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Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to the
Decline of the Catholic Church in Early
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by

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Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to the Decline of the Catholic Church in Early Modern Italy

Eleonora Belligni *

The aim of this paper is to investigate the decline of an institution—the Catholic Church in Early Modern age—by applying a model introduced by the political economist Albert O. Hirschman. In his most famous book (1970) Hirschman proposed a tripartite division in order to describe the reactions of consumers and citizens to the deterioration of companies, political organizations and States: exit, voice and loyalty. This model was born out of the author’s desire to convince economists of the importance and usefulness of a political concept such as ‘protest versus exit’, but even more interesting is the interplay among the three options, which has proved useful to analyze very different contexts. In fact, Hirschman’s classification could be fit as well to Early Modern Europe, when Western Christians began to develop responses to deal with the crisis of the Roman Church, either deciding to remain loyal to their religious institution, or raising a protest about specific issues, or even joining one of the new born Protestant Churches or radical cults. In the following pages the model is applied to find a new approach to explain an old issue: the failure of a proper Protestant Reformation in Early Modern Italy. As Hirschman has suggested in more recent studies, loyalty, exit, and voice might be not mutually exclusive: in 16th-century Italy, Nicodemism (as a doctrinal position combining all three elements), played a major role in keeping many of the faithful from choosing solely either exit or voice.



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1. Introduction

Why did Italy not experience a proper Reformation? This question has animated decades of studies on Early Modern religious history¹. However, in these terms, it is actually a “question mal posée”², as Italy was in fact touched by Protestantism, even though marginally, compared to other countries. About thirty years after Luther had posted his theses, many heterodox communities, from the north to the south of Italy, converted to Calvinism³. So much for the so-called Magistral Reformation. But Italy also knew a Radical Reformation, in different forms, above all with the appearance of Anabaptism, Socinianism, and Antitrinitarianism, and even a hybrid creed, based on the teaching of Juan de Valdés. Rather than speaking about the Italian Reformation, it is probably better to talk about a generically heterodox religious phenomenon, which was sometimes shaped into recognizable patterns, as Churches or sects, and which is

¹ “This question, raised by Jacob Burckhardt in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), nourished intense debates in Italy between the Risorgimento and Fascism, becoming a recurrent point of contention in the controversies between Church and State that followed unification. Generations of scholars and intellectuals saw the consequences of the failed Italian Reformation as extending well beyond the early modern period and informing the precarious national consciousness”: Diego Pirillo, “The Italian Reformation”, *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780195399301-0285> (accessed 2016). Cfr. Manfred Welti, *Kleine Geschichte der italienischen Reformation* (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1985). A thorough survey on Italian Early Modern religious studies could be found in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, eds. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2013). The book gives a rich account of the last decades of studies (and aims to be, as colophon says, “a comprehensive and authoritative state-of-the-art review of current research in a particular area”), though the bibliography is maybe too selective.

² I am quoting here Lucien Febvre, “Une question mal posée: les origines de la Réforme française et le problème des causes de la Réforme”, *Revue historique* 121 (1929), 1-73. About recent views on Febvre’s paradigm, see Thierry Wanegffelen, *Les causes de la Réforme: une question reposée*. 45th Meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, March 1999, Washington DC (<http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00294497>).

³ Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi ed., *Giovanni Calvino e la Riforma in Italia. Influenze e conflitti* (Torino: Claudiana 2011); Federica Ambrosini, “I reticolati del dissenso e la loro organizzazione in Italia”, *La Réforme en France et en Italie: Contacts, comparaisons et contrastes. Collection de l’École française de Rome* 384, eds. Philip Benedict, Silvana Seidel Menchi and Alain Tallon (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2007), 87-103; Adriano Prosperi, “Una chiesa, due chiese, nessuna chiesa. Riforma italiana ed eretici italiani”, *ibid.*, 595-634.

sometimes difficult to collocate, like various other features of evangelism from the 1520s to the 1540s, or like the great number of individual religious experiments, unusual blends, and creative crossbreedings¹. Even the few documented cases of disbelief originated from heterodox ideas².

However, it is true that Protestantism was not a real threat to the Roman Catholic Church for a long time, while in other parts of Europe (such as in ‘the most Christian’ France) it was able to conquer a significant part of the population³. In addition, in some other Catholic countries, such as France and Flanders, the religious conflict erupted into civil war and bloody struggles among the powerful elite⁴. Historians estimate that the last Calvinist communities did not survive beyond the seventh decade of the 17th century in Italy, although a few expressions of religious dissent (often Protestant) continued throughout the Modern age⁵.

In a not-so-distant past, Early Modern historians discussed the failure of a

¹ The main reference is to Salvatore Caponnetto, *La Riforma protestante nell’Italia del Cinquecento* (Torino: Claudiana, 1992); and to Massimo Firpo, *Riforma protestante ed eresie nell’Italia del Cinquecento* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 1993); see also the more recent collection of articles by Ronald K. Delph, Michelle Fontaine, and John Martin, eds., *Culture and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Contexts and Contestations* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006).

² In their precious bibliography Tedeschi and Lattis mention nevertheless a ‘Reformation’, though meaning all the features of religious dissent: John Tedeschi and James M. Lattis, eds., *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture: A Bibliography of the Secondary Literature (ca. 1750-1996)* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1999).

³ Euan Cameron, “The Reformation in France and Italy to c. 1560: a review of recent contributions and debates”, *ibid.*, 17-33; Jean-François Gilmont, “La diffusion des idées évangéliques et protestantes, c. 1520-c. 1570”, *ibid.*, 69-84.

⁴ See the bibliography in Pierroberto Scaramella, “La Riforma e le élites nell’Italia centro-meridionale (Napoli e Roma)”, *ibid.*, 283-308; John Martin, “Elites and Reform in Northern Italy”, *ibid.*, 309-329; Philip Benedict, “Elites and Reform in France and Italy”, *ibid.*, 351-359.

⁵ Silvana Seidel Menchi, “Italy”, in *The Reformation in National Context*, eds. Robert Scribner, Roy Porter, and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 181-201. Here one can find a useful chronology of the rise and fall of the Reformation in Italy. Seidel Menchi claims that “we can divide the religious crisis of the long 16th century into four main periods: the ‘theological call to arms’ (1518-1542), marked by the convergence between the philo-Protestant movement and the ‘spirituali’; the ‘spontaneous diffusion’ (1542-1555), in which religious dissent moved from elite circles into streets and squares circulating especially among merchants and artisans in the urban centers of northern Italy; ‘repression’ (1555-1571), which coincided with the pontificates of Paul IV and Pius V; and finally ‘extinction’ (1571-1588), when the trials for heresy declined and the Inquisition turned its attention to magic and witchcraft” (Diego Pirillo, “The Italian Reformation”).

real Italian Reformation, blaming the hostile environment and emphasizing individual stories of exile and persecution. Until the middle of the 20th century, most studies on the Italian Reformation had celebrated ‘heretics’ by highlighting their life experiences of courage and nonconformity, or they had praised the heroic behavior of single, often isolated communities¹. However, apart from these traditional narrative approaches, most recent historiography has been based on different interpretive perspectives, which sometimes diverge from each other².

1) Some of these perspectives consider the strategic behavior of macro-actors—territorial States, princes, the city of Rome, the Empire—and their conflicting relationships with the Catholic Church.

¹ Between the Risorgimento and Fascism, Italian Reformation became a painful issue in the controversies between Church and State: just like previously, the question about the failure of this experience went beyond the Early Modern period and started involving national consciousness. During the 1930s, influential new trends in European and Northern American historiography pushed some Early Modern Italy scholars (namely most of all Benedetto Croce, Federico Chabod, and Delio Cantimori) to study the religious crisis of the long 16th century from different perspectives and even with different methods. At the time, Benedetto Croce and Delio Cantimori started a quarrel involving the *heretics* which he meant as rebels, not Protestant. The debate between Croce and Cantimori can be found in Cantimori’s preface to the Italian translation of a classic pioneering study, Fredric C. Church’s *The Italian Reformers* (New York: Columbia University Press 1932). Cantimori was far more interested to individual stories of heterodoxy, as one can see in his *Avvertenza in Eretici italiani del Cinquecento. Ricerche storiche* (Firenze, Sansoni, 1939), while his friend Chabod was convinced of the utter importance of describing a religion phenomenon with a keen eye on political and cultural context. Marino Berengo, “La ricerca storica di Delio Cantimori”, *Rivista storica italiana*, 4 (1967), 902-943 describes thoroughly this season and its debate.

² For a clever and accurate discussion about the last decades of Italian Reformation and Counter-Reformation international studies see Elena Bonora, “Il ritorno della Controriforma (e la Vergine del Rosario di Guápulo)”, *Studi Storici*, 2 (2016), 267-292. In this paper, which also contains in the footnotes a rich bibliography about this topic, Bonora gives an account of a recent paradigm shift, that led American historiography to bring back to use the concept of Counter-Reformation, but using an approach based on material culture, on anthropological studies and history-from-the-bottom-up which overshadows any political and institutional acquisition. This new idea of Counter-Reformation is discussed by Mary Laven, “Legacies of the Counter-Reformation and the Origins of Modern Catholicism”, in *The Ashgate Research Companion*, 451-469; Evangelisti, “Material Culture”, *ibid.*, 395-416; Wietse De Boer and Christine Göttler, eds., *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). About art and devotion see for instance Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne, eds., *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Culture and Religion* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009); Jill Burke and Michael Bury, eds., *Art and Identity in Early Modern Rome*. (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2008).

a) Following this path, some historians have highlighted the absence of a territorial sovereignty—a ‘prince of Italy’—that could have taken religious matters in hand, support innovative ideas and, most of all, who was meant to overpower the plan of papal Rome¹ to add the political and territorial power of central Italy to its universal ideological hegemony².

b) A second group of studies, again focused on geopolitical strategies and power relationships between large institutional players, but which has in particular considered the behavior of two foreign monarchies, France and Spain, fighting for the first half of the 16th century to conquer large parts of Italy³. Although the need for religious reform had at first been one of their tactics to weaken the pope’s power, later, when alliances and their own national contexts changed, they abandoned any attempt to intervene actively in the religious battle.

