

the Consecrated Host, saying the ritual words: "Through Him, with Him, and in Him, there is for You, All-powerful Father, all glory and honor for ever and ever." For that instant, most of the Cardinals raise their eyes and look at the Host in the Celebrant's hands. The young Cardinal feels excluded from some happiness that the others share, even if they are not conscious of that sharing. And he remembers what was said to him as a young priest in a remote country parish years before. It was a suicide whom he tried to dissuade: "Father, yesterday or last year—I don't know when—I fell from the velvet dark of happy stars down into these senseless yet sense-lit days and noisome hours. I will have an end to it all now. I cannot go on like this."

As he walks with Angelico along the corridor and the warning bell rings, he says for no apparent reason and not in particular to Angelico: "I have a few important questions to ask you. But for the last hour, the heavens were sort of wiped out. Like a rough hand had banged all the doors shut. But let me drop into my own rooms. I will rejoin you at the door."

"Walk with me as far as my apartment," Angelico says easily, "it will take a second or two. Then you can drop off and catch up with me later." The young Cardinal acquiesces.

As they pass Domenico's door, they both see it open. Domenico and Edouardo Ruzzo, the chief of security, are standing there. Ruzzo, Angelico thinks, is being very, very reverential and respectful. He does not look in the Cardinal's eyes. He has his eyes lowered and is looking intently at the Cardinal's pectoral cross.

Domenico is all urbanity. "Eminence," he calls softly to the young Cardinal, "a moment of your time. Please!"

"We'll catch up with each other later at the bus," Angelico says, seeing his cue. The door of Domenico's apartment closes behind Domenico and Ruzzo and the young Cardinal.

### *THE THIRD SESSION*

When the Cardinal Electors are assembled in the Upper Room, a quarter of an hour later, Domenico enters followed by the young Cardinal and by the Camerlengo. Prob-

ably no one even notices that the young Cardinal is no longer wearing his pectoral cross. All are calm, serious. All quietly take their places.

The Camerlengo starts the ritual for the election of the officials for this Third Session. Down on the Via della Conciliazione, two men sit at their silent console. As they will learn, there is no transmission.

In the Conclave, Bonkowski of Poland is chosen as President, to be assisted by Gellee of France and Kotoko of Africa, as co-Presidents. Scrutineers are Chera, Masaccio, and Motzu. Revisers are three Curial Cardinals: Uccello and two Frenchmen, Houdon and Lamy. *Infirmarii* are Bassano, Eakins, and Peale.

No sooner are the new Presidents seated, and Bonkowski has looked at the agenda, than he announces Thule's name as first speaker. Bonkowski attempts a light tone: "Your Eminences will be surprised to learn that our first speaker this morning will be the Most Reverend Lord Cardinal Thule." But no one laughs or even smiles. There is a deep hush as Thule stands up. He bends toward his table to get his notes.

At this precise moment Domenico chooses to rise and step out from the rows of Cardinals so as to stand in the center. "My Lord Presidents!" he speaks in a loud voice that carries to every corner. "My Lord Cardinals! In virtue of the ancient Conclave practice of *vox populi* (the voice of the people), I claim utter priority over all previously scheduled speakers!" Either by deliberate trick of voice, or because he really has mentally adopted such an attitude, his voice sounds like a back-bencher in the British House of Commons, or like a revolutionary jumping to his feet in the French Chamber of Deputies to upset the equilibrium, the status quo.

The effect is electrifying. Thule is frozen in his posture over his table. Bonkowski's mouth sags open. Every head is jerked around as if on invisible strings, as all eyes are on that one diminutive figure standing in the center of the Hall.

Every head except one: As soon as Domenico intervenes, the young Cardinal bends his head forward and covers his face with his hands. His shoulders are shaking. He, more than anyone here, knows what is happening now. And, if he has tears, it is not for himself, nor for what he must later suffer as penalty, but for the havoc unneces-

sarily created by him and by men like him. He and they have betrayed their Colleagues, sowing lies and ambiguities among honest men, playing on honest fears, abusing the zeal and hopes of many. A body of men who, by and large, wish the same thing have been confused and divided, one from the other, by clever tactics.

Everybody else is so stunned that the first reaction is silence, as though Domenico's words had been stones hurled into a well, and 118 men are waiting for the echo of their landing.

Then, in random cross fire, the reactions explode. Thule straightens and stands like a ramrod and starts speaking and gesticulating. Cardinals leap to their feet, faces fraught with rage, fear, confusion, disgust. Yelling, asking, objecting, shouting. Lombardi, Franzus, Buff, Marquez, Balboa, Lohngren, Delacoste, Manuel, Masaccio. The Camerlengo remains seated, but his hands grip the little table in front of him as if for support.

Domenico looks straight ahead at Bonkowski, his arms folded across his chest. Bonkowski rings his silver bell angrily and insistently, "My Most Reverend Lord Cardinals! My Most Reverend Lords! Please! My Lord Electors! Please! We will have silence! Please! My Lord Cardinals!"

But even as the turmoil and cries die down, a slow, steady quiet clapping of hands begins. Not loud. Not violent. Not quick. Just steady and in a regular beat. The Africans have started it. Garcia and another Spaniard take it up. Then Terebelski and Karewsky follow suit. Then Kinigoshi, Walker, Sargent, Witz, Kiel, the three Asians, two Frenchmen, and a whole host of Italians, Uccello, Riccioni, Canaletto, Maderno, Duccio, Lamennais, Bronzino, Nolasco, Pozzo. The Cardinals who had jumped to their feet to shout in protest are gradually silenced by the rhythmic hand-clapping and sink back on their chairs. The sound goes on and on, louder. Bonkowski consults with Gellee and Kotoko. Then, after a few more instants, he rings the silver bell gently and waits. The clapping fades slowly, then stops, almost as if on cue.

Bonkowski looks at Domenico who has not budged a muscle. "My Most Reverend Lord Domenico," he begins. But Buff is on his feet.

"Doubtless, My Lord Cardinal Domenico can cite historical precedents for this unexpected interruption? For us

country cousins, Cardinals from the outer provinces, perhaps he will take the trouble to cite time and place and Conclave and Cardinal? Otherwise . . ." Buff leaves off significantly.

Bonkowski turns his head slowly to face the lone figure of Domenico standing in the center aisle. All eyes are on him again. "Sudden death for our clever friend," Marquez mutters half out loud.

In the expectant silence, Domenico unfolds his arms and draws from his sleeve a single sheet of paper. In that same raucous voice he thunders out a cascade of Conclaves, names, dates, times; and the phrase '*vox populi*' recurs again and again. It is like a chorus line of support from past Conclaves.

"Conclave 31. 1471. The late afternoon. Cardinal Barbo invokes *vox populi*. Conclave 35. 1513. March 1. Early morning. Cardinal Backocz invokes *vox populi*. Conclave 40. 1549. December 5. Forenoon. Cardinal Salviati invokes *vox populi*. Conclave 53. 1621. January 28. Evening time. Cardinal Campori invokes *vox populi*. . . ." As the high voice of Domenico continues reading out numbers and names, the gentle hand-clapping starts again, low enough to allow his voice to be heard, loud enough to be heard as a background of support from Conclave 82. "Conclave 70. 1800. February 25. Cardinal Mattei invokes *vox populi*. . . ."

Bonkowski rings his silver bell. Domenico stops in the middle of recounting the example of *vox populi* in yet another Conclave ". . . Conclave 73. 1830. December 11. Forenoon. Cardinal Gaisrück. . . ." The rhythm of constant clapping also stops. Then it takes up again. Thule glances around the ranks of Cardinals as far as he can see—and the Presidents see as clearly as he does. Only one out of every eight or ten Cardinals is not clapping. The will of the majority is clear. Bonkowski rings his silver bell once more. There is silence.

"Most Reverend Electors, in view of the intervention of My Most Reverend Lord Domenico, I now declare he has the floor, and this according to the manifest will of the majority of you." There is a subdued murmur of assent.

Domenico places the sheet of paper back in his sleeve. He moves slowly up to the speakers' place. The silence is again so deep that by the time he rises from his brief

prayer and faces the assembly, even those furthest from him can hear the soft rustling of his robes.

