

Italy: Roman ‘tyranny’ and radical Catholic opposition

This final case study provides another different context of the Enlightenment. The experience of Catholic dissidents in the Italian peninsular provides some similarities with the struggles in France, but the very different politico-religious context of the Italian peninsular means that differences tend to outweigh similarities. Differences aside, the point of this chapter is again to illustrate that broad politico-religious struggle – rather than the actions of the philosophes – provided the most significant challenge to the status quo of Enlightenment Europe.

Jansenism and Catholic Enlightenment

The following discussion focuses on those who ‘called upon new knowledge, wanted better education, were against superstition, denounced obscurantism, wished to break the Jesuit stranglehold in higher education and contributed to the fall of the Jesuits, were not friendly to schoolmen,¹ [and] shared most of the broad intellectual aims pursued by the men of the Enlightenment’: the Jansenists. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Chadwick has commented, with reference to the Enlightenment and Italian Jansenism, that ‘we cannot define where one movement ends and the other begins’.² We can thus, hopefully, assume that it is no longer necessary to argue for the validity of the term Catholic Enlightenment.³ Of course the term Catholic Enlightenment cannot be reduced to Jansenism, and enlightened priests at the heart of the Italian Enlightenment such as Ferdinando Galiani and Antonio Genovesi – who cannot easily be bracketed as Jansenists – prove the point. The fundamental issue implicit in the following discussion, however, is that the so-called

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deist movement was nowhere more conspicuous by its absence than in the Italian peninsula, where the critique of perceived papal despotism and superstition was left in the the surprisingly effective hands of radical Catholics. The discussion will, therefore, focus little on the absence of deists and concentrate on examining the radical Catholic challenge and its general context.

By some, Jansenists have been regarded as non-representative of the general Catholic reforming trend, but rather as the 'extremist wing' of the Catholic Enlightenment.⁴ To portray Jansenists as unrepresentative of the period would be, it seems to me, to render the term Catholic Enlightenment of little use to scholars. If the term is to have any meaning at all within Enlightenment or eighteenth-century studies, it must be to indicate the corpus of reforming and often dissenting intellectual and politico-religious thought which aimed at modernization of the Church and some aspects of society, yet retaining a theological outlook significantly Catholic in orientation. In any case, in the context of France, the only manner in which Jansenism can be rendered extremist is to take a blatantly partisan position: the party line of Rome and the Bourbon dynasty. Rather than extremist, as we have seen, French Jansenism undoubtedly represented the politico-religious outlook of very large numbers of people who understood themselves to be challenging Bourbon extremism and in so doing protecting what they understood to be the traditional freedoms of the people and Gallican Church. The problem has been that, for the philosophes and their modern admirers, French Jansenists have usually been regarded as religious fanatics and therefore conservative, while the Church has considered them to be extreme, beyond the Christian pale.

Similar arguments against the label extremist can be advanced in the Italian context, when during the 1770s and 1780s the ecclesiastical rights of Catholic sovereigns were championed against what was understood as the tyrannic jurisdiction of Rome, which had overthrown the state–Church traditions of the early Church. This movement for radical Church reform (although ultimately derailed) posed potentially the greatest eighteenth-century challenge to Roman orthodoxy, ecclesiastical jurisdiction and curial material interests. Compared to the relative weakness of the Italian Enlightenment, the Catholic challenge to the old regime was vigorous and relatively broadly based. Perhaps even more than the French experience, the challenge from within the Church had a political

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dimension, one rooted firmly within the peculiar politico-religious conditions of a politically polycentric peninsula. Again, as with the French and English experience, it was not the political or theological ramifications of the Reformation or conflict between the two great European confessions which was central to developments. Rather it was the seemingly narrower and local context of particular Church–state conflict within Italian sovereign states which led to a politicization of religion in a manner which the Reformation and its seventeenth-century aftermath did not generate within the peninsula. Unsurprisingly, the political vocabulary of revolt witnessed in France also emerged in Italian religious thought. It emerged, however, not against the ‘tyranny’ of authoritarian rulers, but rather against the old regime in the form of what was understood as the antichristian medieval theocracy of the Papal States and the despotic rule of the popes over their European Church empire.

Much of the politico-religious polemic of those decades, as in the French and English experience, was, in the general sense, hardly novel. In this sense the polemic was traditional, but not at all the result of any tradition which finally, as in Gay’s view, regained its ‘nerve’,⁵ but rather the result of specific politico-religious conditions. In this context, as usual, the claims for intellectual or spiritual origins are shaky. Miller, for instance, has claimed that Italian Jansenism was decisively influenced by French Jansenism. The only proof of influence adduced, however, is that French and Italian Jansenists had many ideas in common, and that the ideas of Italian Jansenists could be ‘traced back’ to France. This ‘tracing back’ certainly owes a great deal to academics who have induced texts to talk to each other, and also to the now waning tradition of attempting to reduce the European Enlightenment to the sum of the French High Enlightenment. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that ideas of the Italian Jansenists were any less the product of local circumstances or that their ideas and struggles were less central in the conflict with the old regime than those of the French Jansenists and their supporters. Nevertheless, it is possible to say, as O’Brien has done, that late Jansenists, such as those in Italy, ‘continued to prove receptive to enlightened ideas, such as religious liberty, which were compatible with Jansenist spirituality’, using ‘arguments similar to those used by Maulrot and Tailhé’.⁶

The idea, then, that Italian Jansenism was decisively influenced

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by the French experience I will put aside as yet unproven. In any case, searching for origins is less profitable than properly examining this so far under-researched topic. Instead, I will contend that there were very definite local politico-religious reasons as to why reform-minded Italian Jansenists mounted a frontal assault on Roman theocracy and ecclesiastical jurisdiction – especially so in the second half of the century. It is also difficult to ignore the fact that important elements of their politico-religious polemic significantly resembled the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century jurisdictionalist (i.e. anti-Rome or anti-curial) tradition.⁷

In any event, it can hardly be denied that the Jansenist politico-religious outlook in France had, in one crucial respect, a great difference from that in Italy. In France many Jansenists wanted to move towards some form of constitutional monarchy. Those less radical in outlook sought, at least, an attenuation of regal intervention within the Church, and thus in effect greater religious freedom which was rightly understood as inimical to traditional Bourbon absolutist goals. In the Italian peninsula, however, the dominant trend was definitively towards absolutism and regal jurisdiction within sovereign Churches as a counterweight to Rome. Thus some partisan modern commentators have lamented that the principal weakness of the Catholic Enlightenment was its tendency to place the Church in a position of dependence upon the state and it 'often seriously jeopardized the independence of the Church as a consequence'.⁸ Such a verdict is anachronistic and entirely misses the point, because to bolster the state, even backing absolutist-style rulers' rights within the Church, was then understood as progressive rather than reactionary, a step towards prevailing continental conditions and a step away from the peninsula's medieval past. Given the extreme historical political vicissitudes of Italy, we should not be surprised at this verdict. Treatises in the medieval mirror tradition on the 'good prince' written by great reforming clerics such as Lodovico Muratori only serve to highlight the point.

Anti-curial polemic and its context

Given that many readers will be less familiar with the Italian polemical traditions than with those of France and England, it is worth devoting some time to examining the core elements of the Italian anti-curial polemic and its context prior to the 1760s. At the

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heart of the radical Catholic critique of the Curia was the accusation that the medieval and contemporary popes had usurped the divine rights of kings. For such critics, popes had meddled in the secular affairs of states and had carved out and vigorously sought to defend and extend a secular domain (the medieval Papal States and substantial landed possessions in other kingdoms). In defiance of the dictum of Jesus Christ – that *Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo* (John 18:36) – they had made themselves priest-kings on the ancient pagan model.⁹ The critical significance of that biblical phrase in the Italian peninsula is difficult to overestimate. Indeed, the inclusion of it in the title of the Neapolitan Marcello Eusebio Scotti's *Della Monarchia universale de'papi* 'Respondit Jesus: Regnum Meum non est de hoc mundo.' Joan 18. 36 (1789) is indicative of its contemporary politico-religious esteem. In essence, regalist polemic against Roman theocracy and rebuttals of long-standing (and unrealistic) curial claims to suzerainty and dominion over various parts of the peninsula were all components of a drive by Italian sovereigns to justify reclaiming 'lost' jurisdictional rights within their own Churches.

The Papal States were ruled by the Curia in high-medieval fashion, with the ecclesiastical hierarchy also functioning as secular vassals of the Pope: cardinals governing legations (major cities and areas) and the delegations (minor areas) ruled by a prelate. But the fact of temporal rule was simultaneously Rome's ideological strength and its potential Achilles' heel. Theocratic rule was certainly open to attack by means of the biblical evidence of Christ's rejection of an earthly kingdom. But, as its turbulent medieval history demonstrated, without territorial independence the Curia would have had less security and less political influence in the peninsula. In addition, its claim to exclusive sovereign rights in the administration of its wide landed possessions and organizational superstructure across Europe – which provided much of its financial income – would also have been weakened rather than strengthened.

