Introduction

This book proposes a change of paradigm in studies of the Inquisition. It deliberately breaks away from the national, regional or local framework which has defined the vast majority of available studies, to engage in a systematic comparison of the constitution, configuration and impact on the world of the tribunals of the faith created by the pope to persecute religious dissension inside the Catholic Church. I believe that this change of scale makes it possible to address new issues, experiment with new methods and reach new conclusions. This book also breaks away from the essentialist approach of a 'necessarily' Catholic southern Europe (and Catholic Iberian colonies), whose 'natural' resistance to Protestantism in Italy, or to the supposed diffusion of Judaism and Islamism in Iberia, was only confirmed by the establishment of the Inquisition. This essentialist approach, presented implicitly or explicitly through the outdated anthropological notion of 'cultural areas', sees the Inquisition as an organic institution that expressed the 'feelings' of the vast majority of the population. I strongly reject this determinist vision of the Inquisition: the number of denunciations and the number of victims contradict the idea of immutable religious beliefs or massive popular support for the institution; the controversial period of the Inquisition's establishment, and the number of conflicts arising during the extremely long period of its existence, raise, rather, the issue of different historical possibilities and local conditions. The Inquisition was just one option among others and what is interesting is to analyse how it was implemented by means of faction fights inside and outside the Church hierarchy, how it managed to become rooted in different social environments and how it was rendered obsolete by the new system of values that emerged in eighteenth-century Europe. Finally, this book breaks away from the nationalistic ideology that still prevails in historical studies. The vexed question is how the Inquisition was used as the first centralized institution, essential for the process of state-building in Italy, Spain and Portugal. The impact of the Inquisition on a jurisdictional tradition of fragmented privileges is undeniable, but we need also to consider its disruptive effect at all levels of society, the frequent conflicts between the pope and other political entities in Italy and the embarrassment caused to political powers by certain inquisitorial actions.

This book is about the emergence, development and decline of an ecclesiastical power that largely shaped religious debate, reasserted Catholic doctrine, structured relations between Church and state, diffused a value system and defined boundaries of behaviour (and thought) among the population; however it also faced opposition and finally succumbed to the triumph of ideas it had fought. It is inspired by cross-readings of Georg Simmel, Max Weber, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Clifford Geertz, among many others, who have successively enlarged the notion of power from top-down decision-making to the conflictual dynamic of interest groups, from the political agenda of privileged corporate agents to diffuse movements of opinion, from the symbolic staging of the state to the 'micro-physics' of power and from structured social fields to interacting individuals and groups experimenting with new ideas and new values.[1] Thus I reject a single rigid method of approach; I use different methods to find answers to the questions I pose. My research progressed through a critical reading of the existing bibliography in the field, but also through the extensive consultation and analysis of archival sources. Despite the wide scope of this research my text is not based primarily on secondary literature; the majority of the footnotes are to manuscript and printed sources consulted in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, British and French archives and libraries. I believe it can contribute to a redefinition of the possibilities of historical research through the exploration of an intermediate level of approach, between global history and 'national' history, based on the real actions of the agents involved in important historical processes – in this case the conflictual history of religious hegemony inside and outside the Catholic Church. From a theoretical point of view it tries to bridge the gap between Marc Bloch, who maintained that it is more profitable to compare structurally similar institutions, and Marcel Détienne, who maintained that it is far more exciting to compare the apparently incomparable through time and space.[2] It is true that the tribunals of faith shared the same juridical basis, the same set of doctrines and the same penal procedure, but their constitution, the background of the inquisitors, the sociological origin of the familiars, the ethnic origin of the victims and the cultural, political and social environment varied enormously from one place to another, and from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. However,

[1] Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, trans. from German and ed. Donal N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. from German and ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), trans. Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu, *Choses dites* (Paris: Minuit, 1987); Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[2] Marc Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes' (1928), in *Mélanges historiques*, vol. I (Paris: SEVPEN, 1963), pp. 16–40; Marcel Detienne, *Comparer l'incomparable* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

before entering into the details of my approach, I need to highlight the main works on the subject that have made this research possible.

