

Forbidding Prayer in Italy and Spain: Censorship and Devotional Literature in the Sixteenth Century. Current Issues and Future Research¹

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In the early 1490s, Girolamo Savonarola devoted two spiritual works to the theme of prayer. These were the *Sermone dell'orazione* and the *Trattato in difesa e commendazione dell'orazione mentale* (1492), which were followed two years later by the *Esposizione sul Pater noster* (1494).² Savonarola's criticism targeted the rituals and the devotional practices of the laity in their following of the precepts of Rome. In these writings, Savonarola —anticipating by two decades the invective of Querini and Giustiniani's *Libellum ad Leonem decimum*³— lashed out against the mechanical recital of the Lord's Prayer and the psalms, criticising voiced prayer as an end in itself, the symbol of sterile worship. In his view, a return to the inspiring and healthy principles of the early Roman Catholic Church was needed, since «God seeks from us interior knowledge without so much ceremony».⁴ External ceremony stimulated devotion, and constituted an intermediate passage in man's search for God. Voiced prayer should be nothing more than a prelude to mental prayer. Its prime purpose was to create the conditions to enable man to lift «his mind to God so that divine love and holy contemplation are ignited».⁵ The moment the ascendant state is attained, words become not only useless but a hindrance to communication with God.

1. Translated by Margaret Greenhorn and Julian Weiss.

2. *Il Trattato o vero sermone dell'orazione*, Florence, Niscomini, 20 October 1492, can be read in Savonarola (1976: 189-224). The second treatise is in Savonarola (1976: 157-185). For the *l'Esposizione sopra il Pater noster*, Florence, 1494, also cf. Schutte (1983: 338-339).

3. Mittarelli and Costadoni (1773: 612-719). Cf. also the recent Italian translation: *Lettera al Papa* (Letter to the Pope) (1995).

4. «Dio cerca da noi el culto interiore senza tante cerimonie»; Savonarola (1976: 176).

5. «Acciochè l'uomo levi la mente a Dio e s'accenda del divino amore e delle sante contemplazioni»; Savonarola (1976: 171).

Although severely critical, Savonarola's works were not included in the 1559 *Index librorum prohibitorum*. His arguments did not, apparently, deviate from the explicit assertion of the instrumentally necessary role of external acts. For this reason, they were never expressly considered by the *Index* in Rome. This was not what happened in Spain, where the Spanish translation of the last of the three, the *Exposición sobre el Pater noster* was instead added to the *Index* of 1559 and that of 1583.⁶ Yet, the wave of comments about the *Lord's Prayer*, which Savonarola had initiated, generated considerable attention, especially amongst the compilers of the *Indexes* of the mid 1500's. The Roman *Index* of 1559 and the subsequent Tridentine *Index*, alongside the many *Sermones* (Sermons) and *Prediche* (Preaching) by the friar from Ferrara (condemned in the former with a definitive prohibition and in the Tridentine *Index* with a *quamdiu expurgantur*),⁷ explicitly named the *Dominicae precationis explicatio, impressa Lugduni, per Gryphium, et alios*, which had also been included in the Spanish *Indexes*,⁸ as well as an anonymous *Esposizione dell'oratione del Signore in volgare, composta per un padre non nominato*.⁹ *The Dominicae precationis explicatio* was the well-known Lyon edition printed perhaps as early as 1530 and then reprinted at least fifteen times by 1546. Besides Savonarola's comments on the psalms, it also included the *Dominicae precationis explanatio* and the *Alia dominicae orationis expositio*.¹⁰ For a long time the first was attributed to Savonarola (but, as Mario Ferrara demonstrated, challenging the attribution of Schnitzer, they are not by him),¹¹ while the second's generality of diction prevents any certain identification.¹²

What do these interdictions tell us? What censorial policy was concealed behind these condemnations? In the early decades of the 1500s, in Italy the encouragement to spiritual and mental prayer and the insistence on the *Pater noster* as the only productive prayer were thought to be symptoms of a dangerous doctrinal message. At any rate, this is how they were perceived by the Inquisitors. Conversely, it is easy to understand how the many *Esposizioni sopra il Pater* published in those years encouraged mental and Sunday prayer in order to disseminate, more or less covertly, positions that were hostile to the Roman Catholic Church.¹³

Though obvious, it is still worth remembering that the breaking point was embodied by Luther, and especially, by the diffusion over the course of twenty years throughout the Italian peninsula of the vernacular version of Luther's

6. *Index*, V: 477 and VI: 594.

7. *Index*, VIII: 501-505.

8. *Index*, VIII: 484-85, 638, 660. Cf. also Rozzo (1988: 188-192).

9. For the Pauline and Tridentine *Indexes* cf. *Index*, VIII: 258-259. The work had already appeared in the Venetian *Indexes* of 1549 and 1554 (*Index*, III: 203-204, 271) and was included also in the non-promulgated indexes of

1590 and 1593 (*Index*, IX: 433).

10. Rozzo, (1988: 188).

11. Savonarola, (1976: 417-419).

12. It could be speculated that the inquisitors were referring to the anonymous *Esposizione utilissima sopra il Pater noster* which Adriano Prosperi attributed to the Hebrew scholar Francesco Stancaro of Mantua, cf. Prosperi (1996: 207-208).

13. Caravale (2003).

commentary on the *Lord's Prayer*. While restating many of Savonarola's arguments (for example, the idea of oral prayer as a necessary preliminary to mental prayer), Luther's commentary was now set in a context that was doctrinally heterodox. Any invocation of the Lord's Prayer was, as such, to be found within an interpretation rigidly based on the concept of predestination, and characterised by an emphasis on human misery and the necessity of Divine grace, in accordance with a set pattern, which comprised the invitation to self-denigration followed by the exaltation of divine power.

