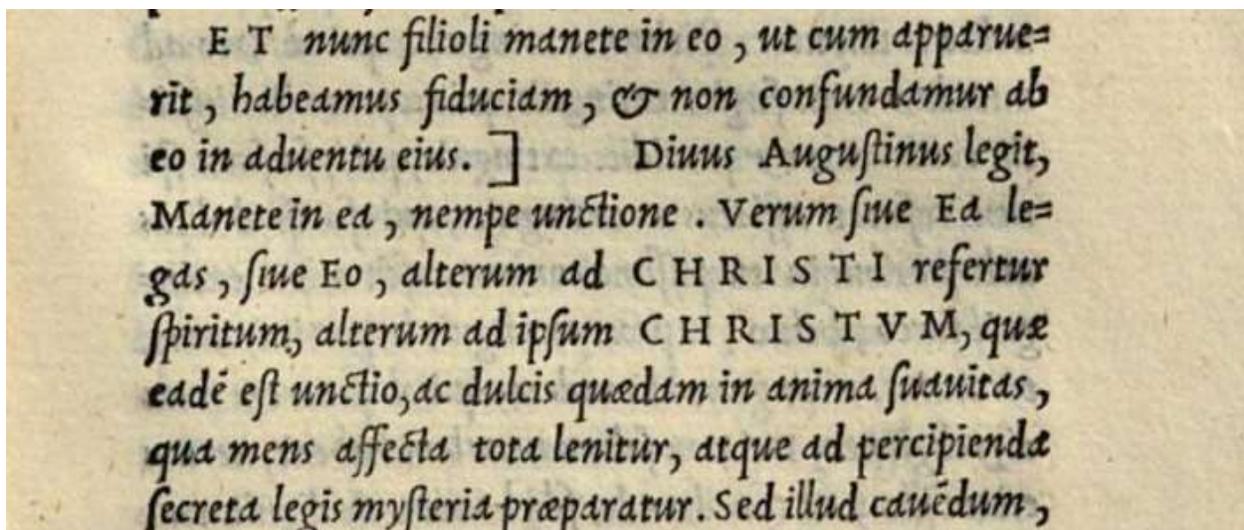


**Samples 3: Toward an Appreciation of Giovanni Battista Folengo's  
*Commentary on the First Epistle of John*, 1546 (1547, 1555, 1559)**  
by Ann E Mullaney, May 6, 2022; with corrections, July 21, 2022

For most readers, the *Commentaria in primam d. Ioannis epistolam*, *Io. Baptista Folengio monacho Mantuano auctore* (*Commentary on the First Epistle of John* by Giovanni Battista Folengo, Mantuan, author, monk) will be his most accessible work. It is much shorter than his earlier *Commentary on the Psalms* – about 80,000 words compared with 555,000 words; sentences are shorter and the syntax a little less arduous than in the *Psalms*; content is less quirky than that of his first published volume, *Dialogi, quos Pomiliones vocat*. An accessible, but shocking work, these *John Commentaries*, because no matter how simple and sing-songy the biblical text, Folengo manages to transform the message into parody and humorous erotica.



## I. The Text

The 1546 first edition is a beautiful volume from the famous Venetian publishing house founded by Aldo Manuzio. A less attractive second edition appeared the following year in Antwerp; in 1555, a third edition of the *Commentaries on the First Epistle of John* was published in Lyons together with subsequent works by the author; a fourth was issued in 1559 again by the Aldine Press, nearly identical to the original edition. All four editions may be read online, at Google Play Books and elsewhere, see the extensive list of available copies: **GB Folengo John Extant Public copies Apr 1 2022.pdf**

Currently, the best available transcription:

**Hybrid transcription GB Folengo John 1546 1555.pdf**

**Combined Documents for Toward an Appreciation of GB Folengo.pdf**

at my site: <https://verbalmask.hcommons.org/> and at <https://www.academia.edu/>

## II. Donation Request Letter to Reginald Pole



**Reginald Pole by Sebastiano del Piombo**

**Hermitage, St Petersburg**

ILLUSTRISSIMO PRINCIPI,  
CHRISTI'que ecclesiae Cardinali  
domino domino Reginaldo Polo,  
Iohannes Baptistae Folengius S. D.