The regalist argument was simple: Christ had never intended that princes should be excluded from government of the Church. Regalist polemicists, even relative moderates such as the influential Modenese reformer, historian and polemicist Lodovico Muratori,¹⁰ claimed that, historically, kings and emperors, with the permission of Rome, had worked together in the administration of the Church. This divinely ordained cooperation had been terminated when the

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medieval popes – motivated by worldly ambition – had discarded Christ's dictum on the illegitimacy of a temporal kingdom of the Church and had usurped temporal rule for themselves. Muratori, in defence of his Modenese ruler's claims to government within the Modenese Church, had compiled a historical account demonstrating that, until the early ninth century, rulers had possessed the power to intervene in matters of ecclesiastical justice. Thus he could conclude, 'Deny now, if you are able, that the kings, although pious, judged it their own duty to intervene in the correction of the ecclesiastics and in their government', against which the popes did not protest.¹¹ He consequently felt he had proven the historical case for the princely right to share in the administration of the Church, so justifying his Modenese ruler's case for reclaiming jurisdictional rights lost when the Curia had usurped temporal dominion and separated itself and the Churches of Europe from secular rule.

Jurisdictional conflict of this type became more frequent and more trenchant in the late eighteenth century, for, as the enlightened Pietro Verri recalled at the end of the century, 'it was really an absurdity to see established a jurisdiction independent of the sovereign, with access to the use of force, prisons, tortures and confiscations ... in which the sovereign played no part at all'.¹² For centuries before, however, Italian sovereigns and their supporters had frequently striven to limit the jurisdiction of Rome over their Churches, for the Church had been – and remained – a wealthy and powerful ideological tool. Anti-curial writers of sovereign entities such as Venice, Tuscany and Naples who opposed full Roman jurisdiction over their national Churches and consequently risked the ire of the Roman Inquisition (founded in 1542 to combat Protestantism in Italy) had thus often written and published with somewhat less fear than dissident Catholics resident in the Papal States or other Italian states more closely allied to Rome. In the eighteenth century, the *Encyclopédie*, for instance, was put on the papal index of prohibited books in 1759, but was never banned in Venice and Italian translations of it were published there. By the mid eighteenth century, however, other sovereign governments had begun to arrogate the responsibility of licensing non-religious books to themselves.

What of the historical evidence for the 'usurpation' of temporal rule? Historians agree that the bare facts of the nexus between the spiritual and temporal authority of the papacy can be traced back at

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least to the eighth century and the territorial donation made to the Pope by the Frankish King Pepin in AD 756 (and subsequently confirmed by Charlemagne) which laid the foundations for the Papal States. In the ensuing centuries, two elements formed the core of that nexus: the need for spiritual justification for Roman jurisdiction over the Churches of Europe, and the need for independence and security in what was to remain a politically unstable polycentric peninsula. Importantly, the peninsula was often viewed as strategically valuable and thus also fought over by rival extrapeninsular powers. This remained the case until the victory of the Risorgimento and unification in 1861. Historically, the resources of the Papal States had also helped to ensure a degree of political, financial and military security against competing noble Italian dynasties intent on capturing the papacy and its rich financial rewards for themselves. By the eighteenth century, open violence in the struggle for the papal throne was a thing of the past. But, naturally, the economic and political power derived from temporal dominion could still constitute an important factor (although of course very rarely explicitly acknowledged) in maintaining a degree of effective Roman jurisdiction in the Churches of sovereign Italian entities.

The history of the city of Rome itself formed an essential component of its spiritual authority, which was founded upon Petrine doctrine: the spiritual legacy of the chief apostle of Christ, St Peter, claimed as the first Bishop of Rome, and his episcopal successors the popes. The unique temporal and spiritual symbiosis of Petrine doctrine, viewed as divine legitimation and providential historical occasion for the existence of the Papal States, was the core around which all of the replies to the critics of papal temporal dominion were founded. Armed with the Petrine doctrine, any challenge to the temporal dominion of the popes could be viewed as an antichristian challenge to the chief apostle of Christ who, as Cardinal Orsi reminded his readers in his *Della infallibilità e dell' autorità del Romano Pontefice sopra i Concilj Ecumenici* (1741–42), had conferred the keys to heaven upon his Roman episcopal successors.¹³ Thus, typically, in his *L'Autorità suprema del romano pontefice* (1789), the curial polemicist Giovanni Marchetti argued that the supremacy of the Pope in the Church and thus the status of Rome in Christianity could be traced back to Jesus himself.¹⁴

For the heads of sovereign Italian states and their supporters to

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question outright the temporal dominion of the popes was, therefore, risking an accusation of heresy. Under these circumstances, some prelates could not always be guaranteed to offer unconditional support to their sovereigns in such disputes. More importantly, overtly hostile relations with Rome could destabilize the complex and often fragile nature of political alliances in the peninsula. The Papal States – stretching from just above Pontecorvo south of Rome, sweeping north to cross the Apennines to Ascoli Piceno and up to Ferrara – constituted a geo-political entity of sufficient size that rulers of smaller independent states could not entirely ignore it. Thus, when circumstances were favourable the Curia could still act as at least a temporary focus for alliances, and thus exert influence within the peninsula.

Some of the Italian states such as the Duchies of Mantua, Milan and Parma were, in European terms, statelets, yet still large in relation to the tiny Republics of Lucca and San Marino. In an often hostile European climate, when territory and influence in the peninsula were still sought by competing great powers, the survival of such small sovereign territories depended to some degree upon strategic alliances. As the balance of power between the peninsula's larger neighbours and in Europe as a whole underwent changes, so alliances shifted and changed inside the peninsula. Such changes could result in cooler relations with Rome, or alternatively warmer relations could quickly become the strategic aim of relatively small beleaguered states. But renewed alliance or less tense relations with Rome could also cause Italian sovereigns suddenly to turn a less benign eye on their progressive and reform-minded subjects in order to avoid jeopardizing newly improved relations.

The year 1723 saw the publication of the Neapolitan lawyer Pietro Giannone's pointedly anti-Rome *Istoria civile del Regno di Napoli*. There is no evidence that Giannone was a deist. Neither can he be termed a Jansenist in the technical sense, for his emphasis on Mozaic law was, as regards human nature, quite positive in outlook, contrary to that of most Jansenists. However, there is no doubt that he formed part of the often radical reforming drive evident in early-eighteenth-century Italy which cannot be explained solely in Jansenist terms, and which was regarded as equally heretical by the Curia. He remained, like most radical critics of the Church, within the Christian pale. As elsewhere in Europe even some of those Enlightened Italian thinkers who were ambivalent to

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the Church still recognized the need for religion to promote an acceptable social order. As Davidson has expressed it, 'from Valletta in the 1690s to Filangieri in the 1780s, Enlightenment writers extended their toleration only to those who accepted both the existence of God and the existence of an afterlife in which the good were rewarded and the evil punished'.¹⁵ The same was true of the enlightened Carlo Antonio Pilati, who wrote in his *Di una riforma* (1767) that any such religion 'will serve the good of the state and the security of the citizens within it'.¹⁶

That Giannone's jurisdictionalism was uncompromising is evident in his statement that the Church had been and remained in the republic 'and not indeed the republic in the Church'.¹⁷ For Giannone, in addition to the papal usurpation of princely prerogatives and tyrannic rule of the Church, Christians had for centuries been subjected to conscious religious fraud. Popes had corrupted doctrine and cultivated superstition in order to amass power and wealth. They had invented the concept of purgatory in which was to be found a door to heaven for the credulous and inexhaustible riches (via the sale of indulgences) for the papacy. For similar avaricious motives, the popes had also brought back pagan image worship. The substance of the problem was that great wealth and temporal dominion meant popes and bishops 'thought with greater promptness to things temporal, than to those divine and sacred'.¹⁸ Although Giannone's critique was welcomed by many anti-curialists and was to be very influential later in the century, the furore of Rome at the publication of his *Istoria civile* and the resultant pressure upon the Neapolitan government obliged him to flee Naples, and he became a target and eventual victim of the Inquisition.

Even if – concomitant with its increasing political weakness – Rome's use of the Inquisition diminished during the century, Giannone's plight was a reminder of the potential risks attached to any direct attack upon Rome. It may be true, as Davidson has argued, that religious persecution in the peninsula was relatively limited.¹⁹ But the fear of the withdrawal of princely protection and consequent abandonment to Rome was sufficient to ensure that some major figures of the Italian Enlightenment preferred not to deal directly with the subject of religion, opting instead to pursue enlightenment on safer ground.²⁰ Enlightened thinkers such as the Verri brothers or Cesare Beccaria, editors of the journal *Il Caffè*

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(1764–66), avoided the subjects of religion and Church reform. *Il Caffè* was almost a mini-version of the famous French *Encyclopédie* and gained some considerable fame abroad, on account of which the encyclopedists invited its editors to Paris. Yet of well over a hundred articles contained in editions spanning two years, written on a wide variety of topics, none directly attacked the Church, its superstition, its history or indeed papal temporal rule.