Domenico no longer has the "transcendent look" that his penitents and clients and students know so well. Instead, there is a great evenness, an equanimity, in his expression. At this moment what Domenico must do is reach every one of these Electors and bind them again in unity. But he must also point up the diverse motives that have divided them, in their fears and faults, into factions that have little to do with Jesus, or with the Church of Jesus.

He looks at the presiding Cardinals, smiles gently and bows: "Most Eminent and Reverend Lord Cardinal Presidents!" Then, turning: "My Most Beloved Brothers and Lord Cardinals." Domenico begins, his tone quiet now, his gaze ranging calmly from face to face. "I think there is not one Cardinal Elector present here who has not suffered deeply in the last thirty-six hours." He looks steadily at Makonde's darkling features. "Some have suffered because they felt deeply slighted." Riccioni's frightened look is unlike his confidence of the day before. "Some have suffered because a mortal fear was let loose in their spirit." Thule is looking at him from beneath his bushy eyebrows. "Others, because they banked all their hopes on one forceful twist of events—or what they regarded as a twist of Providence, no doubt." On his extreme left, Angelico is one of the few not looking at him. "A few because they found whatever love they had for our Lord Jesus was severely deficient in trust—that, in reality, they had trusted themselves, and of course, in the painful crunch of crisis they felt themselves let down roughly." Domenico can hardly restrain a smile as he sees the Camerlengo's studied expression, his 'holy indifference' as one Vatican wag put it. "Others still suffer because nothing in our assembly has proceeded in an orderly fashion. Nothing in this Conclave seems predictable or to be like past Conclaves." As his gaze travels steadily from face to face and returns to the Presidents, he knows that in the silence of this assembly, where only his words echo, by some alchemy of the occasion, he is drawing concentration and attention up to where he stands. He has them in the palm of his hand. He understands them. And their fears.

"In sum, my Beloved Colleagues," still in that level, quiet tone, "this is a Conclave that has hurt everyone it

touched." Domenico stops a moment. "All of us." The three words seem to answer some doubt. Down the row on his left hand, Cardinal Walker is praying to himself and is heard by his neighbors as he says over and over again in a sort of controlled panic: "Lord Jesus have mercy upon us. Tell him what to say. Lord Jesus have mercy on us all. Tell him what to say. . . ."

Thule lifts his head and gives a quick glance at Franzus, then to Buff and to Lynch. They look back and forth at each other, more in questioning than anything else. The Africans, too, glance at one another and over to Yiu and Ni Kan. There is a luminosity to their expressions that no word can convey. Braun makes a small gesture to Bronzino. He hunches his shoulders quizzically. Domenico knows how to read all the reactions. He is certain he must give a focus to what so many in this assembly are suffering. And he must throw a line of hope, must clinch their grasp of it, if he is to draw them along with him where he wishes to go this day.

"Ah, well . . ." he continues, almost in a conversational tone, "I always told those who came to me from time to time for consolation and encouragement, that I myself would never be cast down or immobilized by failure, as long as I suffered only what My Lord Jesus had suffered before me. I would only give up trying, give up loving, I told them, the day I faced something Jesus had not faced. That day has not yet come. For me. Or for us, my Venerable Brothers.

"Is it not a fact," his voice is inflected now with a tiny note of pleading, "that for the first time since our Conclave began we are—as one heart and one mind—beginning to hear that ancient voice saying: 'I know. I know your hurt. I know all about hurting. Especially the hurt of failure.' Is it not so, my Brothers?" He takes a step backward and then forward. It is a mannerism of his.

"Let us not remain wallowing in our pain. Each one with his own. Let each examine his own conscience. Not so we may bleed, but so we can see without flinching how we have come to this impasse. And so we can see how we must move to escape from it. Let us ask ourselves about our major sins—our major sins as Churchmen. Let each of us ask: Have I consorted with those who wish the destruction of the Church?" Domenico's voice rises almost querulously at the end of each sentence. "Have I

identified all my own ambitions with the glory of God? Have I too easily met the onslaught of barefaced barbarity—whether it be the comfort of corruption, or the lethal aims of the Church's enemies—with concessions? With smiles? Merely because I wished my accustomed life to continue a little longer? Merely because I did not want to step over the threshold of hardship?

"Or is it force I relied upon? On those powerful sinews of gold and silver? On my beautiful friends? On the power of my position? And, as ultimate guardian, on the cunningly distributed nuclear tinderboxes of friendly powers? Our technological fix? Have I found it easier to sit with grand-scale sinners and smile indulgently, and treat oleaginous officials with cooperative friendship? Have I found that easier, I mean, than to take a proper stand?"

Domenico has reeled off what is, in effect a litany of the faults besetting the chief factions in the Conclave drama. Many, if not all, feel Domenico may be building up to a name-by-name denunciation. Some Cardinals hold their breath. One or two gather up their papers, as if wishing they could leave. Some sit back as if waiting for the axe to fall. The silence is so concentrated one can almost touch it like velvet.

Until Domenico's next words, which come as sweetness to many: "And now for each of my weaknesses is there no way out? No way out but hard thinking and still harder deciding?"

"My Brothers, there is an ancient voice speaking among us today. We need to listen to that voice. We need to. Because we must move forward. Because we must choose. Because we must act. And because our grace period is not of infinite duration, even though we serve a Lord whose grace is infinite." It is as though he has given every Elector a reprieve. All are listening to hear what their most trusted man thinks must be done.

"Haven't we all heard it? At one time or another? Do we not hear it now? And do we not know whose voice it is? We have an ancient proverb of this city which tells us: *Never is silence here. The voice of Rome is eternal.* That voice has nothing to do with our humanistic glory! Nor our Renaissance monuments, our libraries, our statuary, our frescoes, our palaces, our bureaucracy, our dignitaries, our power at the green-topped tables. No!

"No, my Brothers! I mean the real voice of Rome, the voice of our Lord present here!"

Then there is another abrupt change. Domenico's mood becomes downright cheerful, like someone setting out on a pleasant reminiscence of things beautiful and of certainties undoubted. "I remember, it was the morning after His Holiness Pope Paul had had his late night session with a certain financial gentleman and signed a bit of paper. I remember that morning, because that was the first time His Holiness made an open remark to me about that ancient voice.

"We discussed the whole demarche, of course—but that part of the discussion with His Holiness was only a springboard. We stood at one of the windows in his study and looked out over the Piazza of Saint Peter's, down at the Obelisk at its center, with the fountains playing around it in the sunlight." It is almost as though Domenico is looking magically through the solid walls and out across the roofs and on to the Piazza of St. Peter's where the Obelisk stands and the waters leap and fall splashing, gleaming. He seems to have the power to grant his listeners the same vision.

"His Holiness said that, whenever he had made a big decision, he always found a judgment on it mirrored around that Obelisk. I could have asked what judgment he found on the Sindona decision, but I didn't because that would have fractured the experience. Instead, we recalled how Emperor Caligula placed that Obelisk there about five or six years after Jesus was crucified in Palestine; and how Peter saw it upside down as he waited one evening for death and for Jesus; and how thousands of Christian men and women and children saw it as they waited for death and for Jesus.

"His Holiness turned away and sat down at his desk. Then he said, without my asking, that the judgment on him was hard, but not harsh. I remember nodding and quoting that old proverb: *Never in silence. The voice of Rome is eternal.* His Holiness looked at me, then, with that peculiar brusqueness of his, eyebrows raised, mouth clenched, chin jutting out. 'Even if I have not translated that voice correctly at times, Father, someone will. You! You translate it for us. For them. For all of us.' This was the essence of our conversation that morning."

Domenico is silent for a few seconds, caught in the



strong emotion of memory. "Even though all of us hear that voice, many, perhaps most of us, can no longer understand it. Let me interpret then. In my own words. And let us put ourselves some hard questions.

"Is there any point in hiding the truth from ourselves? Isn't it the fact that we are dealing with life and death? Let us not fool ourselves. Yes surely, we are simple priests, sacred Cardinals; and we represent the spiritual interests, the supernatural values of believers.

"But is that the extent of our activity, the ambit of our effective action? I ask you! My Brothers!

"Are we merely and only and exclusively clergymen processing birth, marriage, and funeral certificates across our desks, carefully elaborating descriptions of doctrine, devising new ways of fanning the piety of the faithful? Is that a complete and accurate and genuinely exhaustive account of our dealing with life and death? Who says that is us? Is that really us?" Domenico straightens up, his body rigid, his head flung back. He raises his hand and points at them all—points in accusation. His voice is hard. It rings loud around the hall. "*That is a lie!*" Domenico's lips close on that last Latin word, *mendacium*, as he spits it out distastefully, with sudden violence, unrelenting disgust portrayed in his face. "A lie, my Brothers!