This is not the place to retrace the developments of the devotional tradition initiated at the end of the fifteenth century by Savonarola. What has to be remembered is that over the span of three decades —after the diffusion of Protestant, mainly Lutheran ideas, in the Italian peninsula— the prayer that had been prescribed and encouraged in the most widely diffused catechistic texts up to the early 1520s, and one that was warmly recommended by the Church hierarchy,¹⁴ had come to symbolise a rampant and menacing Lutheran heresy: «This heresy begins with the Lord's Prayer and ends in the pike and arquebus» wrote Alvise Lippomano to Cardinal Cervini in 1547.¹⁵

Yet the history of Counter-Reformation spirituality and the history of sixteenth-century censorship also tell the tale, in the second half of the century, of a largely successful attempt to reclaim for orthodoxy at least a part of that devotional tradition that had inadvertently been handed over to the Protestant front in the previous decades. I refer in particular to the works and pastoral activities of the Archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, in the Milan of the 1570s. As early as 1559 —significantly the same year as the promulgation of the severest Roman *Index* of the century, which included the most representative commentaries on the Lord's Prayer— the Archbishop of Salerno, Girolamo Seripando had succeeded in devoting an entire cycle of sermons to the *Pater noster* and in so doing he set in motion a process whereby Sunday prayer was reappropriated for Roman orthodoxy.¹⁶ It was, however, through Carlo Borromeo that mental prayer definitively returned to the cradle of orthodoxy. It is true that Borromeo, who was the hero of the Counter-Reformation, is first and foremost the Borromeo who wrote and disseminated in 1572 the *Lettera pastorale ed istituto dell'orazione comune*. The Archbishop of Milan had underscored the communal dimension of a prayer that was «capable of impressing with an extraordinary power» («capace di imprimerle una forza straordinaria».) At any rate, authentically communal prayer did not diminish the value of individual

14. The Bishop of Bugnato, Filippo Sauli, in the *Opus noviter editum pro sacerdotibus curam animarum habentibus* (Milan, 1521) insisted on his curates duty of checking their flock's knowledge of the Lord's Prayer; cf. Prosperi

(1989: 97-98 and 104 note 28).

15. Buschbell (1910: 289-290); *Processo Morone* (Morone Trial), see Firpo and Marcatto (1981-1995: II, 247-248); Prosperi (1996: 216).

16. Abbondanza Blasi (1999).

prayer, which was presented as a valid alternative to the communal form. It is not surprising, moreover, that Borromeo, at the height of his pastoral activity in the first half of the 1570s, while encouraging the confessors of his diocese to get «those who could read and had the means, to buy spiritual and devout books», also recommended fourth and fifth-century texts as well as treatises such as «Gerson, of the Imitation of Christ» and «the works of Fray Luis de Granada».¹⁷ Fray Luis de Granada, author of the *Libro de Oración*, as Marcel Bataillon demonstrated some time ago in an article that is still required reading, owed a great deal to Savonarola's writings on the subject of prayer.¹⁸ The recommendation—that of the Archbishop of Milan to his confessors—can be fully understood only in the light of the close personal relations that Borromeo, through his Jesuit collaborators, had with Fray Luis de Granada, many of whose works are to be found in the Archbishop's private library.¹⁹ However, more importantly, it was testimony to the Counter-Reformation's spiritual response to the problem of mental prayer and spiritual needs, such as the suppression of human will and man's surrender to divine will. A clear sign of this tendency had already been seen a few years earlier when the censor, Giovanni di Dio, had himself written an introduction in 1567 to the Italian translation of the *Pie et devote orationi raccolte da diversi e gravi autori per il R. P. F. Luigi di Granada dell'ordine de' Predicatori*. In this introduction, he warmly praised the work, commending it as a «precious joy» that «deals with things of the mind, and in such a fashion that it is necessary to engage one's entire spirit and affect» («tratta di cose mentali, e di tal conditione ch'intorno a quelle bisogna adoperar tutto lo spirito, e tutto l'affetto»)²⁰ This praise was all the more significant since a few years later, in 1576, the same Giovanni di Dio, on the suggestion of Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto, promoted an index of forbidden books which has recently been discovered in the Archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. This index catalogues all the forbidden books not included in the Pauline *Index* of 1559 or in the Tridentine one of 1564. In it, he added other mystical texts such as the *Dialogo dell'unione dell'anima con Dio* by the Franciscan Bartolomeo Cordoni da Castello, whose theme was the surrender of human will to that of the divine.²¹ So it was a 'yes' for Cordoni, whose *Dialogo dell'unione dell'anima con Dio* was included in the *Index*, and a 'no' for Fray Luis de Granada, whose *Libro de Oración* was praised and recommended to the most devout and faithful followers of the Holy Catholic Church. What was the fine line that separated orthodoxy from mystical heresy, the line the guardians of Catholic orthodoxy were drawing throughout the Italian peninsula in the 1570s and 1580s? From many points of view, this question reiterated the terms of another dilemma the

17. Caravale (2003: 78-81).

18. Bataillon (1936).

19. Huerga (1958); and Robres Lluch (1960).

20. Caravale (2003: 95, note 129).

21. *Index*, X: 825-826; Caravale (2003: 94).

Roman inquisitors had faced only a few years previously, regarding the works of the Dominican Battista da Crema and his favourite scholar, the canon Serafino da Fermo. The works of the former entered the *Index* while those of the latter were saved from the disgrace of condemnation.

In 1552, the Holy Office had issued a formal condemnation of the doctrines of the Dominican Battista da Crema, in perfect accordance with the brief issued more than fifteen years earlier (in 1536) by Paul III against the Milan coventicles that had been inspired by the work of the Dominican.²² The goal of the inquisitors, expressed a few years later when the *opera omnia* of the Dominican (1559)²³ was included in the *Index*, was to consolidate absolute certitude of faith and impeccability, which, according to Battista da Crema, lay in the perfection achieved by those devout souls who succeeded in abnegating their will to become one with the divine.

