

# Illiterates and Church Censorship in Late Renaissance Italy

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The plan to control ideas and book circulation that the papacy enacted in the second half of the sixteenth century in close collaboration with the Congregation of the Inquisition and the Congregation of the Index radically changed the landscape of Italian culture. In the ten years following the 1998 opening of the Holy Office Archives in Rome, historiography concentrated mostly on the institutional aspects of Roman censorship, highlighting the conflicts, resistance, and jurisdictional struggles behind the main decisions taken by the two Congregations of cardinals (Inquisition and Index) in charge of censoring books. If it's true, on the one hand, that a lot of work must still be done to evaluate the mid and long-term effects that censorial action had on the development of Italian culture, it's also true, on the other hand, that some aspects have already been clarified.

The most recent studies have shown that, in cultural terms, censorship inflicted its most severe damage on the ignorant and illiterate, on those social categories that were unfamiliar with Latin and did not habitually frequent the courts or academies. Because the system of licensing the reading of books had to allow for the professional needs of cultured readers (medicians, scientists, lawyers), often giving way to political and even curial pressure;<sup>1</sup> moreover, thanks to a well-developed network which cleverly eluded customs control, thus allowing books to travel relatively easily, Italian intellectuals were able to maintain close contact with the European *respublica litterarum*.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the cultured classes

1. On the topic of this essay see the article by Prospero (1981) on «prudenza dei letterati» and «controllo dei semplici». On reading licences, though with different interpretations, see U.

Baldini (2001) and Frajese (1999), followed without significant changes by Id. (2000).

2. Many of the consultores and censors at the service of Rome were men of letter, lay people

as well as the political and ecclesiastical elites of the Italian states suffered to a very limited extent the effects of the privations imposed by Rome. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moreover, many of those whom the Curia employed as consultants or censors were men of letters, and connected with the most open-minded cultural *milieux* in Europe. The climate of cultural oppression influenced the general outlook of contemporary intellectuals, their moral fibre, as it were, but did not condition their actual access to important areas of Italian and European culture.<sup>3</sup>

What took place in the life of the so called «semplici et indotti» was something much more radical than a mere change in their cultural outlook and mental attitude. The banning of those religious and literary texts which for centuries had nourished their faith in God may be seen as an existential trauma.<sup>4</sup> ‘Zurai non legger mai più’, were the words of the cobbler Domenico di Spilimbergo to his inquisitors in 1574: twenty-five years had passed since the beginning of censorship and he had been deprived of the only three books he possessed: the *Orlando Furioso*, the *Decameron* and a copy of the New Testament.<sup>5</sup>

Others, without reaching the dramatic peaks of the cobbler from Spilimbergo, threw themselves on their judges’ clemency, declaring they had «not read the book often, and never [...] all of it» or else «scarcely or not at all»; others declared they could not read.<sup>6</sup>

These ‘unlettered’ defendants, more or less conscious they were, matched the more intimate desires of their persecutors, and their defensive strategy —if that was the case— was destined in most cases to be rewarded. For in the mentality and practice of the Inquisition, a book’s potential danger increased in proportion to the reader’s level of education. To present oneself as ignorant or even illiterate was the best way to escape unharmed from the claws of the Inquisitors. As it would soon be possible to read in the pages of one of the best known Inquisition investigations of the time, the judge had first and foremost to calculate a book’s possible danger in relation to the person before him: in the case of readers who were well informed and intelligent, the judges were expected to act harshly without any reduction of the penalty; with readers who were «ignorant and simple», lacking in guile and ready to collaborate with the judges, it was possi-

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or ecclesiastics, linked to the most open-wide European cultural circles; see Prosperi (1984, 1999, 2003a: 263-269) and especially Id. (2003b: 345-384). See also the considerations made by Rotondò (1973), to be referred though to the second half of xviii century and to the first half of xviii century, but also, for a good synthesis on xviii century, Braida (2005).

3. It is no coincidence that *Dissimulazione onesta* by Torquato Accetto (1641) is considered

a text-symbol of xviii century Italian intellectual life; cf. Accetto (1997).

4. For the quotation about the «scandolo che pigliano i semplici e buoni», see the letter by Antonio Benivieni, vicar of the Archbishop of Florence, to reverend Lionardo, florentine canon in Roma, quoted by Fragnito (1997: 139).