"We know, we Cardinals who work in Rome, we all know the vast board on which we play the game of nations. And for what high stakes! And if any non-Curial Cardinal thinks that we spend our time blessing Holy Water and kneeling in adoration of statues and taking part in pious processions at orphanages; if any non-Curial Cardinal says, in other words, that he knows nothing of the full realities, he is either naive or he is deliberately turning a blind eye to the crude realities of our lives.

"No! Eminent Colleagues! Religion is big business, as the Americans say. And this affair of the Church of ours is the biggest of those businesses.

"And let none of you mistake my meaning. I am not saying that our financial structure is completely worldly; I am not saying our diplomatic participation is for purely secular objections. I am not saying our political clout is used for temporal glory. For none of that would be completely true. What I *am* asserting is that we are deeply engaged in the world of international finance; that we are definitely committed to the obligations and functions of

secular diplomacy; that we are part and parcel of the socio-political community of nations and states. That is all.

"And I am stating all this not as a main conclusion, nor as something to stop at and consider. But, merely as a stage in the basic argument I wish to make with you. In other words, Eminent Brothers, you and I as Princes of this Church, as Most Eminent Cardinals of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, we are to be described and defined precisely and accurately as players on an international chessboard.

"When you think of that fact, think at the same time, of the middle-class housewife in Brooklyn, New York, or in Kansas City, Missouri, running her eye over the price of a pound of coffee. Or the little newly-married girl in Caracas, Venezuela, her baby in her arms, searching for a cheap tin of beef or some vegetables, perhaps. Or the slum-dwellers in London, Paris, or Palermo shivering for lack of heat because oil and coal and even wood are beyond their means. Or the swollen bellies of the babies in Bangladesh, or the beggars of Hong Kong, or the little children playing with roaches in Brazilian *barrios*, or the seven-year-old boys catching rats in the *favelas* in order to bring the meat home for dinner. . . . Say to yourselves: Are we involved in these lives? Are we involved as *clergymen*? Or are we involved as political revolutionaries no different from all the others who carry guns and kill? No different, except that our candor must be less, for we serve a cause we cannot face or name when we kill.

"And then, when you think of the latest shipment of arms to Eastern Europe or West Africa, or the exclusivity of high-rise apartment houses in Rio de Janeiro and in Manhattan, or the pride and dominance of the Rome Hilton, the Pan Am building on the Champs Elysées, or the Watergate Complex in Washington, D.C., the Stock Exchange in Montreal, Canada . . . say to yourselves: There, in each of those situations and places, we are involved deeply. Not as *clergymen*. Not as apostles of Jesus. But as businessmen. As corporation executives. As shareholders. As directors. As responsible for what happens. That is us.

"Or think of the flow of confidential information passing in the privileged circles, Hambros Bros. of London . . . J. P. Morgan of New York . . . Credit Suisse of Switzerland . . . the Banco di Roma . . . and the monopolist families of North America and Latin America . . . and

the financial dynasties of Europe and the Americas and the Far East . . . and so on. Yes. Be sure. That is us. We are keenly interested. Deeply involved. Accepted players in that chessgame of nations. And if that were the nature of the game, we would be participating merely in a little human corruption.

"Again, this is not my conclusion. Only a stage in the argument. An accurate observation, and to be admitted! Without cavilling. That is us. Part of us. And, quite frankly, we do not, on the whole, participate in that game—in any of those games—merely for gain. No. Oh no! Our motives over all are pure. For we have learned the game well after sixteen hundred years' apprenticeship and practice. The craft is ours—as much as any man's. And, to our credit, we have never taken the ultimate step: never has the economic and political and diplomatic power of the Church been used for the direct destruction of the Church of Jesus. But we have had, and we have still, our share of scoundrels, charlatans, and cheats. Simply put: of corruption.

"We do all that. We play that game. We move the pawns and the pieces around that board. We lose. We win. We make alliances. We break from traps.

"And we do all that because of a very ancient decision. Not one man's decision. Nor even one generation's decision—I mean one generation of Churchmen. You can point to this or that Churchman, Pope, Cardinal, clerical advisor. Yes. But no one in particular did it all.

"In fact, you will find that it was and is the result of a mentality that grew, first imperceptibly, and then quite openly. And it was not an economic decision, nor a political decision, nor even an intellectual decision.

"Here, my Brothers here is its subtlety. And, if we understand how and on what plane that decision was made, we will understand who was its prime mover and what the intentions were and are of that prime mover." Domenico pauses. He appears to be focusing on something far beyond the here and now of this assembly. His head is turned slightly to one side as if he were straining to listen. He stays like that for some seconds. Then he takes a few paces back and forth.

"I seem at this moment to hear the words of that ancient voice . . ." he stops pacing and looks at the farthest

seated Cardinals, "we can wonder, even though we hear those words, we can wonder who among us will understand them still. And we can wonder if they will not be drowned out by the never-tiring voice of a most ancient enemy of ours with his hideous strength." And Domenico begins to recite in a low-pitched level tone:

I am the Light of divine salvation within a universe that I have made human. That universe was never a closed cosmos of material forces, of interlocking life structures, of weaving and webbing laws governing a material universe where not one particle escapes, and where all matter and energy interchange—shifting, dovetailing, expiring, reviving, transmuting, becoming, decaying, birthing.

Into that cosmos I came. I intervened. From outside it. And not according to its iron laws. Yet, not violating those laws. But transcending them.

And know that my intervention was an intervention by a completely different force. For I am not a new source of light. But Light uncreated. Not a loving being. But Love itself. Not a compassionate and saving force. But Compassion is my being. And Salvation is of my essence. All of this was incorporated into flesh and blood in a mother's womb. Into my flesh and blood. As baby's body, as a man's frame—his life, his actions, his promises, his death, his resurrection, his rule. Thus my being, the light of salvation. In this world, but not of this world.

Look what happened. Look how the Prince of this world with his hideous strength tries to tie me down! To explain me! To deal with me! At one moment, I am presented as the product of one brain hemisphere—analytical, digital, logical, discrete. At another moment, I am described as the product of another hemisphere—synthetic, mystical, affective. But I belong neither to Athens, nor to Jerusalem with its Bible and Passion. Yet within this human universe, I passed through Bible mind and Bible people, and through Athens and its child—the Western mind.

I am Love uncreated, uncreated Light. Light and Love that always were. Always will be. In all times. In all

places. Belonging to each one intimately. But not limited by any time or place or system or theory. And, since the earliest days, the enemy has succeeded in tying me down.

Domenico ceases his monotone and waits for just a moment. Then he launches into a denunciation which mounts steadily in volume and emphasis to a crescendo until his whole body is shaking in the effort.

"I spoke a while ago of the chessboard and the world-wide game of pawn and dice we play. And play it we do. As well as any men. As successfully. As dismally. But let us not be stupid. The games of loans, investment banking, real estate, foreign credits, stocks and shares, corporate financing, portfolios, and all the myriad decisions in economics, industry, manufacturing, buying and selling, these are little games we play. Pettifogging checks and balances and giving and taking and destroying and creating. That is shadowplay. That is a shadow-game of the *real* game that is being played. The game of nations' souls, of salvation for men and women. *There* is the *real* game, my Brothers!

"And there we have been trapped! For our ancient adversary *knows* the board; and he plots his game one thousand years ahead. And now, our moves are made—and his. We face checkmate.

"If anything has frightened us all in this Conclave—hurt us all—it is that we feel trapped. We already hear the sardonic voice of that ancient enemy saying '*Checkmate! I got you to imagine that Uncreated Light was to be completely understood and made available in logic.*' Even so, my Brothers, we entrusted all we knew to scholastic philosophy. Aquinas made it all clear. And that was why Bonaventure tried to warn us when he called Aquinas the father of all the heretics. It was Aquinas who taught us to be rational even about faith.

