

**CAN THE POPE BE MASTER IN WISDOM?**  
**Centro Culturale Lepanto denounces the heirs of the 1968 revolution for their  
hostility against the Preacher of Hope**

*His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI was invited to deliver a speech in the “Aula Magna” (Big Hall) of La Sapienza (“Wisdom) University in Rome for the inauguration of its 705<sup>th</sup> academic year, on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008.*

The announcement of the felicitous initiative caused His Holiness to be accused of using a repeated appeal for a meeting of Reason and Faith “as a Trojan Horse in order to enter the citadel of scientific knowledge” (1) and “indignation” was directed at the Rector of “La Sapienza”, qualifying the invitation to the Pope as “an incredible breach of the traditional autonomy of universities - embodied by La Sapienza for over 705 years”. (2).

**AN UNFOUNDED ACCUSATION**

By announcing the inauguration of the 705th academic year, the Magnificent Dean and the Academic Senate highlight the University’s continuity, starting from when “La Sapienza” was founded up to the present day, which has never been interrupted, whether by the Napoleonic invasion or by the Piedmontese annexation in 1870, and not even by the cultural revolution that took place in ’68, as is admitted when writing about “705 years” of tradition.

But at “La Sapienza,” the tradition is certainly not one of rebellion against the Papal magisterium. La Sapienza’s blueprint was drawn up on October 14, 1265 by the head of the Guelfs, Carlo I d’Angiò. (3) After various vicissitudes, the Roman University was definitively inaugurated by Pope Boniface VIII in 1303.

Many other pontiffs came to the aid of the Studium Urbis which was named after Divine Wisdom, from Eugene IV to Pius XII, who gave Rome’s current university complex the “great chapel dedicated to Eternal Wisdom” (4) with “the costs totally covered by the Holy See” (5).

The Roman university La Sapienza’s roots are therefore not just Christian, they are also pontifical, to anyone not attempting “a clumsy denial of historical evidence” (6) daring to define the invitation to the Roman Pontiff as “improvident and detrimental to the image of La Sapienza in the world” (7).

**LEGACY FROM ’68**

The real reasons behind the vehement reaction against the Pope are the same as the reasons behind the ’68 protest in cultural and academic domains (8).

Ten years or so ago Lepanto was already denouncing that “thirty years after ’68, commentators have tried to diminish the extent and the results of that ‘global revolt’ which fired the Western world (...) And yet, this way we tend to forget that although the global revolt failed at what it wanted to build, it totally succeed in destroying what it aimed to destroy” (9).

The ’68 protest movement, born in Marxist cultural circles (10), was not created to build, but only to destroy; and indeed, as far as proposals are concerned it never went

beyond generic collectivism or a vague New Age: therefore its promoters admit that “we were asking the impossible” (11), whereas they didn’t even pay attention to the “path between the given social order and a desirable, possible social order”. The latter element was not only basically missing; it was not even really dealt with (12).

On the other hand, criticism of what was left of Christian civilization was not only effective but, paradoxically, especially and mainly directed at the false hopes (of materialistic wellbeing, materialistic rule over nature, a State that guaranteed purely material safety and peace) with which Modernity had fascinated the West from 1600 on (13). We can say, as did an authoritative witness, that “the ’68 protest demolished the bourgeois modernistic concept; perhaps even more than demolished, we could say that it corroded it, in the sense that it burnt its roots” (14).

The ’68 protest was not, however, “anti-modern” or “counter-modern”: it was simply “post-modern”, that is, the logical result of Modernity, the fruit from that plant. In fact, wellbeing, happiness, sway over Nature that are based only on material elements inevitably lead to financial crises, drugs, violence, esoterism and whatever type of “high” that conceals unhappiness and insecurity: in one word, they lead to desperation.

If the main aspect of ’68 was that it crowned the false hopes of materialistic Modernity with post-modern desperation, the descendants of ’68 can only perceive His Holiness Benedict XVI, apostle of the theological virtue of Hope, as The Enemy.

## KNOWLEDGE

We must bear in mind that in ’68 a certain scientific community revealed the fragility of modern science (15); but not, however, in order to confer it with more solid bases of the illuminated Reason of Faith but rather, to sink scholars in relativism, disorient them, lead them to give up trying to grasp natural truths, and thus to celebrate the “loss of a unitary criteria of knowledgeable validity” (16).

The result of this skeptical decline was total nihilism.

To the contrary, for Catholics “Christian knowledge can be understood as a unifying knowledge of our existence, founded on a free approach throughout history.” (17).

While expressing its total solidarity with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Centro Culturale Lepanto also hopes that His and our times will see the end of these 40 years of marching in the postmodern desert of desperation, and implores his august benediction upon us Italians and the entire world.

Rome, 16 gennaio 2008,  
Centro Culturale Lepanto ([www.lepanto.org](http://www.lepanto.org))

President **Fabio Bernabei**

Vice-president **Guido Vignelli**

## FOOTNOTES

1) Marcello Cini, *Lettera*, in “il manifesto”, 14 Nov. 2007. Prof. Cini is a well-known scholar specialising in the so-called theories of “complexity” or “chaos”, an important emissary of the left wing culture as well as a member of the National Promoting Committee of SD (Sinistra Democratica, viz. Left Wing

Democracy, a political faction led by the Minister of University Fabio Mussi), who reacted with a letter to the Dean of the University of Rome, subsequently published in the communist daily "il manifesto".

2) Ibidem.

3) Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, Torino, Einaudi, 2003, p.319.

4) AAVV., *La Cappella della Divina Sapienza*, Roma, Cangemi ed., 1998, p.9.

5) Ibidem.

6) Marcello Cini, *Lettera*, cit..

7) Ibidem.

8) Gianni Mattioli, *Verdi figli del '68*, in Massimo Ghirelli, *'68 vent'anni dopo*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1988, p.60; Marcello Cini, *Introduzione*, in AAVV, *L'ape e l'architetto. Paradigmi scientifici e materialismo storico*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1976, pp. 21-36.

9) Guido Vignelli, *Fallimento o successo del '68*, in "Lepanto", n.153, 1999.

10) Carlo Freccero, *Introduzione*, in Guy Debord, *La società dello spettacolo*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 1997, pp. 19-20; Massimo Ghirelli, *Prefazione*, in IDEM, *'68 vent'anni dopo*, cit., p.13; Fausto Bertinotti, *Pensare il '68*, Milano, Ponte alle Grazie, 2001, p.98.

11) Massimo Ghirelli, *Prefazione*, cit., p. 12.

12) Fausto Bertinotti, *Pensare il '68*, cit., p.130.

13) S.S. Papa Benedetto XVI, Lettera Enciclica "SPE SALVI", 30 XI 2007, §§ 16 e ss.

14) Fausto Bertinotti, *Pensare il '68*, cit., p. 110.

15) Gianni Mattioli, *Verdi figli del '68*, cit., p.60.

16) Marcello Cini, *L'ape e l'architetto. Paradigmi scientifici e materialismo storico*, cit., p. 24.

17) B. Metz, *Sapienza*, in Heinrich Fries, a cura di, *Dizionario teologico*, vol.III, Brescia, Queriniana, 1968, p.248.

**Centro Culturale Lepanto**  
**C.P. 6080**  
**00195 Roma Italy**  
**email: lepanto@lepanto.org**