This interpretation is (still) based on the idea of the rational choice of two sovereigns, which was driven by political and military goals, but it also takes into account groups of individuals, defining their collective interests and identity, according to their networks and to the social context to which they belonged⁴. For instance, the conversion to Protestantism neither was on Emperor Charles V’s agenda, nor was it one of the aims of King Francis I; it was not part of their immediate successors’ plans either. Yet it is known that some of the most influential foreigners in Italy—politicians, diplomats, prelates—just like some Italian governors and princes, such as Cosimo I in Florence, sometimes felt a strong attraction to heterodox beliefs, and joined pressure and interest groups⁵.

¹ Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, eds., *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Visceglia, *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna* (Roma: Viella 2013).

² One can find a recapitulation of this perspective in Roberto Bizzocchi, “Church, Religion, and State in the Early Modern Period”, *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995): 152-165.

³ Piers Baker-Bates and Miles Pattenden, eds., *The Spanish Presence in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Images of Iberia* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴ Delia Baldassarri, “Collective Action”, *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, eds. Peter Hedström and Peter Bearman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 402.

⁵ See for instance Adriano Prosperi, “Europa ‘in forma virginis’: aspetti della propaganda asburgica del ‘500”, *Annali dell’Istituto storico-germanico in Trento*, 19 (1993), 243-277, then published in Prosperi, *America e Apocalisse e altri saggi* (Pisa-Roma: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici, 1999), 127-152. See also Gigliola Fragnito, “Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e costruzione dello Stato: riflessioni e spunti”,

Their religious sympathies were encouraged (or, at least, not clearly rejected) by the Emperor, or by the King of France, partly because a certain religious ambiguity had been tolerated for a certain period of time in their own countries after Wittenberg, partly because using religious and ideological means to unsettle a land of conquest had become itself a fraction of the overall strategy. Some recent studies have emphasized the conflict between the 'Imperial party' and the 'French party', both of which even stimulated the spread of heterodoxy in the first half of the century, but quickly changed their attitudes between the fifth and the sixth decades, when the great trials of heretics and the Peace of Augsburg (1555) led to a brand-new context¹.

c) A third group of studies favored an economic approach and adopted a perspective that included individuals, collective actors, such as groups and associations, and macro actors². Most of the pre-Reformation European economic system depended only on the religious economy and organization of the Catholic Church, and was based on a system made up of benefits, prebends and tithes, alms and indulgences, but, at the same time, affected a large number of collateral resources. Huge amounts of money, *e.g.*, came from papal court expenses, from artistic patronage and investments in religious architecture, from military expenditure, from worship and devotion, from engravings and publishing, from charities and education, as well as from material and immaterial goods produced and exchanged by religious orders, and by secular and regular clergy³. The whole system was ultimately bound to benefit Italy, at the expense of the other countries, which were further from the center of curial power⁴. Although

Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna. International Congress, The University of Chicago, 26th-29th April 1993, eds. Giorgio Chittolini, Anthony Molho, and Pierangelo Schiera (Bologna: il Mulino, 1994), 531-550.

¹ Elena Bonora, *Aspettando l'Imperatore. Principi italiani tra il papa e Carlo V* (Torino: Einaudi, 2014).

² Robert B. Ekelund, Jr., Robert F. Hébert and Robert D. Tollison, "An Economic Analysis of the Protestant Reformation", *Journal of Political Economy* 110, 3 (June 2002), 646-671; from a public choice perspective see Ekelund and Hébert, "Interest Groups, Public Choice and the Economics of Religion", *Public Choice* 142, 3/4, *Essays in Honor of Robert D. Tollison* (2010), 429-436.

³ On a later period see Renata Ago, *Economia barocca: mercato e istituzioni nella Roma del Seicento* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 1998); Ago, *Carriere e clientele nella Roma barocca* (Roma-bari: Laterza 1990). See also all the essays in Francesco Ammannati, ed., *Religion and religious institutions in the European economy, 1000-1800* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2012).

⁴ See for instance Barbara McClung Hallmann, *Italian Cardinals, Reform, and the Church as Prop-*

the newly-converted Protestant States were able to take advantage of the confiscation of the Church's goods and properties, the Roman Inquisition gradually organized an efficient seizure and confiscation system of the assets of heretics¹. In short, although the conversion of rulers and their territories to Protestantism in the rest of Europe showed, at least in the long run, that crossing confessional boundaries could also lead to economic benefits, the Italian context was less prepared to absorb drastic changes in religion².

Even economic interpretations are, more or less explicitly, based on a rational choice actor model: in fact, taken individually, they can hardly ever be used to explain decade-long processes, in which people calculating cost-effectiveness, even in the near future, needed to include a large number of variables.

2) Other interpretive approaches have shifted the focus from the macro-level of the major institutional players to the meso-level of organizations that were the warp and the weft of the great institutions, such as the papal Church. Different groups (bodies and organs of the Roman Curia, religious orders, the flock of faithful)³ and organizational interests, coalition tactics, power managing skills, collective action, mobilizing influence and consensus building (proselytism, printing, preaching, street protests), cultural and material backgrounds of factionalism and ideological fragmentation: those factors have recently been explored by historians on religion in Early Modern Italy. However, they did not reach a unified and consolidated view.

a) In this perspective, some recent historians have attributed the failure of the Italian Reformation to the actions of groups within the Catholic Church (factions or parties, but also curial agencies and departments, such as congregations), and to their various ways of dealing with the spread of heterodox ideas. Some studies have reported, for instance, the underground work of an

erty (Berkeley: California University Press, 1985); Dennis Hay, *The Church in Italy in the 15th Century: The Birkbeck Lectures 1971* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹ See for instance Vincenzo Lavenia, *L'infamia e il perdono: tributi, pene e confessione nella teologia morale della prima età moderna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2004).

² See e.g. Antonio Menniti Ippolito, *Il tramonto della curia nepotista. Papi, nipoti e burocrazia curiale tra XVI e XVII secolo* (Roma: Viella, 1999); Menniti Ippolito, *Il governo dei papi in età moderna. Carriere, gerarchie, organizzazione curiale* (Roma: Viella, 2007).

³ One of the most important books about conflicting groups is Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996).

efficient, although embryonic intelligence group that was meant to control religious dissent, at least ten years before the setting up of the Roman Inquisition¹. This was an informal organization, made up of members (mainly Theatins Regular Clerks) who mainly collected information and referred directly to Gian Pietro Carafa, the founder of the Order and Bishop of Chieti, until 1542. This group was then formally converted into the Roman Inquisition, and in time it became the most important power in the Roman curia. Faced with Pope Paul III's procrastinating in addressing Luther's legacy, a part of the Church had already equipped itself to deal with the problem. It is perhaps possible to refer to this period as an exploratory phase, in which some influential people had been monitoring the pervasiveness of heterodox networks throughout the territory, pending police operations and judicial proceedings².

b) Other researches have focused on the role of the Inquisition as a real political party, unceasingly struggling for primacy in the curia against other congregations (especially the Index and the Council)³, and, sometimes, even against the pope. These interpretations see the Counter-Reformation not only as a pro-

¹ Ten years after the opening of the Holy Office Archives (ACDF) a first evaluation appeared in Elena Bonora, "L'archivio dell'Inquisizione e gli studi storici: primi bilanci e prospettive a dieci anni dall'apertura", *Rivista storica italiana* 120, 3 (2008), 968-1002.

² See for instance Andrea Vanni, "Fare diligente inquisitione". *Gian Pietro Carafa e le origini dei chierici regolari teatini* (Roma: Viella, 2010). On the regular orders and the Holy See's politics see: *Papacy, Religious Orders, and International Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Massimo C. Giannini (Roma: Viella, 2013); Elena Bonora, "Il sospetto d'eresia e i 'frati diplomatici' tra Cinque e Seicento", *Hétérodoxies croisées. Catholicismes pluriels entre France et Italie, XVI^e-XVII^e siècles*, ed. Alain Tallon (Roma: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2015), 42-63.

³ On the first indexes see most of all: Jesús M. De Bujanda ed., *Index des livres interdits*, vol. VIII, *Index de Rome 1557, 1559, 1564. Les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente* (Sherbrooke-Genève, Centre d'études de la Renaissance-Librairie Droz, 1990). See Gigliola Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471-1605)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1997); Fragnito ed., *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Fragnito, *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2005). About censorship on entertaining literature, see Marina Roggero, *Le carte piene di sogni. Testi e lettori in età moderna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2006), 59-60. For a milder view of the censorships on vernacular translations of the Bible in European Early Modern cultural history, see Willem Frijhoff, "Chrétienté, christianismes ou communautés chrétiennes? Jalons pour la perception de l'expérience d'unité, de division et d'identité de l'Europe chrétienne à l'époque moderne", in *L'expérience de la différence religieuse dans l'Europe moderne (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, ed. Bertrand Forclaz (Neuchâtel: Éditions Alphil, 2013), 17-43.

cess of social control, confessional unity and religious homogeneity, but also as the product of conflicts pertaining to individual and group interests involving different parts of the Roman Church¹.

c) Some authors have dedicated attention to the role of organizations within the Catholic Church, in order to analyze its way of dealing with external enemies (and how it was compelled to demonstrate that it was competitive with other Churches. Assuming that its strategies were the outcome of internal negotiations, and often the result of struggles, the focus here is nevertheless on its new identity building process². In fact, there is a branch of a great historiographical tradition that points out the proactive role of the Church between the Middle and Early Modern ages: the claims, experiments and proposals which, even before Luther, had been calling for a profound renewal of the institution *ab imo*. These experiences and ideas have been classified as a homogeneous phenomenon, known as the ‘Catholic Reformation’³, which has been considered

¹ Hence the studies about the Church elites and their connections to the ‘spirituali’ and the Valdesian movement, which consider the battle engaged by the ‘intransigenti’, the Inquisition party, to emarginate and expel them from the Roman curia leadership. Cfr. Massimo Firpo, *Dal Sacco di Roma all’Inquisizione: Studi di Juan de Valdés e la Riforma Italiana* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1998); *Il processo inquisitoriale del Cardinale Giovanni Morone*, 6 vols. (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per l’età moderna e contemporanea, 1981-1995); *Inquisizione romana e Controriforma: Studi sul cardinale Giovanni Morone e il suo processo d’eresia* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1992); *Tra alumbados e ‘spirituali’: Studi su Juan de Valdés e il valdesianesimo nella crisi religiosa del ‘500 italiano* (Firenze: Olschki, 1990).