"And there was more, my Brothers. That sardonic voice continues: '*I got you to imagine that Eternal Love itself could take sides in pettifogging games. To think you must compete in raw power. I got you to act as though Love saved by wealth, as though Love healed souls by armies, treasuries, chancelleries. You fell for it. It's too late now. Checkmate.*' Hear that sardonic cruelty, my Brothers,"

Domenico's face is flushed, his hands by his sides with fists closed. His voice rises, loud, clear, harsh.

"Look around you and listen and you will see and hear how accurate the voice of our enemy is, and how hard it is for us to hear the ancient voice of eternal light, of eternal and caring love. For our vocation is *not* of Light Eternal. Our method of government is *not* of Love Eternal. Our formulation of Light's knowledge is partial, provincial, out-of-date, blind. Our Cardinalitial principedoms and our episcopal dignities have as much to do with the love and the light of the Lord Jesus, as the coins he paid in Caesar's tribute had to do with buying our salvation from the Devil and from the Devil's Hell and the Devil's sin.

"We meet as Princes. We think as brokers. We plot as career-men. We hate and despise. We are indignant and triumphalistic. We seek redress and revenge. We harbor grudges to be paid off in kind to those who oppose us. We undermine. We lord it over others. We walk proudly. We rely on wealth, on honeyed words.

"We accept a capitalistic democracy which is unacceptable to God because it says all power is vested in the people—whereas we know from faith that all power is vested in God and passes from God to all those who have authority in our world—people or rulers.

"And, on the other side, a section of us is willing to throw in its lot with a socialist democracy that invests all power in the economic forces of history—and to the Devil with God and the people!

"And this, our Conclave? Do you think even this is exempt from critique or from influence? Do you? Honestly, do you, Brothers?

"Its very nature is that of a powerplay. Our purpose here is to balance bloc against bloc, interest with interest. To meet selfishness with selfishness, and patch together a working unity based on a power-broker's compromise. *Do ut des! Quid pro quo!* This for you. This for me. This for him. Nothing for them. A little bit here. A little bit there. And the power of Jesus is treated like a huge apple pie that all the greedy children must share. An inheritance that all the aspiring heirs must divide between them, each according to his own. These are the things that swing us hither and thither.

"What chance would Peter the Fisherman have here? For that matter, if Jesus were present and did not reveal

his identity, would he get one vote from us, my Lord Cardinals? Of course not! And not because he was not a Cardinal. But because he had no faction behind him, could promise nothing.

"For, to tell the truth, we have two scales of value—we are torn apart by the disparity of rhythm in our very souls. And the life of our Church is cracking at the seams because the institution is filled with an unbearable inequality of vibrations. We are doomed as an institution. We were led off the path. We were hell-bent on winning. We looked to short-term victories—forty years, eighty years. And our adversary saw a victory looming up about two thousand years later. We did not see the strategy. We were occupied with tactics.

"So we made all the wrong moves on that chessboard. And now there is no saving what we have been building ever since the day Silvester talked with Constantine, and since Leo 3 kissed the foot of Charlemagne. No saving, I say. *No saving!*" The last two words are almost a scream, an old man's scream. Domenico is shaking all over, perspiration running down his face. He is weeping.

He pauses; and when he resumes, he succumbs for a moment to weariness. "You must forgive me, Brothers. Perhaps this is why Pope Paul said: 'The Church seems destined to die.' And if these tears flow freely, it is not for what we might have been, but for the deep pain we all must have at this moment, and in this Conclave."

Then, after a glance at the Presidents, he goes on. His voice still low, is vibrant and now burning anew with some powerful feeling. He speaks as if trying to pour out from himself all the force and violence he is undergoing. "Let no one, therefore, no one of us mistake or misapprehend what we are about, Eminent Brothers. What we are about to do today, now, in this final Conclave, is simply this: *to end the Church of Conclaves!* Our job is to plot and plan *our own liquidation!* Not by summary execution. Not by unfaithful desertion. Not by craven stupidity. *But by our concerted will seeking the will of Jesus.* So that the Light we bear and the Love we claim to represent within this human universe shall be free! How shall both Light and Love be freed? How shall we deal with this deathly checkmate threat? For the threat of checkmate it is. . . ."

There is a sudden commotion down near where Thule

is sitting. Domenico pauses, stands up straight, and drops his hands to his sides. He is silent.

"My Lord Cardinal Presidents! I rise to a point of order." It is Buff. He speaks in a tone of controlled urgency. Dignified. His voice is silken and carefully correct. His tones are clear. A touch of detachment in his demeanor—almost haughtiness, as if all these proceedings were distasteful to him. "My Lord Cardinals, we are not proceeding constitutionally. My Most Eminent and Esteemed Brother, My Lord Cardinal Domenico, I feel, is going beyond the bounds of Conclave propriety. . . ."

Domenico's response is immediate. For the first time, his friends see the cold breath of sheer anger on his face. "If My Lord Buff were to spend a little more time studying the documents of the Church and not poring over letters from atheistic ministers and renegade bishops; if he spent his vacations with his colleagues and not among the neopagans of . . ." Buff glances at Thule appealingly. He cannot handle this attack and Domenico's unexpected rage all by himself. He has no defense against brutal confrontation.

Thule leaps to his feet. "My Lord Cardinal Presidents! In addition to advocating revolution in the College of Cardinals, My Lord Domenico is indulging in personal . . ."

Domenico is after Thule in a flash. "Revolution! You! My Lord Thule! *You!* You are the one who told a meeting of monks: 'I have come to preach strife in the world and war in the monasteries.' You, My Lord Thule! *You* are the one who told a public audience in France: 'Traditional Christianity is finished.' *You*, My Lord Thule, you. . . ."

"Will the Lord Cardinal President pardon my rising unbidden?" The voice is Franzus'. He is already standing, looking through his thick lenses at the Cardinal Presidents. He has that full echo in his voice that always betrays anger in a man no matter what language he is speaking. "It is not that we are afraid to go naked and unprotected into the world in order to preach . . ."

Domenico is after him, too, as quickly as he can catch his breath. "You, My Lord Franzus, talk about walking naked? I don't know where Your Eminence intends to go with *that* opening thought. I tell you, My Lord Cardinal, my brother Cardinal, if all of us were as well protected as you have been, our desks and our altars and our baptismal fonts would be as thick in dust as those of your



home diocese." Franzus flushes to the roots of his hair. The protection Domenico refers to is Franzus' constant companion, a Russian-appointed agent, who is always present. Nobody quite knows if this is Franzus' choice or something imposed on him. "Yes, My Lord Cardinal," Domenico goes on relentlessly, "you are protected. But God help you!" And before Franzus can reply, Domenico has another shot: "By the way, My Lord Cardinal, the next time you enter a private government clinic for a light operation, be sure to have yourself debugged before participating in further confidential conversations with Roman officials."

A sudden, audible, wave of puzzlement and nervousness sweeps over the Cardinals, heads turning from side to side, questioning looks and gestures, shoulders shrugged, a few whispered conversations. Franzus sinks back into his place. The presiding Cardinal is finally able to intervene. "My Lord Domenico will continue his address."

Domenico is eager to continue. "I would not have you think, my Brothers, that there is either hate or disgust or even anger in me today. Forgive me for any violation of fraternal charity. And may Jesus have mercy on my soul.

"It is just that we stand at the crossroads of history. We vote. But we must remember that the ballot paper will silently accept anything we write upon it. Only events will plague us. Only the Lord Jesus will judge us for the way we choose.

"In choosing, we must listen, listen, listen! For that same ancient voice is relentless, and we have very little time to take heed. In our real and undying faith, let us not fail to hear the word . . ." and Domenico resumes the "voice" of ancient Rome. All in the Conclave is silence, save for that curious, insistent monotone:

I can lose with equanimity all my monuments. It matters little if the robes of Jesus in Rome are destroyed or neglected. Let the Scala Sancta in the Church of San Salvatore be torn out, if it comes to that. Let its marble be used for public latrines. Let the tanks of an enemy rumble into St. Peter's Basilica, as did the horses of the Spanish Army in 1527; as did the warriors of Attila and Genseric a thousand years before that. It does not matter. Let the mitres and croziers and tiaras and rings and crosses in my museums be

sold as collateral or pillaged as booty. It does not matter. And let the Vicar of Jesus be a pilgrim as Jesus was, whose vicar the Pope now is. It does not matter. Let all such beauty, which is also mine, let it be dimmed and tarnished.