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Most sovereigns, however, continued to have some interest in sponsoring or effectively tolerating attacks on Roman theocracy, for it was the most fertile avenue for justifying their struggle to reclaim lost princely rights and effect reforms within their own Churches. In addition, in a complex and shifting geo-political context, the continuing prosecution by Rome of claims to rights over considerable Church lands in sovereign states,²¹ suzerainty over kingdoms such as Parma²² and Naples,²³ and dominion over Ferrara and Comacchio were of potential concern, even if some or many of them remained only at the level of propaganda.²⁴

The continued decline of the papacy in terms of international and intra-peninsular influence in the second half of the eighteenth century, however, meant that attacks on Roman jurisdiction and temporal dominion seemed to some sovereigns and critics to carry less political risk than formerly. Indicative of curial weakness was its failure to assert its ecclesiastical authority even over the small Duchy of Parma, over which it claimed suzerainty. Du Tillot, the Duchy's foremost minister of the mid-century, prohibited mortmain in 1764, on the basis of the negative economic impact of the withdrawal of land from the market. In 1768, in response to this and other later encroachments of Parma on the traditional rights of the Church, Pope Clement XIII issued a Bull (*In coena domini*) declaring all such ecclesiastical legislation since 1764 invalid. It is doubtful whether du Tillot or Clement could have predicted the dramatic international events quickly excited by the publication of the Bull. Under the direction of Bernardo di Tanucci, the leading minister of the Kingdom of Naples, Neapolitan troops occupied the papal territories of Pontecorvo and Benevento (small enclaves south of Rome), and Louis XV occupied those of Avignon. Charles III of Spain and other Bourbon sovereigns also warned the Pope to withdraw the

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Bull. In the same year the Jesuits were expelled from France and Tanucci expelled them from Neapolitan soil, an action justified in terms of the divine right of kings.

On behalf of the Dukes of Modena, Muratori disputed Rome's right to dominion over Ferrara²⁵ and Comacchio²⁶ (yet took considerable pains to avoid openly heretical formulations). In these disputes historical precedent was of course considered central, but all were ideologically situated in the general historical rebuttal of Roman justifications for temporal rule common to Muratori, Giannone and other polemicists later in the century. Muratori argued that early medieval popes had used the fact of diminishing control over Italy by the Emperor at Constantinople as an excuse to usurp the imperial right to high dominion and effect papal rule over Rome and its environs. But he was careful to assert that the popes and the Roman people still gave obedience to Constantinople until the middle of the eighth century, and popes-elect continued to be subject to confirmation by the Emperor. From this perspective, then, the popes had been merely the governors of Rome on behalf of Constantinople, and, most crucially, the state had intervened as a matter of course in the government of the Church at the highest level. Any claim, therefore, to establishing the origins of legitimate temporal dominion upon this account would of course be untenable. At best, the popes gained high dominion of Rome and its environs by default, and never had a legitimate right to them at all. This account, in terms of grand historical narrative, also had the advantage of placing the final demise of Rome's Byzantine obedience close to the occasion of the Donation of Pepin in 756.

The Exarchate of Ravenna, the north-eastern Italian territory consisting of the lands donated to Rome by King Pepin (which laid the foundation for the Papal States), had – until seized by the Lombards in 751 and then by Pepin – also been territory subject to imperial high dominion. Thus, for the same reason that jurisdictionalist critics considered the Curia's claim to high dominion of Rome to be at best very dubious, the Donation of Pepin was illegitimate: Pepin had donated territory and peoples to Rome 'which were not his'. It did not matter greatly if this latter indictment (made in his *Osservazioni sopra una lettera intitolata Il dominio temporale della Sede Apostolica sopra la Città di Comacchio*, 1708²⁷) might have seemed insufficient against those who argued that the donation was that of lands legitimately pos-

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sessed by right of conquest. Muratori, and most critics of Roman temporal dominion, were anyway convinced that Pepin and his Carolingian successors had always unambiguously retained high dominion over the donated territory. Popes, as vassals of (what were to become from the year 800) the Holy Roman Emperors, only ever held the territory subject to (Holy) imperial will. Thus, in refusing to acknowledge imperial overlordship, the popes had usurped the imperial prerogative. Worse still, 'just as true temporal princes', papal ambition for terrestrial empire 'did not neglect any of the solutions of peace or war'.²⁸

Intended as part of his general defence of princely rights and as support for the territorial claims of his own Modenese prince, Muratori wrote *Della Fallibilità dei pontefici nel dominio temporale* (1872, posth.). His point was eminently simple. If, as he hoped, his illustration of Roman usurpation of imperial temporal rights had demonstrated that the Curia was not infallible in matters of temporal dominion, Muratori could challenge the extent of papal temporal dominion without challenging the spiritual supremacy of Rome and descending into outright heterodoxy.²⁹ Such efforts to avoid direct conflict with the papacy were ultimately effective, for Muratori did narrowly escape excommunication. But the conflict was certainly there. Cardinal Orsi, for example, wrote his defence of papal temporal dominion, *Dell'origine del dominio e della sovranità de' Romani Pontifici sopra gli stati a loro temporalmente soggetti* (1742) in good part as a reply to Muratori's account of the origins of the Papal States. Orsi's co-author on the most voluminous eighteenth-century official historical defence of the Curia,³⁰ Bishop Becchetti, targeted Muratori more than any other writer.

On the question of temporal dominion, there was very little, if any, neutral ground. The issue was too intimately linked to Catholic orthodoxy and therefore potentially destructive of the very basis of Roman supremacy in the Church. As the pro-curial writer Fontanini explained in his defence of Rome's title to Comacchio, the Curia considered that disputes over temporal dominion were engineered only 'in order to present to the Imperial Court and all Europe an odious view of the Curia as a usurper and possessor of the dominions of others'.³¹ In other words, to dispute papal temporal claims was understood by the Curia (and often rightly so) as an assault upon the integrity of the Roman Church itself.

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Pro-curial accounts of the foundation and progress of temporal dominion were naturally radically different from those of its critics and tended, as jurisdictionalist accounts, to be in agreement amongst themselves on most points. In his *Dell'Origine del dominio e della sovranità temporale de'romani pontifici*, for example, Cardinal Orsi claimed that from Pope Gregory II (715–31) neither the Greek Emperors nor the Holy Roman Emperors had held overlordship over Rome, its territories and the Exarchate of Ravenna. The popes had not usurped territory from the eastern Emperor; rather the people had shaken off the yoke of the eastern Emperor and placed themselves by popular will under the rule of the vicar of Christ, the Bishop of Rome. For Orsi and other pro-curial writers, the Donation of Pepin had indeed been the gift of a freehold. Consequently, in struggling to assert its temporal dominion, Rome had certainly not trodden on the temporal rights of the Holy Roman Emperors.³² On the contrary, it was rather defending its providential right, for, as Becchetti put it, in the final instance, papal temporal power had come about as the result of Roman bishops being the successors of St Peter: territorial donations and favourable political circumstances in recognition of the divine grace emanating from Rome.³³

This historiographical conflict between Rome and its critics was no ordinary scholarly debate, for both sides well knew that the stakes were too high for its resolution to rest upon purely academic grounds. The debate could thus unexpectedly turn very nasty indeed when Rome felt the need and possessed the political ability to exert curial discipline inside neighbouring states. Sometimes, with little or no warning, critics of the papacy could find their protection from Rome withdrawn. It was such a shift which, after the publication of his *Istoria civile* in 1723, forced Giannone to flee Naples. Later, in 1736, after being hounded from one northern Italian state to another, Giannone also found his protection withdrawn in Savoyard Piedmont, forming part of the political price for that state's settlement of conflict with the papacy, after which he was finally to die in prison. Similar circumstances also forced the exile of the radical Alberto Radicati, Count of Passerano (1698–1737). In 1725–26 he was supported in his views by Victor Amadeus II (1684–1730), sovereign of his native Piedmont. Subsequently, when Amadeus made a cynical concordat with Rome (1726–27), Radicati had little choice but to flee. So treacherous were these political

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sands, that a text not formerly considered particularly radical by the papacy might in new political circumstances be considered dangerous.

A typical case in point was the anti-curial historiography of the Suffragan Bishop of Trier, Justinus Febronius (Johann Von Hontheim). Contemporary historians recognized that the critique of the Church in Febronius's *De statu ecclesiae et legitima potestate romani pontificis* (1763) contained nothing new, but represented a more threatening aspect because it came at a time of strained relations between Clement XIII (1758–69) and the states of Europe. In 1764 the book was placed on the papal index of prohibited books. In 1766 Rome issued an edict decreeing a ten-year prison sentence for those who replied to an advertisement of the Venetian printer Giuseppe Bettinelli for subscriptions to a proposed Italian translation of Febronius's work.³⁴

The critique of Rome by progressive intellectuals was not limited to questions of religious jurisdiction or the rights of the prince. The economy of the Papal States was in a dire condition, having suffered from the peninsula-wide recession of the seventeenth century³⁵ and, as the century progressed, from a diminution of foreign income as a result of the attacks on the Church across Catholic Europe. The results of the 1764 famine were particularly tragic in the Papal States. Even in what might be regarded as a purely economic sphere, the economic efficacy of papal rule, the blatant luxury of prelates and the great and inefficiently managed landed possessions of the Church were latent. Why? Because the failure to reform the economy of the Papal States was viewed by some as at least partly symptomatic of their backward quasi-medieval theocratic government.³⁶ But the principle of Roman theocracy was viewed as non-negotiable by the Curia, and politico-theological history was still seen as its greatest ally.