² Bonora, “Il ritorno della Controriforma”, 270-292 mentions the fundamental editions of Holy Office trials against the highest ranks of Church hierarchy: Firpo and Dario Marcatto, eds., *I processi inquisitoriali di Pietro Carneseccchi [1557-1567]*, 2 voll. (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 1998-2000); Firpo and Sergio Pagano, eds., *I processi inquisitoriali di Vittore Soranzo [1550-1558]*, 2 voll. (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2004); Firpo and Marcatto, eds., *Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinale Giovanni Morone. Nuova edizione critica*, 3 voll. (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011-2015). On this issue Bonora refers also to Firpo, *Inquisizione romana e Controriforma. Studi sul cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509-1580) e il suo processo d’eresia* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005), which is different from previous 1992 edition; Bonora, *I conflitti della Controriforma. Santità e obbedienza nell’esperienza religiosa dei primi barnabiti* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1998); Bonora, *Giudicare i vescovi. La definizione dei poteri nella Chiesa postridentina* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2007).

³ The expression comes from a most famous article written by the German Catholic historian Hubert Jedin, *Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?* (Lucerna, Switzerland: Stocker, 1946), whose paradigm of Catholic Reformation and later studies on the Council of Trent gave birth to a new wave of research on social discipline and the age of confessions. See also Paolo Prodi, “Controriforma e/o Riforma cattolica. Superamento di vecchi dilemmi nei nuovi panorami storiografici”,

as a development process that emerged as a result of the challenge of the new Protestant churches¹. The Council of Trent guidelines, on the one hand, and the multiple efforts to create a new religious context, on the other, were possible responses to the many pleas that had been made for renewal of the institution, although they were somewhat different from what the early proponents of religious reform had expected.

Two main research areas can emerge from this path. The first considers the policies of post-Tridentine Rome, which resulted in the so-called ‘discipline’², namely the first step in a “modernization” process that involved not only the Protestants, but also the Catholics, though in very different ways³. These interpretations in general tend to defend the idea that the lack of a true Italian Reformation had been compensated for by other means to renovate the Church: first, the Catholic Reformation and then the social discipline model.

Römische historische Mitteilungen 31 (1989), 227-237; Ronnie Po-Chia Sia, *La Controriforma. Il mondo del rinnovamento cattolico (1540-1770)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2001).

¹ For a more extensive view on this approach, see what has been called ‘Early Modern Catholicism’, a broad bibliography on which can be found in Thomas Worcester, “Early Modern Catholicism”, *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780195399301-0173> (accessed 2016).

² The idea of *social discipline* was first received and introduced in Italy by the Istituto storico italo-germanico with his review *Annali dell’Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*: see Paolo Prodi and Carla Penuti, eds., *Disciplina dell’anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra Medioevo ed età moderna, Convegno internazionale di studio. Bologna 7-9 ottobre 1993* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1994); Prodi and Wolfgang Reinhard, eds., *Il Concilio di Trento e il moderno* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1996). On the story of parallel ideas of *discipline* (*social discipline*) and *confessionalization* see Adriano Prosperi, “Riforma cattolica, Controriforma, disciplinamento sociale”, in *Storia dell’Italia religiosa*, eds. Gaetano De Rosa, Tullio Gregory, and Anne Vauchez, vol. II, *L’età moderna* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1994), 3-48, and more recently see Adriano Prosperi, “Disciplinamento”, in *Historia. Saggi presentati in occasione dei vent’anni della Scuola Superiore di studi storici*, ed. Paulo F. Butti de Lima (San Marino: Aiep, 2010), 73-88; Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalization”, in *The Ashgate Research Companion*, 33-53. See on the their origins Peter N. Miller, “Nazis and Neo-Stoics: Otto Brunner and Gerhard Oestreich Before and After the Second World War”, *Past & Present*, 176 (2002), 144-186.

³ Actually, these studies proceeded by two very different historiographical traditions. One was represented by Jedin (see fn. 10). Recently these guidelines on Early Modern Catholicism were reprised by John O’Malley’s *Trent and All That* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). On the other side, when Carlo Ginzburg published *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del Cinquecento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1976), historical anthropology started to focus on popular beliefs and religious behaviors instead of institutions. Very different from Ginzburg and his ‘leftist’ followers is Christopher F. Black, *Modern Italy: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Other scholars, on the other hand, do not seem to believe in a close correlation between discipline-and modernity¹. They usually interpret the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation policies only as a design for image and identity re-building which, excluding crucial issues from the agenda (i.e. those raised by Protestantism), merely reinforced papal centralism and the power of the Roman Inquisition². The latter managed to lead the Counter-Reformation Church toward repression and censorship, and, at the same time, became a very tenacious obstacle to the proliferation of heterodox ideas³. All these interpretations, and many others, have been alternating over decades; sometimes they are in conflict, but other times they overlap. To a certain extent, they still coexist and contribute jointly toward explaining the complexity of the phenomenon.



2. Alternative questions

Rather than speaking of Reformation or heresy in Italy, it is currently preferable to talk about the growth and the decline of heterodoxy, seen as a whole. However, when the genesis and nature of the many heterodox streams are considered, distinct paths emerge. The first is represented by religious communities that followed a precise Church, such as the Waldensian and Calvinist ones, and

¹ See the essays in “*Nunc alia tempora, alii mores*”. *Storici e storia in età postridentina*, Firpo ed. (Firenze: Olschki, 2005). In a more global perspective see also Simon Ditchfield, “Tridentine Catholicism”, in *The Ashgate Research Companion*, 15-31 and Karen Melvin, “The Globalization of Reform”, *ibid.*, 435-450.

² For a recent bibliography on Roman Inquisition, see Christopher F. Black, “Roman Inquisition”, *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780195399301-0279> (accessed 2016).

³ Massimo Firpo, *La presa di potere dell’Inquisizione romana. 1550-1553* (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2014).

even the Anabaptists¹. It is easier to understand why they were suppressed and even why a few outbreaks had obstinately survived after the the 1570s. However, it is harder to follow the less evident tracks of the ones who did not join other Churches or sects, but remained inside the institution in order to protest against its faults.

This internal dissidence is still a rather mysterious phenomenon for historians, as it was back then during the Inquisition. In Italy, as well as in other countries, claims, proposals and even early experiments of pastoral management had initially been supported by some members of the Church, until it was clear to everyone that the institution was changing direction, and that proposals of renewal were no longer welcome. But why did such instances, first recorded in 1520, vanish shortly after the end of the Council of Trent, and give way so quickly to the Counter-Reformation, a season known for its religious uniformity and conformism? If the Catholic Church was so deeply involved in regeneration plans, from the bottom up to the top, why was it that not only the faithful, but the entire hierarchy unconditionally surrendered to the solutions proposed by the Council of Trent, whose decisions were believed to sound the death knell for the *reformatio*, and basically remained a dead letter for most of Europe? Why were none of these claims able to break through, to change Rome's priorities, or at least to last under the appearance of tolerated dissent? Why did no movement, until the Venetian Interdict, seem to survive the Counter-Reformation?

In recent times, historical research has made two important assessments. The first is that each major institutional player (such as the Roman Church) is a system made up of individuals, groups and organizations that are connected by relationships, which are not always strictly hierarchical. Allegedly, the scholars of 16th-century Curia do not find it easy to follow the path of ideas, preferences and interests until they reach the policy-making process. This perspective fo-

¹ Among a huge amount of studies on the local Churches and communities in Northern Italy, see for instance Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, *Speranze e crisi nel Cinquecento modenese: tensioni religiose e vita cittadina ai tempi di Giovanni Morone* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1979); Achille Olivieri, *Riforma ed eresia a Vicenza nel Cinquecento* (Roma: Herder, 1992); Guido Dall'Olio, *Eretici e inquisitori nella Bologna del Cinquecento* (Bologna: Istituto per la Storia di Bologna, 1999); John Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993)

cuses on the ways the institution dealt with any kind of protest, and on how it developed responses to requests and claims for reform. The second assessment states that, instead of considering outcries and collective action as a single unit, it is necessary to identify the singular propensity of given groups or individuals to dissent, and to recognize dissent contents and issues. The latest studies in this direction have expanded the range of religious movements in Early Modern Italy.

The historiographical concepts discussed so far are based on disparate interpretive approaches, though they are rarely explicitly or rigorously problematized. As a contribution to the explanation of the problem at stake, that is, the failure of the Italian heterodox movements, an attempt is here made to apply a model referring to “mechanism-and process-based accounts”¹. The latter have long been employed in social sciences (close to historical discipline borders), as an alternative to explanations based on covering law arguments, system models, and even narrative approaches. They consider social and political processes as “recurring combinations of [...] mechanisms”, i.e. as the result of choices made by individuals or small groups endowed with limited rationality, with historically dated beliefs, who operate in strategically uncertain conditions. Such choices, at higher levels of generality, determine processes that are occurring combinations or sequences of mechanisms.

Of the three most relevant sorts of mechanisms that can explain socio-political processes—environmental, cognitive, relational—the last kind will mainly be considered here, as being able “to alter the connections between people, groups and interpersonal networks”². More precisely, reference will be made to mechanisms that were identified by the political economist Albert O. Hirschman in a famous book published in 1970³, which are applied extensively in the social sciences, but rarely in mainstream history. I believe that the causal mechanisms identified by Hirschman, combined together, had significant cumulative effects

¹ See the explanation given by the historian Charles Tilly, “Mechanisms in Political Processes”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4 (2001), 21. “Mechanisms form a delimited class of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations” (ibid., 25-26). See also Baldassarri, “Collective Action”, 393.

² Ibid., 24.

³ Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

on the processes that led the Italian reformers to fail. In the following sections, after introducing the essential features and the logic of these mechanisms, an attempt will be made to show how these mechanisms created the conditions necessary for the success or defeat of the conflicting players.