*Quod te diligam, pater, atque  
observem, in causa est tua integritas.  
quod te admirer, virtus, iunctaque  
cum amplitudine dignitatis  
mansuetudo. quod deinceps te veluti  
quoddam divinitatis simulacrum è  
coelo lapsum cum venerer, tum (ferè  
dixi adorem) amplectar, et exosculer,  
tua illa facit nota omnibus in adversis  
patientia, eventuumque humanorum  
alta quadam despectio, et risus.  
Postremo autem quod te, virum  
alioqui praeclarissimis in rebus  
occupatissimum, meo ipso  
quinqumestri partu audeam  
onerare, spes lucri est. At lucrum id  
esto mihi quamoptatissimum, si te  
adeo strictim devincire potero, ut tu  
mihi perpetuo partonus sis, ego  
cliens: seu mavis ex servis unus, quod  
aiunt, emptis de lapide. modo de tuis  
unus dicar, triumpho. Vale tui  
ordinis et fax, et sol.*

To the Most Illustrious Prince and Lord  
Cardinal of the Church of Christ, Lord  
Reginald Pole, Giovanni Battista Folengo  
sends greetings.

That I love/ esteem you, father, and respect  
[you], your integrity is the reason. That I  
admire you, [the reason is your] virtue and  
clemency joined with fullness of dignity.  
Then, that I not only revere you as a certain  
simulacrum of a divinity fallen from heaven,  
but also (I almost said I adore) I embrace  
[you] and kiss you tenderly, that patience of  
yours against all opponents makes known,  
and a certain lofty disdain for human events/  
fate, and laughter. Finally also that I may  
dare to burden you, a man extremely busy in  
other extremely distinguished affairs, with  
this five month old offspring of mine, [the  
reason is] the hope of money. But no matter  
how very sought after this money may be by  
me, if I might hold you so closely, that you  
would be my patron forever, I your client, or  
if you prefer, one of your slaves, as they say,  
bought on an auction block. If only I may be  
called one of yours, I triumph.  
Be well, flame and sun of your order.

Reginald Pole (1500-1558) was an English cardinal and the last Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury. He was a great nephew of Plantagenet kings Edward IV and Richard III; he himself wrote in his *De unitate* (1536) that he had been singled out by King Henry VIII (a cousin through Pole's father) to receive an excellent education. His studies and other interests brought him to Italy. He was at the famous University of Padua off and on from about 1521 to 1526 and thereafter resided chiefly in Italy.

Events in Pole's life which seem relevant for an understanding of Folengo's letter include his break with Henry over the King's negation of papal power and his execution of Thomas More and others. Henry VIII reacted badly to Pole's refusal to do his bidding. He wanted Pole's head and since Reginald was in Italy, he retaliated by imprisoning his mother, Margaret Pole, and two of his male relatives on suspicion of treason: all three were executed. Margaret (beheaded May 7, 1541) was beatified by the Roman Catholic Church in 1886 as a martyr. Due to the charges of treason against Pole and his family members, he was attainted *in absentia* and lost his lands, title and money.

Thus, it could seem odd that not many years later the Benedictine monk Folengo would praise Pole not only for his patience and his disdain for human events, but also for his laughter. And odd that he chose to target Pole with a public entreaty for funds, after the book was published. Odd too that he chose to use such flowery language: "I not only revere you as a certain simulacrum of a divinity fallen from heaven, but also (I almost said I adore) I embrace [you] and kiss you tenderly." In a later piece, Folengo mentions Pole twice in a discussion about monks and literature: the two men may have been friendly with one another, see the opening letter of Folengo's *Commentaries on the Canonical Epistles of the Apostles, namely: First Epistle of St. James, First and Second of St Peter, First of St. John*, Lyons, Sebastian Gryphius, 1555, p. 9, 15.