MAJOR STEPS IN A HISTORICAL CRITICAL ANALYSIS

> The reputation of the inquisitor is huge among religious men, who can suffer the greatest damage from that office; they are constrained to depend on the inquisitors, with the result that one inquisitor, through confessors, can influence opinion, diffuse good or bad reputation, explore any secrets and even create a bad image of the prince amongst his people … A single badly disposed monk can harm the public, either in confession or in preaching, under pretext of spirituality; but one inquisitor has more power than a thousand monks, since he can conquer a greater number of religious men and make them ministers of his own passions.[3]

These shrewd sentences were written in 1622 by Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623), who was nearing the end of a long career as consultant of the Republic of Venice on religious matters. He was a theologian and a member of the order of the Servi di Maria. He was once again writing in furtherance of the fight to block the appointment of foreign inquisitors, who, in his view, would serve the political goals of Rome against the political interests of Venice. To emphasize his point, Sarpi exaggerated the manipulative capacities of the inquisitors, but he was the first public Catholic figure to expose the enormous power accumulated by the Inquisition, the only institution to prevail over all jurisdictional privileges existing among civil groups and religious congregations and to create in many states (not including Venice) its own jurisdictional privilege in order to enhance the ascendancy of its civil and ecclesiastical members.

The central issue of the relations between state and Church shaped Sarpi's writings on the Inquisition.[4] He believed that religious institutions should be under the control of the state, since (in his own words) papal interventions did not take account of local realities and threatened social harmony; the Church, according to Sarpi, was split between factions that put their own interests above the common good, provoking instability and conflict. He believed that the Inquisition had been used by the popes to increase their power within the Church (he quoted the case of Nicholas IV, who in 1289 imposed the presence of his brother Franciscans as inquisitors in Venice), by religious orders and

[3] Paolo Sarpi, 'In materia di crear novo inquisitor di Venezia, 29 Ottobre 1622', in *Opere*, ed. Gaetano and Luísa Cozzi (Milan: Ricardo Ricciardi, 1969), pp. 1208–9 (my translation).

[4] Paolo Sarpi, 'Sopra l'officio dell'Inquisizione (18 Novembre 1613)', in *Scritti Giurisdizionalistci*, ed. Giovanni Gambarin (Bari: Laterza, 1958), pp. 119–212; Sarpi, *Discorso dell'origine, forma, leggi ad uso dell'Ufficio dell'Inquisizione nella città e dominio di Venezia* (no place of publication, 1639).

factions in the Roman curia to extend their influence or impose their own agenda and by civilian members (familiars) to destroy their innocent enemies. This argument was developed in his history of the Council of Trent, in which the Catholic Church was analysed as a human institution contaminated by passions and political feuding.[5]

Paolo Sarpi was writing at a specific historical conjuncture, that of Venetian state assertion against the pope; he founded a 'jurisdictionalist' position regarding the Inquisition, which meant that the tribunal could not operate independently of the jurisdiction of the state. This perspective was to influence other Italian states at a much later date, throughout the eighteenth century. However, there was much more in his prolific writings: he systematically desacralized the pious approach of the Catholic Church, exposing the political interests and personal ambitions that pulled the strings behind the scenes.

Sarpi was a major intellectual of his age, a key figure in the European republic of letters.[6] He managed to clear his name on three occasions when denounced before the Inquisition. As consultant of the Republic, he was deeply involved in the major political battle against the papal *interdetto* (deprivation of rituals and spiritual rights). In 1607, immediately after the pope had been forced into a compromise with the Republic of Venice, he was stabbed and seriously wounded by five hired assassins. Another plot to murder him was discovered in 1609. He studied theology in Padua and established a reputation for integrity within his order; he worked in Mantua as theologian of the duke, Guglielmo Gonzaga, where he met Camillo Olivo, secretary of Cardinal Gonzaga at the Council of Trent and persecuted by the Inquisition; he briefly worked in Milan with Carlo Borromeo (whom he disliked); in Rome he made contact with major figures such as Martín de Azpilcueta Navarro, defender of Bartolomé Carranza at his inquisitorial trial, the Jesuits Roberto Bellarmino and Nicolás Alfonso de Bobadilla and Giovan Battista Castagna, future cardinal and pope Urban VII. He participated in the main academies and intellectual groups in Padua and Venice, in particular the circle of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli. He established friendly relations with both the English ambassador in Venice and the French ambassador, Arnaud du Ferrier, who had been at the Council of Trent. He had a deep interest in medicine (he carried out regular experiments on and vivisected animals), optics, mathematics and physics. He maintained a long correspondence with his friend Galileo Galilei, with whom he developed a telescope and discovered satellites around Jupiter.