3. Hirschman's model

At the beginning of his scientific career, Hirschman declared his intention to use “small ideas” for a general analysis of reality, from a diachronic and synchronic perspective¹. These small ideas were useful to reduce the weight of the rational consumer, and of strategic rationality concepts, in explaining the propensity of individuals to choose products, identities or collective actions. Hirschman believed that, in order to describe a complex social reality, economic analysis needed to be supported by other social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, and most of all, political science. In particular, he believed that small ideas could be useful to understand some economic, social, political and religious phenomena related to Early Modern and Modern European history. Obviously, his interest was not purely historiographical, though he was well aware of the opportunities that a historical and comparative method could offer social and economic sciences.

In his 1970 essay, Hirschman proposed a tripartite division in order to classify the reactions of consumers, citizens and members of companies, political

¹ The book is dedicated to Eugenio Colorni (1909-1944), Hirschman's brother-in-law, who had been killed by fascists: he had taught him “about small ideas and how they may grow”. Luca Meldolesi, *Alla scoperta del possibilismo. Il mondo sorprendente di Albert O. Hirschman* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1994). Hirschman as a ‘worldly philosopher’ comes from his biographer Jeremy Adelman, *Worldly Philosopher: The Odyssey of Albert O. Hirschman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

organizations, parties, trade unions and States facing what they perceived as a decrease in the quality of goods and services in political organizations, trade unions and States: exit, voice, loyalty. The essay attempted to explain the relationship and the interplay of the three options. Starting from this tripartite division, Hirschman analyzed the ways in which individuals oscillate between the pursuit of private happiness and commitment to public life in the form of involvement in collective action.

When his essay was first published, it was immediately clear that exit-voice dualism could open up new perspectives for highly heterogeneous socio-historical phenomena. Exit and voice concern both economic and political actions. *Exit* can be compared to Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', in a world in which buyers and sellers are free to move through the market, forming and destroying economic relationships. *Voice* is essentially a political concept, as it belongs to the sphere of conflict and negotiation. However, the two options can coexist and interplay in different ways in several circumstances. Faced with growing political repression, the citizens of a country can choose whether to emigrate or protest. Similarly, employees working in a company may choose to resign from an unpleasant job, to join a trade union or to express their discontent, in an attempt to improve their working conditions. A product buyer can complain to the store manager, write to the producer or buy another product elsewhere. But the real core of Hirschman's analysis lies in the interaction between exit and voice: voice, which encourages feedback and criticism, may help to reduce exit, while the repression of dissent often leads members of organizations, who are unable to express their discontent, to give up or go away. On the other hand, according to the author, the greater the availability of exit, the lower the likelihood of protests.

In his 1970 work, Hirschman enhanced the dynamics between possible answers to deteriorating institutions by introducing the idea of loyalty. *Loyalty* (the propensity not to abandon an organization, even in the presence of other options) is identified as the element that can influence the cost-benefit analysis of whether to protest or to exit. The stronger the loyalty to an organization (or to a religion, a country, a product), the weaker the exit, especially if the alternatives are uncertain. In addition, it is easier for a loyal member to consider spending time and care on planning how their organization could succeed, once their complaints have been dealt with.

Hirschman suggested that a lack of understanding of these three competing pressures could speed up the decline of an organization or an institution. A typical example is emigration. In the last century, in order to avoid manifested dissent and collective actions, some countries implemented generous policies regarding emigration, *de facto* encouraging to emigrate that part of the population that seemed more inclined to voice¹.

As previously mentioned, the model claims that the easier the exit option is, the lower the likelihood of voice. However, with reference to the situation in Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall, Hirschman had to reconsider this simple mechanics: there are cases where exit, voice and loyalty are not mutually exclusive options. In 1989, in the GDR, the growing dynamics of emigration was the factor that determined the rise in protests and the call for political change by those who had chosen to stay. Exit can sometimes trigger voice, and they can both contribute to the same goal. The emergence of transnational migration, after 1990, has also shown that exit, voice and loyalty can coexist: in some cases, migrants want to maintain strong social ties and loyalty with their country of origin, but, at the same time, they show a willingness to participate (collectively, not just individually) in public life².

Hirschman above all recognized that exit is not just physical, but can also be mental and emotional. This is what happens in totalitarian regimes, in which dissenters are prevented from physically exiting their countries in order to go to other countries, but where voice is also complicated, as it could lead to heavy penalties, imprisonment, exile or even death. Emotional or mental exit is a very particular case, because it is extremely difficult to come out of this state. In the case of former totalitarian regimes, a tendency of the silent masses to exit may explain why the turnout to vote is often low when free elections are held in these countries for the first time.

These examples suggest that the mechanisms identified by Hirschman could also be applied to explain historical events and phenomena, under certain con-

¹ “Latin American powerholders have long encouraged their political enemies and potential critics to remove themselves from the scene through voluntary exile. The right of asylum, so generously practiced by all Latin American republics, could almost be considered as a ‘conspiracy in restraint of voice’” (Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, 60).

² Albert O. Hirschman, “Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History”, *World Politics* 45, 2 (1993), 173-202.

ditions: the decline of a great institution; demands for change that foster individual or collective actions; other institutions offering a real exit option. His classification could also be applied to Early Modern Europe, to the period in which Christians began to develop responses to deal with the crisis of the Roman Church, and when to cross or not cross borders (and which) became the question.

4. Decline

In the late Middle Ages, the Catholic Apostolic Church was struck by a general crisis which, for the first time since ancient times, did not just invest groups of individuals or specific geographical areas, but led the religious unity of Europe to an irreparable rift. At the beginning of the Early Modern age, the religious life of people was affected by two closely intertwined events, which influenced each level of society. The first was the increasing demand for spirituality; the second was the growing impatience toward the answers that the Catholic Church had given till then¹. At that time, at least in the West, no real alternatives were available. The Christian religion was an almost absolute monopoly, supported by an institution that had no rivals, which had previously absorbed dramatic turmoil and faced changes, but, at the end of Middle Ages, it seemed to have lost the will and the ability to search for remedies to its flaws. In the early 16th century, clerics, theologians and lay people throughout Europe were

¹ For general references on the dawn of Reformation and its roots, see Alistair E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1986); Heiko A. Oberman and C. Trinkhaus, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Reformation Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); Oberman, *Dawn of the Reformation. Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), especially his "Fourteenth Century Religious Thought: a Premature Profile", *ibid.*, 1-17. See also Elena Bonora, "La Riforma protestante", in *La Storia. Il Cinquecento: la nascita del mondo moderno*, Massimo Firpo and Nicola Tranfaglia eds., vol. VII (Torino: UTET-"La Biblioteca di Repubblica", 2004), 168-220; Ottavia Niccoli, *La crisi religiosa del '500* (Torino: SEI, 1975); Niccoli, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e vita religiosa tra Quattro e Cinquecento", in *La storia. I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Firpo and Tranfaglia eds., IV/2 (Torino: UTET, 1986), 105-134; Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia (1520-1580)* (Milano: Bollati Boringhieri, 1987), 71. Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, *Dai Paesi Bassi all'Italia: "Il Sommario dalla sacra Scrittura": Un libro proibito nella società italiana del Cinquecento* (Firenze: Olschki, 1997).

easily able to read the signs of the decline of the institution. This widespread perception started with the Protestant Reformation. Individuals and newborn States, whose support of the Church of Rome was stumbling, were forced to face the three alternatives indicated by Hirschman which, with the settling up of Protestant churches, seemed more feasible.



5. Voice, exit, loyalty

The first option was to stay in the institution without protesting. At that time, most individuals, rulers and States chose to be loyal to the Church of Rome. Among the other variables, social status, the context to which individuals belong and their geographical position appeared to be of great importance. People and governors could continue to be loyal, not only when they were satisfied with what the Church could give them—tangible or immaterial goods—but also when the costs of other options seemed too high: i.e. when the threat of death or losing one's assets for ever elicited the unlikelihood of exit.

The second alternative was abandoning the Catholic Church to join other Churches or sects. This meant adhering to a new ecclesiology, a new theological system, or a different discipline (pastoral or moral), and sometimes all three of them. From a political and economic point of view, some secular rulers found great benefits in breaking off with Rome, especially as far as the income from its wealth, properties and the appropriation of revenues and tithes are concerned. As for the simple faithful, there was no doubt that the other Churches or cults that had recently challenged the Church of Rome could offer to the neophyte competitive advantages: at the very least, they gave different hopes and even strategies to gain a decent afterlife. Sometimes, when facing a new belief-system, the identity construction and group identification dynamics were very

fast: newcomers could easily attain a profound feeling of belonging to a community, or even, in the case of exile, a safe place to live¹. However, for those subjects of the territories whose governors decided to remain loyal to the pope, the cost of defection was often unsustainable. After the peace of Augsburg, in 1555, the situation changed, but it seemed to condemn Calvinist Christians to be the renegades of Europe.

The third option was to raise a protest, a voice, with more or less radical contents and meanings, but whose main goal was to propose a renewal of the institution *ab imo*, from the top to the bottom.

6. Costs and benefits of an option

Exiting from the Roman Catholic Church (which Rome called “apostasy”), was, in some specific contexts, almost painless. In each and every part of Europe, people experienced different ways and timings of exiting, which often depended on the attitude of the individual sovereign States (i.e. their governors) toward the Reformation. However, in Early Modern Italy, in the pope’s territory, it was hardly ever easy: breaking with Rome very often meant either a life of exile, or having to refrain from publicly expressing one’s religious beliefs. The establishment of the Holy Office made the repression of voice and exit even more effective and systematic².

But even before 1540s, raising a protest in Italy—conveyed either by books or by leaflets, either from city squares or from pulpits³—surely cost a great deal⁴.

¹ On religious tradition shaping one’s feeling of belonging, see Stephen J. Barnett, “Where Was Your Church before Luther? Claims for the Antiquity of Protestantism Examined”, *Church History* 68, 1 (1999), 14-41.

² For further bibliography see also Elena Brambilla, *Alle origini del Sant’Uffizio. Penitenza, confessione e giustizia spirituale dal medioevo al XVI secolo* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2000); Brambilla, *La giustizia intollerante. Inquisizione e tribunali confessionali in Europa (secoli XVI-XVIII)* (Roma: Carocci, 2006).

³ Massimo Rospocher, *Il papa guerriero. Giulio II nello spazio pubblico europeo* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2015); On the European markets and book circulation, see I. Maclean, *Learning and the Market Place* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009).