A detailed, illustrated biography like that by historian Thomas Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet* (Cambridge UP, 2000) provides insights and a wealth of details about Pole. One such detail, is that Vittoria Colonna, a famous poet and religious intellectual, likely commissioned the painting of him by Sebastiano del Piombo glimpsed above (Mayer, p. 389). Folengo had written to and about Colonna in his *Dialogi, quos Pomiliones vocat*, pp 40-50. The dialogue, interspersed with epitaphs for Colonna's deceased husband, seems mocking: it seems to question the image of Colonna and Ferrante D'Avalos as a devoted couple. In the letter to Pole, I do not perceive the mocking tone which I noted toward Colonna (and others) in the earlier work by Folengo. Not mocking, maybe teasing? But surely, if Pole objected to this letter of entreaty, it seems unlikely that it would have been published again in both the 1547 and 1559 editions.

Thomas Mayer concludes his biography of Pole with speculation about Pole's homosexuality and his self-fashioning (pp. 439-51 and elsewhere); more needs to be said about Folengo's appeal to Pole for funds, and his playful familiarity:

But no matter how very sought after this money may be by me, if I might hold you so closely, that you would be my patron forever, I your client, or if you prefer, one of your slaves, as they say, bought on an auction block. If only I may be called one of yours, I triumph.

To be sure, patronage is a fascinating topic, especially in the Italian Renaissance world of letters. One thinks of Machiavelli's relationship to the Medici family, Ariosto's relationship to the Este, to princes and courts and writers, and I hope that one will think about the Folengo brothers' relationship not only to Reginald Pole but also to the Gonzaga family and to the Orsini (see Teofilo Folengo's dedication to Paolo Orsini of his *Poema varium*, and the letter to Camillo Orsini in the 1540 edition of GB Folengo's *Selected Psalms Commentaries*). There is hope scholarly work will continue to add to our understanding of the patron-artist dynamic generally and the Folengo-Pole relationship in particular.

### III. Index

Twenty pages of alphabetically ordered entries of the Index for the *John Commentaries* appear immediately after the dedicatory letter to Pole and before the text proper. Here the 411 entries are spaced generously for easy reading in contrast with the crowded 2,202 entries placed at the end of Folengo's vast *Commentary on the Psalms*. In this piece of mine entries are given with the page numbers from the 1546 edition \back slash numbers\, and from the 1555 edition, with the footnote number (FN) I assigned to them in my hybrid transcription. The interplay of Index and text is engaging.

#### GB Folengo John 1546 Index April 26 2022.pdf

1. Many of the entries call attention to the **social and socio-religious commentary** of the text:

*Periculosa nostri temporis conditio, in qua quilibet pene particularem sibi effingit religionem, unde ortae sunt haereses, atque scribentium multitudo.*

(The dangerous situation of our times, in which almost anyone may make up his own particular religion, from which heresies have arisen, and a multitude of writers.) \26.b\ {1555 p. 300} FN 132

2. Some are **playfully suggestive**:

*Proprium hominis est labi, Dei autem erigere.* (It is typical of men to slip away, but of God to erect.) \14.b\ {1555 p. 279} FN 84

3. Others **require knowledge of the erotic lexicon**.

Essential for understanding the coded meanings is a knowledge of the erotic lexicon identified and explored by Jean Toscan: *Le carnaval du langage: le lexique érotique des poètes de l'équivoque de Burchiello à Marino (XVe-XVIIe siècles)*, Lille, Presses Univ., 1981 (thèse 1978), 4 vols; glossary of ~2300 terms with English: [Erotic Lexicon July 1 2019](#). Also useful are *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, J.N. Adams (Baltimore, John Hopkins, 1982) and the *Dizionario storico del lessico erotico italiano: Metafore, eufemismi, oscenità, doppi sensi, parole dotte e parole basse in otto secoli di letteratura italiana* (Milan, Longanesi, 1996) by Valter Boggione and Giovanni Casalegno.