[5] Paolo Sarpi, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* [London, 1619], ed. Corrado Vivanti, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1974).

[6] In addition to the introductions of Gaetano Cozzi and Corrado Vivanti to the works they edited, see Federico Chabod, 'La politica di Paolo Sarpi' [1952], in *Scritti sul Rinascimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), pp. 459–588 and Gaetano Cozzi, *Paolo Sarpi tra Venezia e Europa* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978).

Sarpi crossed cultural boundaries in his regular correspondence with Protestant friends in different countries,[7] contributing through his suggestions and writings to important books, such as the *Relation of the State of Religion* of Edwin Sandys.[8] He was familiar with the major works of Pierre Pithou and of his friend Jacques Gillot concerning the rights of the French Church.[9] His *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* was published in London pseudonymously in 1619; it was immediately included in the Roman Index. History was for Sarpi a crucial tool in the deconstruction of 'tradition' and the analysis of the political background of decision-making. One is tempted to say that his insatiable intellectual curiosity, social skills, exposure to a diverse network of correspondents and scientific experiments may have helped to develop his capacity to observe human behaviour and establish a critical approach to Catholic institutions, in particular the Inquisition.

The second significant step towards the construction of a critical analysis of the tribunals of the Holy Office followed in 1692, with the publication in Amsterdam of the *Historia Inquisitionis* of Philip van Limborch (1633–1712).[10] The bulk of this book consisted of the sentences of the tribunal of Toulouse against heretics from 1307 to 1323. Van Limborch published this extensive documentation together with a detailed analysis of the constitution, procedure and methods of the Inquisition, in different periods and extended to Germany, France, Italy, Flanders, the Low Countries, Spain and Portugal. He based most of his text on the treatises published by the Inquisition itself, namely the books on heresies, formularies of enquiry and penal procedure produced by Eymerich, Peña, Paramo, Carena, Simancas, Royas, Ugolini, Campegius and Sousa. Van Limborch chose to play a discreet role as author: he reproduced significant extracts from the treatises, allowing the inquisitors themselves to demonstrate the iniquity of the tribunal. The result was a brilliant exercise of rhetoric since the extracts were systematically turned against the institution, with little need for extensive authorial intervention or guidance for the reader. It was sufficient to change the context, adding short introductions and conclusions. He also used the books of Reginaldo Montano (1567) and Charles Dellon (1688),[11] both in their turn persecuted by the tribunals of Seville and Goa, who

[7] Paolo Sarpi, *Lettere ai protestanti*, ed. M. Duilio Busnelli, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1931).
[8] Edwin Sandys, *Relation of the State of Religion* (London: S. Waterson, 1605). The French edition published in 1626 in Geneva made explicit reference to Sarpi's contribution.
[9] Pierre Pithou, *Les libertez de l'Eglise Gallicane* (Paris: M. Patisson, 1594); Jacques Gillot, *Traitez des droits et libertez de l'Eglise Gallicane* (Paris: Pierre Chaudrin, 1609).
[10] Philip van Limborch, *Historia Inquisitionis* (Amsterdam: H. Wetstenium, 1692).
[11] Reginaldo Montano is a pseudonym. He has been identified with two Spaniards, members of the order of Hieronymus, Cassiodoro de Reina and Antonio del Corro, who escaped to Northern Europe and were executed in effigy in the auto-da-fé of Seville in 1562. See the study and critical edition of the *Inquisitionis Hispanicæ Artes Aliquot Detectæ ac palam traductæ* [Heidelberg: 1567] by Nicolas Castrillo Benito, *El 'Reginaldo Montano': primer libro polemico contra la*

Plate 1. Portrait of Paolo Sarpi. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (LP 85).

had exposed the methods of the Inquisition. Van Limborch set the agenda for discussion of the unfairness of the Inquisition's procedures: the names of witnesses were kept secret; many accusations were collected in jail; confessions were obtained by torture or pressure exerted in prison; there were no independent lawyers to assist the accused; and condemnations could result from the testimony of a single witness.

