



Luca Al Sabbagh, Daniele Santarelli, Herman H. Schwedt, Domizia Weber. *I giudici della fede: L'Inquisizione romana e i suoi tribunali in età moderna.* Studi storici, filologici e letterari Series. Florence: Edizioni Clori, 2017. 146 pp. \$20.00, paper, ISBN 978-88-942416-4-8.



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Roman Inquisition

In 1500, in Western Europe, the Catholic Church was politically and spiritually powerful, yet it was an institution plagued by internal power struggles. Simony and nepotism were rampant. Corruption within the church was widely known. Over the centuries, several attempts were made to reform the church. However, none of these efforts successfully challenged church practice until Martin Luther. Each nation had its own reform with differing declinations deriving from the various thinkers who promoted it, that is, Luther in Germany, John Calvin in Geneva, Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich, Henry VIII in England, etc.[1] In reaction to the Reformation, the Catholic Church published the “Index of Forbidden Books,” naming 583 heretical texts, including the works of Calvin and Luther. A new agency of obedience was created, namely, the Roman Inquisition, to examine all heresy. All religious crimes would be handed to a local inquisitor.

I giudici della fede is the result of collective research on the peripheral branches of the Roman Inquisition in central-northern Italy. The book reconstructs the fundamental stages in the history of this institution, starting with the birth of the Congregation of the Holy Office promoted by Pope Paul III and the progressive affirmation of the intransigent line of the church. The book is divided into two sections, each of which is arranged conceptually and chronologically.

In the first part, Daniele Santarelli presents a historical (and “geographical”) profile of the Counter-Reformation until its decline with the end of the papal states in the nineteenth century. The author also focuses on the Congregation of the Holy Office. As Santarelli illustrates, the Roman Inquisition or Holy Inquisition was the network of institutions that, starting from the reorganization decreed with the papal bull *Licet ab initio* (July 21, 1542) of Paul III, dealt with the repression of her-

esies and the control of orthodoxy in the states of central-northern Italy.

The action of the Roman Inquisition was limited almost exclusively to these areas of the Italian Peninsula, since, at the time of its establishment, in Spain (from 1478) and Portugal (from 1536) there were already “national” Inquisitions integrated into their respective monarchical systems. In France, the “modern” Inquisition was never introduced, since the persecution of heresy was entrusted to a special commission called *Chambre ardente* established by King Francis I in 1535. The survival of the inquisitorial courts of Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Besançon was purely nominal, while that of Avignon, the only one truly active on French soil, resided in territory formally belonging to the papal states. In the Kingdom of Naples and the Republic of Lucca, the inquisitorial competence was entrusted to the bishops, while Sicily and Sardinia fell within the competence of the Spanish Inquisition.

In the second part of the book, the “fruit” of the research of the entire group of authors, the “chronotaxis” of the inquisitors of the local tribunals of the Roman Inquisition in the modern age are published (from about 1500 to the Napoleonic age). The start and end dates for each inquisitorial tribunal are indicated. This part of the book is presented as an integral part of an online project, *Dictionary of Heretics, Dissidents and Inquisitors in the Mediterranean World*, an online dictionary (<http://www.eticopedia.org/start-en>) of the individuals and movements that in the Mediterranean region confronted established norms and reclaimed rights to freedom of thought, expression, and action, including the right to dissent and the primacy of individual conscience over the norms, doctrines, and rituals of behavior that were imposed or commonly accepted in the societies in which they lived. This dictionary also focuses on the other side of the coin: the instigators of the Inquisition and the persecu-

tion, decisive factors in the process of Catholic “confessionalization.”

This book stands out for its rigorous historical approach and represents an indispensable contribution to the reconstruction of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation history. In particular, it offers a well-informed reconstruction of a crucial moment in Italian religious history. Lastly, the book is a clearly written exploration of the cultural history of central-northern Italy that will, no doubt, spark many further research queries.

Note

[1]. Daniele Santarelli, Domizia Weber, *La Riforma protestante in 100 date* (Pisa: Della Porta Editori, 2017).

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