⁴ Great humanists claiming for a deep Church reform, such as Erasmus and Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples, spent most of their lives and energies in the effort to become visible to the Church and

Public action (in its two different meanings: i.e. performed in public or regarding public goods, such as Church renewal) normally required a concerted, organized strategy and it needed time, money, patrons or friends in high places¹. Protesters, in the name of an interest shared by the community of the faithful, sometimes had to perform ambiguous activities and actions, fluctuating between a public profile and a hidden one². What Hirschman pointed out as a sort of covering law could also be applied to Early Modern Europe: the fewer the people involved in a protest, the more the problems related to voice. The main reason was that each of the hopeful innovators had to invest more time on proselytizing or propaganda (if only to move from one place to another) or to collect money for publications; at the same time, a greater effort and more subsidies were required from his or her friends and patrons.

In general, during the first decades of the 16th century, the voice strategy was generally burdensome and costly. Advocates of Church reform across Europe consumed a great amount of intellectual, political, physical and emotional energy: all those resources ran through dense and wide networks, especially through what was later called *respublica litterarum*. Italy, then divided into small States and assailed by foreign kings, was suffering from a situation that drastically reduced the chances of protesting and, at the same time, significantly raised the burdens. As previously mentioned, the foundations of the Sacred

to be listened to by the learned: even after their death, though, they could not escape the consequences of their fighting. See e.g. the classic Guy Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'intelligence des Écritures* (Genève: Droz, 1976). From the enormous bibliography on Erasmus see e.g. Cornelius Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) and James McConica, *Erasmus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). See also Augustin Renaudet, *Humanisme et Renaissance: Dante, Pétrarque, Standonck, Érasme, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Marguerite de Navarre, Rabelais, Guichardin, Giordano Bruno* (Genève: E. Droz, 1958).

¹ Ottavia Niccoli, "Un aspetto della propaganda religiosa nell'Italia del Cinquecento: opuscoli e fogli volanti", in *Libri, idee e sentimenti religiosi nel Cinquecento italiano* (Modena: Panini, 1987) 29-37. See also Firpo, *Riforma protestante*, 3-113; Paolo Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano del Cinquecento: questione religiosa e nicodemismo politico* (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1979), 43-281. On this season see Ronald K. Delph, Michelle Fontaine, and John J. Martin, eds., *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Contexts and Contestations* (Kirskville Missouri: Truman State University Press 2006).

² "Activity often involves one in a very different set of activities: the making of strange alliances, the concealment of one's real objectives and the betrayal of yesterday's friends": Albert O. Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 100.

Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition drastically aggravated this framework.

The setting up of Protestant Churches, between the 1530s and 1540s, drastically led to a drastic change in the way of protesting. The Church of Rome was forced to reckon with the possibility of people exiting: those who had previously appealed strongly for a renewal of the institution could now rely on actual patterns and parameters to shape his or her protest, or obtain incentives to defect. Now the pursuit of exiting meant more options to choose from; the pursuit of voice meant examples to follow, models and suggestion to put forward, different goals to achieve. Actually, from the Catholic point of view, taking care of an apostate who sought exile was a simple matter: namely, he or she was an enemy or a lost sheep that had to be managed properly—even though, as in GDR before 1989, Rome could not afford to lose human capital to Protestantism. A more sensitive issue was how to manage those who did not intend to push the disagreement to extreme consequences: people who did not want to leave their old Church, but who were not prepared to give up their protest either.

However, it should also be considered that the *renovatio* was not high up on the Church of Rome's agenda, even during the pontificate of Paul III who eventually summoned the Council. A radical change is not often taken into account as a valuable option by a declining institution. The Papacy had every good reason to believe that any change in doctrine or morals was due to raise hazardous Ecclesiological issues, which would undermine the internal structure, the role of the pope and the decision-making processes. How dangerous ecumenical Councils could be soon became clear when the internal struggles of the previous century were considered. Rome had no choice but to deal with voice and exit.

7. What voice was about

If we look at the long history of the Catholic Apostolic Church, it is easy to see that voice, as a reaction to flaws and faults of the monopolist religious institution in West Europe, was never a generic, all-encompassing package. Starting from an awareness of the decline, the average dissenter needed to define and

choose the key action areas to which claims for renewal, restoration or radical change should be addressed. In the 16th century, the proponents of a *reformatio* normally articulated their request by referring to the two main purviews of a religious institution: the soft core, including the doctrine and the so-called ‘morals’, and the hard core, that is, the political and the ecclesiological sphere. When the Roman Curia was forced to consider the crisis, it started a process of re-legitimation of its authority that took into account the soft core, and basically rejected the hard core.

The protest could have been related to doctrine: an extended core belief system made up of dogmatic standards, theology, canonical law and its interpretations; codifications, instructions, principles and positions taken by popes, councils, bishops and sometimes organizations inside the institution, as well as theoretical proposals. In the 16th century, this impressive number of elements composing the Church *traditio* was still far from being clear and understandable to everyone. It was mainly the Council of Trent, although in a hasty and incomplete manner, that highlighted the urgent need to systematize what a catholic was supposed to believe in, and what sources of authority were supposed to be the real foundations of the doctrine.

Alternatively (or in parallel), the orthopraxis could be at stake. This was a large field involving very different issues: concerns about purity and cultural integrity, about the transmission of ethical systems influenced by ‘tradition’ (i.e. *traditio* for the Catholic Church) and their enforcement. It included the set of practices, styles and behavior which formed the pastoral *exemplum* of clergy, but also the religious behavior and worldly practices of the faithful: namely, the so-called ‘reform of morals’. In the Early Modern Church, voice referred specifically to pastoral care; to the core question of the bishops’ diocesan residences¹;

¹ On bishops see Mario Fois, “Vescovo e chiesa locale nel pensiero ecclesiologico”, in *Vescovi e diocesi in Italia dal XIV alla metà del XVI secolo. Atti del VII Convegno di Storia della Chiesa in Italia (Brescia, 21-25 settembre 1987)*, eds. Giuseppina De Sandre Gasparini, Antonio Rigon, Francesco Giovanni Battista Trolese, and Gian Maria Varanini, vol. I (Roma: Herder Editrice e Libreria, 1990) 27-81; Fois, “La Riforma dei vescovi al concilio di Trento: una cesura tra due epoche”, *Bollettino storico per la provincia di Novara* 84 (1993), 49-86. See also Joseph Bergin, “The Counter-Reformation Church and Its Bishops” *Past and Present* 165 (1999), 30-73. See Fragnito, “Cultura umanistica e riforma religiosa: il *De officio episcopi*”, in *Gasparo Contarini: un magistrato veneziano al servizio della cristianità* (Firenze: Olschki, 1988), 79-211; see also the English translation of Gasparo Contarini, *The Office of a Bishop (De officio viri boni et probi episcopi)*, ed. John Patrick Donnelly (Milwaukee:

to simony and corruption from high to low ranks of the Church's hierarchy; of devotional behavior, rites and charity structures. In fact, when talking about the 'reform of morals', people were mainly referring to the behavior of the ecclesiastical hierarchy: the moral attitude and pastoral skills of all the members of the clergy, which was generally considered as loose, even unleashed. Moreover, even the conduct of the flock was exposed to criticism. Both components, that is, the pastors and the faithful, were involved in different ways in a set of behavioral practices, rituals and routines, which depended on the devotional apparatus and even, albeit indirectly, on the organization of charities. Therefore, orthopraxis was a multi-dimensional universe. It was bound, above all, to affect the faithful's consciousness and feelings at every level of society, and to arouse indignation and frustration about Rome's failure to deal with abuses and corruption. Conversely, it was also the sphere of those religious practices that governed the lives of the faithful, according to their doctrine, and which relied on the mediation of the clergy. Therefore it was an important target for both confessional foes and collective actions.

Among the reform issues that had been blossoming since the birth of the Catholic Church, doctrine and morals (orthopraxy) were often considered to be closely connected, and even hard to tell apart. Together, they embody the cognitive, ritual and moral backbone of the Church, the *quod* and the *quomodo credendum est*, which linked the faithful to the establishment, and the flock to the shepherds. They were the two main points the Council of Trent had intended to discuss. However, at the end, the decision to give priority to doctrine alone undermined the credibility of the Synod, and accentuated the rift with the Protestants, against the wishes of many, especially Emperor Charles V.

Finally voice could invest ecclesiology, the most feared issue after Luther had declared his intention to oust the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy. Since the first spread of rumors about the oncoming opening of the Synod, the question of the best organizational structure for the Church had been *de facto* removed by the list of topics¹. However, this issue appeared and disappeared during the meetings, every now and then. It was seemingly less contentious than some

Marquette University Press, 2002).

¹ On ecclesiology issues see for instance Eleonora Belligni, *Auctoritas e Potestas. Marcantonio De Dominis fra l'Inquisizione e Giacomo I* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2003).

dogmatic points, such as the doctrine of the justification and the sacraments, which were used to point out the differences between Catholics and Protestants. This was partly because everyone knew that the Tridentine—like any other Synod—would inevitably increase the struggle for primacy between the pope and bishops. For at least a century, the organization and distribution of power within the institution had to be reconsidered in light of the evolution of a context in which, with the appearance of territorial States, many bishops had found new, powerful leaders. For some popes, and mainly for Paul III and Paul IV, the best option was not to call a Council, the second best was to delay the sessions, and the third involved the chance of undermining the assembly's authority as a legitimate source of law for the future of Christianity.



8. Four different responses to the decline

Doctrine and morals on the one hand, and institutional and organizational remodeling on the other: the need to define the spheres of reform led to the formation of several solutions, which arose from the intersection of these two variables. The solutions corresponded to the particular sides that were in conflict for about a century, starting with Luther's theses and ending at the beginning of the 17th century, when new issues raised inside the Church led people like Paolo Sarpi and Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino to start a very different kind of war.