Inquisición española (Madrid: CSIC, 1991). Charles Dellon was a French Catholic persecuted by the Inquisition of Goa, who managed to be sent to Lisbon, where he was released: *Relation de l'Inquisition de Goa* (Paris: Daniel Horthemals, 1688).

While Sarpi reflected the atmosphere of the end of the sixteenth century, defined by the confessional divide in Europe, the French experiment in religious toleration and the development of the theory of the state and its relations with the Church, van Limborch was stimulated by the abolition of the Edict of Nantes in France (1685), the discussion in England of the rights of the Catholic Church during the reign of James II (1685–8) and the debate on toleration in connection with Protestant minorities in England and the Netherlands. As a Remonstrant pastor, van Limborch was deeply involved in the issue of freedom of conscience, and the historical example of the Inquisition became crucial to promoting the eradication of any form of religious persecution. We should keep in mind that, in the Netherlands, the followers of Jacob Arminius (died 1609) had been persecuted by the Calvinists during the first decades of the seventeenth century, with 200 theologians removed from office and many people detained (among them the famous Hugo Grotius).

Van Limborch was a close friend of John Locke (1632–1704), who lived in exile in the Netherlands from 1683 to 1689, probably due to the Rye House Plot against Charles II and his brother, the future James II, aimed at preventing the victory of Catholicism. Van Limborch published Locke's *Epistola de Tolerantia* anonymously, in 1689, in Gouda.[12] Conversely, it was Locke who procured for van Limborch the book containing the sentences of the tribunal of Toulouse: the manuscript was sent him by Locke's friends as early as March 1688. It was also Locke who recommended van Limborch to allow the sources to speak for themselves: 'I would prefer … artless narrative, drawn from the very fountain-head, to the flowers of rhetoric offered by historians, which are ornaments in the writer, indeed, but deceive the reader and lead him into errors.'[13] For the next four years Locke pushed for publication of the document, a constant theme of his correspondence with Limborch, discussing at length the structure and content of the book. It was also Locke who corrected the dedication and persuaded the archbishop of Canterbury to accept it.[14] But the issue of the Inquisition had already been tackled by Locke in 1687, when he discussed with van Limborch the book the latter was preparing on *De veritate religionis christianæ*, published in 1688 with a debate with Isaac Orobio (1620–88), a Jew of Portuguese New Christian origin. Locke then suggested that van Limborch should record Orobio's account of his sufferings at the hands of the

[12] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Latin and English texts revised and edited with variants and an Introduction by Mario Montuori (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963). The letter was written in 1685, after the abolition of the edict of Nantes.

[13] John Locke, *The Correspondence*, ed. E. S. De Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976–1999). For the quotation see vol. III, p. 393. John Locke had seen the manuscript for the first time in January 1677 in Montpellier; he took notes of it then and never lost track of it. De Beer reconstitutes the 'itinerary' of the manuscript until it was offered to the British Museum in 1756.

[14] *Ibid.* vol. IV, pp. 215–18, 263–79, 462–4, 469–70, 481–4, 525–7.

Inquisition (which was later included in the *Historia Inquisitionis*), referring explicitly to the impact of his reading of the account of the Inquisition of Goa by Charles Dellon.[15]

Van Limborch was by no means alone with Locke in this struggle. In 1697 Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) complained that the Inquisition, 'iniquitous tribunal', 'true abomination introduced into the holy sites', had not only 'triumphed and ruled for so long in different parts of Christianity', but was about to 'expand its fibres and roots into all parts'.[16] Bayle had left France in 1681, when the reformed academy of Sedan, where he taught philosophy, was closed down by order of Louis XIV, and he was implicitly accusing the king and the French political elite of accepting the inquisitorial model of a society monopolized by religious orthodoxy and the cultural values of the Catholic Church, in which any religious divergence in the interpretation of Christian doctrine was considered anathema.