5. Seidel Menchi (1987: 289).

6. Cf. for example the cases recalled by Von Tippelskirch (2003).

ble to demand only an abjuration *de levi* «after brief use of the rope or torsion»; with accused who were «totally ignorant», «idiots» who «could neither read nor understand what they read, it was permissible to proceed mildly and even forgo the abjuration».<sup>7</sup> A population that was ignorant and devoid of intellectual independence was more pliant toward cultural and political projects and was therefore less cause for fear; the infantilization of the believers, i.e. treating the people like children, soon became a concrete objective of the Counter-Reformation church. No testimony explains the *ratio* of this aspect of Counter-Reformation ideology better than the satisfaction with which the Bishop of Chioggia, Massimiliano Beniamino, declared to his superiors that his people were devoted «by the grace of God [Dio gratia] to activities other than reading books».<sup>8</sup>

How did the cultural and religious project behind this kind of statement translate into editorial policy? And what effects did that sort of ideology produce upon the Roman politics of book circulation? The Congregation of the Index had some years before expressed a wish that seemed to move in the same direction as the invocations by that bishop from the beginning of Seventeenth century. The wish «that for many years nothing be printed», formulated around the 1570s by an obscure officer worried about the troubles caused by an ever increasing number of books to be examined,<sup>9</sup> transformed with the flow of time into an explicit invitation, by one of its most authoritative members, Agostino Valier, to «publish books with great caution».<sup>10</sup>

Rome in fact nurtured little desire to close down printing houses and workshops nor was it interested in cutting down the book market. The Index's provocative wish and Valier's harsh invective were merely a rough ideological disguise concealing what was in fact a declaration of the Curia's exclusive right to lord it over the printing trade and all its products.<sup>11</sup> It was the Church's task to decide which books were suitable and for whom, in the deep-rooted belief that there was a book appropriate for every social level and that the assessment of book's readability depended on the reader's moral qualities but even more importantly on his level of education.

Through those prescriptions regarding the possession and reading of books that would have been codified in 17th-century inquisitorial manuals like the one quoted above, a notional hierarchy of the most dangerous readers (and pos-

7. *Prattica per proceder nelle cause del Santo Officio*, in Mirto (1986: 120); cf. also Frajese (2006: 338–339). On *Prattica* and its author, cardinal Desiderio Scaglia, cf. Tedeschi (2000: 136–142), as well as the entry by Tedeschi himself in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione* (2010).

8. Fragnito (2005: 24).

9. Letter of an officer from the office of the Master of Sacred Palace, 1575, quoted in Ro-

tondò (1963: 157).

10. The reference was of course to *De cautione adhibenda in edendis libris*, the title of a short work that he had dedicated to Cardinal Antoniano, destined however to remain unpublished until the early Eighteenth century. On this text and its author, in addition to Rotondò (1973: 1439), see now Cipriani (2009).

11. Rotondò (1973: 1440).

sessors) had taken shape in the second half of 16th century. The highest level on this imaginary scale was occupied, as might be expected, by learned heretics: these were and would continue to be the ecclesiastic authorities' number one enemy. At the opposite end of this scale were learned (or literate) persons of sound Catholic faith: these, especially if 'recommended' by some Cardinal or other high ecclesiastic authority who could vouch for their moral rectitude, were the ideal recipients of the reading licenses that Rome granted in large numbers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> The halfway steps on this scale were filled by the illiterate. The 'simple and uneducated', the smart and intelligent who were capable of making rapid deductions like the miller Domenico Scandella, a.k.a. Menocchio and made famous thanks to Carlo Ginzburg's research, were the sorts of reader who came nearest to presenting the same degree of danger as learned, well-informed heretics. Illiterate persons who were not smart were basically harmless—they were in fact the least to be feared, occupying a position near the lowest point on the scale, that of learned persons of sound Catholic faith and morality.

If we shift our attention from the potential danger presented by the readers to the books themselves—thus translating this hypothetical scale of dangers connected with different books' users (or consumers) into more concrete considerations regarding the quality of the text itself and the perception of its intrinsic danger—there is no doubt whatsoever that the vernacular was more greatly feared by the Inquisitors and censors in Rome than the language of the learned, i.e. Latin. Books in the vernacular were dangerous because their impact was almost comparable to that of an image «which after one single look people are able to understand», to quote the words of Gabriele Paleotti, one of the intellectually liveliest members of the Congregation in charge of book censorship.<sup>13</sup> The perception of danger was directly proportional to the consciousness of the power of a given means of communication. It was precisely because they realized the potential power of books that the ecclesiastic hierarchies were no way inclined to forgo such an effective instrument.