That is not your concern. You are not subject to history—there is no such thing really; nor are you subject to historical forces—these are concepts. History does nothing. It is the living human being that does something. And our history is nothing but the activity of men pursuing their purposes, individuals like you.

Individuals are the determinants. And the future depends on your choice, your individual choice. You are not the creatures of systems or collectivities or aggregates or institutions. And the law of your lives and your achievement is not logic and not emotion. It is experience.

Experience tells you that you have to make an end to it all, in order to make a beginning. You must free me from the trammels you and your forebears in this Church have placed on me. Free me. Or else, I may have to destroy you, in order to make room for a more faithful generation who will not speak your language, will not think your thoughts, will not wear your dignities or your robes. But they will consent to offer to God that most acceptable sacrifice of the Lord Jesus in purity and in truth, all over this human universe! "From the rising of the sun," as the Hebrew Prophet wrote, "to the going down of the same," a pure offering.

"My Lord Cardinal Presidents, I thank you all." Domenico walks slowly to his place.

There is a short silence. No one of the Electors moves. Then the Cardinal President confers in whispers with his assistants. He stands. "We move that a balloting take place. We will vote as we should vote, first on policy, then on our candidate. The vote on policy is a choice between the formulation of My Lord Domenico and the formulation of My Lord Thule. Will their Eminences please assent or dissent to such a vote. First, those who assent." There is a moment's pause. Then, as a wave rippling onto

a long curving shore, the *Ita's* sound. First from one Cardinal, another, another, all around the thrones. Then the *Ita's* finally die away. "Now, their Eminences who dissent," the President bids. There is no sound. No dissent.

"We shall proceed then to a balloting. And . . ." Bonkowski pauses. He looks down at his notes, then clears his throat. He speaks with gravity and emotion. "Not in virtue of my function as presiding Cardinal," he begins slowly, "but as one of you, my Most Eminent Brothers, permit me to add one short reflection." He looks around in query at the two rows of thrones and down to the far end.

"This seems to be an all-important moment in our history as a Conclave, when normal conventions can be mitigated. Personally, my Brothers, I have no use for the amnesia of our contemporaries or the futuristic doomsaying of our current prophets—I refer, of course, to no one here in our Conclave. We have time, the Lord's time. We have the secret of the only real time—not a vacuous eternity and not a dead past, but the sparkling instant that lies at the heartbeat of all human living. For this, for reminding us of this, we wish to thank My Lord Domenico . . ." There is a brief outburst of quiet hand-clapping. The President pauses a moment, nonplussed by the unexpected approval.

"It is the privilege of the Presiding Cardinal to call on any one of our number who, in his opinion, can properly set the tone and the mind of the Conclave in perspective. I have not yet exercised this prerogative. And this I wish to do now. Believe me, Brothers, it is not lightly or suddenly or at anyone else's bidding, but with deep conviction, that I now call on . . ." he looks around seeking that boyish face, and then finds it, "My Most Reverend Cardinal Lord Azande to address the Conclave on its task."

There are a few quiet voices of encouragement. "*Bravo*, Azande!" "*Ita!*" Azande rises in a slightly awkward fashion and makes his way to the speaker's place. In his embarrassment, he forgets to kneel at the Altar for the customary prayer. Facing the Electors, he looks shy, somewhat timid. But his voice is strong and resonant.

"I feel, my Most Eminent Colleagues, that my intervention may lack the necessary weight because of my junior years in the Sacred College." There are some cries of encouragement: "*Bravo!*" "*Avanti!*"

"I may lack clarity because, despite education and daily

accustoming, I am not and cannot be of the Western mind. Even this language, as I use it, is a translation by my mind—my own—in itself alien to the mind of the great men who built the institutional Church and fashioned its language." He paces over toward one side, and turns around. There is a trace of quiet humor on his face.

"Many of you—all of you, perhaps—know that in the Sistine Chapel, which used to house every Conclave, Michelangelo covered the end-wall with the *Last Judgment*. And on the ceiling he portrayed the Prophets. Very few of you may know that Michelangelo inserted two self-portraits in his frescoes." He swings around and points as if they were all looking at the *Last Judgment*. The power of his imagination lifts the minds of his listeners with him.

"Look!" he says excitedly, pointing. "See that figure of one man groping his way out of his tomb: Jesus has summoned the dead to rise, according to the artist. Notice the ashen joy on the face of the man." Then, turning back to his listeners: "That's one of Michelangelo's self-portraits. In a sense, it is a portrait of me emerging into the light of some understanding, my Brothers." There is a rustle of approval, some pleasant murmurings of "*Bravo!*" "*Ben!*" Azande smiles boyishly, his angular features of mouth and chin expressing some mischievous trait in him.

As he walks back over toward the President's table he looks up at the ceiling again, as if he were in the Sistine Chapel. He stops, seems to be searching, then exclaims: "Oh, yes! There he is! Jeremiah the Prophet!" There is a titter of laughter as the Cardinals anticipate the next comparison. "Michelangelo also put himself in Jeremiah's face.

"We think of Jeremiah as a prophet of doom, of sorrow, of laments over the ruins of Jerusalem. But, you know, my Brothers . . ." Azande's face has that casual brotherliness and cozy intimacy so natural to Africans, "Jeremiah is primarily the prophet, the announcer, of the New Covenant. And, if you permit, take me as an announcer, a proponent of a new covenant.

"First, as we say in Africa, let us get rid of the grass.

"To stand pat and hold on is no alternative for us: we would be as the Apostles still hiding in the Upper Room waiting for a Holy Spirit—who has already come!

"Alternatively, gradual and thoughtful change and adap-

tation is no alternative for us: The Church is already changed—in its people, and its spirit.

“So, should we step out and be like all the others, homogenize with all the others? Homologize our Church with theirs? No, that is no alternative for us either. What right have we to be like others? We have no rights. Only sacred duties.

“But still, could we not forge a socio-political alliance with populist—some democratic—elements and movements? No, that is no alternative for us: We have had political alliances all the years of over sixteen centuries, and look where that has left us!

“But we must surely, indubitably, beyond the cavil of any sharp-eyed enemy, we must be rid of our present status. As financial giant. As diplomatic power. As beneficiaries and even as wielders of political interests. As real estate owners and operators. All that, we must get rid of.

“Why? Two reasons! One negative, one positive.

“The negative permits of no gentle treatment, Brothers. Ask around you. Walk disguised in the market place, in the parliaments of men, in their shops, their money exchanges, their clubs, their homes, their factories. Ask and you will blush. We are, according to them, the schizoid preachers. We celebrate divinity's love in the morning. We sit at Mammon's counting tables in the high noontide. We wander after hours along the boulevards of fine living in the domain of the 'beautiful people.'

“We operate—so they say, and they are correct—on the supposition that the gossamer substance of our faith and the metallic sheen of hard cash fertilize each other. We handle water and bread and wine, claiming that God's blessing impregnates one and that God's humanity and divinity transubstantiates the other two. But with the same consecrated hands we pocket the shekels of the Shylocks, and we deliver pocketfuls of votes to the chosen political party, and we steer contracts to the preferred clubhouse. That, my Brothers, is the negative reason.

“The positive reason is beautiful, consoling, encouraging.” A smile wreathes around the angles of his face. “It is that we—and the Pope we elect—we, the Church, have within us a fund of spiritual enlightenment, an inexhaustible wealth, of moral authority! It is all there. But it is leashed in the toils of political commitment, of ruthless diplomacy, of moneying and bargaining and buying and

selling and bartering. No amount of purple, my Brothers, no field of cloth-of-gold, no glistening ermine or perfumed ceremonies, no amount of human dignity can camouflage or make prettier to behold the fact that the *greatest* riches of our Church are caught in the poor trammels of worldliness.

"In the name of our triumphant Lord, have we not got something of our own? As My Lord Domenico said, have we not got an initiative all our own? Positively Christian, authentically Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic? Have we not the basis—the greatest basis—for a general policy to which we are all committed? To which our elected candidate must commit himself and his Church? *Must* commit his authority as Pope and as Christ's Vicar? And commit every ounce of energy the Church harbors?"

Suddenly, Azande is interrupted. All heads swing around as Thule is on his feet on the near right, and Vasari on the far left. Both Cardinals are signaling for permission to speak. Both have the question to ask—but for totally different reasons. Vasari fears for the old guard, Thule for what he sees as the vanguard of the near-future.