**3.a.** *Descriptio morum illius, qui odio in alium elatus, fit pene amens.* (Descriptio of the behavior of that one who, raised up in hate for another, becomes almost demented.) \35.b\ {1555 p. 315} FN 171

Then, in the text proper we see not just the humorous *pene amens* (almost crazy/ **demented phallus**), but an image of frenzy and disfigurement wrought by *ira* (hatred/ sexual ardor), followed by a lengthy description of bristling hissing snakes, 1555 pp. 315-6. *Pene*, as in the first example above, often slips by as an innocuous adverb (an alternative spelling of *paene*, meaning almost, nearly), but does mean penis in Italian and signifies phallus in many of its hundreds of appearances in Folengo's writings.

**3.b.** *Eos pinguissimum habere animum necesse est, qui in curis libenter occupantur terrenis.* (Those who gladly occupy themselves with terrestrial concerns, must have a very thick soul.) \95.a\ {1555 p. 417} FN 349.

**3.c.** *Adhortatio ad perseverantiam.* (Exhortation to perseverance.) *Ingenii signum est vani ab incoepto facile desistere.* (It is a sign of an unreliable natural talent to desist readily from an undertaking.) \58.b\ {1555 p. 355-6} FN 242-3. These two Index entries usher in a particularly audacious passage.

**3.d.** *Divinorum cognitio vix longa acquiritur exercitatione, et sudore.* (Knowledge of divine [matters] is acquired with difficulty from long practice and sweat.) \5.b\ {1555 p. 263}

#### IV. Prologue

**Original text image: GB Folengo 1546 PROLOGUE BNC Firenze.pdf**

The Latin text, transcribed: **GB Folengo John Prologue Orig 1546 and 1555.pdf**

Colorful Latin text with Index entries placed as footnotes and my translation: **GB Folengo John Prologue Highlighted w English May 6 2022.pdf**

#### **Color Commentary to Accompany the Prologue of Giovanni Battista Folengo, *Commentaries on the First Epistle of John* 1546, 1555**

GB Folengo starts right off with more than a hint of naughtiness by telling the reader that Christian philosophy depends on “charitas” (love/ charity, often spelled caritas in English), \1546 page 1.a\, 1555 p. 257. The Italian word *carità* is used by writers drawing on the erotic lexicon to signify the charitable offering of one’s own body (see Toscan, pp. 1042-7). The first six Index entries strongly reinforce this meaning. Toscan defines philosophy as *sodomie*.

“when dying, he commended his own mother to him”: mother, although rarely, was used to designate the back end. Offhand I can think of only a couple of references that may

illustrate this designation: Teofilo Folengo's poem, *Ad matrem virginem* (*Varium poema*, 3), and Berni's "Capitolo a Messer Baccio Cavalcanti sopra la gita di Nizza" vv. 103-9. The verb *morire* (to die) is well-attested in writings of the era with various acceptations related to sexual activity, Toscan explores some of these, pp. 499-502.

***Rem arduam tento, atque eo difficiliorem, quod illius virtus a plerisque mortalium ignoratur:*** "I am attempting **an arduous thing**, and the more difficult because the **virtue of it** is ignored by many mortals": the meaning of ***rem arduam*** (the **arduous thing**) becomes something more than its antecedent [the interpretation of Christian philosophy] would indicate, once it is "recognized and laid before the eyes of all, it is disguised, and like a plaything (***res ludicra***), laughed at," [*res ludicra* could also be translated comic act]. It is not just a thing, but **that thing/ thang**. It is so great a thing (***rem tantam***), until now, unknown. Our author strives to explain it to others, \2.b\ p. 260. And ***rem tantam***, again below: "Who, they ask, has dared to undertake **such a thing** as the interpretation of **divine matters** (***divinarum rerum***), having scarcely learned the first rudiments of Greek [letters]?, \4.b\, not in 1555. Following close upon **divine things, celestial things**:

*sic doleo divitias Spiritus in **tam arcto** ab illis concludi **armariolo**, ut **pene** affirmare ausint amplissimam **rerum coelestium** exuberantiam **in nullo**, quod **graecum** non sit, reponi posse **scrinio**.*

(thus I am pained [that] the riches of the Spirit are closed up in such **a narrow little cabinet** by them, that they almost dare to assert the very ample abundance of **celestial matters** is able to be stored **in no box** that is not **Greek**)

Wily **res** even makes a brief cameo in the final sentence of the Prologue, *His igitur haud **ab re** delibatis...* (Therefore, though these [matters] were hardly **out of place**...). Folengo does not hesitate to pull apart idiomatic expressions and exploit each defenseless word.

