

# PROLOGUE



A dream is a scripture, and many scriptures are nothing but dreams.

— *Umberto Eco*

*Anno Domini 1492, July 25.  
In the Papal apartments of  
Giovanni Batisto Cibo,  
Pope Innocent VIII, as he  
lay dying...*

SERENITY GRACED THE FACES of the three 10-year-old boys lying at the foot of the Pontiff's bed. Their blood had been drained to provide an infusion of youthful vitality in a desperate effort to save him. In fact, the unheard-of procedure had reanimated Innocent's spirits. He recalled how their eyes, closed now, had sparkled with dreamy visions at the promised ducat still clutched tightly in their little palms. He was sitting up in bed for the first time in days, reading a large book propped against his upraised knees. He had dismissed everyone except Adolpho, the only man within these walls he trusted without question.

Innocent gazed again at the young faces and sadness washed over him at their sacrifice. He would pray for them again. Oddly, he felt safe with them and wondered how long he might keep them there, for fear was overtaking him now as he finished the text and closed the book. He shook his head and narrowed his eyes as he studied the heretical title:

***SOMNIA—Sola Ecclesia Vera de Hominis et Dei—HHL*<sup>1</sup>**

He looked up. "Adolpho, are you sure this is the only copy?"

Adolpho approached the bedside, reaching out to take the book. "Yes, there are no others. I am certain."

Still, the face of Innocent VIII showed no relief. "And have you seen to its author as I asked?" He gave up the volume and closed his eyes.

"Yes. He refused to leave his books. They made an extraordinary blaze. Everything burned. Nothing survived." Adolpho gathered up the volume under his arm and with just the slightest smile asked, "Shall I burn it as well?"

The Pope looked at the children. For a moment he was struck by their innocence and tried in vain to remember why he had taken his name. He looked at their closed eyes as if he was looking for the answer there.

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<sup>1</sup> *DREAMS—The One True Church of Man and God--HHL*

“No, Adolpho. We must not destroy it. It may prove useful to me or to one who follows me. Wrap it and bind it with my seal and use the warning: *pro oculis nullius.*”<sup>2</sup> Lock it away in the Papal vault. I trust you will tell no one.”

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<sup>2</sup> “for no one’s eyes”