

Les meilleures causes embarrassent les juges, si elles manquent de bonnes preuves:

Père Norbert's Militant Historiography on the Malabar Rites Controversy

Paolo Aranha

I. The Malabar Rites Controversy

Between the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, the Catholic church was torn by violent conflicts concerning the missionary methods followed by the Jesuits in China and in the South Indian missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic. These struggles eventually came to be called the Chinese¹ and Malabar Rites² controversies and produced effects,

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- 1 The literature on the Chinese Rites controversy is extensive, although a comprehensive synthesis is not yet available. A first orientation can be found in George MINAMIKI, *The Chinese Rites Controversy from Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago 1985); *The Chinese Rites Controversy. Its History and Meaning*, ed. David E. MUNGELLO (Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 33, Nettetal 1994). Particularly important for the wealth of its documentation and the emphasis on the Portuguese involvement in the Chinese Rites controversy – not fully appreciated by previous studies – is António VASCONCELOS DE SALDANHA, *De Kangxi para o Papa, pela via de Portugal. Memória e documentos relativos à intervenção de Portugal e da Companhia de Jesus na questão dos ritos chineses e nas relações entre o Imperador Kangxi e a Santa Sé* (Memória do Oriente 18, 3 vols., Macau 2002). Paul Rule, formerly of LaTrobe University, Australia, is currently completing a monumental history of the Chinese Rites controversy, in collaboration with a team of historians and sinologists.
 - 2 The literature on the Malabar Rites is far less developed. Until now not a single attempt has been made to trace the entire history of this controversy. A very useful contribution is Gita DHARAMPAL, *La religion des Malabars*. Tessier de Quéralay et la contribution des missionnaires européens à la naissance de l'indianisme (Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft Supplementa 29, Immensee 1982), a study of a major treatise produced against the Malabar Rites at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Two synthetic works can also be mentioned: Émile AMANN, *Malabares (Rites)*, in: *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, contenant l'exposé des doctrines de la théologie catholique, leurs preuves et leur histoire*, 9/2: Mabillon – Marletta, ed. Alfred VACANT et al. (Paris 1927) col. 1704–1745; Edward René HAMBYE, *History of Christianity in India*, 3: Eighteenth Century (Bangalore 1997)

although of a very different nature, both in Asia and in Europe. In India and China, what was at stake was the continuation of promising missions and their unity within the Catholic orthodoxy and orthopraxis. In Europe the Catholic church had to demonstrate to internal and external critics, such as respectively the Jansenists and the Protestants, that its missionary efforts were indeed conducive to the expansion of a genuine form of Christianity. Moreover, the good name and even the very destiny of the powerful Society of Jesus were put in question by the disputes on these Asian practices.

The Malabar Rites controversy consisted to a great extent in an excruciating debate on the decree *Inter graviores* that Carlo Tomaso Maillard de Tournon (1668–1710), Patriarch of Antioch and papal legate to China and the East Indies, had issued in Pondichéry, a French settlement on the Coromandel Coast of India, on 23 June 1704 and published on the following 8 July³. The final papal condemnation of the Chinese and Malabar Rites, respectively in 1742 and 1744, prepared the ground for the suppression of the Society of Jesus in Portugal in 1759, then in the countries ruled by different Bourbon sovereigns – France in 1762–1764, Spain and Naples in 1767, Parma in 1768 –, and finally all over the world in 1773⁴.

211–237. – I am about to defend at the European University Institute (Florence) a doctoral thesis entitled „Malabar Rites: An Eighteenth-Century Conflict on Social and Cultural Accommodation in the Jesuit Missions of South India“, directed by Prof. Diogo Ramada Curto (Universidade Nova de Lisboa). This work tries both to analyse the Malabar Rites controversy in its South Indian original context and to explain the Roman decisional process that led to the condemnation by the Holy See. Anticipations of my findings are published in several articles: Paolo ARANHA, Nicodemism and Cultural Adaptation: The Disguised Conversion of the Rāja of Tanor, a Precedent for Roberto Nobili’s Missionary Method, in: *Interculturation of Religion. Critical Perspectives on Robert de Nobili’s Mission in India*, ed. C. Joe ARUN (Bangalore 2007) 105–144; Paolo ARANHA, La formazione del giovane Roberto Nobili, in: *Roberto De Nobili (1577–1656), missionario gesuita poliziano. Atti del convegno, Montepulciano, 20 ottobre 2007*, ed. Matteo SANFILIPPO–Carlo PREZZOLINI (Linguaggi e culture. Studi e ricerche 7, Perugia 2008) 31–44; Paolo ARANHA, Roberto Nobili e il dialogo interreligioso?, in: *Roberto De Nobili* 137–150; and in the articles cited below in n. 8, 9 and 65.

- 3 This decree and the subsequent papal decisions on the Malabar Rites are published in the Bull *Omnium sollicitudinum*, issued by Benedict XIV on 12 September 1744, which can be consulted in Raffaele DE MARTINIS, *Iuris pontificii de Propaganda Fide pars prima, complectens bullas, brevia, acta Sanctae Sedis a Congregationis institutione ad praesens iuxta temporis seriem disposita* (7 vols., Roma 1888–1897) 3 166–182, at 168.
- 4 Among the vast scholarly literature on anti-Jesuitism, one may mention: *Les anti-jésuites. Discours, figures et lieux de l’antijésuitisme à l’époque moderne*, ed. Pierre-Antoine FABRE–Catherine MAIRE (Rennes 2010).

The rites controversies were debated throughout Europe and gave rise to a vast literature, both printed and in manuscript form. Within this wide corpus, whose full extension has not yet been charted, we can find works of different kinds. There are innumerable notorious libels, in which the Jesuits were accused of being hypocrites and idolaters by the opponents of the rites, who were in their turn stigmatised as Jansenists. However, there were also works that, even though produced in order to affirm a specific position within the controversy, did contain erudite or informed orientalist analyses of the Indian and Chinese cultures and religions⁵. Finally, we find publications that aimed at describing the history of the missions in India and China, highlighting the alleged faults of the adversaries and the merits of one's own position.

The matter of contention in the rites controversies was the extent to which Christianity could be adapted to the cultural and social traits of civilisations that were very different from the Western one. The Jesuits overshadowed all other religious orders in the evangelisation of South and East Asia in the Early Modern age, at least in terms of self-representation. Thanks to audacious forms of missionary adaptation – technically known as *accommodatio* –, they were able to implant Christianity beyond the narrow limits of the Portuguese Estado da Índia, the thalassocratic sphere of influence that the Lusitans had established in Asia after the foundational expedition of Vasco da Gama in 1498. While in areas under direct Portuguese control, such as Goa on the western coast of India, a full-fledged colonial society was created and the process of conversion was understood as a form of Lusitanisation, no evangelical progress could be attained in areas under the control of native rulers unless new methods were envisaged. In China this adaptation was undertaken for the first time by the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who came to the conclusion that the only way to have Christianity respected and considered as a serious religious option was to make it compatible with the official Confucian ethics professed by

5 On the Jesuit side we should mention in particular Francisco LAINEZ, *Defensio Indicarum missionum, Madurensis nempe, Maysurensis et Carnatensis, edita occasione decreti ab illustrissimo domino patriarcha Antiocheno domino Carolo Maillard de Tournon visitatore apostolico in Indiis Orientalibus lati* (Roma 1710). This book is extremely rare; until now I have been able to find it only in two Roman institutions, the library of the Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu and the Biblioteca Casanatense. An anti-Jesuit treatise that played a role in the genesis of European indology is the manuscript *La religion des Malabars*, written by Jean-Jacques Tessier de Quéralay (1668–1736), procurator in Pondichéry of the Missions Etrangères de Paris at the beginning of the 18th century. His work is still unpublished, but a detailed study is offered by DHARAMPAL, *Religion des Malabars* (see n. 2).

the Chinese Empire⁶. By interpreting Confucianism as a moral system without any religious implications, Ricci could claim that the Chinese Christians need not give up customs such as celebrations in honour of Confucius or ritualised demonstrations of respect towards one's ancestors. Moreover, Christian concepts were expressed not by Chinese phonetic adaptations of Portuguese or Latin terms, but by finding within the Chinese lexicon words that translated the theological notions of the new faith⁷. God could be then translated as *Tien* (*Tiān*), even though the literal meaning of this word was „Heaven“, which did not necessarily imply the notion of a personal God. The Jesuit missionaries learned classical Chinese and presented themselves as mandarins. Thanks to these various forms of adaptation and to their advanced expertise in science and technology, the Jesuits were admitted to the imperial court, whence they were not dislodged even when persecutions were instituted against Christianity in the whole of China.

Inspired by the success of Ricci and building on principles set down by Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), Jesuit Visitor to the missions of the East Indies, a new experiment was undertaken in the internal regions of South India by a third Italian Jesuit, Roberto Nobili (1577–1656)⁸. He established himself in 1606 in Madurai, a major political and cultural centre, but then extended his mission to various regions of what is today called Tamil Nadu. In the case of the Madurai mission, the local system to which Christianity was adapted was not a moral and public ethos such as Confucianism, but the social system of caste hierarchies⁹. If Europeans had been considered

6 A recent and rich portrait of Ricci, based on both Western and Chinese sources, is Ronnie Po-chia HSIA, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*. Matteo Ricci, 1552–1610 (Oxford et al. 2010).

7 Even in the Malabar Rites controversy special attention was paid to the *traslati* by which names of saints and sacred mysteries had been rendered into the Indian local languages. In his decree *Inter graviores Tournon* ordered that *Nec parochis seu missionariis sub quovis praetextu liceat Crucis, Sanctorum, et rerum sacrarum nomina per translata immutare, nec ea alio idiomate explicare, nisi latino, vel saltem indico, quatenus voces hujus Regionis latinae significationi liquido et adamussim respondeant*: DE MARTINIS, *Iuris pontificii de Propaganda Fide pars prima* (see n. 3) 3 168.