Eighteenth-century pro-curial historiography was, in content, mostly still reliant on the Counter-Reformation work of Baronius, the *Annales ecclesiastici* (1588–1607). The voluminous historical works of eighteenth-century writers such as Cardinal Orsi, Bishop Beccchetti and others were essentially restatements of Baronian orthodoxy.³⁷ Any notion that unilateral reform of sovereign Churches might, under any circumstances, be acknowledged as legitimate was sternly ruled out by such writers, and the unqualified Petrine right to temporal dominion and supremacy was affirmed.

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As Becchetti stated in relation to the Conciliar Movement, the momentous fifteenth-century attempt to subject the Curia to the decisions of general councils of the Church, ‘to allow all the faithful to have jurisdiction [in the Church] would be the same as granting democracy, which is to allow error. The faithful have never been known other than with the voice of sheep, of the flock.’³⁸

These contending historical views – those of enlightened intellectuals and Catholic anti-curialists versus papal apologists – were fundamental to the ecclesio-political outlooks of their respective protagonists. The result was a historiographical deadlock implicitly expressing contending visions for the future of the Church (even if critics of Rome rarely publicly defined their vision much beyond calls for greater princely jurisdiction). It was a deadlock that remained substantially unaltered, even throughout the great challenge to the papacy during the second half of the eighteenth century, when Italian sovereigns began to undertake unilateral reform of the Church.

The temporal imperative: Roman theology and politics fused

Implicitly confronted with the prospect of diminished control over a vast and wealthy multinational institution, the Curia’s determination not to cede any substantial jurisdictional ground, or historico-theological justifications for it, was perhaps to be expected. As Muratori and others opined, ceding historiographical ground on the issue of temporal dominion could not be contemplated without implicitly accepting fallibility on that issue. But, of course, contrary to the (ostensibly) limited polemical aim of Muratori’s *Della Fallibilità dei pontefici nel dominio temporale*, as many certainly realized, accepting fallibility on matters of temporal dominion also implicitly raised the question of Rome’s venerable justification for it on both the theological and historical level. This dilemma was of course epitomized in the anti-curial use of Christ’s dictum *regnum meum non est de hoc mundo*. To most participants of the debate, therefore, it was obvious that the acceptance of curial fallibility in temporal matters would have served to open the gate of jurisdictional demands rather than close it.

Contemporaries, whether pro- or anti-curial, could hardly deny that papal claims to Italian territories would decisively collapse if the papacy was coerced into renouncing temporal dominion, al-

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though, as with Muratori's polemic on the fallibility of the Curia on matters of temporal dominion, the existence of tracts advancing curial territorial claims should not be confused with the practical reality of such claims or the intention of the Curia to employ further means to pursue them. We can, however, say with confidence that the polemic had profound implications, for, as we have seen, any admission of 'error' on the question of temporal dominion had potentially serious theological and political implications.

In more immediate political terms, if temporal dominion were renounced, the Roman Church and papacy would then, in practice (if not in theory), be to some degree or another subject to the government of the city of Rome and/or its sovereign. The result, of course, would have been that papal arguments for complete autonomy of the Church from secular authority would have suffered a set-back greater than any since the Middle Ages. Equally as important, the renunciation or loss of the Papal States would have been viewed by their critics as a signal victory in the struggle to return the Church to the purely spiritual realm as advocated in the New Testament. Simultaneously, the loss would also have constituted a large step in the endeavour to reclaim lost princely rights in the Church, leaving papal polemicists with a good deal less effective basis on which to counter claims for greater princely jurisdiction in their Churches.

Another corollary flowing from the loss of temporal dominion would have been a great diminution of the Curia's political clout in the peninsula, which was based partly upon spiritual legitimacy and, as with any other state, partly upon political alliance. Such a situation would undoubtedly – as the Curia certainly realized – have given more confidence to those pressing for autonomous reform of Churches of sovereign states. Reform of sovereign Churches could come in many guises, with spiritual and political but also economic consequences. With a politically much weaker Curia, unilateral reform might be more likely to entail a much increased intervention in the finances and administration of the considerable landed interests of the Church in most Italian states.

Interestingly, on the question of the limitations on curial polemicists, they were also hampered by elements of their own politico-religious doctrine. During the Counter-Reformation, Rome had actively sought to bolster the venerable theory of the divine right of kings. Not surprisingly, then, divine right theory was as

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healthy as ever in Italy, still widely supported by princes, intellectuals and peoples, and was naturally put to good use in the regalistic camp in which many supported strong, often absolutist monarchical rule. Indeed, the form of state power in the Muratorian scheme is royal absolutism, as evidenced in his *Della pubblica felicità oggetto de'buoni principi* (1749). Thus, by divine right, the strong but 'good prince' should not have his prerogatives usurped by the Church, but rather should work hand in hand with the Church to promote a just Christian commonwealth.³⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that Muratori, Giannone and most other regalistic polemicists sought to demonstrate how, historically, good princes had worked hand in hand with Rome and its prelates in the just government of the Church. As Giannone put it, the problem was that in the medieval period the popes ceased to be vicars of Christ, and instead became princes 'who, like all princes, are attached to the interests of their realms, putting themselves at the head of their armies'.⁴⁰

Being hedged in partly by its own divine right theory, able to exert less political influence in Europe than ever, and feeling unable to modify its politico-theological doctrine without the risk of emboldening its many critics, the Curia's many able propagandists, therefore, such as Cardinal Orsi, Filippo Becchetti, Francesco Zaccaria and Giovanni Marchetti, had very limited room for innovative polemical manoeuvre. There is also evidence to show that, at times, conscious of its decreasing influence and the dangers of conceding polemical ground, the papacy preferred not to take official measures against some anti-curial historical works, lest the measures inflamed an already very difficult situation. One consequence of such passivity was that the Gallican and fiercely anti-curial historiography of Claude Fleury was able to circulate through much of Italy relatively freely.⁴¹ Of course pro-curial replies to Fleury appeared,⁴² but sometimes Rome's attempts to combat heterodox writings could also backfire. In order to train clerics to fight new heretical ideas, it was sometimes considered necessary to provide frank and detailed lectures upon the pantheistic and/or rationalist ideas of thinkers such as Baruch Spinoza, Herbert of Cherbury and Thomas Hobbes. Some of these lectures were published – such as those of the learned Abbot Domenico Bencini (who performed a leading role in the college De Propaganda Fide at Rome) in 1720 – and in Turin the growing interest in Spinozan thought in Piedmont was attributed to similar teachings.⁴³

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The burgeoning call for the reform of the Church naturally extended to the condemnation of the past and present activities of the Roman Inquisition against heterodoxy. For Giannone, the founding of the medieval Inquisition and its continued existence was proof that the heresy charge had been, and still was, used by the Church to persecute political opponents and perpetuate a corrupt self-serving doctrine. For this and other national-minded intellectuals in the peninsula, it was also a glaring example of a foreign body interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. In sum, declared Giannone, the Inquisition had been founded 'in order to better establish the monarchy of the popes'.⁴⁴ Later in the century, Bishop Scipione de'Ricci⁴⁵ explained, in his circular to clergy on the forthcoming Jansenist Synod of Pistoia in 1786, that the papacy had for centuries defended superstition and ignorance by denouncing as heretical any attempt to reform the Church by returning to the precepts of the primitive Church (unsurprisingly, the council also condemned the Curia for the usurpation of princely temporal rights).⁴⁶

But despite influential calls for a reform of the European system of justice, including that of Cesare Beccaria (1738–94), who was moved to write the classic Enlightenment text *Dei Delitti e delle pene* (1764) by the inhumanity and arbitrary nature of criminal procedure in Italy and Europe as a whole, the curial defence of the Inquisition remained steadfast. It was an intransigence exemplified in the work of Tommaso Pani. Pani had the misfortune to publish his apology in the very year of the French Revolution, which has left to posterity the worst possible assessment of curial backwardness. In his *Della Punizione degli eretici e del Tribunale della Santa Inquisizione* (1789) Pani included chapters on the defence of the death penalty for heresy, on the notion that even the suspicion of heresy could be punished, and on the obligation of secular powers to protect ecclesiastical judges. He warned that without the Inquisition the Catholic faith would be at risk, in turn risking the collapse of the social and political order. Pani was no pro-curial maverick. His views were – if rather bluntly expressed – typical of many eighteenth-century pro-curial thinkers, including Bishop Becchetti.⁴⁷

To have abolished the Roman Inquisition would have been for the Curia to weaken its hand in relation to the intellectual policing of its own state, and to a degree the policing of Roman orthodoxy and its jurisdiction over the Churches of its sovereign neighbours.

