

ABSTRACTS

GIUSEPPE MARIA VISCARDI, *Popular Religion between History and Social Sciences: a Dialogue of the Deaf?*

Over recent decades the subject of popular religion has enjoyed enormous success, especially in the 1970s. This has involved not only the traditional specialists, such as anthropologists, ethnologists and scholars of folklore, but also historians, whose contribution has been fundamental in both methodological and scientific terms. The horizons and frontiers have been conspicuously expanded, signifying an extension of the research prospects to the mediaeval and modern past in particular. At the same time it has made the approach to the subject more problematic and the literature on the topic has become practically boundless. The debate has undoubtedly been enriched, although often it has assumed the features of a dialogue of the deaf. Historians and anthropologists, sociologists and experts on popular traditions do not necessarily speak the same language, starting from the very definition and concept of popular religion.

The contribution made by theologians such as the Brazilian Catholic, Leonardo Boff, and the American Baptist, Harvey Cox, should also not be overlooked.

Referring to the teachings of Don Giuseppe De Luca, Gabriele De Rosa has significantly renewed studies on popular religion, working in close liaison with French historians such as Delumeau, Poulat, Le Goff, Schmitt and Vovelle, Italian historians including Manselli, Galasso and Ginzburg, as well as ethno-anthropologists such as Ernesto de Martino.

MILENA SABATO, *Pious Literature and Ecclesiastical Censure (16th-17th Centuries)*

The subject of devotional writings and readings, together with the active practice of piety, is closely tied up with the ecclesiastical censure of books. This essay is comprised within a historiographical panorama that has recently been greatly enriched by research into the history of the book. It aims to examine the measures

of censureship and the various systems of control adopted in Italy towards pious writings by the Roman Congregations of the Holy Office and of the Index, as well as by peripheral ecclesiastical bodies, in the 16th and 17th centuries. Through a series of particularly significant cases, which also illustrate the complexity of this project, some of the most widespread devotional works of the time have been identified, along with the tortuous vicissitudes of their condemnation. The study explores in depth the topics of prayer, devotional texts in the vernacular and versifications. The censure perspective also offers further insight into the controversial relationship between Italians and reading, identifying a fundamental turning-point in the 16th century. Finally, the data emerging from literature on this subject will be supplemented by indications of the no few issues that have remained on the margins of historic research.

VALERIA VERRASTRO, *«Appearing Before Me, the Notary»: Public Attestations of Miracles and Prodigious Events in the Deeds of Lucanian Notaries of the Modern Age*

This essay illustrates the importance of certain types of notarial deeds and documents in the history of piety. It examines in particular certain examples of deeds and documents from Basilicata conserved in the State Archives of Potenza. These documents, dating to the 17th and 18th centuries, attest the occurrence of prodigious events and miraculous healings in both public contexts and sites of worship (during novenas, pilgrimages etc.) and in private contexts. It is possible to derive from these a great deal of information about the cults, the social status of the miraculously healed persons, the type of healings involved, the rituals used and the manner in which the pious chose to spread word of the grace received. These documents are also important because they illustrate the continuation into the Modern Age of an ancient practice, shared by lay persons and religious, which saw the public attestation of the notary as a fundamental and essential means of affirming cults and devotions and reasserting the presence of the divine in the troubled events of human life.

GIUSEPPE POLI, *Forms of Popular Piety and Religiosity in the Puglia Area during the Modern Age*

This article focuses on certain forms of popular religiosity that were particularly widespread in the territory of the provinces of Puglia in the Modern Age. More specifically it examines the forms of assistance offered by the confraternities to both members and outsiders. The role played by these lay associations through the supply of credit on a small and medium scale to different brackets of local society is explored. In contexts prey to systematically recurring food crises, popular religiosity displayed itself in different forms. The function of persuasion exerted by the clergy

in relation to particularly important situations of public order is also explored, as for instance at certain high points of post-unification brigandage in the Gargano.

