected in Worms in 1868, is therefore all the more as it is and Savonarola, a huge historical

forgery: the central figure is Luther, are also represented Melancthon, Reuchlin, Philip of Hesse, and Frederick of Saxony, all one and one. Is based on a smaller group, representing Waldo, Wycklif, Hus and Savonarola, the forerunner of the monk of Wittemberg. Not true”!

Savonarola was one of the most notable figures that Italy has produced. Modern Christian world, Catholic and Protestant, puts together ardent religious enlightened of all countries and of all time. He was a preacher of righteousness and patriot. Between religious personalities of Italy, it occupies a special place with Dante, the Italian poet, St. Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas. Italy had other preachers - Anthony of Padua, Bernardino of Siena - but their messages were local and ecclesiastical. Savonarola had something in common with Arnold of Brescia. Both had a disturbing message for reform. Both political ideals combined with spiritual activity and both died as a result of judicial sanction given by the papacy.

Analysis of the relationship between Savonarola and Pope Alexander VI decrypts finally one Protestant historians Philip Schaff – “Savonarola was a true Catholic. He did not deny even the medieval church dogma. The way they did hear the message, he rose above rituals and customs. He ordered imperative heart regeneration. His rebellion against papal authority through the use of a council is a serious stumbling block for Catholic” - and Leopold von Ranke – “Luther wanted, especially a reform of dogma, moral concern Savonarola's reform and constitution. He was a reformer who accept the papacy and would not be nothing but a servant of the Catholic Church”.

Even Protestant Professor Pasquale Villari said Savonarola's attacks are never against Church dogma, but only against those who were deformed, you must know that it is the purest essence Catholic, wanted only moral reform of society, leaving faithful to the end of his creed. Rev. John Procter, Dominican English, the translator Savonarola's book *Triumph of the Cross*, he calls it as a traditional Catholic: the introduction, Procter says that is not a reformer Savonarola. Catholic historian Ludwig von Pastor, known opponent of the priorities of St. Mark, concludes: “Savonarola was always faithful Catholic dogma theory. The only sense in which it was removed from disobedience to the Pope and the use of a council”.

Through Savonarola therefore a long way from heresy to holiness, as I said at the end of chapter VII. In conclusion this study, we believe that Savonarola's fight against the pope, though honest reasons taken to reform the church morally, proved to be a reckless act, Florentine monk far exceeding their condition and status. Example disobedience to the superior, of which

Savonarola proved, will cause mass refusal to obey you, so that more effective work was continuing reorganization of the Dominican Order and social activities, a reform initiated at the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but without the spectacular attack against the Roman Pontiff.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century, the city of Florence seemed ready to become a model municipality, a model of Christian moral, a theocracy where Christ was acknowledged as sovereign. In the development toward this change, the main author was Girolamo Savonarola, the prior of the Dominican convent of St Mark.

Girolamo Savonarola was, by his more than active involvement in the social and political life of Florence, a political character of far-reaching proportions who would aim at reforming society in its complexity. In the beginning, his sermons were despised for being sophisticated and lacking rhetoric, but by his apocalyptic visions, his oratorical style acquired a penetrating and triumphant power in both the pulpit and the familiar discourse. His full of threat preaching was closely related to national events. The global content of his sermons focuses on three issues: the Church must be punished; by this renewed punishment; renewal will come soon. Moreover, the biblical element was a remarkable feature of his sermons. Savonarola based the authority of his sermons on the very authority of the Scriptures, but also the prophetic dimension of Fra Girolamo's discourse gave power to his sermons. He claimed that he is a prophet who shows things that goes beyond knowledge, natural for any being. He addressed his message both the clergy of all ranks and the laity, and the arrows of his indignation would often fall upon Lorenzo's Palace.

As in the case of many a distinguished man called to perform a difficult work in difficult times, and failing to carry the objects he aimed at to full visible success, the reputation of Savonarola has suffered from the shadow cast upon it by his failure. His real greatness has been obscured, not so much by the melancholy tragedy of his death, as by the troubles and animosities which beset him in his later days, and which to a lamentable degree cramped his usefulness and power. Those fatal embarrassments were due to several causes, which, though already touched upon in the course of the narrative, may appropriately be summed up here.

He accepted a position which was too complicated to maintain. In the attempt he made to combine the rule of political director with that of religious teacher and reformer, he undertook a task which, by very necessity, involved him in meshes of perplexing entanglement. The

exigencies of the times were such that in his political action he was forced to identify himself with a particular party in the State, and, as a consequence, the interests of his religious work were mixed up with that party's rising or falling fortunes.

It was not in the nature of things that he should continue for long to control the government of the State from the pulpit without incurring for his doctrines, his reforming efforts, and his own person, the full brunt of partisan enmity and intrigue. The service he rendered to Florence in framing its constitution after the expulsion of the Medici, was invaluable. It was a service thrust upon him by a pressure of circumstances which it was impossible for him to withstand; he was the only man of any influence in Florence who had a well-defined, enlightened, practicable form of government to propose, and his success in securing its adoption was flattering in the highest degree. Unfortunately, however, having once been drawn so prominently into the sphere of politics, he could not restrain himself from endeavouring more or less to regulate the actual working of the political machinery he had organised. This was one of the rocks on which the lofty usefulness of his career was split. A factious opposition was aroused, which, increasing always in bitterness and vehemence, broke down his sway as a religious teacher, and contributed to his destruction when the fitting opportunity arrived. Moreover, the difficulties thus occasioned were aggravated by the collision into which his political action brought him with the Pope, whose implacable resentment he incurred by standing between him and his favorite policy of drawing Florence into the Holy League.

He imposed a restraint that caused the inevitable revolt. Well-intentioned and commendable, as most of the regulations made by him for moral reform, Savonarola committed their offense to enforce excessively severe measures.

While achieving all the goals for which it was tried foiled confused state of corrupt former times, and even though it was shot down by the opposition aroused by his noble efforts, this man was destined to exert an unusual influence on the way of thinking and to live in the world. Undoubtedly, he was still hampered by prohibitions, customs and superstitions of the Middle Ages, scholasticism and pedantry of his most remarkable that Savonarola's views were advanced for its time.

He had to suffer the penalty of originality, that struck a blow to the faster and stronger because of his own courage and sincerity. If it was less bold or less honest, more prone to hesitation and delay, perhaps many troubles, which were combined as the tragic end of his life

would be spared. Had it not been so eager to see new ideas and seek placed orders that in fact, he might have avoided the most fatal of mistakes for which he was betrayed. But moral vigor of his temperament could not be repressed, she urged him to go ahead, disregarding any warning caution. Savonarola is an impressive typical example of such penitential preaching apocalyptic earthquake, which promoted a speech he faltered Florentine society, born of love and hate alike, moved hearts, gave hope and shattered ideals, a sign the question of the mentality of the people of those times.

Keywords:

Savonarola, Quattrocento, Florence, Renaissance, Humanism, Alexandru VI, Charles VIII, Luther, sermons, reformer.

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