On the other hand, when they examined the *corpus* of works by his pupil, Serafino da Fermo, the Roman inquisitors chose to include in the *Index* only what they could not ignore without woefully confuting their own work. In other words, the *Apologia* by Battista da Crema, edited by Serafino da Fermo in the early 1540s—for its intrinsic nature, I would say—sealed its fate as it was impossible to distinguish one from the other. For all the other works by Serafino, instead, the silence of the inquisitors can be read as an implicit legitimisation.²⁴

There was, actually, a slight yet significant difference between the mystical discourses of the two authors. In his path of ascendancy to God, Serafino traced four steps—reading, meditation, mental prayer and contemplation—on the ladder that the devout gradually climbed, ascending from the condition of beginner through that of proficient to finally achieve a state of perfection. This final stage, when the soul of man, freed from earthly ties, unites with God and his will rejoins the divine, is the stage of perfect prayer, and at this point Serafino adds a precaution that his Master failed to adopt. While speaking of a state of deification, and while referring to some «betrothal with the numbers of the elect» he chose to take refuge behind an explicit profession of «unknowability». In this way, he avoided insidious statements about the state of impeccability and the total freedom of the perfect, which had provoked the condemnation of Battista da Crema.²⁵

The impression obtained from a parallel study of the respective interventions of the censors is that the more closely mystical prayer was associated with heretical Lutheran doctrine the sooner it was condemned. What determined the respective fates of Battista and Serafino da Fermo was the presence or absence of that condi-

22. Bonora (1998: 189 ss).

23. *Index*, VIII: 379-380.

24. For the ban of the *Apologia* cf. *Index*, VIII: 677-678.

25. Caravale (2003: 39-45).

tion of impeccability, whose contingent effects coincided too dangerously with the Lutheran certainty of salvation by faith alone. The censorship in the 1580s of texts by Cordoni (the author of *Dialogo dell'unione dell'anima con Dio*) and by the aforementioned Battista da Crema substantially endorse this conclusion.²⁶

After the Tridentine *Index* modified the 1559 prohibition of the works of Battista da Crema to a *donec corrigentur*, they, like many other works condemned in 1564, all waited to be expurgated and to experience a new life in a new guise, or version. Put into the hands of the General of the Society of Jesus, Giacomo Laínez, who was initially in charge of expurgating them, they had to wait, following his death, for a better outcome.²⁷ And so, in the late 1580s, the Congregation of the Index decided to return to the papers of Battista da Crema and commence the expurgation of his writings. What were the works that the cardinals of the Index decided to examine? They selected two of his principal works, *Della cognizione et vittoria di se stessi* and the *Specchio interiore*, and there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the choice was not purely random. Accepting the traditional vision of the path towards perfection in four stages, corresponding to the devout beginner, the proficient, the perfect and truly perfect, the Dominican had devoted special attention to each of these stages, writing a work for each step or stage of the path of mystical ascendancy. Unlike the *Aperta verità* and the *Philosophia divina* (which addressed those who were taking their first steps along the mystical path, those who were called to exert their human will and abandon earthly ties and passions, turning their eyes to God), the two works examined by the Congregation of the Index were those written for the devout who had, on the other hand, walked much of the path and were about to join the object of their love, God. The choice of the two works was therefore not accidental, as in these two works the faithful were called on to abandon free will in order to achieve total oneness with divine will. So, reading the censors' observations, preserved among the papers of the Cardinals of the Index, it would seem that—as in the case of Cordoni, whose story cannot be told here—the goal of the anonymous censor was almost exclusively to reassert the importance of man's will and to oppose any attempt to diminish the good works of human endeavour.²⁸

The restoration of the theological and doctrinal importance of human will remained the censors' strategy throughout the 1580s, influenced by enduring anti-Lutheranism; it constituted the main censorial filter for scrutinizing mystical literature, and its more radical derivations. However, although these anti-mystical sensitivities (influenced in part by the personal outlook of Pope Gregory XIII) played an important role in the strategies of the Roman censorship of the 1580s, they did not last. In due course, those aspects of mysticism, that anticipated Qui-

26. Caravale (2003: 94ff.).

27. Scaduto (1974: 248).

28. Caravale (2003: 134-138).

etism, were to pass unhindered through the net of the Roman censor, only to be revealed as dangerous vehicles of heresy in the last decade of the seventeenth century, when the Quietist heresy was formalized in proposals attributed to Miguel de Molinas, who was tried and sentenced in the autumn of 1687.²⁹

What was happening in Spain during this same period? What were the Inquisitorial authorities' reactions to these authors? Savonarola (with the *Exposición sobre el pater noster*), Luis de Granada and his *Libro de Oración*, Serafino da Fermo (whose *Obras espirituales* were translated in Spanish in 1556, on the instigation of Melchior Cano), were all included in the *Index* alongside the *Dialogo dell'unione dell'anima con Dio* by Cordoni, right from the first official list of 1559, drafted by the General Inquisitor Ferdinando de Valdés.³⁰ The absence of Battista da Crema may be explained by the fact that his works had not yet been translated into Spanish rather than by any specific decision to save his writings. The *opera omnia* by Battista da Crema were, instead, promptly included in the 1583 *Expurgatory Index*, which, with few differences, repeated the condemnations of the Tridentine *Index* and its general rulings. It was therefore a policy of censorship whose lines differed from that of the Roman *Index*, administered in a cultural climate where there seemed to be no room for the distinctions, subtle or otherwise, of the Roman censors. While, in Italy, the implicit concern of the censors was to rescue, however partially, mystic traditions and reinstate them within Orthodoxy (the *donec corrigantur* ban on Battista's writings, I feel, can be seen in this light), in Spain the religious clash became entrenched early, immediately following a turning point in the mid 1500s, amid a clear polarity between the Cano and Carranza camps which left no space for compromise or uncertainty. Under the shadow of the power struggle that followed the Inquisition's trial of the Spanish Primate, Carranza, the ultra powerful Archbishop of Toledo, whose fiercest critic was Melchor Cano, all spiritual demands similar to Carranza's —expressions of that pious and intimate tendency Bataillon³¹ first spoke of— were condemned. The main Spanish exponent of the Society of Jesus, Francisco Borja, then the widespread spiritual works of Luis de Granada, followed by the *Obras espirituales* by Serafino da Fermo, were all condemned by the Inquisition as expressions of a heresy whose dominant theme was mental and emotive prayer, and which rode dangerously close to the themes condemned in the heresy trials of the *alumbrados*.