***quod illius virtus*** (the **virtue of that [thing]**): translated as virtue, yet *virtus* could also be manliness, vigor, aptitude or excellence.

\1.b\ {1555 p. 258}

"...himself the pastor, us sheep..." In many passages throughout his works, Folengo objected to these sorts of comparisons between God and humans.

"almost all of us are occupied with investigating divine providence and the abyss of desire. What?" **Quid?** often signals a passage with loaded words. Here, it draws the reader's attention not so much to the abyss of desires which preceded it, but to what follows: a veiled reference to Martin Luther.

The sentence beginning, "Then indeed truly the impetus of the stream gladdens the city..." does not require commentary.

{1555 p. 259}

*veram... viam*: the expression seems innocent enough, but not when one has seen *via* used a hundred times to designate a specific pathway in the body, as in *Dirige cor tuum in uiam rectam* (Direct your heart on the right path, 1555, Peter, p. 251). And, *Non cadam, inquit, quandiu sperauero. Non elabar. Non, ne minimum quidem, in uia iustitiae titubabo* (I will not fall, he says, as long as I hope/ am be full of hope. I will not slip away. No, not even a little bit will I wobble in the path of justice), Folengo, *Psalms*, pdf 201).

{1555 p. 260}

Folengo fusses at the prevalence of discussions about arcane matters among not just the learned (*docti*: experienced in sexual practices) – those who worship on Monte Cassino [home of the famous Benedictine monastery] – but also among wool-workers, barbers and cobblers: trades marked in code for sexual activity. “They all strive to explain so great a thing (***rem tantam***) until now unknown. I digress.” For further examples and analyses of learning (doctrine, erudition, etc.), see Toscan, pp. 1251-1284.

*quique humeros collapsae pene fidei structurae supponere desiderant* (and who desire to place their shoulders under the almost collapsed structure of faith): note the juxtaposition of *collapsae* and *pene* and well, the whole image.

{1555 p. 262}

“Yet, warning the reader that he not read my [writings], if in [my] commentaries he should desire anything other than the naked and succinct sense of the author.” *Nudum* is well-served by naked, but *succinctum* has additional meanings: hiked up to the waist, as a robe; strapped on like a sword. Folengo does signal his intentions clearly here, as he did in the Preamble to his first published work, where he explained his predilection for naked praise of vice: *nuda... elogia vitiorum* (*Pomiliones*, p. 5/ p. A iii).

Folengo concludes that he always had in mind to be helpful not hurtful: *prodesse certe non obesse mihi semper fuit animus*.

## Greek erudition

The last pages of the 1546 Prologue are included in both the 1547 and 1559 editions, but omitted from the 1555. I do not think the omission was a mere oversight. I think these two pages – loaded as they are with references to Greeks, Greek erudition, carrying Greeks in one’s breast, storing celestial things in Greek boxes – were too obvious. And there may be more going on in these pages than just an exuberant do-si-do with The Unspeakable Vice of the Greeks: Folengo reiterates that he himself is not steeped in Greek letters. At any rate, the ten occurrences of Greek (***graec-***) in these two pages compel the reader to perceive the erotic parallel text.

## V. Samples

1. A brief passage which highlights the mixture of biblical phrases and previous glosses with erotica that is Folengo’s special power.