"My Lord Vasari!" It is the President.

"My Lord Cardinals! I think that My Most Eminent Lord, Cardinal Azande, owes us an actual list of concrete changes and proposals. We are not here to gather wool." Vasari is angry because he is frightened. Azande's hints and intimations are as fearful to him as are Thule's actual proposals.

Thule shrugs his shoulders, indicating by a hand motion that this also is his question, more or less.

Azande nods smilingly at Vasari. His mild and winsome manner is a perfect foil for the inherent harshness of his words. He speaks as if reciting a sweet and nostalgic poem of his youth in faraway Africa.

"On a certain day, at a certain hour, in a certain well-known part of the Vatican, by the instrumentality of a certain document duly signed, sealed, and delivered, and carried over television and radio in 25 languages, via satellite and by cable, to all the continents of our world, through the written media and by simultaneous presentation of official versions of that document to all the bishops of all 2,700 dioceses, to all member governments of the United Nations, to all international organizations—governmental and non-governmental—let our candidate-Pope

and his Sacred College of Cardinals inform the family of man precisely about the following initial measures which the Holy See and the Catholic Church is about to implement.

"Number One: the creation of an international, interdenominational, lay Trust Fund organization; and the legal transfer to its possession of all actual wealth—cash, securities, valuables, real estate, promissory notes—that at present belong legally and rightfully to the Holy See, to its agencies, to its representatives, at home and abroad."

Extraordinary! Already there is a silence that can only be described as dumfounded. Some Cardinals have craned forward in their seats, as if they feared to lose a word of what he is saying.

"National divisions of this international Trust Fund organization will be created for every sovereign state that requires this, according to its own national laws. But Churchmen will never again administer, decide upon, or allocate the wealth of this Church." By the time Azande reaches the end of this statement, the silence is shot through with emotions that are almost palpable. On the faces of Masaccio, Vasari, Ferro, there are looks of anger and consternation and bewilderment. They have been caught completely unawares. Lynch is biting his upper lip, gazing stolidly in front of him. Thule is obviously at sea—he does not quite know where Azande is going: it may be all in his favor; it may be against all he proposes. It is more radical than he and his group had ever contemplated.

The Camerlengo is like a man with all the blood drawn out of him. No longer dispassionate, detached, occupied with note taking, as has been his wont until this extraordinary moment, he is transfixed—eyes bulging, mouth held in a firm line; even his aquiline nose appears more curving than ever with the clenching of his lips.

Walker is the only one who seems more attentive to the looks on his fellow Cardinals' faces than to Azande. Walker seems to have understood at once all that Azande has said and not to be too surprised by a word of it.

"Number Two," Azande proceeds relentlessly in spite of the consternation he knows he has caused. "The termination of all diplomatic missions to the Holy See from sovereign states and nations; and the simultaneous recall of all Vatican diplomatic missions accredited to sovereign

governments and to international organizations." It would have seemed impossible for the shock of Azande's first proposal to deepen; but his Number Two does it.

Still Azande has further to go.

"Number Three: Formal and legally drawn documents containing the official renunciation by the Holy See of all territorial possessions constituted juridically by the Lateran Treaty of 1929 between the State of Italy and the Holy Sec."

This is too much. Several muttered conversations have started. Cardinal Vasari does the extraordinary thing of rising and crossing over to talk with Angelico. Azande pauses. The Cardinal President, seemingly unruffled, rings his silver bell: "If the Eminent Cardinal will regain his seat, and their Eminences will give His Eminence, My Lord Azande, time, I am sure what remains for him to say will be of short duration." Vasari returns to his place.

Azande continues: "Number Four: The putting on notice of everybody concerned—governments, political organizations, financial groups, cartels, chancelleries, ministries of foreign affairs—that henceforward the Holy See reserves the right—the duty—to criticize, to critique, to condemn, to approve, as it sees fit and as the principles of its faith dictate. Unencumbered by *any* motive arising out of political, financial, or diplomatic ties. *For there will be no such ties. Not ever again!* And that henceforth no one should be surprised by any such action that the Holy See may take without earthly fear, or hope, of earthly favor."

Now the Camerlengo is on his feet. Thule is on his feet. Vasari, Riccioni, and Lynch too—all asking for permission to intervene. With all the dignity of the Camerlengo of the Universal Church, this senior official is most persistent in his request for "permission to question the Most Eminent and Esteemed Lord Cardinal, My Lord Azande." He obtains permission.

Glancing hurriedly at a pile of notes in front of him, the Camerlengo starts, his manner urgent and pressuring. "Will His Eminence explain what all this has to do with the *internal* condition of the Church? All these measures cover our *external* relations. And, beyond that, there are extraordinarily serious questions totally ignored by your, er, so-called proposal. For instance, who is to structure this supposed Trust Fund? How are we to be sure that



another financial farce, worse than the Sindona affair, would not result? What is to substitute for the diplomatic channels of communication with the various governments of the nations, if we wipe out our own diplomatic corps? And if we abrogate all treaty arrangements with the Italian State, what of the Vatican itself, to mention only the most obvious question? Has His Eminence any idea of what such restructuring involves?" Then he sits down with the air of a man dealing with madness, shaking his head.

Azande goes to his table and lifts two heavy files from it. He lifts them, saying simply: "The Camerlengo—and all of you, Eminent Brothers, for I will have it polycopied—will find here a very respectable skeleton blueprint of the processes of restructuring." He moves again to the center of the floor.

"As to the internal structure of the Church, my point Number Five (which I did not reach) outlines the general principle I would use in judging that. It is: that the Conclave will appoint, in conjunction with the election of a new Pope, a committee of seven or eleven or thirteen Cardinals. This Commission will prepare for the Holy Father certain preliminary documents within a couple of months. One document recommending revisions of all that the post-conciliar Commissions have decided about the Liturgy of the Mass and of the Sacraments." Thule shifts in his seat impatiently, perhaps angrily.

"A second document will contain the principles for a proposed restructuring of the Vatican and of the international structure of Church Government.

"A third document will list deviations from official doctrines, together with the names of the theologians, philosophers, writers, publicists, bishops, priests, and intellectuals involved in the active promulgation of those deviations, evident since the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. This document will also clarify the substance, meaning, and importance of such deviations, in terms of faith."

Thule is on his feet. He now must have the answer to one question. "On what basis, Eminent Brother, will the Church deal with the political and social problems and forces let loose on our world today?" Thule's leonine head is lifted in direct challenge.

Azande has expected this question—from Thule. He looks at the Cardinal, then at the other Electors, and then walks down the Hall between the rows of Cardinals, all

the while looking at the floor. He stops when he is opposite Thule, but it is at the Electors massed at the end of the Hall that he looks. Then he turns and faces the whole assembly. When he speaks, the Electors hear the authority ringing in his voice, and feel the inner resolution of this young black whose grandparents were not even Christian.

"It would be easy, so easy—glib, that's the word—to answer the Most Eminent Lord Cardinal in his own words. After all . . ." a quizzical smile spreads across his mouth, "My Lord Cardinal would have us trust those who have already killed, maimed, destroyed, imprisoned, executed, calumniated, persecuted the Church all over Europe and Asia." His voice becomes harsh in protest. "Trust the Maoists, Reverend Cardinal? Trust the KGB, Most Eminent Brother? Trust that castrated Communist jackal, Kadar, Most Eminent Cardinal?" Thule is taken aback.

Then Azande's voice sinks back to normal. "So? I would be entitled to say: Let's trust in Our Lord!" He smiles in mock apology. "But that is not the answer. My answer is to deplore your poverty of alternatives, Eminent Cardinal! You and everyone who has neglected one essential truth of our faith, and one irrefragable promise of our beloved Jesus Christ." He looks up toward Angelico's corner, and over to the Camerlengo, then to where Vasari sits.

"That truth and that promise are *one*." He hits that word 'one' with high emphasis and repeats it: "*one!*"

"Think Eminences! Imagine and recall to yourselves that day of all days! See Jesus conferring the power of the keys on Simon Peter near Hermon. Look! Eminent Brothers! Look, each one of you, at that scene in your mind's eye. We all know it. We know the words by heart. In Latin. . . . In Greek. In our native languages. Yet," he looks all about him, he asks everyone there—everyone everywhere, "have we really grasped what those keys represent? What power is thereby given us?" He stalks up the aisle between the Cardinals again, musing as he goes.