The most erudite Church-men at the end of the xvth Century addressed their energies towards the composition of bibliographical instruments capable of guiding the minds of the most learned among faithful. The Jesuit Antonio Possevino published a voluminous selection of permitted readings taken from the books recommended for the education of the prince and the Christian nobleman: the *Bibliotheca selecta*.<sup>14</sup> That this work by Possevino was not the result of a personal initiative but was rather part of an agreed ampler cultural strategy was attested also by the fact that the Congregation of the Index itself did not

12. In addition to the bibliography quoted above at note 1, see also Brevaglieri (2008).

13. Paleotti (2002: 74).

14. On *Bibliotheca selecta* by Possevino see Biondi (1981a).

limit its activity to condemning or expurgating books but also ordered others to be written, replacing those that were to be eliminated. It is very likely, for example, as has recently been suggested, that Botero was commissioned to write the *Ragion di Stato* from within the Congregation of Cardinals, of which he had been appointed Consultor two years before the publication in Venice of his masterpiece (1589). So it was that Machiavelli was eliminated and Bodin's *République* was expurgated, and at the same time, to fill the gap left by these two great thinkers, a work was commissioned that could offer new coordinates for reflection on the relationship between politics and religion.<sup>15</sup>

While the *Bibliotheca selecta* (1593) by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino is an invaluable guide for finding one's way around the shelves of the library of the perfect Catholic aristocrat,<sup>16</sup> it is less easy to find an equally reliable guide to imagine the minimum library of the perfectly illiterate. Simple persons were not expected to take an interest in learned readings like those recommended by Possevino. The invitation by the Jesuit himself «to read that which directs people's customary behavior towards virtue rather than that which sharpens the intellect for subtleties», echoed the exhortation of another late sixteenth-century Cardinal, Silvio Antoniano, who believed that «no good Christian should be drawn by curiosity to seek out the many things that are beyond his understanding but rather simply believe whatever our Holy Mother Church presents before us.»<sup>17</sup> All they had to learn was soon synthesized in two short works that Roberto Bellarmino was commissioned to write by Clement VIII at the end of the sixteenth century: the *Dottrina cristiana breve perchè si possa imparare a mente* (1597) and the *Dichiaratione più copiosa della dottrina christiana* (1598). The *Dottrina* and the *Dichiaratione* were the only texts authorized in the schools of Christian doctrine of the State of the Church. Extreme simplification of the most important doctrinal concepts, learning by rote of the rudiments of faith, and the encouragement of moralization in individual and collective behavior, in the practice of the sacraments, and in the observation of the Commandments: these were the ingredients of the two texts that eliminated from the horizon of the simple man of faith all theological complications and all temptations to internalize faith.<sup>18</sup>

However, the point was that since the faithful had been accustomed for decades and even centuries to enrich their inner faith with devotional texts in

15. Cr. A. E. Baldini (2000: 85-86).

16. The original title of the work was *Bibliotheca Principum ac Nobilium*, but the work was later expanded to include «tum qui sese dant disciplinis interioribus, tum christiani principes ac milites vel alii». In other words it was a book for the Catholic aristocracy, an ideal library for the training of the ideal disciple, the nobleman, who throughout his life was expect-

ed to combine the exercise of power with service for the Church, cf. Biondi (1981b: 297).

17. The first quotation is from the *Bibliotheca selecta*'s chapter dedicated to *Coltura de' gli ingegni*, Possevino (1990: 96). The second one is taken from *Tre libri dell'educatione christiana dei figliuoli* dell'Antoniano, on which cf. Fragnito (2005: 12).

18. Fragnito (2005: 309).

the vernacular, brightening the passing moments of their everyday lives with fly sheets, i.e. little stories of various sort sold in the public square and streets by itinerant mountebanks, they could not all of a sudden be left without anything. Just as a learned Catholic nobleman, when deprived of Machiavelli's writings, needed his substitute (Botero), so also the simplest of men continued to need their daily food. At the time the men of the Counter-Reformation understood very well this mechanism, which was primarily psychological rather than religious, and it can be said that the success of their cultural proposal was in part a result of this felicitous intuition.