8 I have explored the continuity between Valignano and Nobili in Paolo ARANHA, *Gerarchie razziali e adattamento culturale: la „ipotesi Valignano“*, in: Alessandro Valignano S. I. Uomo del Rinascimento: Ponte tra Oriente ed Occidente, ed. Adolfo TAMBURELLO–Murat Antoni John ÜÇERLER–Marisa DI RUSSO (Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S. I. 65, Roma 2008) 76–98.

9 It is important to stress that the adaptation in the Madurai mission was less concerned with cultural differences than with a non-European system of social distinctions. In this respect the *accommodatio*, at least in the Indian context, cannot be understood as a refiguration of the modern missiological notion of „inculturation“.

until then as low as the *paraīyār* (pariahs), the outcastes¹⁰, Nobili presented himself as a Roman *rāja* (king, aristocrat) who had chosen the life of a *saṃnyāsīn*, a penitent¹¹. In contrast with the practice followed in the *Estado da Índia*, Nobili allowed to his high-caste neophytes certain signs of social distinction such as the *punūl* (a thread hanging from the shoulder)¹², the *kuḍumi* (a tuft of hair on the head)¹³ and the *tilakas* (signs drawn on the forehead) made out of sandal paste¹⁴. He also conceded the use of ritualized baths, performed before eating or attending religious services, arguing that they were done for the sake of hygiene and not because they were interpreted as forms of spiritual purification. These rituals caused furious debates both among Jesuits and between the Jesuits and other religious orders. Eventually the rites of the Madurai missions, not yet labelled „Malabar Rites“, were approved on 31 January 1623 by Gregory XV in the constitution *Romanae sedis antistes*, although the Jesuit missionaries were invited by the pope to do their best so as to remove from the Indian neophytes any form of contempt against the *paraīyār*¹⁵.

The Chinese Rites continued to be debated, with varying intensity, all throughout the seventeenth century, whereas the method of the Madurai mission, extended also to the regions of Mysore (now Karnataka) and the Carnatic (now northern Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh) did not draw major

I have developed this point in Paolo ARANHA, *Sacramenti o saṃskārāḥ? L'illusione dell'accommodatio nella controversia dei riti malabarici. Cristianesimo nella storia. Ricerche storiche esegetiche teologiche* 31 (2010) 621–646.

- 10 The *paraīyār* are a specific *jāti* (caste as a professional group) of South India, but by metonymy their name was often used to indicate all the numerous castes that were subject to untouchability. A useful, although dated, ethnographic account of the *paraīyār* in Tamil Nadu and Kerala is given in Edgar THURSTON–Kadamki RANGACHARI, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (7 vols., Madras 1909) 6 77–139.
- 11 For the scriptural foundation of the penitent life in Hinduism see Patrick OLIVELLE, *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads. Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation* (Oxford et al. 1992).
- 12 *Punūl* is the term used in Tamil, whereas in Sanskrit the thread is referred to as *yajñopavīta*; see Robert C. LESTER, *The Sāttāda Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (1994) 39–53, at 40.
- 13 The Tamil expression *kuḍumi* corresponds to *śikhā* in Sanskrit. This tuft is supposed to be arranged for the first time on a child's head on the occasion of the sacramental ritual (*saṃskāra*) of *chūḍākarana* (tonsure); see Raj Bali PANDEY, *Hindu Saṃskāras. Socio-religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments* (Delhi 2 1969) 94–101.
- 14 Important for all the *tilakas* and not only the *vaiṣṇava* ones is Alan W. ENTWISTLE, *Vaiṣṇava Tilakas. Sectarian Marks Worn by Worshipers of Viṣṇu* (International Association of the Vrindaban Research Institute Bulletin 11/12, London 1982).
- 15 The text of *Romanae sedis antistes* can be consulted in DE MARTINIS, *Iuris pontificii de Propaganda Fide pars prima* (see n. 3) 1 15–17.

critiques until the beginning of the eighteenth century. With the expedition of Carlo Tomaso Maillard de Tournon, the controversies on both the Malabar and the Chinese rites reached their ultimate intensity. Pope Clement XI (1649–1721) sent Tournon to China in order to establish direct diplomatic relations with the emperor and to bring an end to the controversies concerning the Chinese rites¹⁶. On his route to the Far East the Patriarch stopped over in Pondichéry between November 1703 and July 1704. During this period he performed various jurisdictional acts that distressed the *padroado*, the patronage of the Portuguese crown over all the eastern missions¹⁷. His single most important act was precisely the decree *Inter graviores*, with which he banned a number of rites allowed by the Jesuits to their neophytes. The list of these practices was long and varied and included marriage customs, modifications in the ritual of baptism, the use of ashes to draw signs on the forehead, Indian „translates“ used to express Christian notions or as baptismal names, the participation in pagan ceremonies on professional grounds, reading pagan books, taking ritual baths, considering women unable to receive sacraments during their menses and, most importantly, refusing to provide the viaticum to moribund *paraiyār* within their huts. The common trait of all these sundry rituals was a concern for ritual purity. For instance, entering the huts of the *paraiyār* was believed to transmit untouchability and defile one from one's own caste¹⁸. The Jesuits held that without a strict observance of these rituals, the neophytes in the missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic would be persecuted for breaching the law of the country and would eventually turn back to paganism. Tournon's decree was confirmed in 1706 by the Holy Office, in 1712 by Clement XI, in 1727 by Benedict XIII, in 1735 and 1739 by Clement XII and finally by Benedict XIV

16 There is no comprehensive biography of Tournon. Some important contributions are provided by Fernand COMBALUZIER, *Ile Bourbon* (3–18 août 1703). *Passage et séjour de Charles-Thomas Maillard de Tournon, patriarche d'Antioche, Visiteur apostolique et Légat de Clément XI pour la Chine et les Indes orientales*. *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 6 (1950) 273–283; Francis A. ROULEAU, *Maillard de Tournon Papal Legate at the Court of Peking. The First Imperial Audience* (31 December 1705). *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 31 (1962) 264–323; Giacomo DI FIORE, *Il presunto avvelenamento del cardinal Tournon e la traslazione del suo cadavere da Macao a Roma*. *Studi settecenteschi* 18 (1998) 9–43; VASCONCELOS SALDANHA, *De Kangxi para o Papa* (see n. 1).

17 Among the most important sources for Tournon's stay in Pondichéry are several manuscript volumes of official acts and original correspondence written by or addressed to the Patriarch and his party, belonging to the Fondo Fatinnelli of the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, in particular Mss. 1629, 1641–1644, 1646, 1650.

18 I have suggested that these rites were actually christianized Hindu „sacraments“ (*samskāras*) in ARANHA, *Sacramenti* (see n. 9).

with the bull *Omnium sollicitudinum* of 12 September 1744. Seven official acts of the Holy See were, however, not sufficient to eradicate the Malabar Rites from the South Indian missions, since the Jesuits were convinced that without the toleration of these customs the Christianity of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic would fall apart.

It is precisely in the period before the ultimate resolution of the Malabar Rites controversy by the bull of 1744 that Norbert undertook the first steps of his career as a polemical writer. We can now consider the main works that he published and how he became a historian of the Malabar Rites controversy.

II. Norbert: A Life against the Jesuits

The Capuchin Norbert of Bar-Le-Duc (1703–1769) was also known, at various moments of his life, as Norbert de Lorraine, Abbé Jacques Platel, Pierre Parisot and Pierre Curel¹⁹. This chameleonic figure traversed identities and continents, making a career out of controversy and becoming *le fameux Père Norbert* of a highly romanticised biography, published in 1762²⁰. He was one of the major anti-Jesuit authors of the eighteenth century, and his work had a professed historiographical nature, although a very peculiar one. It is not surprising that historiography could be developed in the context of a fierce controversy. A famous instance are the competing narratives of Christian origins produced by Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) and the Centuriators of Magdeburg on the Lutheran side and Cesare Baronio (1538–1607) on the Catholic one²¹. Likewise well known are the conflicting interpretations of the Council of Trent provided by Paolo

19 L.-J. HUSSON, Le P. Norbert de Bar-le-duc, capucin (Pierre Curel Parisot, dit l'abbé Platel). *Études franciscaines. Mélanges d'histoire et de doctrine* 49 (1937) 632–649; 50 (1938) 63–77, 220–239; 51 (1939) 55–75. A complete biography of Norbert is still missing. Husson's work is a rich source of information, but suffers from two major limitations. First, it provides no references at all to the archival sources that have been used to describe in great detail the actions of the Capuchin. Second, Husson (apparently a Capuchin or Franciscan, though this is not specified in the articles) has a clear partisan position. He engages in polemics against Jesuit authors such as Joseph Bertrand (1801–1884) or tries to justify the affiliation of Norbert to Freemasonry by observing that even a famous traditionalist Catholic author such as Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) was a fervent Freemason.

20 [François Antoine de CHEVRIER], *La vie du fameux Père Norbert, ex-Capucin, connu aujourd'hui sous le nom de l'Abbé Platel* (London [Bruxelles] 1762).

21 *Ecclesiastica historia integram ecclesiae Christi ideam complectens* (13 vols., Basel 1559–1574); *Cesare BARONIO, Annales ecclesiastici* (12 vols., Roma 1588–1607).

Sarpi (1552–1623) and Pietro Sforza Pallavicino (1607–1667)²². Norbert's historiographical contributions were different inasmuch they had a more practical nature and were aimed mainly at the goal of promoting himself by means of a violent attack against the Society of Jesus. The matter for his endeavour derived from a short missionary experience in Pondichéry, where he lived between 1737 and 1740, taking part in various conflicts which opposed the Capuchins and the Jesuits. Afterwards he came back to Europe, moving across several countries, changing identities and becoming a famous figure thanks to the credit he achieved through his books.