"Somewhere along the line of our horizontal history on this globe, we lost hold of that vertical plumbline. We confused that power with the effects of money, of political sway, of military advantage, of cultural enrichment, of humanistic glory. And, to tell you the truth, as I see it, Eminent Brothers, I do not think there are ten men among us today who know what power in spirit is; and

rarely has any one of us seen it used in our day. And when it was used beneath our very eyes, did we recognize it for what it was? I doubt that. I doubt that.

"Let us meditate for one moment on that power. For what I propose in the name of the Eminent Cardinals who stand with me is that we remodel, refashion, refurbish all Papal and Vatican and Church activity, so that we rely *only* on that power. Only on *that* power."

There is a sudden, not disturbing, sound of approbation from the black Cardinals. It is strange but unwontedly exciting, deep, waving, drumlike. First from Makonde, then echoed down the right row by Chaega, Koi-Lo-Po, coming on the left from Lotuko, Nei Hao, Duala, Lang Che-Ning, Saleke, and echoing from the one black at the back of the assembly—Bamleke.

Coming from their chests and throats, the sound is a long, slow, resounding upbeat flow rising loud and high, then dropping off a cliff of sound to a very low and sustained basso tone. The sound is not molded into words. But it is inflected and modulated by an emotion so raw, so naked, so natural, so collective, so evident, that everyone understands. It is as if, to convey the experience of seeing a sunrise, the human throat formed sounds that conveyed not the idea of a sunrise, but the emotions aroused by a sunrise. It has a primordial quality that affects everyone, disturbing some, exciting others, making everyone sit up and look at Azande, who is smiling the smile of Africa at the black Cardinals, and they are smiling back at him and then at each other, and then at everyone else. This applause is a near-perfect expression of agreement, sympathy, and encouragement.

"This power," Azande's words command silence again, "this power, is not one of healing sick limbs, or seeing at a distance, or being in two places at the same time, or reading the secrets of the mind, or foretelling the future.

"This power is a force emanating from God, inhabiting those who are in God's grace. Power in spirit. And in the Keeper of the Keys and in his ministers and in the priests and in the people. This is a power that *resides* in them, that gives them moral authority—according to their grade in God's Kingdom of the Spirit.

"In Peter, whoever he be, the power is preeminent and forceful and unbeatable. With it, he can evoke the loyalty, the obedience, and the actions of all the faithful. He

can literally oppose enemies and oppressors and all evil, and they cannot conquer him or the faithful or their faith.

"It would be easy to recall the example of Pope Leo the Great, alone, unarmed, walking out to meet Attila the Hun and his sixty thousand warriors. Leo alone, by force of moral power, persuaded Attila to turn away and not sack Rome. But that was 1500 years ago at least. And the distance in time makes the event unreal for us moderns.

"But we have modern examples nearer home. How, do you think, have the Poles survived with their Church intact in Stalinistic Poland? Do you think they and their Church did that because of their bank balance? Or their stock investment? Or their real estate holdings? Their political clout? Their diplomatic influence? Not a bit of that! You know that better than I. Not a bit. Only because they held on to that power in spirit!

"How often in recent history has the Pope and the Vatican relied solely on that power? How often, relying on it alone, have they wielded it?

"And not the Pope only. Let us face the truth. For many of us Bishops, for thousands of priests, for millions of layfolk, this power-in-spirit, this moral authority has been obscured, disguised, transmuted, degraded. Above all, it has been confused with other things. We have become indentured as slaves to the fearful rigidities of a politico-economic system. And neither do we realize it, nor do we know how to get out of it. My God! Eminent Brothers, my God! And we rush to our brokers and our bankers and our realtors and our diplomats to solve our problems, instead of relying on the power of Christ. 'Ask of the gods,' said Socrates, 'only for good things.' 'Ask for anything in my name,' said Jesus, 'and it shall be given to you.' Have we forgotten all that? Is it all a joke? An ancient story. May Jesus help us to let the scales fall from our eyes.

"And this is how confused we all are. We confound spiritual power with psychic energy. We confuse soul with psyche. We confuse God's inspiration with the irrational subconscious. Piety becomes behavioral psychology. Theology bows to anthropology. Moral law and ethics are treated as nothing more than and nothing different from sociological quantification. We define human history with Lenin's chilling phrases and boil them down to 'Who has done what to whom?' We define divine salvation in Darwin's

crass obliteration of spirit. And that boils down to 'What has become what?' Love is reduced to physical sex. The dignity of the mendicant is reduced to the claims of welfare recipients. Freedom is debased as the absence of any control. Liberty is transformed into resentment against any limit on behavior.

"The Sacrifice of the Mass is all but obliterated by the indignity of a 'holy meal.' Evil is equated with negative environmental factors; good is a refrigerator, a dishwasher, a TV set.

"The charity of Christ is confused with minority quotas; the works of mercy, with social activism; worship of God, with the fellowship of men and women sipping cocktails; unity and harmony, with majoritarian whims; civility, with no inflation; the fitness of things, with good plumbing; liberation, with more money; self-control, with the license to kill unborn babies; the dignity of man, with male sodomy; the emancipation of women, with Lesbianism; the truth, with repeated publicity of lies and half-lies and myths.

"And in this Conclave, the unbought grace of life stands in danger of being confused—for the last time—with financial subsidies from socialist governments.

"My God! Eminent Brothers, Oh, my God! Good Jesus! Where have we got to!" Azande's eyes are full of tears. His body is quivering. His fists are closing and opening. He stands silent and staring down the assembly for some instants.

Someone clears his throat in the absolute silence, as if he was about to say something out loud. The sound sets off a reaction. It comes without warning, but as if on cue. Some start clapping their hands. Then a few more. And a few more. The Camerlengo looks around quickly from one applauding Cardinal to another, alternately glaring and questioning with his eyes. The applause rises in volume. One Cardinal cries "*Bravo!*" Thirty cry "*Bravo!*" Already two have stood up, still clapping their hands and crying "*Bravo!*" Then all along the lines of seated Cardinals, Electors clamber to their feet dropping their papers on the little tables in front of the thrones, clapping, smiling, crying "*Bravo!*" "*Bravo!*" "*Azandel!*" "*Magnifico!*" "*Well said, Azandel!*" "*Bravo!*" Some few remain seated—the Camerlengo, Lynch, Thule, Marquez, Manuel, Buff, Franzus. But they, too, rise after a few moments; and, if

only as an act of consentient presence here, join the applause.

Some few Cardinals are weeping openly; one or two are seen shaking hands, as if together they had witnessed some scene or heard some words that together they had prayed and hoped for. Some pristine emotion has risen unbidden among these dignified and highly egotistical and personalistic men—career-men, bureaucrats, politicians, holy bishops, scholars, diplomats, men of the world. All know that as individuals, and as a College of Cardinals, they have suddenly seen some shining image, some shimmering ideal resting among them uninvited, winsome, the real object of their lives, and the highest object of the best moments of their spirit.

And, they know that that thin, angular, youthful black figure standing at the long table has been the occasion and the instrument for this experience.

"We see, Azandel! Don't worry. We understand! We are with you, Azandel! Azande has spoken for us all. The Holy Spirit has spoken from Africal Azandel! Jesus is with you, Azandel! Azandel!" The black Cardinal is trying to say something above the uproar. And some Electors start shushing the applause, waving their arms and hands: "Shhhh! Shhhh! Brothers! Shhh! Let him speak!" The clamor dies down. All look at Azande. If anyone there had any doubts about Azande's ability to read an audience or to seize an opportunity, all such doubts are laid to rest. He looks steadily at the Electors on each side and down to the mass of Electors at the back of the assembly.

"Can we do it, my Brothers?" he finally says. "Can we do it still?"

There are several spontaneous cries. "*Ital!*" "*Ital!*" "*Ital!*" "*In nomine Cristil Ital!*" (In the name of Christ, yes!) "*Si volumus! Ital!*" (If we really want to, yes).