Despite the backdrop of the harsh and repressive political censorship of the 1559 Spanish *Index*, and their total condemnation in the Roman *Index* of

29. See Tellechea Idígoras (2005).

30. *Index* V and VI. For Serafino da Fermo, respectively pp. 539-541. On Cordoni's *Dialogo* which appears in Quiroga's *Index* of 1583 and in all indexes subsequent to this (in Italy, he was condemned by the decree of 8th March 1584

and then on 29th January 1600) cf. De Bujanda (1972: 99-102). More generally on Valdés' index cf. González Novalín (2008: 245-286). For a closer look at the relations between censor and spirituality see Pérez García (2008).

31. Bataillon (1936).

1558-1559, the works of Erasmus in Spain were, instead, treated with a certain respect. Only six of his works in Latin and in vernacular were condemned, and not surprisingly they included the treatise specifically devoted to matters of prayer, the *Modus Orandi* (1524) and, among the works condemned in Spanish, the commentaries on the *Pater Noster* and the psalm, *Beatus vir et cum invocarem*. The *Modus orandi* was to be moved to the works recommended for expurgation only in the Sandoval *Index* of 1612, while on the Italian peninsula, the *Index* of Clement VIII (1596) was to reiterate the previous Roman condemnations of this text.³²

It is certainly worthwhile returning to the riveting pages of Bataillon, where the great French historian recommended the comparative study of the Spanish and Italian schools of prayer. Only from a comparative point of view, wrote Bataillon, can we understand the evolution of spiritual traditions that have for long periods moved on a parallel, linking up at times, crisscrossing at others and then moving apart.³³ Moreover, I would like to add, only from a comparative perspective can we possibly understand fully the censorial policies of the Roman and Spanish *Indexes* in the crucial area of devotional and spiritual literature, without being constrained by general categories such as the Counter-Reformation (or of Counter-Reformist spirituality), which do not always aid the work of the historian.

We need to appreciate how, for example, the emphasis placed by Granada and Serafino on man's insignificance and on surrendering one's will as an obligatory part of passage to the soul's oneness with God, could be received with greater alarm in Spain where, since the 1520s, it became increasingly common to identify the *alumbrados* with the Protestant movement.³⁴ In the Italian pen-

32. Bataillon (1937); De Bujanda (1993); Seidel Menchi (1997). The writings of Alberto Pio da Carpi against Erasmus, the Spanish version of which was banned in 1551 (in the Castilian translation of 1536; original edition 1530) and in all versions in 1559 (De Bujanda: 1972; 92), are really emblematic of the different sensitivities of the Roman and Spanish censors. Erasmus's works were not condemned in Spain, while they were in Italy. The Roman index contrasts with a more lenient Spanish censorial policy regarding Erasmus (with only six works banned in Latin and Castilian, three only in Castilian; more generally, only a few of the untranslated works were banned).

33. Bataillon (1936).

34. Cf. by way of example, the well-known passage in which Melchor Cano draws a parallel of the effects of the *alumbrada* heresy and that of Lutheran heresy: «Los alumbrados tenían a su pascercer estas experiencias e

demonstraciones de la gracia e luz del espíritu sancto, e como los lutheranos llevaban la certitumbre de la gracia por via de la ffe cathólica, ellos la llevaban por otro camino: esto es por un sentido experimental que se prometían en sí mesmos de la ffe y del amor de Dios». From here we have the illusory «seguridad» which, similar to the heretics from across the Alps, had brought them to despise ceremonies and external works, in the false conviction that «no eran menester» and that «quien se detenía en estas cosas era como quien se detenía en el camino e no llegava al cabo de la jornada», incapable of attaining an authentic «paz interior, agena a todos affectos e perturbaciones», which was reserved instead for those «barones espirituales, [que] se davan por libertados de esta ley de el sábado exterior e de otras semejantes [...] nisi ratione scandalii» (Cano's censure of the *Catechismo* of Carranza, in Cabelero (1871) and Firpo (1994: XXXI)).

insula —despite the determinant role of Juan de Valdés in defining the features of the Reformation in Italy— this distinction was perceived as less of a priority.

The most important differences between Roman and Spanish censorship are to be found, therefore, on the terrain of mystical heresy or mystical prayer. In Spain, at the beginning of the mid-sixteenth century, the Inquisition confronted what I would call the layered processes of Lutheran movements alongside *alumbrados* spiritualistic currents, empowering them to strike both heretical manifestations indiscriminately.³⁵ The situation on the Italian peninsula was different. Italian mysticism had been developing ever since the 1300s —except for a few exceptions such as the Beghard heresy— within the cradle of Catholic Orthodoxy. As Protestant doctrines became widespread in Italy, this tradition offered, among other things, an important anti-Lutheran tool in the defence of Orthodoxy itself. The indiscriminate persecution of mysticism, like that taking place to a certain extent in Spain in the 1500s and beyond, would have undermined, among other things, the goals of the anti-Lutheran struggle, a struggle which, at least until the 1570-80s, dominated all other priorities. And more generally, it would have erased a tradition from the Roman Catholic heritage, one which the Church wanted to contain and address and which it most certainly did not want to surrender.³⁶

The whole affair has to be studied in the awareness that very little was to change even beyond the confines of the sixteenth century. One example is the very significant case of the Capuchin monk, Felix de Alamín who, in 1703, sent the Roman cardinal inquisitors a *Delación contra muchos libros que al parecer contienen los errores de Molinos*, in which he reported twenty-seven ascetic-mystic books, which in his view were guilty of propagating the errors of the Quietists, Alumbrados, Beghards and Bequines in Spain. The authors comprised very well-known names, mostly from the Carmelite Order, among them Jose Gesú di Maria Quiroga (author of *Subida del alma a Dios que aspira a la divina unión*), Francisco di Santo Tomás (*Medula mistica*), John of the Cross, and other texts of the 1400s, such as those of Gerson, which seemed to provide support for Quietist heresy. However, the Congregation of the Inquisition, after a thorough examination following the denouncement, issued an astounding statement —what was to be included in the *Index* was not the works reported by Felix de Alamín but instead a work of the very same Felix de Alamín, the *Espejo de verdadera y*

35. There is a vast bibliography on the subject. Besides Bataillon (1937), see *Reforma española* (1975); Tellechea Idígoras (1986).