Norbert arrived in Rome in April 1741 in order to secure papal support mainly on two burning related issues: a final and effective condemnation of the Malabar Rites and the pastoral care of the Indian Christians in Pondichéry. This settlement had been established by the French East India Company in 1674, and its spiritual needs had originally been served by the Capuchins. Once the Jesuits were expelled from the kingdom of Siam after the „Revolution“ of 1688 that overthrew king Narai²³, they sought refuge in Pondichéry, and from there they eventually started the Carnatic mission in the year 1700. On account of their linguistic proficiency in Tamil and other Indian languages, the Jesuits were granted the pastoral care of the Indian neophytes by the bishop of São Thomé de Meliapur (today a residential area of Madras-Chennai, the capital city of the state of Tamil Nadu), whereas the Capuchins were confined to the Christians of European or Luso-Indian origin. The Capuchins never accepted this decision and tried for decades to obtain its reversal.

Norbert started lobbying within the anti-Jesuit milieus of the Roman Curia, securing in particular the protection of Cardinals Neri Maria Corsini (1685–1770) and Domenico Silvio Passionei (1682–1761)²⁴. Parallel to these initiatives targeting prominent figures, Norbert also committed himself to creating public awareness about the cause of the Capuchin missionaries in India and their engagement against the allegedly superstitious Malabar Rites supported by the Jesuits. The first important work published by Norbert was the edition of a sermon that he had pronounced in Pondichéry in

22 Paolo SARPI [pseud. Pietro SOAVE], *Historia del Concilio Tridentino, nella quale si scoprono tutti gl'artificii della corte di Roma* (London 1619); Pietro SFORZA PALLAVICINO, *Istoria del Concilio di Trento, ove insieme rifiutasi con autorevoli testimonianze un'istoria falsa divulgata nello stesso argomento sotto nome di Pietro Soave Polano* (2 vols., Roma 1656).

23 See Edward Walter HUTCHINSON, *1688 – Revolution in Siam. The Memoir of Father de Bèze, S.J.* (Hong Kong–London 1968); Michael SMITHIES, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 „Revolution“ in Siam, by General Desfarges, Lieutenant de la Touche and Engineer Jean Vollant des Verquains* (Bangkok 2002).

24 HUSSON, *Norbert de Bar-le-duc* (see n. 19) 50 66–67.

December 1737 on the occasion of the death of bishop Claude de Visdelou (1656–1737)²⁵, a French Jesuit missionary who disagreed with the official position of the Society of Jesus in support of the Chinese Rites. Because of this position, Visdelou provided useful expertise to the legate Tournon, and in return was consecrated by him bishop of Claudiopolis in partibus infidelium and apostolic vicar of Kwei-chou (Guizhōu) in China. The disgrace of the Patriarch of Antioch with the emperor Kāngxī compelled Visdelou to flee first to Macao and then to Pondichéry, where he lived from 1709 until his death. Norbert had been instructed by Visdelou in the theological and political intricacies of the rites controversies, and in the sermon that he pronounced in honour of the prelate, he hinted at the persecution that Visdelou had suffered by the Jesuits, who considered him a traitor and a dangerous internal adversary. The *Oraison funebre de Monseigneur de Visdelou* was published in 1742 in Avignon, but with the false indication of Cadix. In that same year Norbert also published the *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires, tristes et consolans, sur les missions des Indes orientales*²⁶. The text, in French and Italian on two columns, contained an appeal made by Norbert, as procurator of the Capuchin missionaries, in order to obtain the restitution of the pastoral care of the Tamil Christians of Pondichéry from the Jesuits to the Capuchins. The bulk of the book was occupied by 43 documents that were supposed to demonstrate the right and the expediency of the Capuchins being in charge of the Indian neophytes.

The turning point in Norbert's career was the publication in July 1744 of the two volumes of *Mémoires historiques présentés au souverain pontife Benoît XIV sur les missions des Indes orientales*²⁷. The timing was particularly fortunate because on 12 September of that same year Benedict XIV published his constitution *Omnium sollicitudinum*. The fact that Norbert's

25 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Oraison funebre de Monseigneur de Visdelou* Jesuite, évêque de Claudiopolis, vicaire apostolique en Chine etc., décédé à Pondichéry, le 11 novembre 1737, et inhumé dans l'église des reverends Pères Capucins, missionnaires apostoliques et curés (Cadiz [Avignon] 1742).

26 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires, tristes et consolans, sur les missions des Indes Orientales* etc., dressées selon l'ordre des supérieurs et sur l'instance des Capucins missionnaires aux Indes. Memoriali utili e necessari, afflittivi e consolanti, rispetto alle missioni delle Indie Orientali etc., composti per ordine de' superiori e sopra l'istanza de' Cappuccini missionarii nelle Indie (Lucca 1742).

27 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires historiques présentés au souverain pontife Benoît XIV sur les missions des Indes orientales*, où l'on fait voir que les Pères Capucins missionnaires ont eu raison de se séparer de communion des reverends Pères missionnaires Jésuites qui ont refusé de se soumettre au décret de Monsieur le Cardinal de Tournon, légat du Saint Siège, contre les Rits Malabares (2 vols., Lucca 1744).

work appeared in Lucca, was dedicated to Benedict XIV, and was accompanied by a series of letters of support by Roman ecclesiastics, including a qualifier of the Roman Holy Office and consultant of the Congregation of the Index such as the Franciscan Carlo Maria da Perugia²⁸, necessarily suggested to the readers that there was a close relation between Norbert's work and the the final ban on the Malabar Rites contained in the papal constitution. An Italian translation of the *Mémoires historiques* was also published in the same year²⁹, and the author took great care to distribute it widely throughout Europe. Each cardinal in Rome received a copy, as did king John V of Portugal, queen Maria Theresa of Hungary, her husband the grand duke of Tuscany Francis Stephan of Lorraine, king Charles Emanuel III of Sardinia, as well as many other prominent figures³⁰. The *Mémoires historiques* saw a second edition in 1745, once again at Lucca, and a third one in 1747 at Besançon³¹.

If this work aimed at supporting the Roman opposition to the Malabar Rites, instead it created embarrassment and was forbidden by the Congregation of the Holy Office on 1 April 1745. Six years later, on 24 November 1751, the Roman Inquisition also condemned a third volume³², published in London that same year, which integrated the two volumes of *Mémoires historiques* that had appeared in 1744. In the following years Norbert lived an adventurous life³³. He fled from Rome, retaining the patronage of anti-Jesuit cardinals such as Corsini and Passionei, and – using the names Pierre Curel or Pierre Parisot – moved across Switzerland, Germany, Holland and England, obtaining protection from Protestant ministers and rulers. He developed connections with the Church of Utrecht, allegedly in order to

28 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires historiques* (see n. 27) 1 xiii–xiv.

29 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Memorie istoriche presentate al sommo pontefice Benedetto XIV intorno alle missioni dell'Indie Orientali*, in cui dassi a vedere che i Padri Cappuccini missionari hanno avuto motivo di separarsi di comunione da i reverendi Padri missionari Gesuiti, per aver essi ricusato di sottomettersi al decreto dell'eminentissimo Cardinale di Tournon, legato della Santa Sede (Lucca 1744).

30 HUSSON, *Norbert de Bar-le-duc* (see n. 19) 50–67.

31 An inventory of the numerous editions of Norbert's writings is given in HUSSON, *Norbert de Bar-le-duc* (see n. 19) 51–70–75.

32 NORBERT OF BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires historiques, apologetiques etc.*, présentés en 1751 au souverain pontife Benoit XIV sur les missions de la Societé de Jésus aux Indes et à la Chine, où l'on voit le commerce immense et les fausses relations de leurs missionnaires, les persécutions qu'ils ont faites aux envoyés du Siege apostolique et aux fidèles ministres de l'évangile, leur opiniâtreté à pratiquer les rits idolâtres et superstitieux anathématisés par plusieurs papes et nouvellement par deux éclatantes bulles, qu'on donnera dans ce volume (London 1751).

33 For all the vicissitudes of this phase of Norbert's life see HUSSON, *Norbert de Bar-le-duc* (see n. 19) 50–63–77, 220–239; 51–55–75.

bring it back from Jansenism to communion with Rome. In England he undertook an entrepreneurial venture, building up a tapestry factory staffed with French specialized workers whom he recruited away from the French state factories of Gobelins and Saponnière, by using Portuguese passports in order to expatriate them. Considered a fugitive friar who had committed apostasy, he eventually obtained a dispensation from his religious vows and became a secular priest of the diocese of Toul. The count of Oeyras, then marquess of Pombal, invited the Abbé Platel – as the ex-Père Norbert was now called – to Lisbon to work on the propaganda required for his anti-Jesuit policies³⁴, and probably also to explore the possibility of a schismatic solution for the Catholic church in Portugal on the model of the Union of Utrecht³⁵. In particular, Platel contributed to crafting false accusations against the Genoese ex-Jesuit missionary to Brazil, Gabriele Malagrida (1689–1761). The deterioration of political relations between Portugal and France compelled him to leave Lisbon in 1763 and settle in Paris. There he published in 1766 a comprehensive collection of historical *mémoires* on the alleged misdeeds of the Jesuit missions in China, India and Indochina³⁶. Three years later he died.

III. Falsification or *bonnes preuves*?

Norbert and the Roman Inquisition

In a period when erudite monastic historiography was at its apex, Norbert wrote a totally different kind of history. It was a „history of the present“ with direct polemical aims. Norbert's narrative dealt mainly with clashes and disputes between missionaries in South India, Indochina and China, particularly during the first half of the eighteenth century. Norbert's anti-Jesuit activity began with works such as the *Oraison funèbre* and the *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires*, occasional texts that did not yet have a

34 Giacomo DI FIORE, L'Abbé Platel in Portogallo (1760–1763), in: Congresso internazionale Il Portogallo e i mari. Un incontro tra culture (Napoli, 15–17 dicembre 1994), ed. Maria Luisa CUSATI (3 vols., Napoli 1997) 3 441–465.

35 Samuel J. MILLER, Portugal and Utrecht: A Phase of the Catholic Enlightenment. *The Catholic Historical Review* 63 (1977) 225–248, at 231–232.