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The current Tridentine doctrine (derived from the Council of Trent, 1545–63), it can be said, thus remained locked in a stultifying embrace with the imperatives of papal secular dominion and curial jurisdiction. Doctrine and reality do not, of course, always coincide. Beyond rhetoric, Rome could muster little effective opposition to the gradual running down and abolition of the Inquisition Tribunals in several Italian states during the 1760s–1780s. There is no doubt that the decline and eventual end of the Tribunals of Inquisition were indicative of the increasing impotency of Rome in the face of unilateral Church reform. The inability of Rome to concede even quite moderate reform, however, and so provide a much-needed bolster for its practical leadership of the Church without self-jeopardy is vital in understanding the practical weakness of Rome and the growing confidence of anti-curialists in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In the first half of the century, in common with other parts of Europe, there had been a wide call from both pro-curial and anti-curial thinkers for a renewal of faith. That desire for spiritual rebirth is usually described as Jansenist in character. Italian Jansenism was not, however, a unified phenomenon, and its character often varied from one state to another. Jansenism, derived from the thought of Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638), Bishop of Ypres, had originated as an ascetic and theologically pessimistic search for the renewal of Christian piety. But spiritual renewal inevitably meant reconsidering some aspects of doctrine, which of course ran into the rigidity of Counter-Reformation theology. Jansenists thus came to be opponents of the papacy and were duly condemned by Pope Innocent X in 1653.

Although it is true that some pro-curial reforming ecclesiastics did exhibit the theological pessimism characteristic of Jansenism, it was only one facet of a more general reform stance. In the Italian peninsula, especially after the mid-century, Jansenist thought often noticeably lacked or failed to emphasize the doctrinal elements of Jansenism, instead demonstrating a more practical, general reforming zeal. It is thus difficult to define the precise nature of Italian Jansenism, and it is more fruitful to understand anti-curial Italian Jansenism – perhaps exemplified in the thought of Lodovico Muratori and Bishop de'Ricci – as a hybrid of Jansenist, regalist and jurisdictionalist ideas, in which the following common elements can be identified: the desire for a return to Christian origins and the

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limitation of superstition in the Church, a pastoral adaptation to new times, moral rigour, an acquiescence to the will of sovereigns, and the independence of sovereign Churches from Rome.⁴⁸ Important elements of this matrix, however, were also present in the thought of anti-curialists who can hardly be considered as Jansenist, as in that of Pietro Giannone for example, who held a positive view of human nature. To cloud matters more, even ardent pro-curial and essentially conservative thinkers such as the Dominican Cardinal Orsi were also accused of Jansenism.⁴⁹ Such accusations serve to compound the practical difficulty of defining Italian Jansenism in relation to Church reform, and raise the relatively little noted question of the political use of the Jansenist label within the various shades of conflict between reform-minded and conservative pro-curial thinkers, and hence the need for caution when applying that label.

One element of thought shared by pro-curial and anti-curial (so-called) Jansenist thinkers was hostility to the Jesuits. For orthodox but liberal and reform-minded Catholics who wanted to break the restraints of Counter-Reformation dogma, the Jesuits were, as Woolf has put it, the 'paladins of papal authority'.⁵⁰ Indeed, they were considered by many as propagators of a casuistic defence of Roman doctrine. Prior to the late seventeenth century, the Jesuits had shown considerable capacity to absorb new ideas; but the widespread threat to Roman orthodoxy in the eighteenth century had the effect of narrowing their view of permissible debate. Even many loyal and relatively conservative curial would-be reformers thus had reason to consider the Jesuits a danger to spiritual renewal and even strictly limited Church reform.

In seventeenth-century Italy there were numerous theologians and high ecclesiastics influenced by the reforming tenor of Jansenism. In the first half of the eighteenth century, even in the Curia itself there were those, such as Cardinal Polignac, prepared to encourage Jansenist-inspired reforming tendencies. Polignac was representative of orthodox Catholics who recognized the need for reform of the Church in order to neutralize the most threatening aspects of Enlightenment culture. Reforming prelates such as Archbishop Celestino Galiani (1681–1753) and other thinkers attempted to harness new scientific and philosophical ideas to the service of Catholicism. The confines of that project are, however, evident in the fact that in 1733 Galiani was denounced and felt

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unable to present his views in print.⁵¹

Nevertheless, under Pope Benedict XIV (1740–58) two leading ecclesiastics at Rome, Giovanni Bottari and Pietro Foggini, formed a reforming group which included anti-curialists, Jansenists and other reform-minded Catholics who believed in the possibility of internal reform and were united in their hostility to the Jesuits. The group, the Archetto school, which influenced clerics elsewhere in Italy, and was protected in the Curia by some cardinals, attacked the Jesuits by claiming they ascribed a positive role to human free will. But theological polemic increasingly formed only one component of the Jansenist reforming drive, although it could seem more central when Jansenists were under attack – as they were by Jesuits after 1750 – and needed to defend themselves against specific charges of heterodoxy.

Even popes less hostile to reform, such as Benedict, who demonstrated conciliation towards critics of the Church, found themselves caught in a vice of inertia: held between interlocking spiritual and temporal imperatives in an often hostile environment with increasingly little international political leverage at their disposal. It is true that Benedict arrived at some concordats with princes who made some concessions. Nevertheless, he fought to preserve papal temporal dominion and the main elements of Roman spiritual jurisdiction, and to protect the considerable property interests of the Church across Europe. He also remained hostile to anti-Jesuit polemic and renewed the condemnation of Free Masonry.

The relatively conciliatory attitude of Benedict was replaced by that of the more hard-line Clement XIII (1758–69), who was pro-Jesuit. Thus, after the mid-century, the broad movement for Church reform ran into the sands of renewed curial intransigence and repression. The papacy feared that even mild calls for reform might turn into potentially dangerous flashpoints. The prospect of reforming the Church from within thus became very remote. Clement, it seems, recognized more than Benedict that granting reforms entailed great risks. Yet to remain unyielding to the insistent demands for change was to court potentially unilateral action by princes and their supporters and risk a public display of papal weakness – which was subsequently to happen.

Clement's intransigence and the growing European isolation of the Curia prompted a significant change in the strategy of those striving for change. Reform-minded clergy increasingly turned to

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Italian princes as instruments to advance both Church reform and the jurisdictionalist struggle for control over their own Churches. In a number of states, often with the support of anti-curial clergy, acts to limit the power and influence of the Church were passed. Although there is no doubt that sovereign rulers took the reform initiative in the 1760s and 1770s, it would not, however, be correct to say that the shift of reform initiative towards princes began only with Clement XIII. To tie the development of the peninsula's Church-state dynamic so closely to developments internal to the Curia would be to underestimate the growing desire of sovereigns, clergy, administrators and intellectuals for change (the relationship between manifestations of enlightened thinking and the political reality of the peninsula is discussed at the end of this chapter). Before 1758, sovereigns had already taken some action to curb the power of Rome in their Churches, as in Lombardy (1757) and Tuscany (1751–54).

Such unilateral measures aroused in Clement the fear that worse was likely to come and action was needed to avert it. In reality there was little Clement could do, although he could of course attempt to put his own house in order and clamp down hard on those prelates viewed as overly sympathetic to reform. In 1761 he coerced the pro-Jansenist Cardinal Passionei to sign a condemnation of Jansenism. In this environment any remaining overt support for Jansenist ideas amongst pro-curialists naturally began to evaporate. Rome could also cooperate with princes who at times felt the need to limit the extent of radical thought in their own states, such as when, at the request of the Sardinian government, the radical Piedmontese Dalmazzo Francesca Vasca was arrested in Rome in 1768. But the coming storm could not be halted, not even by the election of the energetic Pius VI (1775–99), who vigorously defended the Church from attack and clamped down further on pro-reform clergy in Rome.

Radical Jansenism 1770s–1790s

The height of Jansenist reforming influence was reached in Tuscany under Grand Duke Leopold in the 1780s.⁵² Independently of Rome, in alliance with Jansenist clergymen such as Scipione de'Ricci,⁵³ Leopold wanted to impose reform on the Tuscan Church via provincial and national synods, a movement epitomized by the reform-

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ing Synod of Pistoia (1786). But, although Leopold ensured the passage of several acts reforming various aspects of the Tuscan Church, more moderate bishops prevented the full implementation of his planned reforms.