What was taken away and what did the illiterate faithful receive in its stead, i.e. those could scarcely read the vernacular or who in many cases were obliged to seek the assistance of someone who was more familiar with the written language?

It is no easy task to rip the veil that shrouds the vast quantity of publications generally labeled as «popular literature» or to cast light on the dynamics of censorship that caused first of all the elimination of its literary expression and then its substitution, performed by the guardians of orthodoxy. The indices and lists of prohibited books were full of generic affirmations, as also those that prohibited the circulation of «comedies, tragedies, invented tales in any language containing any matter deemed to be shocking, obscene, vulgar, seditious, schismatic, immoral...»<sup>19</sup> Apart from these generic prohibitions, there are very few documentary indications allowing us to identify exactly the texts that the censors had in mind when they pronounced interdictions of this sort.

However, one trace —left absentmindedly on a sheet of one of the volumes of papers collecting together the preparatory works of the Sistine Index (1590) casts some light on this *mare magnum*, which otherwise would have remained concealed by the all-devouring categories of censorship established by the Roman Indices. The titles of two minor works written in a form of verse known as *quarta rima*, *Speranza de' poveri* by the ballad singer Vincenzo Citaredo of Urbino and *Barceleta de Messer Faustino da Terdocio, in laude de l'oro e de l'argento*, were hastily jotted down by one of the Roman censors in the late sixteenth century: these were texts of little value dedicated to the theme of poverty, songs that laid bare the illusive nature of the fictitious work of religious and spiritual mediation which ecclesiastic culture —or at least much of it— had constructed around the subject of famine, denouncing all the political and economic responsibilities behind the dramatic problem of hunger that afflicted sixteenth-century society: «It is not God: it is the people / who hour by hour / cause famine,» —that was the opening line of Citaredo's *Speranza de' poveri*.<sup>20</sup>

19. The reference is to rule XXI of the Sistine Index. Bujanda (1994: 799).

20. I would refer to my article (2002).

The popularity of such texts was clearly a threat to the stability of the political and economic order, which was based on the absolutely unchanging quality of people's station in society —a factor the Church considered essential for the success of its own particular religious and cultural designs. This constituted a dangerous break in the rhythm of the ecclesiastic litany that now somewhat wearily recited the refrain that famine was sent by God to punish men's sins and that individual penitence was the most effective remedy. The church hierarchies, confronted with this threat, first eliminated harmful minor works and then, almost at the same time, replaced the *quartine* with other verses which were identical as regards literary form and linguistic codes but which from the content point of view conformed to the dominant cultural models.

The objective was to replace the concept of the poor as people who were discontented and embittered with that of the poor as people who were happy and grateful. The most important instrument in this operation was one of the best known ballad singers of the time, Giulio Cesare Croce, who had himself been the protagonist of a significant genetic mutation: in 1590 he was still singing the woeful *Lamento de' poveretti* (*The Moan of the Poor*), while a few years later he had not hesitated to celebrate *La Grandezza della povertà* (1620; *The Greatness of the Poverty*): «Molto starebbe mal la povertade / se non si ritrovasse la ricchezza, / E viverebbe in gran necessitade / il ricco, se non fusse la bassezza,» («Ill would poverty fare / Were there no riches, / And in great need would the rich man live / Were there no poverty»), this singer from Bologna would sing from the song sheet with the score of the work, thereby accepting the Counter-Reformation social and cultural model. Acceptance of one's condition and contentment with one's social status meant accepting the order God had imposed upon the things that make up this world. This was the message Rome wished to transmit to every corner of its jurisdiction and even beyond.<sup>21</sup>

In order to affirm the ineluctability of this message and impress it indelibly in the hearts (and heads) of the faithful, the church hierarchies were willing to proffer it in the most attractive manner, even going so far as to serve it up in the frankest of language that was worthy of Boccaccio at his best. To form a good idea of this, one only has to read a few pages of an Aesopian fable published in Milan in 1610 by a close collaborator of Federico Borromeo. Barely concealed by a code name (i.e. Latrobio, meaning «I live in hiding») which soon afterwards, in the second edition of the text, he abandoned, the nobleman and priest Giovan Pietro Giussani, author of the more celebrated biography of St Carlo Borromeo, demonstrated in his *Brancaleone* that the Counter-Reformation did not hesitate to use ever more intriguing cultural and linguistic expedients that were all the more easily appreciated even by the simplest of readers, if by so doing it could achieve its aim of popularizing whatever reading matter it deemed

