



Erudition, Antiquity, and the Enlightenment in Rome, ca. 1600-ca. 1800. Theodor Dunkelgrün / Timothy Twining / Felix Waldmann, Cambridge, 07.06.2018.

Reviewed by Stefan Bauer

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (June, 2018)

Historians of scholarship met in the Old Divinity School at St John's College, Cambridge, to exchange their views on "Erudition, Antiquity, and The Enlightenment in Rome, ca. 1600-ca. 1800". The themes this conference aimed to ponder were the relationship between erudition and the Christian confessions, the impact of censorship on scholarly practices, and the place of erudition in the emergence of the Roman Enlightenment. Special attention was given to biblical scholarship – and its censorship – in early modern Rome.

THEODOR DUNKELGRÜN (Cambridge) pointed out the paradox created by the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1546), which decreed that only the Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome was authentic, without, however, indicating any particular manuscripts of this text. Nevertheless, the Antwerp Polyglot Bible prepared by the Spanish scholar Benito Arias Montano, which presented a synoptic version in five languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Syriac), was approved by the Roman authorities and was printed by Christopher Plantin between 1568 and 1573. The decisive turn which made this papal approbation possible was the death of Pope Pius V and the accession of Gregory XIII. Dunkelgrün argued that this approbation must be understood within the context of the post-Tridentine multilingual Bible scholarship in which Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto was involved. Dunkelgrün compared the Gregori-

an calendar reform to what he termed the "Gregorian scriptural reform".

The paper by PIET VAN BOXEL (Oxford) began with the observation that the Latin Vulgate authorised by Pope Sixtus V in 1590 was met with severe criticism. The Jesuit theologian Robert Bellarmine formulated a set of text-critical rules for the revision of the Vulgate. He was convinced of the importance of variant readings for the establishment of a reliable text, an idea that resonates in his preface to the *Sixto-Clementine Vulgate* (1592). Van Boxel called particular attention to a manuscript in the Archives of the Gregorian University in Rome, which contains Bellarmine's notes regarding his teaching on Genesis in Leuven. In 1575, Bellarmine requested Cardinal Sirleto's approval for his exegetical comparison between the Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts. The cardinal, however, was not prepared to support Bellarmine in his exegetical work in public. Melchior Cano had declared in his *De locis theologicis* (1563) that "Christian truth should be learned from men of the Church and not from the rabbis of the Synagogue". Bellarmine's exegetical dream did not come true in his day; a revised *Nova Vulgata* was completed only in 1979.

JAN MACHIELSEN (Cardiff) was the last of the *triumvirate* of Dutch scholars in the morning session of the conference. He dealt with scholars who had developed saintly reputations. Cesare Baronio had predicted his own death at the age of

69. The *Annales ecclesiastici* provided a platform for this “aspiring saint” to enact his piety. As Peter Burke has shown, the range of Counter-Reformation saints did not include any scholarly theologians. Bellarmine and Baronio, however, were the putative or informal patron saints of early modern Catholic scholarship and they acted as models for future generations of scholars. There was and still is a campaign for the beatification of Baronio, and Machielsen circulated a current prayer card from the Chiesa Nuova of the Oratorians in Rome. Bellarmine was canonized in 1930. Incipient cults of Baronio and Bellarmine sprang up in the seventeenth century, but the lack of success of their canonization was due to the reforms to the canonization process made by Pope Urban VIII. After these reforms, causes could only begin fifty years after the candidate had died, since the papacy was worried about unauthorized local cults. Finally, Machielsen asked what a beatification of Baronio and Bellarmine might have meant during a period of Gallican controversies.

TIMOTHY TWINING (Cambridge) began his paper by pointing out that there is a relative paucity of studies of Roman book censorship in the seventeenth century and that more comparisons between case studies are needed. Twining concentrated on several works of Northern European biblical scholarship which were dealt with by the Roman Inquisition and Congregation of the Index. He remarked that there were no seventeenth-century Roman equivalents to the *Sixtine Septuagint* (1587) and the *Biblia sacra vulgate* (1592). Examples of censored works in the seventeenth century are Louis Cappel’s *Critica sacra* (Paris 1650), Brian Walton’s London Polyglot (1657) as well as several works by Richard Simon, including his *Histoire critique du vieux testament*. Although Cardinal Francesco Barberini had a genuine interest in biblical criticism, there was a decisive lack of institutional support for biblical scholarship in Rome. According to Twining, the fact that Catholics in Rome could not produce bib-

lical scholarship was a genuine and important effect of censorship.

The point of departure of the next paper, by DANIEL STOLZENBERG (UC Davis), was the observation that in the first half of the seventeenth century some works by Catholics were published in Amsterdam under false Cologne imprints. Publishing with Protestant printers was still taboo, so that Catholic authors used false imprints for a good reason. However, in the second half of the century, Catholic scholars began to publish openly and with the correct imprints in Protestant Amsterdam. The first of these publications was Martino Martini’s 1655 *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, printed by Joan Blaeu. In the wake of the *Atlas*, it seemed as if a spell had been broken. It became commonplace for Catholic authors to be published in Holland and also to collaborate in other ways with Dutch publishers. Stolzenberg explained this shift with the policies of Pope Alexander VII towards Protestantism. The new *modus vivendi* between Catholic authors and Dutch bookmen was made possible by Alexander’s response to the new political landscape after the Peace of Westphalia. Conversion retained its role, but what was new was the papacy’s conviction that Rome should be as welcoming as possible, so that Protestant visitors should leave with positive impressions. Soft diplomacy, resting on persuasion rather than coercion, began to be employed. Although confessional debates continued to dominate intellectual life in Europe, the possibilities for engaging in cross-confessional conversation multiplied -- even in Rome.