\36.b\ {1555 p. 318}

O nostros testudineos in uia Dei passus. Ferrei propemodum facti sumus, ac duriores quam quos repetiti hi ictus edomare possint. Miramur tamen, querimurque delicatissimi, si Deo placet, homines, si nostram ob tarditatem ea repetant sancti autores, atque ad fastidium usque, ut blatterant quidam, inculcent, quae uix semel, ac tenuiter, ut pretiosior assolet liquor ab aurea stillare fistula, prolata, satis omnibus, et qui in coelis sunt spiritus, et qui in terris agunt homines, facere debuissent, nisi nostra obstitisset duricies, atque in his quae-	O, our tortoise-like steps in the path of God. We have been made just about iron-like and harder than those whom these repeated blows could subdue. Yet we are amazed and, extremely delicate men, we complain, if it pleases God, if on account of our slowness the holy authors may repeat these things, and even to the point of annoyance as they blather something, ram home those things not just once, or delicately, so that the rather precious liqueur is wont to drip from the golden pipe brought forward/ lengthened, should have made/done enough for everyone, both those spirits who are in heaven and those who drive men on earth, unless our hardness might get in the way and,
{1555 p. 318}	{1555 p. 318}
-rendis, quae aeterna pollicentur bona, segnicies.	in seeking these things which promise eternal good [things], [our] sluggishness.

2. **Secus**, an alternate form of the noun *sexus*, means sex, as in gender and sexual organs, *secus* is also an adverb meaning otherwise, differently. Folengo's *secus* often manages to carry these two disparate meanings at the same time:

\84.a\ {1555 p. 399}

Sic ueri quidem Patres, sic pastores, sic qui sunt a Deo magistratus suum ita attemperant animum et curam ad subditorum salutem, ut aequae hi patrum seueritatem amare possint, et rigorem, ac solent illorum lenitatem ferre, et amare. Qui secus agunt, subditos magis exasperant, et effraenes reddunt, quam dociles et morigeros. Tyranni quidem ab hoc horrent affectu, qui suis in moderandis subditis nihil in primis tam quaerunt, quam timeri. <sup>FN</sup> Quid mirum?	Thus indeed the true Fathers, thus the pastors, thus those who are magistrates of God, adjust their own soul and care for the salvation of [their] subjects such that these may in like manner love the severity of the fathers and the rigor, as typically they support and love their gentleness. Those who do otherwise/ sex, further exasperate their subjects, and render them unruly, rather than docile and yielding. Indeed, tyrants tremble at this affection who, in regulating their subjects, principally seek nothing so much as to be feared. What is surprising [in that]?
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FN Pastoris boni ac mali partes. (Roles of the good and the bad pastor.)

Two additional examples: 107.a\ {1555 p. 438}

<p>Puto equidem dominum IESUM hunc soluisse nodum, cum dixit: Quaecumque petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit uobis. Absolutissima haec est finitio, quod qui aliquid in Christi nomine postulat, indubitanter accipit. Qui uero <b>secus</b> rogat, aut non obtinet, aut suum ad exitium et damnationem (quo in eo illud prophetae locum habeat, absorpti sunt in beneplacitis eorum) obtinet.</p>	<p>I think lord Jesus loosened this knot when he said, Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give to you. This is a most unconditional definition, that who asks for anything in the name of Christ indubitably receives [it]. But he who asks <b>for sex/ otherwise</b>, either does not obtain [it], or obtains [it] to his own death and damnation (so therefore one may consider that passage of the prophet: they are absorbed in things well-pleasing to them). [A misquote of Psalm 141.5-6]</p>
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and \33.b\ {1555 p. 312}

<p>Ea itaque tota uidetur esse ratio dilectionis mutuae inter Christianos. Qui <b>secus</b> amant, humano ducuntur affectu, natura plerunque sordido, et instabili.<sup>FN</sup></p>	<p>So that seems to be the whole reason for mutual love among Christians. Those who love <b>sex/ in another way</b> are led by human affection, very often sordid and unstable by nature.</p>
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FN Vera dilectionis mutuae ratio. (The true reason for mutual delight.)

**3.** A major theme of John's epistle is **the vileness of this world**, a theme which Folengo addresses in various ways.

Sometimes with a light touch:

*Sancti viri hunc mundum eo mirantur modo, quo mimos solent scaenicos.* (Holy men admire the world in that way, in which they usually [admire] theatrical farces.) \76.a\ {p. 385} FN 285.