PIA MARIA DIGIORGIO, *Calamity and the Cult of Saints in Basilicata between the 17th and 19th Centuries*

During the grievous natural calamities, including plague and earthquakes, that have flagellated southern Italy over the course of the modern age, people turned to prayer. The invocations made to the saints for protection and help were the only defence in the face of human impotence before such devastating natural phenomena. These manifestations are an important aspect of southern religious experience and underscore the constant presence of the sacred in the lives of the Southern Italians.

MARIA ANTONIETTA DE CRISTOFARO, *Churches, Altars and the Worship of Saints in the Episcopal District of Muro (18th Century)*

In the religious upheaval of the 18th century the network of sacred structures, altars and dedications represents an essential reference for the devotional practices of the faithful. Exploring the distribution of the places of worship and the most popular devotions in the diocese of Muro offers insight into religious society and its ideal models of behaviour. There was an increase in the cult of the Virgin Mary throughout the area and Eucharistic piety flourished. There was also an expansion in the veneration of miracle-workers, invoked by popular piety at times of serious calamity, epidemics and diabolic temptations; interest in indigenous saints also increased. Statues and paintings illustrated a consolidation of the ancient devotion to archangels, while the precious fragments of San Quirico and other sacred remains confirmed the circulation of numerous relics connected with the martyrs.

FRANCESCO SPORTELLI, *Historic Elements of the Process of Liturgicization of Popular Religiosity in the Contemporary Catholic Church*

Until the middle of the 20th century the subject of popular religiosity was not addressed in a systematic and profound manner in any institutional ambit of the church, being instead considered with suspicion and mistrust. The documents of the magisterium were restricted to homilies, addresses or contributions to synodal proceedings or pastoral letters from individual bishops which, in a juridical tone, aimed to correct errors or formulate recommendations. Everything still conformed to the spirit of the Council of Trent. The articulated evolution of the reconsideration of popular religiosity began in the 1960s. This essay illustrates the historic evolution of the concept of popular religiosity in the contemporary Catholic Church and its

progressive ‘valorisation’. This progress is traced from the sessions of the Second Vatican Council to Pope Paul VI’s revaluation of popular religiosity, to which Pope John Paul II also subscribed, through to the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* of 2001.

MARIA ANTONIETTA RINALDI, *Lucanian Bishops and Popular Devotion. Augusto Bertazzoni – Aurelio Sorrentino – Giuseppe Vairo*

This article reconstructs the theological and pastoral approach to the various manifestations of the Lucanians’ popular religiosity by the three bishops in charge of the dioceses of Potenza, Marsico Nuovo and Muro Lucano in Basilicata from the 1930s on. Their pastoral orientations reflect the different climate and ecclesiology of the Church before and after the Vatican Council, in line with the relevant directives issued by the Holy See. The magisterium passed from a ‘strategy of discipline’ to a ‘pedagogy of evangelisation’ following the path of the theological platform sketched out by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi* in 1975. This was continued by the numerous operations of his successors, who underscored the need to retrieve and revitalise popular piety within the context of the renewed liturgical education urged by the Second Vatican Council.

IVAN BUTTIGNON, *Italy in the Centre! The Julian DC and Patriotism during the Allied Administration*

In a Trieste under joint British-US military administration (1945-1954), the Democrazia Cristiana was the party of relative majority, and also the leading philo-Italian party of Julian Venetia.

Patriotism became a transitory opportunity for the DC, since in the Cold War Trieste was seen as a defensive anti-Communist bastion, combined with the legal structure of a Free Territory that would never become a state. The philo-Italian legacy of the old liberal-national tradition was skilfully taken over by the party leader, Gianni Bartoli, with all the demographic contingencies connected with the agglomeration of numerous exiles arriving from territories that were no longer Italian.

This essay, based on the consultation of American, British and French documentation as well as Italian, explores specifically the particular philo-Italian strategies of the Catholic party in Julian Venetia under Allied rule.