"If we really want to," Azande takes up the last exclamation, raising his own voice to be heard above the cries from the assembly. "If we have recourse to the Spirit of Jesus. Even if the whole human world were covered with concrete and all our lives were mechanized in steel and chrome, even so! Some day, somehow, our faith and our reliance on that Spirit would crack that cement. And through that solitary crack the flower of faith and true worship of the Risen Christ would blossom and grow. That

gleaming inanimate machinery would be festooned in the glory of God's love. And over the bleak landscape of our human life would break the sunrise of the Resurrection! Believe it, my Brothers! Believe it! Believe it with the Apostles! With Peter! With Clement! With Leo! With Paul! With Pius! With all the saints! With the faithful! Believe it! Believe it and it shall be done!"

The tumult breaks out again. "We believe it!" "You are Peter!" "We believe it!" The clapping and cries of "*Bravo!*" ring through the Hall. Even the young Monsignore seated outside the door hears the noise. He rises, his face flushing with excitement. He thinks: A Pope has been chosen! He waits.

Behind the closed doors, the enthusiasm holds. Azande has no intention of letting it go. And what he now accomplishes takes no more than one minute. His energy is almost spent. His emotions are beginning to recede from him. But he knows what he must do. In a quick glance around the assembly, he takes it all in. There is, for the moment, a sea of affirmation and warmth—arms raised, eyes lit up with expectancy, voices echoing again and again. And, in among those scarlet-clad figures with faces raised to Azande, there are the stock-still members of the opposition, a Thule, a Franzus, a Buff, their faces set, their eyes understanding more than their applauding colleagues. They, standing on the sidelines of this collective feeling, sense Azande's next move. But they are powerless to stop it.

"Brothers!" It is the first time that Azande raises his voice to the level of a proclamation. He raises both arms, palms facing outward to the assembly and gently motioning for silence. All the cries stop. Electors are held in the midflight of their applause. "Brothers! Will you in your majority, will you declare the general policy I have outlined, will you give it the oldest form of Christian endorsement—your voice! your voices!" He pauses, then shouts in one loud triumphant cry: "*Ita!*"

For just a couple of seconds the whole assembly hangs there. And, suddenly, as one body it decides. It reacts.

Once more, it is the blacks who begin. Drawing out the first syllable of that affirmative *Ita*, they stay on it, prolonging the "ee" sound until one, seven, twenty, fifty, ninety, over one hundred voices have joined in. That "ee"

has now become a full-throated fluency. As natural-born chorus leaders, the blacks raise the pitch of their voices while prolonging that sound. All instinctively understand that at a certain high point in that rising pitch the second syllable of *Ita* will come. All have their eyes on Azande who is in control. His hands, his eyes, the shape of his mouth as he forms that syllable "ee"—all his listeners are watching them. This assembly is now acting as one body.

Magically, when that second syllable comes, the majority of those voices hit it hard. And the young Monsignore—who has hastily summoned the priest-confessors, hears the tail-end of that rising "ee" capped by a thunderous and prolonged "*ta!*" Azande, on stage, holds his arms level and immediately cries out sharply "*Ita!*" The Cardinals repeat "*Ita!*" And then it is a row of twelve or fifteen *Ita's* coming like the blows of a hammer driving home a nail already sunk deep into the wood.

Now, Azande has his last duty to perform. He raises his hands for silence. "Brothers! What are we waiting for? The Holy Spirit has spoken! We know our general policy. We need a Pope! We need a Pope! The Church needs a Pope! Jesus wills us to have a new Pope! Shall we not vote? Now? Here and now? Shall we not elect the successor to Peter and the Vicar of Jesus? Shall we? Does it seem good to the Holy Spirit and to us?"

There is one more resounding *Ita* followed by hand-clapping. Azande looks around at the Presidents, then down to Domenico. The old man is sitting back motionless, his face drawn. But in his eyes, Azande reads: "Well done! Well done! Stop now. Get down." Azande turns, bows to the Presidents. As he walks to his place, the Cardinal President speaks. "Very well, Eminent Brothers. Your will is clear. The general policy as proposed by our Most Eminent Lord, My Lord Cardinal Azande, is official Conclave policy. We will proceed to a balloting and scrutiny. Will the Scrutineers, Revisers, and *Infirmarii* please come forward, so that we can distribute the ballot papers."

While the ballot papers are being distributed, two Cardinals leave their places. The young Cardinal with the stutter, unnoticed by many, goes over to Domenico and drops to his knees in front of the older man, his face in his hands. Those nearby see Domenico's lips moving, his right hand making the sign of the Cross. The Electors only surmise what is being transacted between the two.



When the young Cardinal rises and goes back to his place, the Electors glance at his face and then look away hastily in pain and embarrassment. Most of them, priests though they are, have forgotten and cannot take the sight of a face that portrays the peculiar peace and that rather frightening strength of repentance done, of humiliation accepted, of love renewed. It is too much.

The other Cardinal is Thule. Stiff as a Rhinish oak, his face as immobile as an Alpine peak, large eyes reddened with feeling, Thule walks with a rare dignity and followed by 117 pairs of eyes. He stops in front of Azande who is already seated. Azande is about to rise for the older man. A flicker of Thule's gaze stops Azande, like a hand placed on the chest; and he sits there, his black face lifted up as he looks into Thule's eyes. Then, spontaneously, Azande clasps his own two hands together and raises them to Thule. Thule takes them into his own, bowing his head over them. Some word—short, gentle, whispered—passes between the European and the African. Then, slowly unhurried, as if he were walking in a total solitude of his own, Thule goes back to his place.

By this time, the ballots have been distributed. The Cardinal President takes off his glasses and looks at the assembly. "It is customary that the Cardinal presiding over what promises to be a definitive vote, has the privilege of saying a few unofficial words. I feel—as you all feel—that the agony of our choosing the next occupant of the throne of Peter should be ended as expeditiously and as efficiently and as easefully as possible. Now, in other words. And in fraternal union and peace." He looks around meditatively at his fellow Cardinals.

"The outside world will never understand it. But we have had moments of heart-rending experience in this Conclave, my Brothers. Something unique and precious has happened here to us. Eh?" He looks around again and receives nods of assent and smiles of encouragement. "The greatness of our Lord Jesus, I suppose, has passed in front of us, and we have touched the hem of his trailing glory. And grace has gone out from him to all of us.

"We have experienced that nameless breath of Jesus' inspiration blowing gently over our spirits. We, like other poor mortals, would not wish to examine its supremacy too closely for fear of the demands it might make. And yet we are alone now. Absolutely alone with Jesus. We cannot

afford to forget his presence. Much less pass it over in nonrecognition.

"We now choose for the highest of motives. There is no one of us here who has not been thoroughly informed of our situation. We are at the end of one road. Perhaps no one has been forced to see, as we have, how the presence and the power of Jesus, the good Lord of the Church, has for so long been invested with the toils of imperialism, financial strength, diplomatic panoply, cultural elitism, and personal ambitions. For so long!

"Yet there is not one of us now—no matter how worldly our hearts have been or become—who does not realize as perhaps never before that this presence and this power is among us men. But it is not of mankind. It is the only force uncontrollable and uncontrolled by men's power, by our sins and faults, and by the plots of the Evil One.

"We are the temporary holders of Roman power. We will bleed and die, each in his own way. But the heart of the Roman power rests safe in a guarantee of permanency. It will wreak its effects—dire and beautiful, by turns—effortlessly among men. And neither the evil nor the sanctity of Popes and Cardinals can violate or better that power, any more than the ravages of time can shatter it.

"What we can do, what we must do, what we are about to do now, is an awesome and terrible thing, my Brothers. For it is terrible and awesome to fall into the hands of the living God. And that is precisely where we have fallen. For this precious and fate-laden moment, we will stand outside of time, independent of space, as it were. And, as at Hermon, once again we will hear Jesus saying through us: 'You are Peter.' We can blaspheme—you know how! Or, we can bow to his will—you know how! We all know how!

"In marking his ballot, each one of us is touching the intimacy of the great mysterious Lord to whom each one of us will personally answer for what he does here today. And can our wait for that answering be long for any of us, my Brothers?" He lets his gaze travel over the faces. "A few years? A year? The Lord knows best. Praised be the Lord!"

He looks down at his notes, then folds them and places them in his briefcase. All the while, there is no movement or sound among the Electors. Then, quietly, he raises his

right hand, gesturing with a forward motion of his outstretched fingers—the signal to begin.

Silence falls on the Conclave. One by one, each Cardinal bends over his writing table, takes a ballot paper, and opens it to write the name of the next Pope.