Sometimes with solicitude: \29.b\ {1555 p. 305}

<p>Dei enim infensi cum sint, atque ultro ad pietatem ferrei, quid succi spiritus a tam duris mentibus prodire posse existimas? Proinde quicquid agunt, ferum est, durum, immite, uarium, exitiale. Quod si quid tamen lenius datur cernere, id totum lascium est, effoeminatum, languidum, ac mundo deditum.</p>	<p>Since [mindless people] are hostile to God and wantonly iron-like toward piety, what breath of sap/ liquor do you think is able to come forth from minds so hard? In like manner, whatever they do is fierce, frightful, rough, fickle, destructive. Because still if one is permitted to discern anything gentler, he is wholly lascivious, effeminate, languid and devoted to the world.</p>
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Sometimes with bitterness: \43.a\ {1555 p. 328}

<p><b>2.15 Nolite diligere mundum, neque ea quae in mundo sunt. Si quis diligit mundum, non est charitas Patris in eo.</b></p>	<p><b>2.15. Refuse to love the world, and those things which are in the world. If anyone loves the world, there is no love of the Father in him.</b></p>
<p>Oro, nunquid eget glossis absolutissimum istuc axioma? Si quis diligit mundum, non est charitas Patris in eo. Quemadmodum enim a Patre, uti ab oceano quodam gratiarum immenso, uirtutum riuuli dimanant: ita a mundo intemperanter amato, tanquam a spurcissima ebulliunt cloaca uitiorum agmina. Non hic mundum appellat pulcherrimam hanc faciem uniuersi, cu-</p>	<p>I pray [you], can that extremely complete axiom need glosses? If someone loves the world,* there is no love of the Father in him. For rivulets of virtues flow from the father, just as from some immense ocean of graces; so from the world immoderately beloved, streams of vices bubble up as though from an extremely filthy sewer. Here he does not call the world this most beautiful appearance of the universe,</p>
<p>{1555 p. 329}</p>	<p>{1555 p. 329}</p>
<p>-ius opifex est Deus: sed foedas rerum inanium cupiditates, luxumque illum contaminatissimum, ac libidinem: qua qui exuberant, felices mundi possessores, beatique censi solent.<sup>FN</sup></p>	<p>whose artifex is God, but rather, foul desires of inane things, and that extremely polluted debauchery and libido, in which those who flourish/ gush – lucky possessors of the world – and are typically thought to be happy.</p>

<sup>FN</sup> Quid mundi nomine intelligat Ioannes. (What John understands by the term world.)  
[Index entry repeated below, \44.a\ p. 330, FN 197.]

\*mundus (world) is often used for the nether regions of the trunk of the human body.

Sometimes with bitter resignation: After a long passage on God, eternal life and Christ (pp. 527-30), Folengo sums up his argument in clear, simple, I think bitter language.

\160.a\ {1555 p. 530}

<p>Ipse sane uia est solus, per quam tuto itur ad uitam, cuius autor ipse est, ac summa: imo absque illo nulla esset uita. Is unus itaque adorandus, unus quaerendus, unus amandus: quia sine illo non ulla potest esse uia, nisi obliqua: nulla uita, nisi misera: nullus amor, nisi foedus et exitialis nullum bonum, nisi fictum. Ergo cum talis sit noster dominus ac Pater,</p>	<p>He [Christ] alone is the way by which one safely goes to life, whose author and subject matter is himself: yes, without him life would be nothing. He alone is to be adored, he alone to be pursued, he alone to be loved: since without him not any path if not oblique could there be, no life if not wretched, no love if not shameful and deadly, no good if not fictitious. Therefore, when our lord and father is such,</p>
<p><b>5.21. Filioli custodite uos a simulacris.</b></p>	<p><b>5.21. Children, guard yourselves from images.</b></p>

## VI. Word Lists

Italian writers who drew on the erotic lexicon frequently used an overabundance of superlatives (if there is such a thing). In a casual but thorough search I found nearly 200 superlatives in the *Commentaries on the First Epistle of John*, and see *Gli Asolani* by Pietro Bembo for an earlier display of *superlativi* used to further erotic discourse.