21. Ivi.

most suitable —even if that meant sinking to levels of vulgarity and profanation that would otherwise have been intolerable and thus renouncing the opportunity of providing a concrete example of the rules of censorship drawn up at Trent.<sup>22</sup> If one considers the aggressiveness of the crystal-clear declarations of war pronounced by the ranks of Tridentines against any form of mixing of the sacred and the profane, it seems to be an act of total surrender by the hierarchy of the Church.<sup>23</sup>

There was surrender (or renunciation) also on the front of the fight against superstition in acts of devotion. It is now possible to consult in the archives of the Holy Office in Rome a series of lists of books that were banned, condemned, confiscated, or deposited in the archives of the convents where the Inquisitors General and their Vicars habitually lodged. These lists enable us to glance through the titles of books owned before the Clementine Index came into force and handed over to the Inquisition authorities by booksellers or members of the laity, or by leading figures in the secular clergy. In other words these documents enable us to conduct a preliminary survey of the actual impact of the Clementine Index, with particular reference to the broad and somewhat vague indications in the *Observatio circa quartam regulam*, which generically banned any writing in the vernacular containing material derived from the Scriptures. Among the most significant items on these lists there are some of the most widely popular devotional texts in the vernacular, such as *Il Giardino d'orazioni*, *Il Monte delle orazioni volgari*, or *Lo specchio di orazioni*. These were reprinted dozens of times during the sixteenth century alone, and thanks to them hundreds and even thousands of «simpletons and idiots» were able to come closer to the practice of inward oration and gain confidence with the concept of mental prayer, avoiding the intellectual sophistry and mystic impulses of certain spiritual literature intended for the better educated but at the same time escaping the dangers of the mechanical «slurring» of paternosters and the superstitious repetition of outward actions devoid of any intimate religious belief. The strategy of the censors in Rome was to reduce the time and space allowed for individual acts of piety, replacing them with collective devotional proposals and practices that were more easily kept under control by the watchmen of orthodoxy.<sup>24</sup>

What writings took the place of works in the category of *Il Giardino di orazione* and *Gli Specchi di orazione*? What texts were most widely published in the first decades of the seventeenth century? What form of devotion was proposed by the ecclesiastic hierarchies? A census of the devotional literature that survived the wave of censorship in the sixteenth century still remains to be conducted, while works that were popular among the uneducated classes in the

22. Latrobio (1998). On this work see Caravale (2002); for a different interpretation cf. Zardin (2008).

23. Caravale (2002).

24. On this subject I would refer to Caravale (2011).



seventeenth century, such as Bartolomeo Dionigi da Fano's *Compendio istorico del Vecchio e Nuovo Testamento* and Ludovico Pittorio's *Homilario*, still await careful examination. However, some indications regarding literary trends in the first decades of the seventeenth century can already be collected together. Two examples in particular give us the measure of what happened in the crucial decades of the Counter-Reformation. The devotional publishing market in those first years of the seventeenth century witnessed the success of texts such as Arcangelo Caraccia's *Rosario della Beata Vergine* and the Jesuit Francesco Albertini's *Trattato dell'angelo custode*, texts that were not specifically aimed at simpletons and idiots yet reflect the cultural atmosphere of the day.

Printed for the first time in 1614 and republished in 1627, Caraccia's *Rosario* is a demonstration of how popular the Marian rosary now was among ordinary working people. However, it also testifies to the success of a proposed form of devotion imbued with a miracle-based, superstitious culture that gave the devout reader no real escape from the flat alternative of choosing between the miracle-working virtues of the promises made to the faithful followers of the Company of the Most Holy Rosary, on the one hand, and the cruelest of punishments menacing anyone that opposed it, on the other: a proposal perfectly tailored to the sectarian mentality and exclusivist needs of people who used ritual and Catholic practices for magical and superstitious purposes.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Jesuit Albertini's *Trattato dell'angelo custode* (1612) presented its readers with a guardian angel that «dispensed benefits in the body and in temporal goods», promising comfort and redemptory solutions for all in a language that seemed to draw its inspiration from the many formulas of «incantationes ad amorem» then in circulation.<sup>26</sup>

These publications were symptomatic of a trend in religious teaching that aimed above all at the conquest of the faithful by proposing and offering an image of the sacred that was intended to satisfy the most instinctual and concrete everyday needs of the faithful, rather than respect the strict canons of theological correctness and doctrinal purity that it had imposed on itself at Trent.