36 Pierre PLATEL, Mémoires historiques sur les affaires des Jésuites avec le Saint Siège, où l'on verra que le roi de Portugal, en proscrivant de toutes les terres de sa domination ces religieux révoltés, et le roi de France voulant qu'à l'avenir leur Société n'ait plus lieu dans ses états, n'ont fait qu'exécuter le projet déjà formé par plusieurs grands papes, de la supprimer dans toute l'église (7 vols., Lisboa [Paris] 1766).

specific historiographical dimension. One peculiar element, however, was already visible: a systematic effort at supporting the argumentation with extensive documentary evidence. In the case of the *Oraison funèbre*, Norbert took care to accompany his sermon with a number of subscriptions by missionaries who approved his words. We have also seen that the *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires* contained 43 different documents that, in Norbert's view, demonstrated that only the Capuchins should take care of the Indian Christians of Pondichéry. This meant that almost 60 % of the book was occupied by documentary evidence, such as letters from missionaries or official acts of bishops and rulers³⁷. Overall it was dull reading, whose purpose was mainly to provide authoritative proof that the Jesuits were responsible for all the problems afflicting the eastern missions. The *Mémoires historiques* of 1744 had the same purpose but were indeed a work of historiography, although a passionate and sectarian one. The book was arranged chronologically and described the history of the missions of South India since 1606, when Roberto Nobili came to Madurai and started to adapt Christianity to the local social and cultural features – an exercise that Norbert described as a conciliation between „the purity of worship and the practices of idolatry“³⁸. The *Mémoires historiques* did not aim at a systematic description of the way the Indian missions developed. For this reason the first book of the work, devoted to the seventeenth century, was focused entirely on the controversy surrounding Nobili's method, resolved in 1623 by Gregory XV, and had little to say about what happened during the second half of the century, when no major conflict took place in the missions. It is remarkable that the second book was devoted completely to a time span as short as 1700–1703, i.e. the period that preceded the advent of Patriarch Tournon to India, during which major clashes occurred between the Jesuits, the Capuchins and other missionaries of *Propaganda Fide*.

Norbert's conflictual history focused on the missionaries and had little to say about the great mass of the neophytes. For instance, the mission of Madurai alone numbered as many as 200.000 Indian Christians and numerous local catechists, but their voice was absent in Norbert's plethoric account of intestine fights among European clerics. This omission comes as no surprise given the hierarchical relation between missionaries and native Christians that was as indisputable in the eighteenth century as in the first half of the twentieth. Furthermore, Norbert explained clearly what the purpose of his

37 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires* (see n. 26) 93–344. The whole is composed by 25 pages of preface, 378 pages of main text and 19 pages of postface.

38 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires historiques* (see n. 27) 1 14: *Ils [sc. les Jésuites] concilient sans peine pureté du culte avec les pratiques de l'idolatrie.*

history was: „The best causes embarrass the judges if they lack good evidence; the affair this work deals with suffers no such lack. This cause concerns justice and religion“³⁹. In other words, Norbert was providing to the supreme judge of the Catholic church, pope Benedict XIV, the evidence that was required in order to condemn the Malabar Rites once and for all. Since this is in fact what the bull *Omnium sollicitudinum* did, it is necessary to understand why the Holy Office then condemned the *Mémoires historiques* on 1 April 1745 and on 24 November 1751.

It is clear that a special pressure had been exerted by the Portuguese crown. On 9 March 1745 Benedict XIV wrote to John V a long letter dealing specifically with the implementation in India of *Omnium sollicitudinum* and the action to be taken against Norbert's book⁴⁰. The pope was replying to a letter from the king dated 4 February, presented by the Portuguese minister in Rome, Manuel Pereira de Sampaio (1689–1750). The pontiff explained that the purpose of the bull had been primarily to solve a doctrinal problem concerning the First Commandment, and only secondarily to end the quarrels among the missionaries in India. He stressed that he had given full attention to all the protests that both Franz Retz (1673–1750), Superior General of the Jesuits, and the Portuguese minister had lodged against Norbert's work, which Benedict XIV judged to be a „bad book“. The pope had suggested that Retz denounce the book to the Holy Office. This step had been undertaken, but then the Roman Inquisition had preliminarily claimed that jurisdiction in the case belonged to the Congregation of the Index. Benedict further explained that he had overturned this determination, demanding the examination of the book by a „Thursday Congregation“, that is, a meeting of the Holy Office presided by the pope. In that way, explained Benedict, it had been possible to have the case examined in the presence of the pontiff, a situation that did not occur in the Congregation of the Index. The pope added that he expected that some delays could take place in the Holy Office (this was probably an allusion to the supporters of Norbert who belonged to that Congregation), but could also assure the king that the most rigorous justice would be rendered. In the meanwhile he could already confirm that Norbert was no longer in Rome, but hidden in some place in Tuscany where there was „bad air“ (probably an area infested by malaria, such as the region of Maremma). The Capuchin had already been deprived of the functions he had held in his order. The pope then addressed the single question that most concerned John V, namely the possible

39 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires historiques* (see n. 27) 1 1: *Les meilleures causes embarrassent les juges, si elles manquent de bonnes preuves; l'affaire [sic] dont il s'agit dans cet ouvrage n'en manque pas; elle regarde la justice et la religion.*

40 Roma, Arquivo da Embaixada de Portugal junto da Santa Sé, cx. 36, mc. 1, doc. 5.

impediment to the beatification of the Jesuit missionary João de Brito (1647–1693) which the publication of Norbert's book might have caused. Brito had belonged to the highest aristocracy of Portugal, and the recognition of his sanctity would have been a major honour for the Lusitan monarchy. Norbert might have prevented such an outcome by stressing that, even if Brito had been killed in the exercise of his missionary activity in the Marava region of South Tamil Nadu, he had also practiced the Malabar Rites. If these were idolatrous, then it would have been impossible to argue that Brito had died as a witness of the Catholic faith. In response to this danger Benedict XIV stressed that, when he had been a consultor in the Congregation of Rites, he himself had initiated the process of beatification for Brito. Moreover, it had been he who, in the first year of his pontificate (1740–1741), had removed the cause from the jurisdiction of the Holy Office, where it had been stopped because of the alleged practice of the Malabar Rites by Brito. On the direct initiative of the pope, the cause had then been sent again to the Congregation of Rites, so as to quickly arrive at a positive outcome. Finally, Benedict XIV expressed a complaint against the form in which Sampaio had represented the dissatisfaction of the Portuguese crown regarding Norbert's book. The excessive emphasis of the Lusitan minister in his „gloomy pleading“ (*lugubre perorazione*) had led the pope to reply to him in a rather „lively“ manner (*ci hà posto nel cimento di rispondergli con qualche vivacità*).

The tension between Lisbon and Rome because of Norbert's book can be seen even in a letter written on 8 June 1745 from Marco Antonio de Azevedo Coutinho, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Cardinal Neri Maria Corsini. At that time the *Mémoires historiques* had already been condemned, but still the effects of their publication had not disappeared. In the eyes of the court of Lisbon, Norbert's book was a satire of the Jesuit missionaries, both French and Portuguese, that attacked the martyr João de Brito, the bishop of São Thomé de Meliapur and the Portuguese crown itself. Azevedo specified that John V had not contacted Cardinal Corsini at the time when the crown was engaged in obtaining a condemnation of the *Mémoires historiques*. However, he was now being addressed because it had been heard that certain supporters of Norbert were trying to obtain an abrogation of the condemnation, while the Capuchin was working towards the publication of a new similar book. In fact Azevedo Coutinho was probably writing to Corsini precisely because it was known that Norbert had been concealed in his palace at the beginning of 1745⁴¹.

41 Lisboa, Biblioteca da Ajuda, 54-XIII-19, doc. 128. On the protection that Neri Maria Corsini had granted to Norbert see HUSSON, *Norbert de Bar-le-duc* (see n. 19) 50–75.

From the letters of Benedict XIV and Azevedo Coutinho it appears that during the first months of 1745 a political struggle had taken place in Rome between the supporters and the opponents of the Père Norbert. The arena for the clash was primarily the Congregation of the Holy Office. The *vota* of the consultors of the Roman Inquisition who examined Norbert's work can be read as a peculiar form of book reviews, addressing also the extent to which the Capuchin had written a work properly historiographical. Since 1998, when the archives of the former Roman Holy Office were finally opened to scholarly research, it has become possible to better understand the paradox of a work condemned by the Holy Office even though its main declared aim was to support a papal decision. A single archival dossier contains the documentation concerning both condemnations of 1745 and 1751⁴². As mentioned in the pope's letter to John V, the examination of *Mémoires historiques* had been officially introduced by a petition made by a representative of the Society of Jesus. However, while Benedict XIV had talked with the Superior General of the Jesuits, the denunciation to the Holy Office was presented by the Procurator-General of that order⁴³. Norbert's work was indicted on nine charges⁴⁴:

1. The decree of the Holy Office of 25 September 1710 had banned all publications on the Chinese Rites. Norbert's book dealt not only with the Malabar Rites, but also with the Chinese ones⁴⁵.

2. If Norbert had knowledge of crimes against the faith committed by certain Jesuits, he was obligated to denounce them in secret to bishops or to the Holy Office. On the contrary, he had published his accusations in print.

3. Innocent XI had banned, in 1679, all private censures against doctrines that were not condemned by the Holy See⁴⁶. Norbert, however, was

42 Città del Vaticano, Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (ACDF), S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 187r–392v.

43 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 191r–v, 201r–v.

44 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 194r–198v.

45 The decree can be found in: Magnum bullarium Romanum seu eiusdem continuatio, quae supplementi loco sit iis, quae praecesserunt, editionibus tum Romanae tum Lugdunensi, 2: Constitutiones Clementis XI., Innocentii XIII. et Benedicti XIII. hodie sedentis hactenus ineditas complectens (Luxembourg 1727) 398. It specifically forbade *libros, libellos, relationes, theses, folia seu scripta quaecumque, in quibus ex professo vel incidenter de ritibus Sinicis huiusmodi vel de controversiis desuper seu illorum occasione exortis quomodolibet tractetur, sine expressa et speciali licentia a sanctitate sua seu pro tempore existente Romano pontifice in Congregatione supradictae Sanctae et Universalis Inquisitionis obtinenda*. It was precisely the reference to works that dealt even only incidentally with the Chinese Rites controversies that made Norbert's *Mémoires historiques* liable to censure according to the decree of 1710.

accusing of idolatry missionaries who followed principles set by bishops and prestigious theologians.