Pius's rigorous defence of orthodoxy and renewed defiance of calls for reform did, however, reap a rich harvest of some considerable importance in the history of intellectual thought. His untimely intransigence pushed reform-minded clerics and others into more extreme denunciations of the history and contemporary reality of papal supremacy and temporal rule. In the late 1770s and 1780s, clerics and ex-clerics produced the most astounding condemnations of papal history – equally as hot as those of the most ardent English Dissenters – which were almost always in harmony with the regalism of princes as an alternative to Rome. Their writings, an important facet of the experience of the European Enlightenment and a reminder that even in the late eighteenth century Catholicism could still adopt radical politico-theological forms, have been, however, little discussed and hardly noted at all outside Italian studies.

Anti-curial Catholics thus not only turned to Italian princes as agents of reform independent of Rome, they also realized it was necessary to openly declaim, with princely support, against the legitimacy of Roman jurisdiction and temporal dominion. To do so they returned resolutely to the anti-curial historiographical traditions of Giannone and Muratori. In this period papal temporal dominion was considered by even the most timid anti-curialists as anathema. Thus even the pious and conciliatory Jansenist professor of philosophy at Genoa, Pier Delle Piane,⁵⁴ could note that 'indeed, the popes did not become monarchs and temporal princes via the institutes of Jesus Christ, who said *Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo*'. Corrupted by wealth, the medieval Church had been a strange and monstrous mix of the temporal and the spiritual, in which even the cardinals of the Pope were the equals of kings.⁵⁵

The necessity of a return to a radical critique of Rome was by no one more succinctly advocated than by the Archbishop of Taranto, Giuseppe Capecehatro, who reminded his readers in his *Discorso storico-politico dell'origine del progresso e della decadenza del potere de' chierici su le signorie temporali* (1788) that whoever wished to deny the legitimacy of the present ecclesiastical system would have to form a new history of past times.⁵⁶ Thus he observed that medieval kings, from the example of the ancient kings

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of Israel, had wished to be crowned by the Pope, as vicar of God and head of the Church, but 'the popes took advantage of this strange fantasy ... in order to believe themselves not only ministers of that pure ceremony, but despots of kingdoms and even of the empire ... This is the true primordial origin of all the famous dominions of Europe which were reputed feoffs of the Roman Church.'⁵⁷ Such arguments against temporal dominion were, however, but one part of a much wider accusation of priestcraft, which bore a remarkable similarity to radical Protestant critiques of Catholicism. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the anti-Rome critique of such thinkers was not home-grown, for it still relied in good part on Muratori and Giannone.

In his trenchantly titled *Della Monarchia universale de'papi*, the radical Neapolitan clergyman Scotti reminded his readers that the governors of the people receive their power from God. The disciples of Christ and their successors, therefore, subordinated themselves to the emperors in all temporal aspects, and even though the emperors were idolaters, the Christians prayed for their prosperity and paid tribute to them.⁵⁸ He also described the deeply corrupting effects of the medieval enrichment of Rome, resulting in ambition, usurpation of supremacy and of the divine rights of princes. In order to defend its illegitimate gains, the Curia had become a workshop of falsity and imposture. For gain, Scotti opined, the popes had cultivated a corrupt external religion for the ignorant masses, one reliant upon hypocritical formalism, while it concealed the true Christian doctrine. The considerable forging skills of medieval monks and clerics were thus learnt 'from the new maxims of the Pharisaical Gospel of Rome become carnal', the new Sanhedrin of Christendom. Canon law was born of the avarice and ambition of the 'Universal Judaic Monarchy', created in order to obscure divine scripture and 'to sanction the claim of the papal universal monarchy'. Canon law was, in a word, the 'Talmud' of the popes.⁵⁹

The venom of their analyses should, nevertheless, not be allowed to obscure the fact that Scotti, Capecelatro and others rarely, if ever, wished to abandon Rome as the spiritual, non-executive centre of the Catholic faith. In any case, princes and their supporters were of course aware of the potential dangers of more radical, egalitarian religious reform such as presbyterianism. Sovereigns were naturally concerned to avoid damage to the role of the

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Church in the maintenance of an elite-dominated social stability. They were also alert to the possibility of potentially perilous shifts in the complex series of alliances on which rulers of small Italian states often relied for their continued existence. Not surprisingly, sovereigns rarely if ever allowed the spiritual, Petrine legitimacy of Rome to be questioned overtly in the public arena. Thus, the problem for more radical thinkers of the Italian Enlightenment (those who wished to attack Christianity itself) and at times Catholic reformers was that in practice they formed part of a broad alliance of princes, aristocrats, prelates, administrators and intellectuals, the religious and political parameters of which were most often set by sovereigns.

No matter how fiercely anti-curial Catholics attacked the temporal rule of the popes as antichristian, the practical dismantling of the Papal States was not, in political terms, a realistic proposition. Any 'liberation' of Romans from theocratic rule by politically coercive means would have had unpredictable and potentially dangerous consequences in the delicate political conditions of the peninsula.

After the fall of Napoleon and the tumultuous vicissitudes of the establishment, collapse, and re-establishment of French republicanism⁶⁰ in the peninsula, the re-establishment of sovereign kingdoms and the theocracy of the Papal States was accompanied by a widely held recognition that radical religious reforming movements were no longer to be encouraged. Quite sensibly, sovereigns did not wish to sponsor attacks on the legitimacy of Roman sovereignty, for in the fragile political conditions of Italy after 1815 – with revolutions occurring in the 1820s and 1830s – the Pope was more prudently seen as a conservative ally. Sovereigns knew very well that, in the hands of those sympathetic to republicanism, the reforming attack against Roman temporal rule might not be accompanied by the traditional regalism. If proof were wanted for the validity of this fear, they had only to read the *Storia del papato* of one Paolo Rivarola.

While under French protection after the entrance of the Republican Army into Lombardy in 1796, Rivarola – probably an ex-priest – translated the *Mystère d'iniquité, c'est-à-dire l'histoire de la papauté* (1611) of the French Huguenot leader Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay.⁶¹ The *Mystère d'iniquité*, a monument to the nature of the Huguenot priestcraft theory, was promoted as official anti-Church

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propaganda by French and Italian Jacobins.

In Rivarola's pro-republican rendition of the *Mystère d'iniquité*, the *Storia del papato*, the medieval popes were those 'conquerors of the world and ministers of war' who, with an 'unrestrained lust', had claimed the power to create or depose kings. They had claimed direct or indirect dominion over all states of the world, fomenting sackings, massacres and intestine wars of nation against nation. Indeed, popes and other princely despots 'had always used the mantle of religion and the veil of imposture to cover their treacherous designs'. The principal occasion for the apostasy of Rome was not just papal iniquity, but the 'treachery, the imbecility and worthlessness' of kings who, 'prostrate at the feet of the popes', granted the popes temporal dominion. Almost immediately, as the papal despots 'deified' their plunder, there arose, 'favoured by ignorance and superstition', the 'monstrous colossus of the papacy'.⁶²

It can be argued, therefore, that the continued existence of the link between Roman orthodoxy and temporal rule into the nineteenth century owed a great deal to the eventual defeat of French and native anticlerical republicanism, and the fear of restoration sovereigns that any reforming movement might prove detrimental to the security of their own newly restored regimes. Only when the polycentric nature of the peninsula was itself 'reformed' by the Risorgimento (despite the best efforts of extra-peninsula power to maintain papal independence), and competing princely interests were subordinated to the Italian national state, was it politically possible to dismantle papal temporal power decisively. Even then, however, the Curia stubbornly refused to accept that a European theocracy was no longer a tenable political concept and would not recognize the loss of their temporal power. It was not until 1929 that the question of the Pope's relation to the Italian state was settled by the Lateran Treaty of 1929, which set up an independent Vatican City state.

Given the traditional preeminence accorded to a relatively narrow band of elite thinkers in Enlightenment studies, it should be no surprise that Franco Venturi – perhaps the greatest of Italian historians of the Enlightenment – has rarely discussed Jansenism. It is difficult, however, to comprehend how the often complex fundamentals of the eighteenth-century Italian peninsula can be understood if the question of Church and state is not thoroughly addressed. And it is, of course, not possible to discuss state and

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Church in eighteenth-century Italy without addressing oneself to the question of Jansenism. It has always seemed absurd to me that Italian Jansenism has traditionally been divided into two camps: political and theological. As we have seen, the political realities of the peninsula meant that any desire for reform meant a challenge to Rome, and a challenge to Rome inherently invoked the intensely political question of the relationship of Church to state. We must never forget that all eighteenth-century rulers acknowledged the importance of religion in maintaining an acceptable social order, and so it was unthinkable that a sovereign would declare disinterest in the question. Thus Peter Leopold of Tuscany – acknowledged as a leading enlightened ruler of the peninsula – abolished the Inquisition in Tuscany in 1782, but the edict of abolition explicitly referred to the prince's duty of maintaining religion. In that document he enjoined his bishops to monitor the beliefs of the faithful and 'whenever the circumstances of a case require it, we must proceed with severity; and when the use of the secular arm is needed, we shall consider it our duty to intervene'.⁶³ The same transfer of responsibility for prosecuting dissent had occurred in Parma (1769) and Lombardy (1775), and although it is true that Joseph II's Patent of Toleration (1781) allowed some non-Catholic Christian worship, he still insisted on the prosecution of deists. As Joachim Whaley has commented, 'there is a clear distinction between most notions of toleration and religious indifference'.⁶⁴

We can say, then, that in an era of confessional states, the issue of Church and state was at the heart of Enlightenment thinking, but nowhere more deeply central and embedded than in the Italian peninsula. In this sense, then, we can perhaps argue that the Italian Enlightenment was more consistently political in nature – although not explicitly in its manifestation – than other 'national' Enlightenments. What, then, was the relationship between the development of Enlightenment thinking on religion and the political realities of the peninsula?