There is no need to point out that these were ideal positions, which were not so clearly defined at the time. In the real world, individuals and groups (and individuals within groups and organizations) belonged to multiple contexts and joined many associations, some of which overlapped and crossed. People had different belief systems, which conditioned the way they read the context and

defined the situation; different intermediate and final goals; different strategies of coalition-building and particular, idiosyncratic qualities and assets: family traditions; kinship and patronage networks¹, whether local or not. They were tied by relationships given by social status, heritage or wealth; by ownership and work; by loyalty to an institution or to a single organization or power structure, such as a religious order or a congregation of cardinals; by their theological education; by adherence to a faction or a party, to an academy, even to a style or a literary coterie. However, in order to look at the whole picture of protests triggered by the decline of the Church, it could be useful to try to define the main alignments that existed in spite of the diversity of their members. In this contentious age, players were usually divided into four fractions, that resulted from the two aforementioned variables: on one hand, the longing for the reform of doctrine and orthopraxis; on the other, the willingness to reassess the ecclesiology, to reexamine hierarchy, to plan a new distribution of power by reconsidering decision making processes, roles and appliances inside the governmental structures of the Church. These four fractions did not at first cross the boundaries of heterodoxy, but the creation of the Holy Office, which was seemingly not very sensitive to the differences between enemies, made it difficult to tell voice from heresy.

The first group gathered all those who were favorable to both reform guidelines, albeit with different degrees of radicalism. For these people, changes in doctrine, morality and devotion should have gone hand in hand with a revision of the distribution of power within the Church, which might eventually have contemplated the suppression of the entire Church hierarchy. These ideas brought them closer to the European Protestants and even to radicals, sectarians and undogmatics (who, at that time, sometimes mingling with Lutherans and especially with Calvinist communities, helped to create the particular approach of the Italians to the Reformation)².

The second group included all those who considered that a thorough reform of doctrine and morals would be appropriate, but who did not want to touch

¹ See e.g. the references in Liesbeth Geever and Mirella Marini, eds., *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities Politics and Culture in Europe, 1650-1750* (London: Routledge, 2016).

² On one of the most creative experiences see Adriano Prosperi, *L'eresia del Libro Grande: Storia di Giorgio Siculo e della sua setta* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000).

Rome's hierarchical system. They wanted in particular to preserve the structure that then existed: a *caput*, supported by the consistory, a sacred college of cardinals with senatorial functions; the *membra* made by ordinary bishops, secular and regular clergy in charge of local government. Those Italians who had approved of Luther's first allegations (the initial phase of Protestantism), after the setting up of Protestant churches, ended up sharing this second position, which mustered, e.g., most of Juan de Valdés followers¹ or, across the Alps, Queen Marguerite of Navarre's large network in France and Germany².

A third position gathered together those who rejected any possibility or opportunity of voice. This was an over-interpretation of loyalty, as not only did it mean abstention from voice, but it also found it necessary to prevent and punish any kind of protest. Some members of this group believed that no intervention on doctrine, on morals or institutional structure would be of benefit to the institution. Some others believed that no kind of reform would be able to increase feelings of devotion, boost religious identity, govern daily behavior or regulate the religious life of Christians. Still others placed a series of political, prudential considerations before any plan (even if hypothetically good) for amending things. Voice was as risky as the Council: it was better to leave things as they were. This particular kind of loyalty had two requirements: first, the doctrinal system of the Catholic Church needed to be maintained, and even

¹ On the followers of Valdés and the members 'spirituali' of the 'Ecclesia Viterbiensis' (especially cardinals Reginald Pole and Giovanni Morone) see the catalogue of the exhibition *L'uomo del concilio. Il cardinale Giovanni Morone tra Roma e Trento nell'età di Michelangelo*, eds. Roberto Panchetti, Domenica Primerano, and Massimo Firpo (Trento: Editrice Temi, 2009). See especially Firpo, "'Amorbato delle cose lutherane' o 'fidei caholicae propugnator'? Giovanni Morone tra Inquisizione e concilio", *ibid.*, 19-47.

² See Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, duchesse d'Alençon, reine de Navarre (1492-1549): Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2 voll., Paris: Honoré Champion, 1930, and Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister, Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549) and Her Evangelical Network* (Leiden, Brill, 2009). About her Italian network see mainly Richard Cooper, "Marguerite de Navarre et la Réforme Italienne", *Marguerite de Navarre 1492-1992. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Pau*, 1992, eds. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan: Éd. Interuniversitaires, 1995), 159-188. See also Verdun-Louis Saulnier, "Marguerite de Navarre, Vittoria Colonna et quelques autres amis italiens de 1540", *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone. France et Italie dans la culture européenne*, vol. I, *Moyen Age et Renaissance* (Genève: Slatkine, 1980) 281-295. On Marguerite's political power see Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre. Mother of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

strengthened, in order to elicit the gap with the Protestants and with the Radical Reformation; second, the hierarchy should not suffer organizational or procedural innovations. For these people, in fact, structural changes in the Church must not alter the balance of power, but rather ease a process toward centralization and absolutism. The so-called ‘Intransigenti’, whom Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa, the future Pope Paul IV, gathered into an ‘Inquisition party’ after the birth of the congregation, were the typical representatives of this fraction.

These men, well aware of the dysfunction and degeneration of the clergy, found an exogenous factor to blame: the Protestant heresy, which had infected the whole of Europe, boosting corruption and degradation inside the institution, became the main target. Paradoxically, stressing the need for fighting an external enemy—which had become internal—represented not only, as previously mentioned, the downside of loyalty, but a kind of particular voice. A significant example, which dates back to the pre-Tridentine Italian period, is certainly the well-known 1532 memorial to Clement VII, written by Carafa. This text (called *Memorialaccio*) conjugated vehement critiques toward the institution and complaints about heresy spreading outside, but also inside the Church.

The last group was composed of those who, considering the negligence, malpractice and ecclesiastical corruption of that time, did not look upon a deep doctrinal reform as a priority. They instead believed that any attempt to restore and to re-legitimate Christian religious life should have been subordinate to the renewal of the ecclesiastical ‘body-politic’, the Church *in capite et in membris*. However, apart from the metaphor, their aim was to revise the internal decision-making procedures so that a profound ecclesiological revolution would take place, shaking the Church to its foundations, thus clearing the way toward some of the other religions’ views about both government and governance. In their opinion, ecclesiology was the cornerstone of a new religious life, while all the other issues should have been judged by each person’s internal forum. Among the supporters of this position, there were ‘designers of irenic utopias’, although these figures were more frequent between the 16th and 17th century, as described by Delio Cantimori in his chronology of Italian Evangelism¹.

¹ Delio Cantimori, *Prospettive di storia ereticale* (Torino: Einaudi 1958), 30-31. On Cantimori’s ‘paradigm’, see Anne Jacobson-Schutte, “Periodization of Sixteenth-Century Italian Religious His-

This classification has been made considering ideal types. It is not immediately easy to locate people, interest groups and factions in these alignment; at the same time, belonging to a particular fraction does not explain all of the stances and behavior of the individuals and coalitions, or their preferences and political choices¹. However, this typology could lead to the drawing up of some hypotheses about the Early Modern conflict that arose concerning the reform of the Church and might help to raise a few points that could help to explain the failure of voice in post-Reformation Italy.

9. How Rome survived exit and voice

In the 16th century, the Roman Curia, holding on to unpleasant memories about the 15th conciliarist movement, was not inclined to engage in any kind of major reform². In general, many post-Wittenberg popes tried hard to avoid calling (or re-calling) a general Synod: they instead reserved the right to choose the methods, times and guidelines of a seemingly urgent restoration. In fact, apart from the popes, the Italian prelates were not particularly sympathetic or confident in the idea of a Council either.

The good will of a few clerics, which some historians saw as members of ‘Catholic Reformation’, met the strong resistance expressed by popes like Paul III, by most of the Italian bishops and cardinals and, last but not least, by the ‘Intransigent party’ supporting the Roman Inquisition. As always happens in declining organizations, the upper echelons of the Church were ready to fight to defend their political and cultural identity, and to guard their prerogatives:

tory: The Post-Cantimori Paradigm Shift”, *The Journal of Modern History* 61, 2 (1989), 269-284.

¹ Eleonora Belligni, “Le antinomie della Controriforma. Note in margine al libro di Franco Motta ‘Bellarmino. Una teologia politica della Controriforma’”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 119, 1 (2007), 407-442. See the discussion of these issues in Giuseppe Alberigo, “Concezioni della Chiesa al concilio di Trento e nell’età moderna”, in *Il Concilio di Trento: istanze di riforma e aspetti dottrinali*, ed. Massimo Marcocchi (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), 136-146.

² See Marek Sygut, *Natura e origine della potestà dei vescovi nel Concilio di Trento e nella dottrina successiva (1545-1869)* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1998), 257-258. About the primacy of the pope and the ‘heretical propositions’ condemned by Sorbonne theologians and by the Council of Constance (similar to Wycliff’s and Hus’ statements), see Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil, *Opere edite e inedite*, tomo IV (Napoli: Tipografia del Diogene, 1855), 307-337 (part. 326).

for such purposes, in just a few decades, they restored a control system that allowed them to resort to violence, repression and censorship. How was it possible to manage the internal dissidents? The Church leaders, who were hostile to any change, elaborated two possible answers. The first was to repress voice, that is, to deal with it as if it were exit or the betrayal of faith, prosecuting and sentencing it to silence. The second was to pretend to take voice into account. In its long and interrupted sessions, the Synod of Trent obtained a double result. The first was to reassert orthodoxy boundaries, thus highlighting the distance of the Catholic Church from Protestant Churches, and at the same time, refusing the possibility of a real doctrinal revision. The second was to appeal to the ecumenical assembly in a shallow, tokenistic way, in order to testify the good will of the Roman Church about *renovatio* and, on the other hand, to give credibility to measures in ecclesiology¹ and orthopraxy which, in reality, were bound to be ignored² or discussed elsewhere.

10. Combining exit, voice and loyalty

The two solutions, that is, repression and image restoration, are not necessarily alternatives, and were surely not in Tridentine Italy. Rome produced an articulated response that left dissenters few chances of countering the measures taken to control them. For many of them, abandoning their claims and reform plans, that is, returning to a position of unconditional loyalty, was out of the question. At the same time, apostasy could have led them to martyrdom or flight, as any explicit protest would have endangered their lives, their beloved ones' safety and reputation, and their properties. However, there was also the possibility of pursuing a dissimulation strategy³.

¹ Eleonora Belligni, "Il Concilio di Trento tra storia e apologia: Pietro Sforza Pallavicino", in *Trent and Beyond. The Council, Other Powers, Other Cultures*, eds. Michela Catto and Adriano Prosperi (Turnhout: Brepols 2017) (forthcoming).