### **GB Folengo John Superlatives Oct 2020.pdf**

And here is a more casual and less thorough list of about 100 adverbs and other transition words: **GB Folengo John Adverbs etc.pdf**

Both lists are now incorporated in the 11,800 entries of the **GB Folengo Glossary**:  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PfxDC6FtQwPz67FoJWXoYrDgwt9XyJPDEUqWUNOoAdo/edit?usp=sharing>

Other lists which could be helpful for decoding these texts may be found at my site,  
<https://verbalmask.hcommons.org/>

## VII. Censorship:

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century surprisingly effective censorship of Folengo's work is the result of stonewalling, a refusal to engage in communication with or about the texts and their author. In his own day, GB Folengo was rebuked by a contemporary, Dionisio Faucher, see a brief presentation of Faucher's Latin poems chiding Folengo:

### **D Faucher and GB Folengo June 14 2018.pdf**

Official censorship began in the 1550s as Folengo's works made appearances on many an Index of Forbidden Books, where he was in good company along with Dante, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, Bembo, Ariosto and his own brother, Teofilo Folengo. Numerous lists of forbidden books were drawn up by cities and countries and the Vatican. Many sources for these lists are available, and yet it is difficult to get a clear picture both of the scope of the censorship and the actual effect of it. My notes show vigilance against Folengo's biblical commentaries did not let up, as all three works of "biblical commentary" were repeatedly prohibited:

*In Psalmos commentaria*: Portugal, 1561, 1581.

*In primam Ioannis Epistolam commentaria*: Parma, 1580.

*In canonicas Epistolas Iacobi, Petri, ac Ioannis primam, commentarii*: Portugal, 1561, 1581. Spain, 1583. Rome, 1596.

*from Thesaurus de la littérature interdite au XVIe siècle: auteurs, ouvrages, éditions avec addenda et corrigenda* by J M De Bujanda, René Davignon, Ela Stanek, Marcella Richter, (Montréal, Librairie Droz, 1996)

As time passed, readers no longer grasped the irreverent aspect of Folengo's works: Magnoald Ziegelbauer (1689-1750), in his literary history of the Benedictine Order,

treats Folengo's work as though it were straight biblical commentary, *Historia rei literariae ordinis S. Benedicti* (Augsburg, Martin Veith, 1754) vol. 4, p. 34 et passim. As stated above, the most effective censorship involves a refusal to engage with authors and their works.

### VIII. Questions and Answers

1. Why? Why would a Catholic monk mock holy scripture?

It is not difficult to understand why an individual would rebel against a society in which his education, his livelihood, his options for forming close relationships, for producing offspring, essentially all aspects of life in this world and others were controlled by religious institutions. Plus, I think Folengo had a great talent for mockery and sophisticated linguistic entertainment, it was his schtick.

2. Where can I find additional scholarship on these texts?

In the future. Today one sees calls for papers on topics such as the Church and Hypocrisy, Fruitful Interdisciplinary Collaborations, Underrepresentation, etc. so surely there will be articles forthcoming on GB Folengo's parodies.

3. The Church was really powerful, and by the 16<sup>th</sup> century dominated Western civilization – how could Folengo hope to find readers?

Yes, the Church was very powerful especially on the Italian peninsula. And yet an erotic code in literature had been going on for much longer than the Church, so although Folengo likely saw that Christianity would continue to dominate Europe and the newly colonized Americas, he might have hoped that transgressive humor would persist in making his parodies enjoyable as long as Latin and the erotic code were understood.

4. Were there other parodies of the bible and biblical commentaries?

Yes, but they were generally short and rather basic compared with these tomes of Folengo's. Try a search for sacred parody.

5. Is his work blasphemous?

Well, yes. But if you mean is his work criminally blasphemous, the answer would depend entirely on current laws which vary from place to place, year to year. Wikipedia, "Blasphemy law" provides some basic information. Regardless of the current trend away from criminalization, Folengo's works have yet to be properly studied: this lack of attention is most likely due to a perception that his works are blasphemous.