Two facts stand out above all others: the centrality of Rome to religious change and the evident decline in the international and peninsular influence of Rome. Rome was now perceived by Italian sovereigns as less capable of rallying extra-peninsular support to its defence, and so it is unthinkable that – regardless of whether the Enlightenment ever arrived or not – sovereigns would not seize the opportunity of redefining state–Church boundaries, which had for

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long been keenly resented, in their favour. After all, this had been accomplished by Protestants and by the Gallican Church. To attempt to disaggregate Enlightenment and state and Church is thus little more than to play games with history, or as Voltaire put it, to play tricks on the dead. But even glancing for a moment at the issue from this counterfactual vista is to remind ourselves what an absurdity it would be not to place Jansenism firmly on the map of the Enlightenment. But to raise this topic is also to raise that of Enlightened despotism and its relationship to intellectual change.

This is not the place for continuing the old debate on the nature of enlightened despotism. We can say, however, that Joseph II's Patent of Toleration which did not extend to deism and the abolition of the Inquisition were decisions taken with the health of the Church and thus of the state firmly in mind. So, the imperatives of sovereigns and those of reformers could coincide on very important issues, which is just one more example of how misleading it can be to attempt to build a Chinese wall between the enlightened and non-enlightened. In this period it was at times those very state imperatives that could provide the appropriate political conditions for the expression of reforming/enlightened thought. We know, for instance, that in some cases the intellectual calls for the abolition of the Inquisition Tribunal were published only after the process of legislation against them had already begun. To emphasize the need to comprehend the diversity of Enlightenment political and social contexts and thus of the nature of the Enlightenment itself, it should be remembered that Venice was the home for many outspoken writers, yet its Tribunal of Inquisition was only abolished in 1797 after the Republic's defeat by Napoleon.

To argue that the philosophes of Europe often reflected emerging reality, rather than initiating it, is not to diminish the stature of the phenomenon we call the Enlightenment. Thus, without a blush, we can admit that, as Owen Chadwick has put it, 'the courts and the legal profession were ending torture before he [Cesare Beccaria] wrote a word'.⁶⁵ To speak out, courageously, for justice and by the impact of your pen hasten the end of a despicable medieval practice is typical of the spirit of many in that century, reflecting the fact that wide layers of society had become more aware of the gap between social potential and its often sad, brutal and backward reality. Neither is it to belittle the Enlightenment to talk of a Catholic or Protestant Enlightenment. On the contrary, to do so is to illustrate the

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width, breadth and scope of the intellectual ferment in eighteenth-century Europe.

Notes

- 1 'Schoolmen': orthodox Catholic theologians.
- 2 O. Chadwick, 'The Italian Enlightenment', in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 103.
- 3 On the Catholic Enlightenment see, for instance, the discussion in S. J. Miller, *Portugal and Rome c. 1748–1830. An Aspect of the Catholic Enlightenment* (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1978), ch. 1. On the general reforming trend in early-eighteenth-century Italy see V. Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment. Newtonian Science, Religion and Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century* (New York: Humanities Press, 1995; 1st edn 1982).
- 4 Miller, *Portugal and Rome*, pp. 2–3.
- 5 See P. Gay, *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation. Vol. 2: The Science of Freedom* (London: Wildwood House, 1973; 1st edn 1969), ch. 1 'The Recovery of Nerve'.
- 6 C. H. O'Brien, 'Jansenists on Civil Toleration in Mid-18th-Century France', *Theologischen Zeitschrift*, 37 (1981), p. 93.
- 7 On the seventeenth century see my *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests. The Origins of Enlightenment Anticlericalism* (London: Macmillan, 1999).
- 8 Miller, *Portugal and Rome*, pp. 2–4.
- 9 For an analysis of eighteenth-century anti-curial historiography see my *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests*.
- 10 Some of the leading Italian and Austrian Jansenist reformers looked upon Muratori and his *Della Regolata Divozione dei Cristiani* (Venice, 1747) as a guide to the reform of the Church.
- 11 L. Muratori, *Dissertazioni sopra le antichità italiane* (3 vols, Milan, 1751), vol. 3, *Dissertazione* 70, pp. 460, 468. The *Dissertazioni* are the posthumous translation of the *Antiquitates italicae medii* (6 vols, Milan, 1738–42) by the nephew of Muratori, Gian-Francesco Soli Muratori.
- 12 P. Verri, 'Memoria cronologica dei cambiamenti pubblici dello stato di Milano 1750–1791', in *Lettere inedite di Pietro e Alessandro Verri*, ed C. Casati (Milan, 1879), vol. IV, pp. 360–1, quoted in N. Davidson, 'Toleration in Enlightenment Italy', in O. Grell and R. Porter (eds), *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 236.
- 13 Cardinal Orsi, *Della infallibilità e dell'autorità del Romano Pontefice sopra i concilj ecumenici* (2 vols, Roma, 1741–42), vol. 1, sigs. 5^v–6^r.
- 14 Giovanni Marchetti (Archbishop of Ancyra), *L'Autorità suprema del romano pontefice* (Rome, 1789), 'Al Lettore', pp. 5–6.
- 15 Davidson, 'Toleration in Enlightenment Italy', p. 237.
- 16 C. A. Pilati, *Di una riforma* (1767), quoted in Davidson, 'Toleration in Enlightenment Italy', p. 237.
- 17 Pietro Giannone, *Istoria civile del Regno di Napoli* (Naples, 1770; 1st edn 1723), vol. 1, p. 62.

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- 18 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 461; vol. 2, pp. 315, 398; vol. 3, p. 339. For Giannone's views on papal corruption see the analysis of his *Istoria civile* and *Trireigno* in my *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests*.
- 19 Davidson, 'Toleration in Enlightenment Italy', p. 234.
- 20 Of the very few enlightened who struck in print (anonymously) against the Church in this period was Amidei Cosimo (d. 1784), in his *La Chiesa e la repubblica dentro i loro limiti* (sine loco, but Florence, 1768).
- 21 See, for example, the curial publications: *Sommario de' documenti che giustificano il supremo ... dominio della Santa Sede sopra de' feudi ecclesiastici in Piemonte* (Rome, 1727); and the *Dimostrazione della sovranità temporale della Sede Apostolica ne i feudi ecclesiastici del Piemonte* (Rome?, 1725?).
- 22 See, for example, the papal official document *Ragioni della Sede Apostolica sopra il ducato di Parma e Piacenza esposte a sovrani e principi cattolici d'Europa* (Rome, 1741).
- 23 On Rome's claim see, for example, Cardinal S. Borgia's *Difesa del dominio temporale della Sede Apostolica nelle Due Sicilie. In risposta alle scritture pubblicate in contrario* (Rome, 1791).
- 24 The status of Rome's claim to suzerainty over the Kingdom of Naples is perhaps best captured in the title of Tommaso Turbolo, *Libera ed indipendente sovranità de' Rè delle due Sicilie ... vindicata contro l'assurde ... pretese della Corte di Roma* (1788). For an anti-curial assessment of the areas of Italy claimed by the Pope see the anonymous *Il dominio spirituale e temporale del papa* (London, but Italy, 1783); the curial reply to this text was Francesco Antonio Zaccaria, *Denunzia solenne fatta alla Chiesa e ai Principi Cattolici di un anticristiano* (Assisi, 1783).
- 25 See Muratori, *Ragioni della Serenissima Casa d'Este sopra Ferrara confermate e difese in risposta al dominio temporale della Sede Apostolica* (Modena, 1714).
- 26 On Muratori and Comacchio see below. On the curial defence against Modenese territorial claims see, for instance, G. Fontanini's *Il Dominio temporale della Sede Apostolica sopra la Città di Comacchio. Si aggiunge la Difesa del medesimo dominio ... in risposta alle tre ultime scritture pubblicate in contrario* [i.e. Muratori's writings] (Rome, 1709); and his *Difesa seconda del dominio temporale della Sede Apostolica sopra la Città di Comacchio* (Rome, 1711).
- 27 Lodovico Muratori, *Osservazioni sopra una lettera intitolata Il dominio temporale della Sede Apostolica sopra la Città di Comacchio* (sine loco, but Modena, 1708), pp. 5–7.
- 28 Lodovico Muratori, *Annali d'Italia* (12 vols, Milan, 1744–49), vol. 4, pp. 164–5, 293, 396.
- 29 L. Muratori, *Della Fallibilità dei pontefici nel dominio temporale*, ed. C. Foucard (posthumous, Modena, 1872).
- 30 Three works constitute the history of the Church commenced by Orsi and continued by Becchetti: Giuseppe Agostino Orsi, *Della Istoria ecclesiastica* (21 vols, Rome, 1746–62); Filippo Angelico Becchetti, *Della Istoria ecclesiastica dell'eminetissimo Cardinale Giuseppe Orsi* (13 vols, Rome, 1770–81); Becchetti, *Istoria degli ultimi quattro secoli della Chiesa* (10 vols, Rome, 1788–96).
- 31 Fontanini, *Il dominio temporale ... sopra la Città di Comacchio*, p. 389.