² See on this issue Giovanni Romeo, Michele Mancino, eds., *Clero criminale. Chiesa e onore degli ecclesiastici nell'Italia della Controriforma* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013).

³ On the twin concepts of simulation and dissimulation see e.g. Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1990). For a rich bibliography see Jean-Pierre Cavallé, "Bibliographie: 'Mensonge,

Many chose to escape from their Church, without crossing territorial boundaries, that is, by just hiding their actual religious sentiment and hoping in the slowness or in the partial ineffectiveness of repressive policies. Theirs was an exit, even though not a specifically spelt out one, as in the case of many heterodox communities that survived until the last decades of the 16th century by hiding. In fact, it is more appropriate to speak of a simulation of faith than the opposite.

However, another behavior was known as dissimulation. One could remain loyal to the institution, even without endorsing some of its creeds and values, which meant fighting a silent or clandestine battle against specific issues or ignoring them, while being aware that the time of public criticism had expired¹.

This attitude has been called ‘Nicodemism’, after a famous pamphlet by John Calvin. According to the theologian, ‘Nicodemists’ were people who, like Nicodemus in Matthew’s Gospel, refused to compromise themselves openly and publicly; or, in alternative, they were pretending to be faithful while despising the word of God in the depth of their hearts. They were mostly intellectuals, as specified by the author: “Ceste bende est quasi toute de gens de lettres. Non pas que toutes gens de lettres en soyent. Car i’aiderois mieux que toutes les sciences humaines fussent exterminées de la terre, que si elles estoyent cause de refroidir ainsi le zeile des Chrestiens et les destourner de Dieu”². In fact, Calvin had some

tromperie, simulation et dissimulation”, *Les Dossiers du Grihl, Secret et mensonge. Essais et comptes rendus*, mis en ligne le 20 octobre 2012, <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/document2103.html>; Cavaillé, “Mensonge et politique au début de l’âge moderne”, *ibid.*, mis en ligne le 25 avril 2013, <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/5936>.

¹ See Jean Pierre Cavaillé, “Pour une histoire de la dis/simulation—Per una storia della dis/simulazione”, *ibid.*, 2 (2009), mis en ligne le 07 février 2013, <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3666>. On simulation and dissimulation strategies in Europe, see Miriam Eliav-Ufeldon and Tamar Herzog, eds., *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe* (New York City: Springer, 2010).

² Jean Calvin, *Excuse de Jehan Calvin a Messieurs les Nicodemites, sur la complaincte qu’ilz font de sa trop grand rigueur* (Geneva: Jean Girard, 1544). It had many editions and revisions: see the bibliography added to *The Works of John Calvin on microfiche*, ed. Francis M. Higman (Geneva: Institut d’Histoire de la Reformation, 1997). Now the pamphlet has been published with a long introduction in Giovanni Calvino, *Contro nicodemiti, anabattisti e libertini*, ed. Laura Ronchi De Michelis (Torino: Claudiana, 2006). See Carlos M. N. Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), especially chap. 7: Calvin against the Nicodemists, 243. See also, Francis M. Higman, “The Question of Nicodemism”,

doubts about the use of his neologism, in which the reference to Nicodemus must have seemed to him a bit too flattering: his indecision was even more evident in later editions of his pamphlet¹.

Nicodemism could be chosen for three possible reasons. The first, and most obvious one, was opportunism. At that time, according to John Calvin, an ‘opportunist’ was any man or woman who did not sympathize with the idea of martyrdom, prison or exile *religionis causa*: people who, being “déliçats”, did not want the extreme adventure of religious migration, which did not always end up with the person being happy ever after. Actually, Calvin was speaking about simulation.

The second reason could be found in a sincere and unreserved adherence to the idea of *unam Ecclesiam*, to its hierarchies and decision-making processes, or in a low opinion of the Ecclesiological alternatives given by the other Churches and cults. In this case, differences in theology and moral issues could not be considered strong incentives to leave the Church. Backers of this position were often driven by the myth of harmony, peace and unity, which were then regarded as supreme values, or by a genuine disgust for divisions and fractures, and sometimes from the elitist idea that not everyone was able to access the deepest mysteries of faith without serious consequences². Many of those who, in the early decades of the century, had shared some of the most common reform ideas under the banner of a generic “evangelism”, later on ended up sharing this point of view. The third motivation instead pertains to those people who were genuinely indifferent to both theological doctrine and ecclesiologi-

Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis custos, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Frankfurt/Main: P. Lang, 1984); Higman, “Calvin polémiste”, *Lire et découvrir. La circulation des idées au temps de la Réforme* (Genève: Droz, 1998), 403-41.

¹ Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, “Nicodemism and Deconfessionalisation in Early Modern Europe”, *Les Dossiers du Grihl [En ligne], Les dossiers de Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, Secret et mensonge. Essais et comptes rendus*, 30/05/2012, <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/5376> says that Calvin “was not satisfied with the term (which seems to imply that we should blame Nicodemus for his behavior, which can not be precisely the case). If he tells about Nicodemites, is that people who he calls by this name, assert that they follow the example of Nicodemus; which is for him an abuse”.

² See Firpo, *Riforma protestante ed eresia in Italia*, 129-141. Cfr. Maurice Causse, “Les dissimulations de Marguerite de Navarre et l’Aventure Nicodémite”, *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 132 (1986), 347-390, 348.

cal theory, who elected the internal forum¹ as last appeal venue for social and ethical behavior. In this last group, it would be possible to include, *e.g.*, the proponents of an ethics-based religion, who were substantially indifferent to the institutional apparatus, to rituals, to structured creeds and articles of beliefs.

Historical studies on Nicodemism have always referred to the two latter reasons, which sometimes overlap and melt into one. In truth, the term ‘Nicodemites’ was made up by Calvin to define the former position, *i.e.* the cunning, opportunistic concealment of one’s faith; and that was because the author’s goal was to consider the other two forms of behavior—which he perceived to be far more dangerous than any Protestant Church or cult—as hypocritical and coward. But when contemporary historians speak of ‘Nicodemites’, they do not mean either the ones who simulated orthodoxy for convenience, or those who justified an *a priori* strategy. Of course some people, forced to repress their voice, might be as well trying to avoid a risk. When one’s personal freedom, security and family is at risk, boundaries between one’s convenience and normal instinct of survival very often fade².

Nicodemism, as it was defined in 20th century historical studies, was not a camouflage tactic or a set of alibis and mitigating circumstances. It was instead a doctrinal position in the form of a religious initiation path, which one could undertake with the awareness of its theoretical premises, though not always with the knowledge of the religious and philosophical consequences that might arise along the way. Hence, its two theoretical pillars can be inferred: the first, which states it is legitimate to hide one’s own religious feelings; the second, dissimulation of faith is not sinful (and thus punishable as a religious offence) because ethical behavior is judged only by an internal forum. Nicodemism suggests that remaining firmly loyal to an institution and raising a protest are not always mu-

¹ On internal forum see Jacques Chiffolleau, “‘Ecclesia de occultis non iudicat’. L’Eglise, le secret, l’occulte du XII^e au XV^e siècle”, *Micrologus, Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies* 13 (2006), *Il segreto nel Medioevo*, 359–481, <http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00144037>. See also Paolo Prodi, *Una storia della giustizia. Dal pluralismo dei fori al moderno dualismo tra coscienza e diritto* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2000) and Adriano Prosperi, “Confessione e dissimulazione”, *Les Dossiers du Grihl [En ligne]*, 2 (2009), <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3671>.

² On the 17th-century political turn of the idea of dissimulation see Rosario Villari, *Elogio della dissimulazione. La lotta politica nel Seicento* (Roma: Laterza, 1987) discussing mainly Torquato Accetto, *Della dissimulazione onesta* (Napoli: Egidio Longo, 1641).

tually exclusive options, although the Roman Catholic Church never stopped to consider any voice, disguised or not, as anything but heresy and treachery¹.

11. Nicodemism as a hybrid solution

According to Hirschman's tripartite model, Nicodemism could be recoded as a particular kind of voice: a hybrid answer, which is not completely unambiguous, to the decline of the Roman Catholic Church. It shows similarities with both the 1989 GDR situation and the transnational migration that occurred in the early 1990s: two examples that were analyzed by the author in a subsequent revision of his 1970 essay².

Here, the discussion is not about people simulating loyalty and concealing their exit (e.g. converting to Protestantism): their loyalty was not sincere, and they hid their true religious inclinations³.

However, the real Nicodemism made the interplay between exit, voice and loyalty quite a tricky matter. The Nicodemites were loyal: they had consciously

¹ For classic studies on Italian Nicodemism, in addition to Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani*, see Antonio Rotondò, "Atteggiamenti della vita morale italiana del Cinquecento. La pratica nicodemita", *Rivista Storica Italiana* 79 (1967), 991-1030; Carlo Ginzburg, *Il nicodemismo. simulazione et dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500* (Einaudi: Torino, 1970); Salvatore Caponetto, "Fisionomia del nicodemismo italiano", in *Movimenti ereticali in Italia e in Polonia nei secoli XVI-XVII. Atti del convegno Italo-Polacco, Firenze, 22-24 settembre 1971* (Firenze: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 1974), 203-209. For European Nicodemism see the introduction to Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, *Dis/simulations. Jules-César Vanini, François La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto, Religion, morale et politique au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002); Andrew Pettegree, "Nicodemism and the English Reformation", in *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Farnham: Aldershot, 1996). See also Antonio Rotondò, *Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento* (Firenze: Olschki, 2008).

² Albert O. Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History", *World Politics* 45, 2 (1993), 173-202; Bert Hoffmann, "Bringing Hirschman Back", *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty in the Politics of Transnational Migration, The Latin Americanist* 54, 2 (2010), 2, 57-73. Matthew M. C. Allen, "Hirschman and Voice", *The Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, eds. Adrian Wilkinson, Jimmy Donaghey, Tony Dundon, Richard B. Freeman (Cheltenham and New York: Edward Elgar Press 2014), 36- 51.

³ For an example of long-term dissimulation, see Pierroberto Scaramella, "'Sotto manto de santità'. L'Inquisizione romana, i Calabrovaldesi e l'accusa di simulazione religiosa", *Les Dossiers du Grihl* [En ligne], 2 (2009), <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3668>.

chosen to remain Catholic. But, following their true religious convictions, they were attempted to break down the walls between voice and exit: two options that were considered to be mutually exclusive, at least at the same time. Normally, remaining loyal and raising one's voice (as e.g. patriots do) is considered more rational behavior, than nurturing intentions to reform an institution while planning to leave it.