4. Norbert had published in print and in vernacular languages infamous accusations against missionaries and neophytes, in such a manner that the „heretics“ (i. e. Protestants) would be offered an occasion to denigrate Catholicism.

5. Would a book that accused the Capuchins, pointing at certain friars who indeed had committed crimes, ever be acceptable? Would it not be considered a scandal?

6. Norbert's accusations attacked all the Society of Jesus in general terms.

7. The „heretics“ would find grounds in Norbert's book to direct re-primations against the Holy See, which had tolerated missionaries who were now presented as idolaters.

8. Norbert justified the separation *in divinis* imposed by the Capuchins against the Jesuit missionaries in Pondichéry. According to the Procurator-General, this implied that the Capuchins had appointed themselves to the function of judges entitled to sanction crimes.

9. Norbert argued that João de Brito could not be canonised because he had practised the Malabar Rites. However, on 2 July 1741 the Congregation of Rites, presided by Benedict XIV, had declared that such an objection did not prevent moving on to the following phase in the process of canonization, i.e. the examination of his martyrdom and miracles.

On 16 September 1744, just four days after the publication of *Omnium sollicitudinum*, the cardinals of the Congregation of the Holy Office examined the denunciation of Norbert's work lodged by the Jesuit Procurator-General. There was a vote to determine whether such an instance belonged to the jurisdiction of the Holy Office. Four cardinals – Tommaso Ruffo (1663–1753), Luigi Maria Lucini (1665–1745), Fortunato Tamburini (1683–1761) and Neri Maria Corsini – believed that it was not a matter for the Roman Inquisition, whereas three others – Vincenzo Petra (1662–1747), Antonio Saverio Gentili (1681–1753) and Gioacchino Besozzi (1679–1755) – maintained that

46 This ban was at the end of the condemnation of 65 laxist propositions by the pope on 4 March 1679. See *Magnum bullarium Romanum seu eiusdem continuatio, quae supplementi loco sit tum huicce tum aliis, quae praecesserunt, editionibus Romanae et Lugdunensi*, 11: *Complectens constitutiones a Clemente X. et Innocentio XI. editas (Luxembourg 1739) 256: Tandem ut ab iniuriis contentionibus doctores seu scholastici aut alii quicumque in posterum se absterneant, et ut paci et charitati consulatur, idem sanctissimus in virtute sanctae obedientiae eis praecipit, ut tam in libris imprimendis ac manuscriptis quam in thesibus, disputationibus ac praedicationibus caveant ab omni censura et nota necnon a quibuscumque conviciis contra eas propositiones, quae adhuc inter catholicos hinc inde controvertuntur, donec a Sancta Sede recognita super iisdem propositionibus iudicium proferatur.*

the Jesuit request should be examined by the Congregation. A few days later the majority vote of the Congregation was reversed by Benedict XIV (as he mentioned in his letter to John V), who personally ordered that Norbert's book should be examined by Antonio Andrea Galli (1697–1767), the General Abbot of the Regular Lateranensian Canons⁴⁷. In his *votum*⁴⁸ Galli rejected some of the Jesuit claims, in particular the ones that Norbert should have presented a secret denunciation to the Holy Office, and that had violated the prohibition of private censures. First of all, the Jesuits had published books to defend their position, so that the Malabar Rites controversy was already public through their own action; secondly, Galli observed that Innocent XI's ban concerned only doctrines not yet examined by the Holy See, whereas the Malabar Rites were already condemned. However, Galli conceded that Norbert's work presented four important problems:

1. It was untimely: the Malabar Rites controversy had just been resolved by *Omnium sollicitudinum*, so there was no reason at all to raise new polemics.

2. The book was too bitter in its tone.

3. Norbert leveled charges against his adversaries that were either incredible or unproven.

4. The Capuchin did not respect the partial approval of certain Malabar Rites made by various popes since Gregory XV.

The conclusion that Galli derived from this examination was that Norbert's *Mémoires historiques* deserved to be banned, whereas no prohibition was required against the *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires* and the *Oraison funèbre*. However, Galli's position was not immediately accepted by the Holy Office. Under the pretext that the abbot had fallen ill and could not continue working on the case, on 22 October 1744 the books were assigned for revision by another consultor, the Franciscan Lorenzo Ganganelli (1705–1774), later pope Clement XIV (pope 1769–1774), the very pontiff who was to sign the universal suppression of the Society of Jesus into law with the brief *Dominus ac redemptor* of 21 July 1773⁴⁹. Ganganelli's *votum*

47 Galli was appointed cardinal in 1753: Remigius RITZLER–Pirmin SEFRIN, *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi sive Summorum pontificum, S. R. E. cardinalium, ecclesiarum antistitum series e documentis tabularii praesertim Vaticani collecta, digesta, edita*, 6: A pontificatu Clementis pp. XII (1730) usque ad pontificatum Pii pp. VI (1799) (Padova 1958) 17. Benedict XIV considered him *buon teologo, buon professore e uomo esperto di congregazioni imparziale e non sospetto ai padri della Compagnia*: Émile de HEECKEREN, *Correspondance de Benoît XIV. Précédée d'une introduction et accompagnée de notes et tables* (2 vols., Paris 1912) 2 306.

48 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 216r–223v.

49 The assignment to Ganganelli is recorded in ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 226v. There is no comprehensive biography of him, although an older work remains useful:

was very long and erudite⁵⁰, so that it was necessary to make an abstract of it in order to ease its evaluation by the Cardinals⁵¹. This singular document is particularly important for understanding the anti-Jesuit prejudices Ganganelli held while working at the Holy Office, and how this attitude could be a remote cultural foundation for *Dominus ac redemptor*, issued only 18 years later. In his *votum* Ganganelli compared Norbert of Bar-le-Duc to Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390 – c. 465), a Christian author of the fifth century who had fought fiercely against the Semi-Pelagian *Massilienses et Lirinenses* (monks from Marseilles and Lérins)⁵², writing the theological poem *Adversus ingratos*⁵³ and receiving support from the bishops of Rome Celestine I (bishop 422–432) and Sixtus III (bishop 432–440). This comparison was indeed flattering for Norbert, who found himself elevated to the heroic heights of ancient Christianity! According to Ganganelli, Prosper was similar to Norbert inasmuch as both resorted to very violent expressions and tones, widely publicised at the very moment when the doctrinal deviations they were inveighing against were almost defeated. Moreover, the *Massilienses* included figures particularly distinguished by virtue and learning, such as John Cassian (c. 360–435), St. Hilary of Arles (c. 403–449) or St. Faustus of Riez (ca. 405 – ca. 490)⁵⁴. This observation served Ganganelli to conciliate his enthusiastic support of Norbert's work with respect for the papal decision

Augustin THEINER, *Geschichte des Pontificats Clemens' XIV. nach unedirten Staatschriften aus dem geheimen Archive des Vaticans* (2 vols., Leipzig–Paris 1853).

50 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 227r–226v.

51 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 247r–252v, *Ristretto della Censura del P.re Ganganelli Reggente del Collegio di S. Bonaventura*.

52 On Prosper of Aquitaine see recently Alexander Y. HWANG, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace. The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington 2009). On the theological views of the monks of Lérins see Clemens M. KASPER, *Theologie und Askese. Die Spiritualität des Inselmönchtums von Lérins im 5. Jahrhundert* (Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinertums 40, Münster 1991). See also Rebecca Harden WEAVER, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Patristic Monograph Series 15, Macon [Georgia] 1996); Donato OGLIARI, *Gratia et Certamen. The Relationship Between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine and the so-called Semipelagians* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 169, Leuven 2003). See also the contribution by Jean-Louis Quantin in this volume.

53 Under the title *Carmen de ingratis*, the work is published in PL 51 col. 91–148.

54 On Cassian see recently Columba STEWART, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, Oxford et al. 1998). A brief sketch of Hilary of Arles' life and work is given by Marie-Denise VALENTIN, Introduction, in: *Hilaire d'Arles. Vie de Saint Honorat*, ed. Marie-Denise VALENTIN (Sources chrétiennes 235 – Série des textes monastiques d'Occident 46, Paris 1977) 9–57, at 9–13. On Faustus of Riez see Rossana BARCELLONA, *Fausto di Riez interprete del suo tempo. Un vescovo tardoantico dentro la crisi dell'impero* (Armarius 12, Soveria Mannelli 2006).

in favour of moving forward the beatification cause of João de Brito. Just as Hilary and Faustus were considered saints even if they had maintained an erroneous doctrine, it was necessary to conclude that support for the Malabar Rites, condemned by the Holy See, should not lead to the exclusion of a possible sanctity of Brito.

If Norbert was a new defender of the faith, if he fought the Jesuit missionaries with as much reason as Prosper had struggled against the Semi-Pelagians (and the indirect equation between the Semi-Pelagians and the Jesuits was indeed suggestive), Ganganelli also considered him a historian who matched up to the standards set by Agostino Mascardi's (1590–1640) well-known five treatises *Dell'arte historica*⁵⁵. If the Jesuits did not like Norbert's reproach, it was simply their own fault: *Se rimane offeso il buon nome di coloro, de' quali si raccontano i vizi, di se medesimi si dolgono, non dell'istorico, il quale [...] poco bada al principato danno, e molto meno al rammarico di chi si sente trafiggere*⁵⁶. According to Ganganelli, a further reason why the Jesuits should not seek the prohibition of the *Mémoires historiques* was that, as Mascardi had also noted, impeding historians in their work would only make them stronger and more pungent: *Sappiamo che il vietare agli scrittori lo scrivere, non è rimedio che saldi le piaghe loro [...] gl'ingegni ingiustamente irritati crescono di valore e di forza: punitis ingenii gliscit authoritas, diceva Tacito [...]. Lo stile degli scrittori nella durezza delle persecuzioni [...] si aguzza per ferire meglio*⁵⁷. In this way Lorenzo Ganganelli, a consultant of the Roman Inquisition, found himself in the rather paradoxical position of advocating free historiography and deprecating censorship. At least, we might gloss, when the Jesuits were the target of the historian. The only concession that Ganganelli made to the Jesuit request to ban Norbert's book was that it would have been much better if his work had not been published in Italian and made available to a general public. The reason was that „we live in a time where the communities of the religious are received by the ignorant more with insults than with veneration“, and therefore there was no need to cast further light on conflict within the church⁵⁸. Eventually Galli's position prevailed over Ganganelli's, most probably through the direct intervention of Benedict XIV, who did not want to humiliate the Society of Jesus to the extent wished by Norbert.