36. I feel that the case of Girolamo Sirino is rather significant. He was a regular canon and author of a spiritual treatise called *Come acquistare se debe la divina gratia e conoscer di haberla ricevuta, et mantenersi in essa*, entirely

devoted to the ‘gradi per i quali si viene alla perfetta beatitudine e compimento dei desiderii’ and pure love, published in Venice in 1558 and 1574. The work was never included in any Roman *Index* while in Spain it was censored, in its unique Italian version, in the *Indexes* of 1559 and 1583; De Bujanda (1972: 98-99).

falsa contemplación published some years previously in order to counter those texts he felt were dangerous.³⁷ Above and beyond the undoubtedly important background of the clashes between religious orders and the conflicting relations between Rome and Madrid, there can be no doubt that this episode offered yet another example, albeit a very startling one, of the gap in benchmarks and the different sensitivity of the censors, which, seem to me, to characterise, also in the long term, the comparative history of Roman and Spanish censorship. Once again —though there was no longer a state of emergency after the harsh struggle waged at the very highest Ecclesiastical levels against the Quietists— the case of the Spanish Capuchin monk's Controversialistic obsession seemed to the Congregation of the Inquisition summit far more frightening than the venom of the «new mystics», because it risked sweeping away the entire tradition that Rome intended to keep in check and curb, but not eliminate.

Yet, it would seem that things are not so easily resolved. It would be necessary, for example, to return to the controversial translation (or rather re-adaptation) Cano had carried out in 1550 (at Valladolid) of the canon regular of the Lateran, Serafino da Fermo's *Trattato della cognizione e Vittoria di se stesso* (1546), which in its turn was nothing other than a compendium of the work of the same title by his master Battista da Crema, published in the early 1530s in Venice.³⁸ A deeper examination of this edition would lead to a better understanding of the underlying reasons of Cano's support for the ascetic-mystical message. After all, only a few years later this same message would provoke his censorial rebukes. More importantly we need to understand the reasons for this personal shift (which in only four or five years led him to expose Serafino da Fermo as a dangerous enemy on a par with the major cases of Jesuit spirituality, such as Luis de Granada and of course, the Archbishop of Toledo, Carranza), a shift that was to exert a decisive influence on the basic policies of Spanish censorship in the decades to follow.

To do all this, Cano's stay in Trent, from 1551-1552, must certainly be taken into account. Here, he first received the news of Battista da Crema's condemnation by the Holy Office of Rome. This made him question his previous convictions and halted his work on the translation into Spanish of another treatise by Fermo, *Specchio Interiore*, which a few months previously he had defined as «extremamente provechoso» (extremely valuable). Another factor that must be taken into account is his personal frame of mind regarding his failed nomination for a prestigious post (the Canary Islands were most definitely no such thing) and the brilliant career of his rival, Carranza. Yet another was the isola-

37. Malena (2003: 299-301).

38. Sainz Rodríguez (1963: 543-556); Beltrán de Heredia (1972: 577-598); Tapia (1989: 74-75). For the *Tratado de la victoria de sí mismo* cf. also

Caballero (1871: 386-393). For a more general overview of Cano see Sánchez-Arjona Halcón (1969: 135-163); Biondi (1973); Bleda Plans (2000: 501-750); Olivari (2001); Cano (2006).

tion he was experiencing within the Dominican order following the publication of the Carranza case and, alongside this, the growing hostility of the Spanish Jesuits who were strong supporters of the spirituality of Luis de Granada and Serafino Fermo, as well as authors of a detrimental report to Pope Paul IV in 1555: indeed, this report resulted in an official summons to Rome to see the Pope. But first and foremost —within the sphere of a comparative study of the Roman and Spanish censorship— it would be useful to examine an important change in perspective on the recently acquired knowledge that informed the shift. «The first of three reprimands that the Church motioned against Luis de Granada —wrote Cano in the 1550s— was that he claimed to make all men contemplative and perfect and to teach the populace in Castilian things that are allowed only to a minority».³⁹ «El pueblo —he wrote not long later on the well-known censoring of Carranza's *Catechism* 1559 - tiene necesidad de oración vocal, porque la mental muy pocos la entienden ni salen con ella. Y establecer regla para los pocos con peligro de los más, ignorantes y flacos, es ocasión de escándalo».⁴⁰ In other words, behind the shift of the early 1550s, which had seen him become one of the most ardent enemies of those who had decided to «dejar el norte de la razón para navegar en el mar de la fe», there would not seem to have been a sudden change of opinion as to the usefulness and «healthiness» of the mental prayer of Serafino da Fermo or Battista da Crema. Indeed, he seems to recognise that theirs were devotional practices to be reserved for the few, the few intellectually cultured such as himself, and if given to the multitude of uneducated faithful such practices could easily become dangerous and scandalous. It is easy for a historian of Roman censorship to feel that these words echo the cautions and admonishments of contemporary Italian controversialists, such as the well-known Dominican, Ambrogio Catarino Politi. He was alarmed by the fact that the «curiosity and presumption of humans» had reached the point