Yet Nicodemism conjugated voice and exit. In fact, from the point of view of their enemies, the Nicodemites were true apostates, who had clearly chosen to exit and could easily be compared with heretics. First, the dissimulation concealed a silent threat of exit, especially since the Protestant Churches' strong competition made the danger more tangible, and any kind of protest more extreme. Second, being loyal despite many reservations (though purely doctrinal), appeared to be a form of religious treason, or was seen by the Church in exactly this way. Finally, when Nicodemism concealed indifferentism, it was really a sort of universal exit, that covered all the Churches and sects and put all the options on an equal footing. In truth, the very idea of concealment was in itself frightening, because it was an empty box that (hypothetically) could hide any belief, any value, or any attitude.

In reality, there were many reasons to be frightened. The hybrid solution *par excellence*, which could include virtually any choice and combine loyalty, voice and exit, was the Nicodemism of the so-called 'radicals', that is, the most creative religious and philosophical masterpiece of Italian heterodox thought. Followers of indifferentism, single experimenters who pushed the Reformation as far as religious disbelief, some of the most radical manifestation of the Valdesian movement: these extreme religious experiences came from Nicodemism. The spread of Anti-Trinitarianism, Antinomianism and 'libertine' ideas, up to what after Lucien Febvre can be called "l'incroyance"¹, allowed any Church, even

¹ Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1942). Against Febvre's classical thesis recent studies asserted the existence of disbelief in 16th-century Europe: Jean-Pierre Albert, "À propos de l'incroyance (XIII^e-XVI^e siècle)", *Les Dossiers du Grihl* [En ligne], *Les dossiers de Jean-Pierre Cavallé, Libertinage, athéisme, irrégion. Essais et bibliographie*, mis en ligne le 22 février 2011, <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/4579>; Jean-Pierre Cavallé, "Les frontières de l'inacceptable. Pour un réexamen de l'histoire de l'incrédulité", *ibid.*, *Les limites de l'acceptable*, mis en ligne le 08 janvier 2016, <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/4746>. See e.g. Luca Addante, *Eretici e libertini nel Cinquecento italiano*, Roma-Bari: Laterza

Anabaptism, to suffer exit: although it is in fact difficult to talk about a proper, blatant exit strategy. The absolute primacy of the internal forum made exiting something of a foolish, illogical act. It was legitimate to simulate Catholic membership, mainly because it was not worth leaving the Church of Rome in order to join another Church or sect: individuals could and should have responded to their own conscience. The ethical example of Christ was talking about a man who had not drastically given up his religion.

However, radical groups and individual experiences of creative religion were not the only realities that could associate loyalty to voice and exit under the sign of Nicodemism. Among others, an outstanding example was that of the small heretical community of Renée de France, a true religious hybridization jewel that arose in the Duchy of Ferrara, which, from the third to the sixth decades of the 16th century, had been mixing Calvinism with the loyalty for the Catholic Church and with the silent voice of who, within the community, explicitly theorized Nicodemism¹.



12. How could voice be ineffective?

Nicodemism combines exit, voice, and loyalty, but, at the same time, it seems to be a strategy that Hirschman would have ascribed to dissenters in totalitarian regimes: to repress their own need to protest and to give up defection, in order to organize a mental and emotional resistance, subjected to the internal forum, sometimes in solitude, but always in incognito². Considering the experiences

2010) and Addante, *Valentino Gentile e il dissenso religioso nel Cinquecento. Dalla Riforma italiana al radicalismo europeo* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2014).

¹ On Renée de France see the bibliography in Eleonora Belligni, *Renata di Francia (1510-1575). Un'eresia di corte* (Torino: Utet, 2011).

² Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, 96-98.

of the 20th century, Hirschman seems to believe that the choice of dissimulation and silence would drastically reduce—in the future—the power of voice and exit (or their combination) to affect the change of an institution and to promote effective reforms. His conclusions, in fact, highlight the link between covert strategies and exhaustion of passion in collective action: those who have learned to silence their dissatisfaction, even when they gain the chance to be heard, even when there are new reform issues, new alliances and new incentives to voice, normally refrain from mobilization, from public life, from being part of speech communities¹. But those who keep their discontent hidden, obeying their philosophical beliefs—such as Nicodemists—are particularly exposed to this fate. They are likely to repress the positive and constructive side of dissent, the one that makes some dissatisfied members of an organization kinds of ‘connoisseur’, i.e. particularly skilled in seizing decline in the quality of services (immaterial goods, in this instance) and in planning possible interventions².

Besides the many Calvinist communities—whose heritage still survives today in the Italian Evangelical Church—Italian heterodoxy was very often compromised by Nicodemism, although in many different ways³. In the end, none of these communities actually survived the Inquisition. Above all, any claim for reform, coming from outside (and often inside) the hierarchy, had been suppressed for many, many years. As mentioned before, the most efficient agents of repression were the groups that contrasted the idea of renewal in both the doctrine and moral sphere and in ecclesiology. The most notable of these was the ‘Intransigent party’, founded by Gian Pietro Carafa, who invented the interpretation of the Counter-Reformation as suppression of dissent. On the one

¹ Hirschman, “Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the GDR”, 173-202.

² Hirschmann, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, 47-50.

³ The spread of Nicodemism in 16th century Italy has been especially studied through the experience of the followers of Spanish religious leader Juan de Valdés. See Marcel Bataillon, “Juan de Valdés nicodémite?”, in *Aspects du libertinisme au XVI^e siècle. Actes du colloque international de Sommières* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974), 93-103. In addition to his books quoted above, see also Massimo Firpo, *Gli affreschi di Pontormo a San Lorenzo. Eresia, politica e cultura nella Firenze di Cosimo I* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997); Firpo, *Vittore Soranzo vescovo ed eretico. Riforma della Chiesa e Inquisizione nell’Italia del Cinquecento* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2006); Firpo, “La Riforma italiana”, in Antonio Brucioli, *Humanisme et évangélisme entre Réforme et Contre-Réforme*, ed. Élise Boillet (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), 7-20; Firpo, “Introduzione”, in *Juan de Valdés, Alfabeto cristiano. Domande e risposte. Della predestinazione. Catechismo*, ed. Firpo (Torino: Einaudi, 1994), VI-CL.

hand, it is true that members of this party saw dissent not as a subject of negotiation, but of judicial proceedings. However, on the other hand, the particular, hybrid nature of Nicodemism—a voice torn between loyalty and exit—alienated the chance and the opportunity of negotiating at any level. Many ideas were extinguished in the utter silence of Italian public life, because of the almost total absence of voice. In just a few cases, voice was able to survive, by clinging to someone’s mind and conscience.

Once voice had been suppressed, the leaders of the organization were nevertheless forced to discuss issues that had been brought to light. Conflict between groups within the Roman curia took the place of protests and reform proposals. In the second half of the 16th century, new dynamics seemed to grow dramatically fast inside the Curia: a fierce struggle took place between the congregations of cardinals, and important prelates were charged with heresy, defamed and brought to trial, although they were sometimes acquitted, thanks to a change in coalition or establishment; some popes made great efforts to distance themselves from predecessors, some interest groups had second thoughts and new enemies, different kinds of heretics, emerged¹. This clash spread outside the Roman Church, to courts and centers of secular power, to universities and tribunals, among bishops and cardinals, during conclaves. No longer the struggles looked like claims for reform and voice, but more like an open war for power. When the Italian heterodox season had become just a fading memory, the conflict inside the Church would not die out.

These trends only began to unravel when Paolo Sarpi’s *Istoria del Concilio*

¹ On the interplay between congregations I already quoted Fragnito’s researches on Inquisition and Index. On the Sacred Congregation of Rites see Miguel Gotor, *I beati del papa. Santità, Inquisizione e obbedienza in età moderna* (Firenze: Olschki, 2002); on the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide see Giovanni Pizzorusso, “La Congregazione *de Propaganda Fide* e gli ordini religiosi: conflittualità nel mondo delle missioni del XVII secolo”, *Cheiron* 43-44 (2005), 197-240. About Inquisition and confession see Giovanni Romeo, “Confessione dei peccati e confessori nell’Italia della Controriforma: cosa dire del Seicento?”, *Studi Storici* 51, 4 (2010), 967-1002. On the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and of the Council, see Antonio Menniti Ippolito, “1664. Un anno della Chiesa universale. Saggio sull’italianità del papato in età moderna” (Roma: Viella, 2011). On a world-history perspective see *Administrer les sacrements en Europe et au Nouveau Monde: la Curie romaine et les Dubia circa Sacramenta*, eds. Paolo Broggio, Charlotte De Castelnu-L’Estoile and Giovanni Pizzorusso (Roma: Ecole française de Rome, 2009).

*Tridentino*¹ forced Rome to reflect on the ideological and political struggles it had fought from the spread of Protestant ideas to the first period of the Italian Counter-Reformation. Sarpi clearly identified coalitions, options and sides, and related them to explicit conflicts and to the underground power games played inside the Catholic Church since the beginning of the Council of Trent until the first decade of the 17th century. His idea of the Council was that the change so long invoked was not embraced, but easily removed at the end of the Synod works. Despite any claim for *renovatio*, the Church had chosen the endorsement of contentious politics, which led to the total extinction of voice.

¹ Francis Oakley, "Complexities of Context: Gerson, Bellarmine, Sarpi, Richer and the Venetian Interdict of 1606", *Politics and Eternity: Studies in the History of Medieval and Early-Modern Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill 1999), 188-217. The first London edition of Sarpi's *Historia* is under the name of Pietro Soave Polano, *Historia del Concilio Tridentino. Nella quale si scoprono tutti gl'artificii della corte di Roma, per impedire che né la verità di dogmi si palesasse, né la riforma del papato e della Chiesa si trattasse* (Londra: appresso Giovan(ni) Billio Regio Stampatore, 1619).



Pasquale Cati, The Church Triumphant treads on heresy, with the Council of Trent in the background (1588, Cappella Altemps, S. Maria in Trastevere, Roma). Photo: Anthony Majanlahti.