55 Agostino MASCARDI, *Dell'arte historica trattati cinque* (Roma 1636). Mascardi was a Jesuit until 1617, then professor of eloquence at the Sapienza University between 1628 and 1640. On his intellectual activity see Eraldo BELLINI, *Agostino Mascardi tra „ars poetica“ e „ars historica“* (Bibliotheca erudita 18, Milano 2002).

56 MASCARDI, *Dell'arte historica* (see n. 55) 180, as quoted by Ganganelli.

57 MASCARDI, *Dell'arte historica* (see n. 55) 187, as quoted by Ganganelli.

58 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 250v: *In ea enim temporum conditione versamur, ut religiosorum coetus probris potius quam veneratione ab insipientibus excipiantur.*

However, the condemnation published on 1 April 1745 was indeed very peculiar. The first reason given for the ban was that the book had been published outside Rome (in Lucca), even though it dealt with matter under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office. Moreover, it should have received permission from the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* since it concerned the missions. Finally, it dared to interfere with the beatification of João de Brito, accusing him of having practised the Malabar Rites. The decree specified that there were no reasons to believe that Brito had followed rituals forbidden by the church, and that even if this had ever occurred, martyrdom was sufficient to cancel such a fault. It was also specified that no one could have so rude or perverse a mind as to believe that the condemnation of Norbert's work meant an abrogation of the ban on the Malabar Rites. However, nowhere in the inquisitorial decree could one find that Norbert's work was based on false documents or was against truth. This specific aspect is clear also in the *votum* on the prohibition of the third volume of the *Mémoires historiques*, issued in 1751⁵⁹ by the consultor Giovanni Antonio Bianchi (1686–1768), a Franciscan who had published at that very time a treatise against Pietro Giannone⁶⁰. Bianchi reminded his audience that the ban of 1745 had been declared without even investigating whether Norbert's narrative was trustworthy or false⁶¹. The consultor then added emphatically that by no means did he want to excuse the Jesuit missionaries⁶². The main point was that Norbert's *Mémoires historiques* were all notorious libels, whose slanderous quality did not require falsehood, but the simple effect of causing infamy and ignominy to people who were „grave and honoured by the public“⁶³. Where Ganganelli had advocated the freedom and duty of the historian to denounce vices (though not in vernacular languages), Bianchi decried that important and respectable people were the target of infamous accusations, regardless of whether these might be true. In 1751 Ganganelli had changed his mind, or perhaps had understood that any support for Norbert was not conducive to a successful career within the Roman Curia – the

59 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 301r–354v.

60 Giovanni Antonio BIANCHI, *Della potestà e della politia della chiesa trattati due contro le nuove opinioni di Pietro Giannone* (6 vols., Roma 1745–1751); the work was directed specifically against Pietro GIANNONE, *Dell'istoria civile del regno di Napoli libri XL* (4 vols., Napoli 1723).

61 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 329v: [...] *prescindendo dalla falsità o sincerità de fatti esposti*.

62 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 330r: *Dio mi liberi, santo padre, che io voglia in alcuna maniera difendere ò scusare i missionari della Compagnia*.

63 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 333r: [...] *la qualità di un libello infamatorio, il quale per esser tale, non è mica necessario che contenga fatti falsi, mà basta che tali fatti rechino infamia ed ignominia à persone gravi ed onorate appresso il pubblico*.

very goal he eventually achieved. Ganganelli discovered then that Norbert had written his work *non veritatis amore, non religionis tuendae studio permotum, [...] sed potius invidiae tabe ac iracundiae furore in alios evangelii ministros*⁶⁴.

IV. The documentary limits of Norbert's anti-Jesuitism

It is no surprise that Norbert's historiographical works used an outward documentary rigour in order to foster a distinctively partisan position. Nonetheless such a basic circumstance was not even investigated by the Roman Inquisition, where the *Mémoires historiques* were eventually condemned not because they contained falsehood, but rather for disclosing embarrassing true facts to ignorant people who might thus be encouraged to hold the clergy in contempt. It is useful, therefore, to consider at least two instances of clear manipulation of facts by Norbert, which the Holy See was either unable or unwilling to ascertain.

A major event in Tournon's apostolic visitation of the Indies had been a conflict with the Capuchin missionaries on financial matters. An Armenian Dominican who had died in Madras had left in the custody of these friars a large legacy consisting of alms collected among merchants of his nation in the East in order to support his own convent in Armenia. The money was requisitioned by the Patriarch in order to make his jurisdiction felt, but most importantly to provide the capital for the establishment of an Italian East India Company under the aegis of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*⁶⁵. The *Mémoires historiques* omit the clash with the Capuchins, whereas the *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires* sought to recast the obvious opposition of the Patriarch to the French friars in a heavily slanted light. Norbert published a letter by René of Angoulême, custodian of the convent of Pondichéry, claiming that Tournon had left India weeping and repeating that the conflict with the Capuchins had been provoked by Jesuit envy⁶⁶. In

64 ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1751, fasc. 5, 292v.

65 I have anticipated my discoveries about this rather peculiar project of *Propaganda Fide* in Paolo ARANHA, „Glocal“ Conflicts: Missionary Controversies on the Coromandel Coast between the XVII and the XVIII Centuries, in: Evangelizzazione e globalizzazione. Le missioni gesuitiche nell'età moderna tra storia e storiografia, ed. Michela CATTO–Guido MONGINI–Silvia MOSTACCIO (Nuova Rivista Storica. Biblioteca 42, Città di Castello 2010) 79–104.

66 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires utiles et nécessaires* (see n. 26) 267–268: [...] *ce seigneur Patriarche me donnant avant son départ de Pondichéry le dernier adieu, avec des larmes qui m'en firent aussi répandre, m'assura que si le Seigneur le ramenoit à la Côte de Coromandel, qu'il remettrait les choses dans leur premier*

fact such a claim is incompatible with the position that Tournon expressed in the letters he wrote to Roman Curia, both when he was in India⁶⁷ and later when he had reached China⁶⁸.

A second example of mystification can be seen in the claim made by Norbert that the French crown had agreed to the exercise by the Patriarch de Tournon of all his jurisdictional powers even within the settlement of Pondichéry⁶⁹. On the contrary, the *conseil souverain* of the French colony had on 14 January 1716 issued an *arrêt* invalidating the publication of the Tamil translation of the decree *Inter graviores*, undertaken in Pondichéry by Claude de Visdelou⁷⁰. If ever the French authorities had wholeheartedly accepted the actions of religious reform undertaken by Tournon, their opposition to the publication in the local language of the prescriptions decided by the patriarch would appear puzzling indeed.

The accumulation of documents and the violence of the accusations raised against the Jesuits should not lead to the conclusion that Norbert was able to exert an unrestrained agency in his own partisan fight. While the support network that sustained him in Rome can explain his access to missionary documents conserved in the archives of *Propaganda Fide*, it is possible today to see that he was not able to find and publish sources that would have certainly contributed to an even more furious and effective polemic. We can consider three cases that illustrate eloquently the limits of Norbert's anti-Jesuit program.

A first example concerns a document that Norbert knew only through an extract, whereas its entire text could have provided far more ammunition

état. De plus il ajouta encore avec larmes que ceux qui l'avoient injustement indisposé contre nous, en rendroient un compte terrible au jugement de Dieu. Letter written to Timothée de La Flèche from Pondichéry, 11 July 1708.

- 67 Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Fondo Albani 248, 279r–280v, at 279v, Tournon to Cardinal Paulucci, Pondichéry, 22 February 1704: [...] *prego vostra signoria illustrissima di prevenire Sua Santità, acciò sostenga con vigore la mia risoluzione, anzi minacci i Padri Cappuccini di farli partir tutti dalle Indie (e ciò sarebbe senza gran pregiudizio) se il Padre Michel Angelo non parte immediatamente e non obedisce al mio precetto.*
- 68 In a letter written to the pope from Xao Ce Fu (= Zhàoqing) on 20 September 1705, Tournon observed that only the Capuchins of Madras and Pondichéry had dared to publish the edict that the archbishop of Goa, Agostinho da Anunciação, had issued against the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Antioch on 22 December 1704: ASV, Fondo Albani 248, 342r–343v. A copy of that edict can be found in Città del Vaticano, Archivio della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o de Propaganda Fide, SOCP 23, 381r–381av.
- 69 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, Mémoires historiques (see n. 27) 1 261–262.
- 70 *Extrait des Registres du Conseil Supérieur de Pondichery du 14me Janvier 1716.* A copy made by Visdelou is in ACDP, S.O., St. St., QQ 1-h, f. 224r.

for undermining the stand of the missionaries of the Society of Jesus in India. It has always been well known, mainly thanks to the information given by Norbert himself, that the method of *accommodatio* experimented by Roberto Nobili in Madurai had been initially disapproved by Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, whose family was related to Nobili's⁷¹. Subsequently the prelate became convinced of the value and necessity of adapting Christianity to the local context and played a decisive role in obtaining the approval given by pope Gregory XV in the bull *Romanae sedis antistes* of 1623. In his *Mémoires historiques*, Norbert made reference to a specific letter in which Bellarmino severely condemned Nobili's actions⁷². However, Norbert did not provide any specific date, and he quoted only an excerpt. Moreover, no manuscript copy of that letter has so far been found and used by later historians. However, it has now been possible to recover an integral copy of the document among the selection of records of the archives of the Goa Inquisition which, after the suppression of that tribunal, ended up in the National Library of Rio de Janeiro⁷³. The document had not previously been identified because in the best currently available inventory of that archival collection, the document was referred to as a letter of Roberto Bellarmino to a certain "Roberto Mobil"⁷⁴. The letter was sent from Rome on 22 November 1611. A comparison between the text in Rio de Janeiro and the one in the *Mémoires historiques* shows that Norbert was culpable of some strategic omissions, but did not forge the document per se:

„The Gospel of Christ does not need colours and simulations. <In my opinion> [omitted by Norbert] it is less important that the Brahmins are not converted to the faith, than that the Christians do not preach the Gospel freely and sincerely. The preaching of the crucified Christ was foolishness to the Gentiles and a scandal to the Jews, but nonetheless St. Paul and the other apostles did not cease to preach, in the most free way, Christ the crucified. I do not want to dispute on the single points, however I cannot forebear to say that it seems to me that the imitation of the arrogance of the Brahmins is diametrically opposite to the humbleness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that it seems very dangerous for the faith to keep certain rituals. <However, I have no doubts as to your good intentions> [omitted by Norbert]⁷⁵.