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- 32 For a summary of this type of defence see also Fontanini, *Il dominio temporale ... sopra la Città di Comacchio*, p. 59; for a later but similar defence see Alfonso Muzzarelli, *Dominio temporale del papa* (1789); and his *Della Civile giurisdizione ed influenza sul governo temporale esercitata dai Romani Pontifici* (posthumous, Rome, 1816).
- 33 Cardinal Orsi and Bishop Becchetti, *Storia ecclesiastica* (52 vols, Rome, 1835–62), tome 100, p. 6. The *Storia ecclesiastica* was the first complete edition of the Orsi–Becchetti history of the Church, which remains mostly as it was published, in *fascicoli*, which I have termed tomes.
- 34 Francesco Zaccaria wrote against Febronius in his *Anti-Febronio ... o sia apologia polemico-storico del primato del papa* (Pesaro, 1767; 2nd edn 1770); and (under the pseudonym Theodorus à Palude) in his *Antifebronius vindicatus seu suprema romani pontificis potestas adversus Justinum Febronium* (Francofurti and Lipsiae, 1772).
- 35 On the seventeenth-century crisis and eighteenth-century recovery see D. Sella, *Italy in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1997); and D. Carpanetto's still useful discussion 'Trade and Manufacture. The Historiographical Problem of the Crisis of the Seventeenth Century', in D. Carpanetto and G. Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason 1685–1789* (Harlow: Longman, 1987).
- 36 For a useful summary of the economic condition of the Papal States and the fate of reform proposals see Carpanetto and Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason*; and F. Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment* (London: Longman, 1972).
- 37 The *Storia critico-cronologica de' romani pontifici* (Naples, 1765–68) of Giuseppe Piatti, and the *Vitae pontificum Romanorum ex antiquis monumentis* (Parma, 1739) of Antonio Sandini, for instance, differed little from the analysis of Baronius, Becchetti and Orsi.
- 38 Becchetti, *Istoria degli ultimi quattro secoli della Chiesa*, vol. 1, p. 17; for essentially similar arguments see also Orsi, *Della infallibilità e dell'autorità del Romano Pontefice*; and Marchetti, *L'Autorità suprema del romano pontefice*.
- 39 Lodovico Muratori, *Della Pubblica felicità oggetto de'buoni principi* (Lucca, but Venice, 1749), preface, p. 2. For more on the duties of the good prince see Muratori's 'Rudimenti di Filosofia morale per il Principe Ereditario di Modena', in *Scritti inediti di L. A. Muratori* (Modena, 1872), pp. 219–20.
- 40 Giannone, *Istoria civile*, vol. 2, pp. 190–1.
- 41 Fleury's most influential work was the *L'Histoire ecclésiastique* (1691–1720), translated into Italian by Gaspare Gozzi (Venice, 1739, with several subsequent editions). On the lack of consistent official opposition to the publication of Fleury's work in Italy see Alfonso Prandi, 'La Storia ecclesiastica di P. Giuseppe Orsi e la sua Genesi', *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 34 (1980), pp. 435–8.
- 42 Cardinal Orsi professed to have written against Fleury in his *Della storia ecclesiastica* (1746–62) but his targetting of Muratori is just as frequent; for another reply to Fleury see Giovanni Marchetti's *Saggio critica sopra la storia ecclesiastica di Fleury* (Rome, 1780; 2nd edn 1782–83).
- 43 For a discussion of the thought of Abbot Bencini see Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment*, pp. 146–9.
- 44 Giannone, *Istoria civile*, vol. 3, pp. 322, 333.

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- 45 On Ricci see, for instance, *Gli amici e i tempi di Scipione dei Ricci: saggio sul giansenismo Italiano* (Florence, 1920), and the chapter on Ricci in C. A. Bolton, *Church Reform in Eighteenth-Century Italy (The Synod of Pistoia, 1786)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).
- 46 *Atti e decreti del concilio diocesano di Pistoja* (2nd edn, Florence, 1788), pp. 5, 80–1. See also Bolton, *Church Reform in Eighteenth-Century Italy*. For a similar critique of the Inquisition see also the anonymous *Istoria del pontificate romane e sue relazioni con le potenze della Cristianità* (Geneva, 1785), pp. 82–3.
- 47 For another uncompromising justification of the Inquisition see Orsi and Becchetti, *Storia ecclesiastica*, tome 161, pp. 115–17.
- 48 On the nature of Jansenism in the Italian peninsula and the difficulty of definition see, for instance, A. Jemolo's still useful *Il Giansenismo in Italia prima della rivoluzione* (Bari: Laterza, 1928); E. Codignola's *Illuministi, giansenisti, e giacobini nell'Italia del settecento* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1947); and P. Zovatto's *Introduzione al giansenismo Italiano* (Trieste: University of Trieste, 1970). For an overview of the debate on Jansenism as a political phenomenon leading to the Risorgimento and to Italian unification under liberal and democratic principles see the Introduction to Miller's *Portugal and Rome*.
- 49 Orsi was attacked by his adversaries as Jansenist because of his writings (*Dissertazione dogmatica e morale* [Rome, 1727] and his *Dimostrazione teologica* [Milan, 1729]) in defence of the moral and theological tradition of the Church. On the Jansenism charge and Orsi see, for instance, Jemolo, *Il Giansenismo in Italia*, pp. 162–200.
- 50 S. Woolf, *History of Italy 1700–1860* (London: Routledge, 1991; 1st edn 1979), p. 75.
- 51 Perhaps the most useful discussion of the early-eighteenth-century reform movement inside the Church is Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*.
- 52 For a useful summary of the Tuscan Catholic Enlightenment see S. J. Miller, 'The Limits of Political Jansenism in Tuscany: Scipione de'Ricci to Peter Leopold, 1780–1791', *Catholic Historical Review*, 80: 4 (1994).
- 53 One of the most important texts indicative of this period is Scipione de'Ricci (ed.), *Raccolta di opuscoli interessanti la religione* (Pistoia, 1783).
- 54 There are no firm biographical details available on Delle Piane, but see Carmelo Caristia, *Riflessi politici del giansenismo italiano* (Naples: Morano Editore, 1965), pp. 178–80, 321–2, for some speculative comments.
- 55 Pier Niccolò Delle Piane, *Storia cronologica de' papi da S. Pietro all'odierno pontificato di Pio VII cavata da' migliori autori con annotazioni* (Genoa, 1802; 1st edn 1798), pp. 5, 133.
- 56 Giuseppe Capecebatro, *Discorso storico-politico dell'origine del progresso e della decadenza del potere de'chierici su le signorie temporali* (Filadelfia, but Naples, 1788), preface, p. 8.
- 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 34–6.
- 58 Scotti, *Della Monarchia universale de'papi*, pp. 11–12, 16–17.
- 59 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–2, 61–2, 65, 67, 133. The curial reply to Scotti came in the form of Francesco Antonio Zaccaria's *Il Discorso di un anonimo, della monarchia universale de'Papi, Napoli 1789* (Rome, 1791).
- 60 On specifically Italian republicanism see, for instance, Renzo De Felice, *Il*

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Triennio giacobino in Italia 1796–1799 (Rome: Bonacci, 1990); and Furio Diaz and A. Saitta, *La questione del'giacobinismo italiano* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano, 1988).

- 61 Little biographical detail is available on Rivarola, but for a reference to him see Renato Soriga, *L'Idea nazionale italiana dal sec. XVIII alla unificazione* (Modena: Collezione storico del Risorgimento Italiano, vol. 28, 1941), pp. 116, 120–31; and Caristia, *Riflessi politici del giansenismo italiano*, p. 165. Rivarola translated Mornay's work possibly in collaboration with one Giuseppe Toietti, about whom biographical information is not available.
- 62 Paolo Rivarola, *Storia del papato di Filippo de Mornay, Cittadino Francese. Tradotta, ed accresciuta con alcune Note al testo, e col supplemento al fine* (4 vols, Pavia, 1796–1802), vol. 2, pp. 150–1, 161–2; vol. 3, pp. 2, 75–6, 161–2.
- 63 Quoted in Davidson, 'Toleration in Enlightenment Italy', p. 242.
- 64 J. Whaley, 'Religious Toleration in the Holy Roman Empire', in Grell and Porter (eds), *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe*, p. 184.
- 65 Chadwick, 'The Italian Enlightenment', p. 99.