39. «Another reason why Granada must be justly reprimanded is that he has promised all levels a common and general pathway to perfection without a vote of chastity, poverty or obedience [in other words, without distinguishing between clergy and laymen] [...]. Lastly in this book of Granada's [...] there are some errors which show certain signs of the 'alumbrado heresy' and others which are in clear contradiction of the faith and the Catholic doctrine». Granada sought to avoid Inquisition condemnation by immediately going to Valladolid to stop the inquisitor, Valdés, but did not succeed in preventing his work being included in the *Index*. He had to wait until 1566 when he managed to issue a new edi-

tion (amended and lengthened) of his *Libro de Oración* which enjoyed a great circulation. The new version lost all the contents that had irritated Melchor Cano as well as the praise of the work of Serafino Fermo. Moreover, entire paragraphs included emphasis on voiced prayer, the need of ceremony and of external works; Bataillon (1936: 33-35). In the *Index* of 1583, the prohibition of 1559 was reproduced with an important extension: «impreso en qualquier tempo y lugar, ante el año 1561» (*Index*, VI: 611). Nevertheless, the *Manual de diversas oraciones y espirituales ejercicios* remained in the 1583 *Index*.

40. Bataillon (1936: 32); cit. from Caballero (1871: 593 and 759).

«that anybody of any condition, whether man or woman, idiot or learned, could understand the deeper questions of sacred theology and divine scripture», which would give rise to the widespread diffusion of «unheard of» perilous doctrines destined to perturb and deceive the «ignorant and poor plebeians». ⁴¹ It does not take much to see that the outcome of these processes could only be very similar: from many angles, in truth, the inclusion of vernacular biblical texts in the Roman *Index* of 1559 and the overall censoring of bibles in 1554 can be interpreted as parallel solutions to the same emergency. ⁴²

And, once again, we must return to the latter stage of the Council of Trent where the affair seemed to raise its head once again, at least for a little time during the last sessions of the Council. The commission chosen by Pius IV to review the 1559 Roman and Spanish *Index* in Trent and to prepare a new *Index* of forbidden books that would be universally valid for all Christianity, decided to reaffirm many of the bans imposed just a few years earlier and, in this specific case, to re-examine texts forbidden by the Inquisitor Valdéz. Among these texts were the *Libro de Oración y Guía de pecadores* by Granada and the *Catecismo* by Carranza, whose orthodoxy was formally acknowledged by the Episcopal members of the Council. In brief, as has recently been emphasized, «when the problems in Spain were over, the Council of Trent, it would seem, succeeded in welcoming and finding a space for dissonant voices in the confessional policy, that had been instituted following the shift of the years 1558-59, and succeeded in questioning, from the summit of its universal and supranational role, the condemnations that had been the very symbols of the repression of those years». ⁴³ In point of fact, the Tridentine *Index* was not accepted in Spain and the policy was to have to wait some years before being partially received in the 1580s by Quiroga's *Index*—another interesting knot in the comparative history of the Roman and Spanish censorship. ⁴⁴ At this point, the Trent fathers, favouring the Archbishop of Toledo, would have to be content in witnessing one of those paradoxes that make historians of the Inquisition smile: the sight of Carranza's number one enemy, Philip II, endorsing and diffusing the Catechism of the Council of Trent that owed so much to Carranza's *Catecismo*. ⁴⁵

The question of the Catechism in Spain opens up an important area of reflection. The version sent to print in Spain in 1577 was not, in effect, the Castilian translation commissioned by Philip II following the explicit request

41. Politi (1972: 347-349).

42. For Italy see Fragnito (1997 and 2005); for Spain see Pinto Crespo (1983) and, especially, Inciso (1944).

43. Quotation translated from the Italian; Pastore (2000: 120). For the Tridentine *Index* and Spanish books see Maroto (1976).

44. *Index*, vol. VI, pp. 20-21; while the Trent

decrees were immediately accepted by Philip II on 12 July 1564, the Trent *Index* and the conflicting instructions supplied by the Supreme Council rendered it in effect null in its application; only twenty years later, with the 1583 *Index* would the Trent bans be delivered in Spain.

45. Tellechea Idígoras (1987: 381).

of Pope V. It was a less dangerous Latin version. This story, reconstructed meticulously some years ago by Pedro Rodríguez, saw Philip II, in the months following the closure of the Trent Council and the publication of the Trent Catechism, play the part of the loyal supporter of Rome and a firm follower of the Roman Catechism («which in that place was ordered» and «that the Pope has had published»), a tool he believed was absolutely necessary for the full application of the Council's decrees. The reception of the Council rulings and the teaching of the Roman Catechism were for Philip II two fundamental elements in combating Protestant heresy in Europe. The King and his court, following the promulgation of the Roman Catechism, made no objection to the Castilian translation proposed by the Papal nuncio and even supported it in Rome through Verzosa. Nor did they restrict the Spanish circulation of vernacular copies which were edited abroad.⁴⁶ It was, in actual fact, the Supreme Council of the Spanish Inquisition that strongly opposed the project. The opposition was so strong that it succeeded in halting the project even though it had already commenced and forced the King into a radical change of strategy: the first edition of the Catechism in the local language was to see the light two hundred years later! This outcome highlights the radicalism of the repressive strategies of the Spanish Inquisition, which seem in comparison even more repressive than the prohibitions promulgated by Rome. Although Philip II regarded the *Catechism* in the local vernacular as an ideal tool for combating heresy, the Supreme Council and its most popular councillors argued that there was no need to involve the population in the struggle against heresy: the mission the Holy Office had taken on, was, in the end, very simple—to prevent heresy from entering Spain, and if it had already managed to cross the border through people or books, then it was to be strangled.⁴⁷ In brief, the Supreme Council, through this ban, expressed their opinion that the ignorant should not in any way be made party to «theological things», not even in a didactic form such as a catechism.⁴⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in Spain a clear stance had been taken against controversial books in the vernacular as early as the 1550s. To illustrate this, it is enough to quote views of Cano on another well-known catechism, that of Carranza. He argued that the book is deplorable because «trata muchos questiones entre los lutheranos y christianos ... y las respuestas ... por ventura no son tan claras que satisfagan a los que poco saben», and added that it is harmful for the population to hear that there are