71 Gearóid Ó BROIN, The Family Background of Robert Nobili S. J. *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 68 (1999) 3–46, at 16.

72 NORBERT DE BAR-LE-DUC, *Mémoires historiques* (see n. 27) 14–15.

73 Rio de Janeiro, Biblioteca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro (BNRJ), Ms. 25,1,003, n° 221, 454r–v.

74 Inquisição de Goa: Inventário Analítico. *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional [de Rio de Janeiro]* 120 (2000) 1–367, at 88.

75 BNRJ, Ms. 25,1,003, n° 221, 454r.

It appears clear that Norbert omitted expressions that could partially nuance the condemnation expressed by Bellarmino. Nonetheless, the substance of the passage was reported without any major changes. If this section of the letter is already extremely important, the remaining part of the document in Rio de Janeiro, not reported by Norbert, is even more interesting. Roberto Nobili, acting as a client of a patron closely linked to him both by family connections and corporate affiliation as a Jesuit confrère, had requested Bellarmino to provide him some financial support for his new mission at Madurai. The reply was sarcastic and expressed very eloquently the cardinal's distance from the approach followed by his young protégé. Bellarmino, with obvious irony, said that it was very difficult for him to satisfy the request as there were many poor people even in Rome, and the Jesuit colleges were deeply in debt, so that they could not help others. Even the pope, notwithstanding his great revenues, was burdened by expenses superior to what he earned. However, Bellarmino – and here he shifted from sarcasm to a very painful reproach – had often considered how at the very beginning of Christianity the apostles had not received subsidies from Jerusalem or Rome, and yet been able to establish churches throughout vast regions. The arm of God had not become shorter in the course of time, and He could provide to His missionaries even if no subsidies came from Rome or Spain⁷⁶. In fact the apostles had been able to obtain whatever they needed thanks to the sanctity of their way of life, and the divine signs and prodigies that gave them great authority. Bellarmino argued – and a concerned reader could not be sure whether the remark was sincere or ironic – that he did not believe that the preachers of his time lacked sanctity of life. The cardinal did not know why God in that time was operating fewer miracles than in the apostolic age, even if the need for conversion was as urgent as at the

76 Until now a possible Spanish dimension of the controversy on the Madurai mission has not been considered by historians. However, given that between 1580 and 1640 Portugal was subject to the house of Habsburg in a dynastic union with Spain, connections are highly probable. In this regard, it may be significant that a copy of a key text of the early 17th-century debates has recently turned up in Madrid. This text, authored by the archbishop of Cranganor Francesc Ros (1557–1624) and entitled *De triplici linea et cincinno capillorum Bracmanum Indiae Orientalis, quem curumby aut sindy vocant*, was presented to the Roman Inquisition in 1614. Copies are in the archives of the Holy Office (ACDF, S.O., St. St., QQ 1-g, 22r–23v), in other Roman archives (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Goa 51, 158r–v, 159Ar–v; ASV, Congr. Concilio., Relat. Dioec. 288, 7r–8v), as well as in Lisbon (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Armário Jesuítico, liv. 19, 275r–276v). My colleague Jiang Wei, an expert in the history of the Catholic missions to the Far East in the 16th and 17th centuries, has now discovered a further copy in Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Jesuitas, Legajo 271.

beginning of Christianity. The only possible conclusion was to acknowledge that the decisions of God were mysterious and that they should be adored and not discussed.

If Bellarmino's letter in its entirety would have considerably helped Norbert in casting a very negative light on Nobili, access to another document conserved in the Rio de Janeiro papers of the Goa Inquisition would have probably caused a great embarrassment to entire Society of Jesus. That document is an authenticated copy of a provision issued by the archbishop of Cranganore, Estevão de Brito (1567–1641), on 6 April 1625. During the eighteenth-century controversy on the Malabar Rites, the Jesuit advocates of *accommodatio* constantly made reference to a special permission granted to their missionaries by Estevão de Brito. In fact, whilst *Romanae sedis antistes* allowed the converts of Madurai to wear sandal *tilakas* on their forehead, no mention was made of the cheaper and more widely used *tilakas* drawn with ashes. According to Francisco Lainez and Antonio Broglia Brandolini, procurators in Rome for the Jesuit missions of Madurai, Mysore and the Carnatic, those *tilakas* had been permitted by the archbishop of Cranganore and therefore had to be considered legitimate, at least until a final decision was rendered by the Holy See. However, there was something rather vague about this alleged permission. At the time when Tournon was in Pondichéry, the Jesuits had not been able to present him with an authenticated copy of the grant. In his *Defensio Indicarum missionum* of 1710, Lainez reported the testimony of the bishop of São Thomé, who claimed that the permission had been given by Estevão de Brito more than 60 years before, i. e. sometime in the 1640s. He also quoted a specific passage of the original provision, as it had been reported in a treatise composed by the French Jesuit Jean-Venance Bouchet (1655–1732) at the time of Tournon's visit⁷⁷. Brandolini, in the first of his two printed works, published in 1724, suggested that the permission had been given when Balthazar da Costa (1610–1673) entered the mission of Madurai around 1640 and began the apostolate of the *paṅṭārasvāmi*, instead of following the model of Brahmin *saṃnyāsīn* devised by Nobili. This meant that a specific category of missionaries – modelled on Indian mendicant holy men who dealt with ordinary people – would be devoted to the lower castes, those who actually made use of ash *tilakas* instead of sandal ones. It was also stressed that the decision of Estevão de Brito had been taken on the basis of a commission given from the Holy See and not on his own initiative⁷⁸. Not surprisingly, the

77 LAINEZ, *Defensio Indicarum missionum* (see n. 5) 545.

78 Antonio Broglia BRANDOLINI, *Giustificazione del praticato sin'ora da' religiosi della Compagnia di Gesù nelle missioni del Madurey, Mayssur e Carnate* (Roma 1724) 120–121. A manuscript document that Brandolini presented to the Holy Office,

commissar of the Roman Inquisition, the Dominican Luigi Maria Lucini, who fiercely defended Tournon's decree against the Malabar Rites, stated even in print that it was strange that no copy of the permission by Estevão de Brito or the alleged commission given to him by the Holy See could be found either in Rome or in India⁷⁹. In his second book, Brandolini could only reply, betraying a clear embarrassment, that the Roman records – either those of the Roman Inquisition or the Vatican archives – were very extensive, and maybe Lucini had not browsed them sufficiently. Moreover, it was also possible that the commission from the Holy See to the archbishop of Cranganore had been sent from Rome through some special expedition and not following ordinary channels. As for India, it was well known that the Dutch had burnt the local Jesuit archives when they conquered Cochin in 1662. Moreover, the few remaining documents had been destroyed when the king of Travancore, Rāma Rāja, burnt down the Jesuit college of Toppo in Malabar⁸⁰.

Whilst it might be true that Brandolini did not have access to the original document issued by Estevão de Brito, the discovery of an authenticated copy of it in the Goa Inquisition papers in Rio de Janeiro has the potential to substantially challenge the traditional accounts of the history of the Madurai mission. The document was copied in Goa on 18 September 1650 on the orders of Jerônimo de Sá, governor (that is, vicar general) of the bishopric of São Thomé de Meliapur, from a decree issued 25 years before⁸¹. It does indeed include the passage quoted by Jean-Venance Bouchet, allowing the use of ash *tilakas*. However, it also contains something much more interesting. Estevão de Brito states that, having received a positive report from two Jesuit theologians, he has decided to allow to the Brahmin converts of the mission of Madurai two customs which they were not yet willing to give up: on the one hand, burning the dead and burying their ashes; on the other hand, using *tilakas* made of ashes. In both rituals the missionaries

and that anticipated the section of the book cited above, gave the year 1630, not 1640, as the moment when Balthazar da Costa entered the mission of Madurai: [...] *quando poi circa l'anno 1630 entrò nelle stesse missioni il Padre Baldassarre da Costa, seconda pietra fondamentale di esse, e cominciò ad annunciare il Vangelo all'altre tribù inferiori, ed anche alle vili, allora fù, che si eccitò la questione e che i missionarii si videro obbligati a permettere a convertiti di nuovo l'uso quotidiano delle ceneri* (ACDF, S.O., St. St., QQ 1-i, 258r–283v, at 265v).

79 Luigi Maria LUCINI, *Esame e difesa del decreto pubblicato in Pudisceri da Monsignor Carlo Tommaso di Tournon* (Venezia² 1729) 368. The first edition appeared in 1728.

80 Antonio BROGLIA BRANDOLINI, *Risposta alle accuse date al praticato sin'ora da' religiosi della Compagnia di Giesù, nelle missioni del Madurey, Mayssur e Carnate* (3 vols., Köln [Roma] 1729) 3 149–150.