ALEXANDER BEVILACQUA (Williams College, Massachusetts) discussed Lodovico Marracci’s *Refutatio Alcorani* (Padua 1698). It was not an obvious idea to publish a translation of the Qur’an in Rome, and this project took Marracci his whole life. He argued that the previous twelfth-century Latin translation was imperfect and therefore undermined the very goals it tried to accomplish. Errors would make Mahometans laugh and thus cause them to persist in their own errors. Marrac-

ci aimed to first comprehend how Muslims themselves understood the Qur'an, because only then could arguments that would be convincing to them be devised. After he had encountered criticism of his project in Rome (e.g. that such a translation would be both useless and potentially dangerous), Marracci published his book in Padua in 1698. He achieved something that nobody else had accomplished in Protestant or Catholic Europe: to explain, in his notes, what Muslims had written about doctrine in the Qur'an. Marracci's scholarship could, on the same page, be impartial (in his notes) but also polemical (in his "refutations" of the Qur'an).

SCOTT MANDELBROTE (Cambridge) showed that scholars on the verge of the Enlightenment were still trying to re-interpret the efforts of humanist scholars from two hundred years before. His example was the story of an inscription from the collection of Martin Smet, who had been a secretary to Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi in Rome between 1545 and 1551. Smet's corpus of inscriptions – and the author himself – suffered various misfortunes before the collection was published with additions by Justus Lipsius in Antwerp in 1588. The collection became the basis for the most monumental of epigraphic collections by Jan Gruter (*Inscriptiones antiquae*, 1602-03). The tantalizing inscription presented by Mandelbrote led to a dispute about the Palmyrene alphabet. A group of British merchants reached Palmyra in the Syrian desert and made drawings and reports of its ruins. In 1698, Thomas Smith, Edward Bernard and Robert Huntington published a short pamphlet on the inscriptions found in Palmyra; but the dispute was settled only after an extended period of discussions in the 1750s.

Taking a very different approach from the other speakers, MARIA PIA DONATO (Cagliari / Paris) drew attention to the social and material aspects of scholarship. She described the ways in which figures of papal government and Roman society shaped the production of knowledge, and

how the circumstances of scholars changed over time. Wealthy cardinals granted scholars access to the depositories of material evidence, which included the libraries, antiquities collections, churches and catacombs under their jurisdiction. They rewarded their clientele with positions in the curial apparatus. In the 18th century, however, the social origins of high prelates and cardinals began to lower. The highest nobility withdrew from curial careers as ecclesiastical incomes decreased and the Renaissance habit of great patrons of amassing great collections of objects began to end, with institutional collections evolving instead. The study of epigraphy remained a "middle ground", both socially and intellectually, as many inscriptions were available in public places. Historical polemics in the service of the church became less important. Although at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were still cardinals who were theologians, they usually engaged in theologies of a more speculative and less "historical" kind.

In the final paper of the conference, FELIX WALDMANN (Cambridge) spoke about the theologian Liberato Fassoni (1721-75), a member of the Piarist order. Waldmann used the example of Fassoni in order to question the dispiriting vision of scholarship in the Roman Enlightenment put forward by Hanns Gross Hanns Gross, Rome in the Age of Enlightenment. The Post-Tridentine Syndrome and the Ancien Regime, Cambridge 1990. , whose 1990 book is still the best known English language synthesis of the subject. Liberato Fassoni studied the Letter of Aristeas (second century BC), which purported to give a contemporary account of the translation of the Hebrew Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, into Greek. In his *De Graeca sacrarum litterarum editione a LXX cognominata interpretibus* (1754), Fassoni agreed with Humphrey Hody (1659-1706) and came to the conclusion that the letter was fictitious and that the account of the translation of the Hebrew Bible was legendary.

In conclusion, the conference corrected the perception – often unconsciously drawn from contemporary Protestant polemic – that Catholic scholarship was intellectually misguided. It contributed to a re-establishment of Rome as an intellectual centre. In the nine papers and ensuing lively discussions, scholarly practices in the Roman pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment were richly illustrated; their place in the European Enlightenment, however, remains open for discussion. Indeed, it is an achievement of the conference that this discussion is now even more open than it had been.

Conference Overview:

Session 1. Moderator: Kirsten Macfarlane (Cambridge)

Theodor Dunkelgrün (Cambridge): ‘The papal approbation of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible: The politics of philology under Gregory XIII’.

Piet van Boxel (Oxford): ‘Between Ideology and Reason: The Ark of Noah and the Raven’.

Jan Machielsen (Cardiff): ‘Cesare Baronio and Roberto Bellarmino: Developing Scholarly and Saintly Reputations in Seventeenth-Century Rome’.

Session 2. Moderator: Joanna Weinberg (Oxford)

Timothy Twining (Cambridge): ‘Criticism, Confession, and the Roman Index: The Cases of Louis Cappel, the London Polyglot Bible, and Richard Simon’.

Daniel Stolzenberg (University of California, Davis): ‘Between Westphalia and Enlightenment: Catholic Scholars and Dutch Bookmen during the Papacy of Alexander VII’.

Alexander Bevilacqua (Williams College, Massachusetts): ‘Translating the Qur’an in Post-Tridentine Rome’.

Session 3. Moderator: John Robertson (Cambridge)

Scott Mandelbrote (Cambridge): ‘Verifying an Inscription in Enlightenment Rome’.

Maria Pia Donato (Cagliari / Paris): ‘Roman Antiquarianism in the Eighteenth Century: A Social Approach’.

Felix Waldmann (Cambridge): ‘Liberato Fassoni and the Piarist Enlightenment’.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

Citation: Stefan Bauer. Review of *Erudition, Antiquity, and the Enlightenment in Rome, ca. 1600-ca. 1800*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. June, 2018.

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