While the faithful were being deprived of intimistic devotional texts that were very popular with the less well-educated social classes, such as *Il Giardino d'orazione*, *Lo Specchio di orazione* (by the Capuchin friar Bernardino Balvano, published in 1553 and reprinted in Messina 14 times during the second half of the century), and *Il Monte delle orazioni volgari*,<sup>27</sup> in the early decades of the seventeenth century the publishing market successfully filled the booksellers' shelves with devotional texts by ecclesiastical authors which dealt with the

25. Caraccia (1627). First edition was published in 1614. On this work, in addition to Caravale (2011), see Rosa (1976), in particular pp. 228-231.

26. Albertini (1612). On the subject of «incantationes ad amorem» see the researches made by Fantini, in particular (1996).

27. On these works cf. Caravale (2011: 216-223).

«speediness of the guardian angel» or contained delirious pseudo-scientific calculations of the number of the angels. Such works, which were authoritatively endorsed by the censorship authorities in Rome, repeated the same superstitions which, only a few decades, it had been decided to stamp out.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, a clear break had developed—and one that would have been hard to repair—between the rules and regulations designed at Trent and the reality of what Counter-Reformation devotion could offer, i.e. between, on the one hand, the series of repressive censorship decrees that from the 1560s onward had regularly marked out the policy of opposition to any superstitious or pagan infiltrations that corrupted the texts and rites of Catholicism and, on the other, a set of cultural and religious practices that responded to needs of a very different order.

This break between norm and practice was very clearly described by a Venetian Servite, Paolo Sarpi, whose thinking reflected the ideas expressed by Edwin Sandys. This Englishman, whose *Relazione* was printed in 1607 soon after his return from a long journey through Italy, commented in the following terms on the incurable rift that he saw between Catholic doctrine as taught in the schools and the religious practices of the faithful, between theory and practice: «This religion does not seem today so corrupt in their doctrine and in their schools ... as it appears to be corrupt in the practice and exercise that here they make of it.»<sup>28</sup> Sarpi took over where the Englishman left off, republishing the text in Italian (in 1625) and enriching it with new barbed comments. From the subject of prayer onward, up to the delicate matter of indulgences, the verdict was always the same: doctrinal rigor and inwardness in theory, superficiality and outwardness in practice.<sup>29</sup>

Certain statements of intent made at Trent, in particular the need to separate the sacred and the profane and the centrality of the fight against superstition, were in the end sacrificed on the altar of the fight against heresy. The Protestant peril having been eliminated, and there no longer being any urgency to remove the abuses that had fueled Protestant polemics, the same superstitious elements that in the years after the Council of Trent attempts had been made to eliminate were not only tolerated by the church hierarchy but cases in some even encouraged and exploited in order to achieve even greater success in the conquest of the masses.

27. In this regard very significant is the book published by the Master of Sacred Palace Nicolò Riccardi, *La prima parte dei ragionamenti* (1626).

28. Sandys (1605); I quote from the modern Italian edition: Sarpi (1978: 54).

29. For example: «In the schools it is conceded that prayer pleases God, only if the heart is all attentive: and *in practice* prayers, both pub-

lic and private, are recited with the voice alone and people are convinced that in this way they have satisfied their debt» («Nelle scuole non si concede che l'orazione sia grata a Dio, se non con l'attenzione del cuore; et in pratica le orazioni così pubbliche, come private, si recitano con la voce solamente, e le persone si tengono così d'aver soddisfatto al lor debito»); Sarpi (1978: 56).

The gradual easing of the censor's hostility towards the most widely diverse forms of devotional superstition —as a study of the papers of the Index and the Inquisition plainly show—<sup>30</sup> was accompanied by the deliberate renunciation by the Roman authorities of any attempt to overcome the increasingly more evident hiatus between doctrine and actual religious practice.

It was a renunciation that seems to be a distant precursor of the profound break between the official expression of religion and the conscience of the faithful that today clearly characterizes the relationship between the Church and the lay world.

**30.** In addition to Caravale (2011), see now also Fragnito (2005: 232-259).

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