In his previous writings, namely the *Commentaire philosophique*, published in 1686–8,[17] Bayle had argued at length against religious persecution and in favour of freedom of individual conscience. However, it was in the *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* that he tackled head-on the role of the Inquisition in shaping society. The subtlety of his reasoning is striking, since the French kings had not allowed the tribunals of the Inquisition to operate in their territories in the preceding two centuries. Bayle was clearly not talking about the Inquisition as a tribunal physically present everywhere, but rather about the Inquisition – or the 'Holy Office', as its members called it to enhance its symbolic status – as simultaneously a metonym for Roman power and the most effective institution for the organization, disciplining and enforcement of this power.

These ideas had already been made explicit in 1681 by Luke de Beaulieu (1644–1723), one of the first writers to analyse Protestant and Catholic sources. De Beaulieu exposed the role of the Inquisition in training the ecclesiastical hierarchy; he claimed that more than forty inquisitors had been made cardinals and five elected pope in little more than a century.[18] Thus we have here two complementary views of the Inquisition: as an institution that played a major role in shaping society and as a power that reshaped the Catholic Church. In

[15] *Ibid*. vol. III, pp. 301–2.
[16] Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, vol. I (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1697), p. 770.
[17] Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire Philosophique sur ces Paroles de Jésus-Christ, Contraint-les d'entrer*, 4 vols. ([Amsterdam: Wolfgang], 1686–8). There is a critical edition of the last volume by Martine Pécharman in Yves Charles Zarka, Franck Lessay and John Rogers (eds.), *Les Fondements Philosophiques de la Tolerance*, vol. III (Paris: PUF, 2002). On this subject see also C. Berkvens-Stevelink, J. Israel and G. H. M Posthumus Meyjes (eds.), *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 1987) and Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
[18] Luke de Beaulieu, *Holy Inquisition: wherein is represented what is the religion of the Church of Rome and how they are dealt with that dissent from it* (London: Joanna Brome, 1681).

Plate 2. Engraving of Philippus A. Limborch by Pieter Stevens van Gunst. Graphic Arts Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections (1711). Princeton University Library.

1689 John Locke contributed further to the desacralizing of religious power when he claimed that the assertion of religious orthodoxy through the persecution of dissenters was nothing other than a political phenomenon.[19] The conditions for analysing the Inquisition in a detached way, as a power and as a privileged body within the Catholic Church, which had been established by Paolo Sarpi, were developed further in this new situation. But there was more: when John Locke repeatedly asserted the 'duty of toleration' in his writings, he was helping to transform the content of the noun, from a sixteenth-century notion of suffering (the inevitable variety of confessions) into a value, a positive form of religious behaviour. From this perspective the Inquisition became a major analytical tool in the condemnation of all forms of religion persecution; it was considered as a counter-example of the new system of values that these men of letters were proposing for the eighteenth century, a system first diffused within the Protestant countries, then slowly accepted by public opinion in the Catholic countries.

In 1817–18, Juan Antonio Llorente (1756–1823) published in Paris his *Histoire Critique de l'Inquisition d'Espagne*, a massive work in four volumes which marked a third major step in the critical analysis of the tribunals of faith.[20] Llorente had been secretary of the Inquisition of Madrid in 1789–91; in 1809–13, after the first abolition of the Inquisition by Napoleon, he again had direct access to the tribunals' archives while general director of the 'national property'. He claimed to have copied and purchased thousands of documents, printed and manuscript, concerning the major subject of his research since he had first become involved with the institution in the 1780s. As a result, he published the first systematic history of the establishment, development and decline of the Inquisition in Spain, based on documents accurately quoted and analysed. Even today it is the first book one should read in order to acquire a basic knowledge of the institution.

Llorente defined the institutional framework of the Inquisition: the main documents issued by the pope and the king; the creation of the different tribunals; the competences of the inquisitor general, the supreme council and the district tribunals; the edicts concerning the different 'crimes' under inquisitorial jurisdiction; the specific procedure and penalties; and jurisdiction over censorship of books and images. But he also tackled many other issues: the chronology of the inquisitors general and their main actions during their periods of office; royal intervention and the ways in which the Holy Office was used for political purposes; the main conflicts between the kings and the popes and

[19] Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, especially the last paragraph.
[20] Juan Antonio Llorente, *Histoire Critique de l'Inquisition d'Espagne*, 4 vols. (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1817–18). The Spanish original version was published in 1822 in Madrid. It was re-edited with a prologue by José Jiménez Lozano in 4 vols. (Madrid: Hiperión, 1980).