81 BNRJ, Ms. 25,1,004, n° 159, 377r–v.

were to recite pious prayers that the two Jesuit theologians had to examine and approve beforehand⁸². It should be noted that until now we did not know at all that at the beginning of the Madurai mission the Jesuits had allowed their converts to burn the dead instead of following the universal Catholic practice of inhumation. It is known that at the end of the second century cremation was common among Christians, but „by the fourth century, inhumation had come to be the method of disposal of the dead in the Roman world generally“⁸³. Against cremation there were no clear theological reasons, but – as the Jesuit Caspar Hartzheim observed in 1724 – among Christians it was traditional for various reasons to bury the dead in the earth rather than cremating them. First of all, inhumation seemed to agree better with the biblical words *Pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris* (Genesis 3,19). Secondly, there was no reason to destroy violently what nature itself would dissolve gradually. Moreover, it was fitting to be buried in the earth, whence

82 Given the crucial importance of this document it is probably useful to quote its entire normative section: *Morem vero cadavera comburendi combustosque cineres sepeliendi, cum ea tenaciter ad fidem conversi Bragmanes et alii quidem retineant, cum pro huius temporis et rerum statu nimium arduum sit in contrarium quidquam percipere [sic, for praecipere], cinerisque quotidianus usus adeo sit illis peculiaris, ut ab illo perquam difficile avellantur, multique ethnici [sic, for ethnici] huius moris denegatione minime ad fidem convertantur, nos in exordio nascentis ecclesiae ad conversionis bonum, sanctorum patrum indulta variasque concessionibus mature considerantes, rem etiam pro huius temporis et rerum statu supra dictos mores prohibere fidei catholicae propagatione minime conducere perspectum habeamus, ne novellis Christi germinibus iniciamus laqueum, et ipsorum salutem paterna pietate consulentes, mores hos supra dictos minime condemnamus, donec a sanctissima sede vel a nobis aliquid in contrarium provisum fuerit, supra dictos mores permittimus, illos tamen ab omni superstitione labe expurgatos exurpari [sic]: pro qua fungimur auctoritate strictissime iubemus. Quare cum cadavera cremantur, non nisi iuxta ritum piisque precibus recitatis a patribus Societatis Madurensis missionis ad hunc effectum praescriptis et a nobis per duos theologos Societatis examinatis, cremanda cadavera permittimus, et eius usu, ita permittimus, ut non nisi ecclesiasticis precibus in Romano missali contentis per sacerdotem benedictos cineres usurpari permittimus, ob eum videlicet finem, ob quem catholica ecclesia cineres usurpare et capitibus inponere consuevit [sic, pro consueverit], ad excitandum scilicet postremi diei memoriam et in symbolum poenitentiae, dum modo nec ab ethico [sic, pro ethnico] himine accipiant, nec trium digitorum figura in frontibus vel in aliis corporis locis desinent, sed simpliciter sine ulla figura benedictis frontem et pectus aspergant; quos supra dictos mores duos, ut supra diximus, minime condemnautes nec approbantes, ab omni superstitionis labe expurgatos tenore praesentium permittimus, donec a sanctissima sede vel a nobis contrarium aliquid provisum fuerit* (BNRJ, Ms. 25,1,004, n° 159, 377r).

83 Dorothy WATTS, *Christians and Pagans in Roman Britain* (London–New York 1991) 188.

– as from the womb of a mother – all human beings had come. Finally, following Thomas Aquinas, it was argued that inhumation fostered among the Christians faith and hope in the resurrection of the body⁸⁴. If inhumation was considered in general terms the proper burial for a Christian, on the other hand cremation was strongly associated in India with Hinduism. From the document found in Rio de Janeiro, it can be seen that just two years after the triumph of Nobili's method, sanctioned by *Romanae sedis antistes*, the archbishop of Cranganore and the Jesuit missionaries had found it appropriate to extend the practice of adaptation to a new and unprecedented level. Moreover, no reference at all was made in Brito's decree to any commission received from Rome to examine the orthodoxy of ash *tilakas*. Quite the contrary, it was a decision rendered by a Jesuit archbishop, assisted by two Jesuit theologians, in favour of the Jesuit missionaries of Madurai. It was specified that it was not an approval but a permission to continue the practices of cremation and using ash *tilakas*, as long as the Holy See or the archbishop of Cranganore himself did not decide otherwise. The omission in Lainez's and Brandolini's writings of any reference to the permission of cremation suggests not only that the practice had been discontinued at some point (probably during the second half of the seventeenth century), but also that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the Jesuits had no interest at all in making it known that in the past they had allowed a funeral practice so different from the one common in the rest of Christianity. Moreover, it was striking that the provision dealt with both the burning of corpses and the use of ash *tilakas*. It was just too easy – given the arrangement of the document – to imagine that those very ashes smeared on the foreheads were actually the ashes of the dead!

As we have seen, the decree of Estevão de Brito is preserved thanks to a copy of it made in 1650. This was done as a consequence of a petition that Roberto Nobili made to Jerônimo de Sá so as to obtain the extension to the diocese of São Thomé de Meliapur of the validity of *Romanae sedis antistes*. Nobili desired that he and any other *padre Bragmane* who might come after him should be allowed to enjoy the privileges of the bull of 1623.

84 Caspar HARTZHEIM, *Explicatio fabularum et superstitionum, quarum in Sacris Scripturis fit mentio, vario hinc inde sensu praeter literalem, ut allegorico, morali, anagogico etc. exornata* (Köln 1724) 338. The reference in Aquinas is given as *4 Sentent. d. 15, q. 2, art. 3*, which should indicate the „Scriptum Super Sententiis“, lib. 4 d. 15 q. 2 a. 3 qc. 1 ad 1, although the original passage differed from Hartzheim's synthesis: *quamvis sepultura non prosit mortuo secundum se corporaliter, prodest tamen ei secundum quod in memoriis hominum remanet; tum quia in confusionem mortui reputatur quod inseputus iacet; tum quia ex ipso tumulo magis in memoria manet, et aliqui ad orandum pro ipso excitantur; unde monumentum dicitur a memoria, ut Augustinus dicit in littera De cura pro mortuis agenda.*

Moreover, he specified that the missionaries of Madurai governed their converts and punished transgressions not by imposing pecuniary sanctions (as was common in Europe), but by other punishments current in that Indian region. Nobili's petition was initially accepted by Jerônimo de Sá on 8 April 1649. It was specified that the Italian Jesuit would be the parish priest of the Indian Christian community in the Portuguese city and that his parishioners would be subject to the principles of *Romanae sedis antistes*. He would be allowed to punish them, in case of faults, with „a mild and merciful punishment, in the way that the Christians of Madurai are punished“. It is important to notice that Nobili's petition, preserved in the Goa Inquisition papers of the Biblioteca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro, is actually an authenticated copy made by command of Jerônimo de Sá on 18 September 1650. In other words, both this document and the copy of the decree of Estevão de Brito were part of one and the same strategy, devised by the governor of São Thomé de Meliapur, in favour of radical forms of adaptation advocated by the aged Roberto Nobili.

However, Jerônimo de Sá sent his decree to the Goa Inquisition to obtain its approval. As provisional head of the bishopric of São Thomé, he could also perform the functions of a commissioner of the Inquisition. On 11 November 1650 the inquisitors in Goa rejected Nobili's request to extend to Meliapur the system of Madurai. The reason was that the Portuguese town did not face the same problems as the Tamil interior, where the Christians often had to disguise their faith in order to escape persecutions. According to the Goan inquisitors, *Romanae sedis antistes* had been granted with many cautions and conditions. On the other hand, in a somewhat contradictory manner, the practice of adaptation was described by them as the permission to follow „gentile customs and ceremonies“. It was specifically said that the cremation and certain funeral rituals allowed in Madurai on the basis of Estevão de Brito's permission were actually done „according to the gentile manner“⁸⁵. While the Goa Inquisition rejected the extension of the method of *accommodatio* to São Thomé, it did not revoke the permission of ash *tilakas* and cremation granted by Estevão de Brito to the neophytes of Madurai. In other words, we can conclude that at least between 1625 and 1650 the ecclesiastical authorities allowed the Christians of a mission in the heart of the Tamil country to perform funeral rites that differed greatly from the customs of the universal church, while being almost identical to the ones of the surrounding „pagans“.

85 BNRJ, Ms. 25,1,004, no 161, [379bis]–380r. The decision was signed by Paulo Castelino de Freitas, Manuel da Cruz, Francisco de Barcellos, Lucas da Cruz, Manuel de Mendonça and José Rebelo Vás.

It is beyond doubt that Norbert could have caused even greater damage to the Society of Jesus if only he had been able to access the archives of the Goa Inquisition. There he would have discovered in its full extent the mistrust that Bellarmino initially held towards Nobili's innovations. In that archive Norbert would have learnt that the alleged pagan leanings of the Jesuits had reached unparalleled heights, by endorsing a practice that could be interpreted as contradicting the dogma of resurrection of the body. Moreover, it would have been very easy for him to draw the conclusion that the Jesuits probably even supported the Hindu belief in metempsychosis: the violent destruction of one individual body would not appear a serious problem if each soul would reincarnate in innumerable bodies in the course of time. By recognizing Norbert's incapacity to collect all the possible evidence against the Jesuits, we now realize the limits of his polemical agency. He knew too well that „the best causes embarrass the judges if they are deprived of good evidence“. For that purpose he put together a plethora of sources that eventually gained him the reputation of a trustworthy authority. It is now possible to see not only that his collection contained predictable manipulations, but also that it did not include documents that would have made his polemics even more effective. However, the measure of his initial success can be seen by the fact that the Roman Inquisition prosecuted him mainly because he was making known to the wider world scandals which they were willing to believe had really taken place. While he was probably neither a new Prosper of Aquitaine nor a historian following the rules of Mascardi, nonetheless Norbert achieved his ambition of entirely occupying the historiographical field on the Malabar Rites controversy. From being a collection of historical sources to be critically examined, Norbert's work – with its threatening abundance of documents – has been able to obtain the status of a historiographical narrative. Only with a thorough study of the Malabar Rites controversy, no longer focused on finding *bonnes preuves* for a verdict decided in advance, will we be able to understand Norbert's polemical historiography as a source to be critically investigated.

Und die deutsche Zusammenfassung? Entfällt die?