46. Rodríguez (1998: 68-69).

47. Rodríguez (1998: 146).

48. The conviction that certain subjects should not appear in books in vernacular was a shared criterion; for example, see what Luis de Granada, himself, had written: «porque razón tienen

[those that condemn books of good doctrine written in vernacular] si entienden que no se han de escribir en lengua vulgar ni cosas altas y oscuras, ni tampoco se han de referir los errores de los hereges ni otras cosas semejantes, ni questiones de theología»; Rodríguez (1998: 145).

disputes about the things they believe in, and that «esta causa ha más lugar en España, do no se permiten libros de hereges, y assí es importuno el remedio para el beneno, contra el qual no hemos de pelear si no es echándolo de nuestra tierra, si lo hay, proveyendo que no entre, si no lo hay».⁴⁹ These positions reflect the outlook the Roman Inquisition was to adopt some years later. Most Catholic controversialists in the peninsula, such as Ambrogio Catarino Politi, had shared similar views in the 1520s and 1530s, and adopted rigid positions regarding the problem of Controversy in vernacular and the widespread diffusion of the contents of disputes. The publication of the *Beneficio di Cristo* (1543) and the start of a huge propaganda campaign by Italian spiritualists through the use of the vernacular had, however, turned the tables: even Catarino Politi and other Controversialists had had to give in and fight on that terrain: a battle which in Spain, given the containment of Lutheran heresy, there was never any need to fight.⁵⁰ It was only later, in 1554, when the danger of Lutheran heresy had been curbed, or at least, contained, that Rome came to issue a ban that faithfully mirrored the Spanish sensitivities summarised by Cano, i.e. the ban of books on Controversies in the vernacular.⁵¹

The events surrounding the publication of the Trent *Catechism* in Spain gave rise, as we have seen, to the somewhat contrasting views of Philip II and the Supreme Council. While there was no open clash between them, the event revealed their very different demands and sensitivities. And confirmation of the divergence of thought that separated the Crown from the Spanish Inquisition was seen in the polemics that accompanied the controversial project of the royal Bible in the late 1560s and early 1570s. In 1568 Philip II asked the biblical scholar Benito Arias Montano to collaborate in, and supervise, an ambitious publishing project proposed by the Flemish printer, Christophe Plantin —the updated and extended re-edition of Cisneros' Polyglot Bible. The project, which Plantin had earlier brought to the attention of the Protestant Princes, was originally to re-edit the famous Alcalá Bible in five volumes, with a much disputed three-volume appendix comprising Sante Pagnini's version of the New Testament. In November 1571, part of the work was presented in Rome. It was Philip II himself who insisted, through his ambassador in Rome, Zúñiga, that the text receive Roman approval, while reminding the latter strongly that his name should not appear officially in the request. It was not surprising that the Spanish theologian, Pedro de Fuentidueñas was appointed to present and defend the Polyglot text before the Roman cardinals.⁵² Pedro de Fuentidueñas had already worked with the commission that had edited the Trent *Catechism* and was appointed for the six months following the closure of the Council to prepare its aforementioned Castilian translation which, how-

49. Rodríguez (1998: 146 and 150).

50. Caravale (2007).

51. Fragnito (2005 and 2007).

52. Rekers (1972: 55).

ever, was never completed.⁵³ Despite the direct involvement of the Spanish monarch, the initial reaction to the Polyglot text in Rome gave signs of being decidedly negative. Cabalistic inferences identified in some of Montano's writings, such as *De Arcano Sermone* and *De Ponderibus et Mensuris*, the presence of the heretic, Andreas Masius, among the main collaborators of the publishing project, a quotation from the Talmud, the name of Sebastian Münster, as one of the authorities of the text, and above all, the presence in the seventh volume of the Polyglot of the Latin version of Sante Pagnini's Bible—a text that initially Arias Montano and Plantin had even wanted to replace Saint Jerome's Vulgate in the *corpus* of the text—meant that initially approval from Rome was denied. However, within a couple of months, the wish of the new Pope, Gregory XIII, to strengthen ties with the Spanish monarch, survivor of the astounding victory at Lepanto against the Turks, and the presence of Cardinal Sirleto and Granvelle among the members of the papal commission, appointed to consolidate the orthodoxy of the undertaking, all led to a provisional approval in August 1572, and then in the following month a pontifical *Motu proprio*.⁵⁴ Roman anxiety did not, however, vanish completely. When Montano arrived in Rome in the summer of 1575 to obtain the definitive approval of the text, Bellarmino and the Congregation of the Council expressed a negative judgement (especially concerning the volumes of the *apparatus*) and it was only the need for diplomacy that induced Gregory XIII to soften the terms of the outcome, transferring all final decisions to the Spanish theologians. The point, here, was that the most ferocious attacks against the Polyglot came from Spain, beginning with the harsh polemic leashed by the Professor of Greek at the University of Salamanca, León de Castro. The trials against the Salamanca Hebrew scholars, Grajal, Gudiel, Cantalapiedra and Fray Luis de León (who was the first to give his favourable opinion of the Royal Bible), responsible for the philological studies on the sacred text and a thorough comparison with the Hebrew variations, threw more than one shadow over Montano's project, which, alongside the holy texts in Hebrew and Greek, included the Chaldean paraphrase of the Old Testament and the Syriac version of the New. This time, however, Philip II's wish to carry out the project to its end overcame the Inquisition's resistance: unlike the case of the vernacular translation of the catechism, the King, obviously aware of the prestige the Spanish monarchy would enjoy from Plantin's undertaking, was determined to see it through and succeeded in overcoming both Spanish and Roman resistance; following the favourable opinion of Juan de Mariana, the work suffered no more attacks. One of the most interesting aspects of this affair, in the perspective of a comparative study

53. Rodríguez (1998: 70-89).

54. Rekers (1972: 56). Also see Pastore (2009). Specifically regarding the royal Bible see Sánchez Salor (1998 and 1998a) and Macías Rosendo (1998).

of Spanish and Roman censorship, is undoubtedly the discussions of the Polyglot Bible that were circulating in the Roman Curia. We know very little, for example, of the conflicting opinions within the Congregation of the Council and the other institutions that were called upon to adjudicate the legitimacy of the undertaking. It would be especially interesting to know the details of the position of Cardinal Sirleto who, in the same months as he was endorsing Paul IV's harshest prohibitions of the Biblical texts of the Vulgate,⁵⁵ became prominent as one of the strongest supporters of the Royal Bible of Arias Montano.⁵⁶ A Counter-Reformist spirit and humanistic sensitivity were apparently harmoniously reconciled within the soul of this illustrious member of the Congregation of the Index, who worked for a deeper understanding of the connection between humanism and the Counter-Reformation, however difficult this union would prove from the 1550s onwards.⁵⁷

In conclusion, one final matter I would like to highlight is an aspect that from many points of view is linked to the problems we have just outlined, namely, the attempts of the Roman authorities to control the widespread forms of popular worship. These attempts focussed on the sale, the reading and the private and public use of short texts of «small prayers» devoted to this or that saint (be it Saint Helen, Saint Martha or Saint Daniel), which offered immediate solutions to the concrete problems of everyday life: recovery from an illness, personal safety during a trip, the freeing of an imprisoned family member, the removal or defeat of a love rival or the desire to satisfy an unrequited love (the so-called *orationes ad amorem*).⁵⁸ They were all short texts, generally comprising a few stanzas or, perhaps, a few loose sheets which the Roman censors of the Holy Office began to condemn as «false and superstitious» at the beginning of the 1570s (with a specific reference to the Bull issued in 1571 by Pope Pius V «regarding the recitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with its decrees and indulgences»). Above all the censors targeted as the source of the most frightening superstition the so-called «rubrics» found at either the beginning or end of a text where instructions were provided for the times or ways the prayers were to be recited if the hoped-for success was to be attained (e.g., recite the text two or three times, kneeling and in front of a lighted candle; see *Instructio circa Indicem librorum prohibitorum*). Many local inquisitors were committed to fighting the superstitious use of these texts and the trial records of the last decades of the 1500s abound with testimonies of this battle. In the same decades, the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office and of the Index prepared detailed lists of «false, apocryphal and superstitious prayers and stories». These lists were also published in appendices to the Roman *Indexes*, which were circulated locally

55. Fragnito (1997: 119-120).

56. For an initial idea cf. Alvarez Mulero (2006).

57. On Sirleto, see Denzler (1964).

58. Fantini (1996; 1999; 2000); Caravale (2003).

thanks to the zealous officers of the Roman authorities. These initiatives show, however, that the results of this repressive battle were none too happy. These lists of prohibited prayers were published repeatedly from the early decades of the 1600s through to the next century with an irreversible growth in numbers of prohibited prayers, in direct proportion to the growth of the powerlessness of the organs of control.⁵⁹

Clement VIII attempted to sort out the confusion of litanies, but his attempts at control were made all the more difficult by the fact that some litanies were prohibited in public but permitted for use in private and in oratories. Cardinal Bellarmino repeatedly opposed the apparent laxness at the summit of the Roman authorities. Yet his attempt to stem the tide was in vain, despite his urgent appeals to rigorously vet devotional texts written for private use, both from a philological and theological perspective, so as to avoid historical mistakes, inaccuracies, invented words and doctrinal errors from distancing the faithful from the true faith.⁶⁰

In other words, the tension within censorship slackened. After an initial phase featuring a vigorous battle against superstition, which reached its peak in the last decades of the 1500s and early years of the 1600s, from the first decade of the seventeenth century, faced with the uncontrollable size of the phenomenon, it did not take long for the authorities to be persuaded of the substantial harmlessness of superstitious devotions. The offensive, initiated in the 1570s by the prominent personality of the Archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, gradually came to a halt, becoming a secondary priority in the face of more urgent objectives. The fundamental research carried out by Gigliola Fragnito has taught us much about the policies of that great cultural and religious project to render the mysteries of the faith inaccessible to the majority. The systematic estrangement of the faithful from an interior and intellectual religiosity was the main objective of those who relentlessly strove to eliminate a great many of those devotional texts in the Italian vernacular that had fuelled the internal piety of Catholics in previous decades and centuries. Devotional superstition was actually to become a useful tool in an Ecclesiastical project that, in point of fact, promoted the abandonment of any exercise of independent thought. On the one hand, we witness the removal of intimist devotional texts that were widespread even among less educated classes (works like the *Giardino d'orazione* and the *Specchio di orazione* by the Capuchin friar Bernardino da Balvano, published in 1553 in Messina and reprinted as many as fourteen times throughout the rest of the century, or the *Monte delle orazioni volgari*); on the other hand, the publishing market of the early decades of the 1600s was filling the booksellers' stalls with devotional texts dedicated to the «readiness of the guardian

59. Caravale (2002 and 2003).

60. Caravale (2003); Fragnito (2005).

angel» and head-spinning pseudo-scientific calculations of the number of angels at work, written by ecclesiastic authors authoritatively identified by the organs of the Roman censors, who were reintroducing the very superstitions they had wanted to repress only a few decades earlier.⁶¹

This is another case where a comparison with the realities of Spain could be of great interest. By way of brief conclusion, just think, for example, of the thirty-three Books of Hours in Castilian (and in other languages) banned by the Spanish *Index* in 1559 because they contained «many strange and superstitious things»⁶² and as we do so, let us ask ourselves what were, in this case, the long-term effects, if any, of that censorial offensive.⁶³

61. Caravale (2003).

62. *Index V*, p. 202; González Novalín (2008: 283-284); Pinto Crespo (1983: 280-283).

63. For more general accounts of superstition and popular literature, see Bouza (2001) and Cátedra (2002). For Italy, see Caravale (2002).

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