

# UC Davis

## UC Davis Previously Published Works

### Title

The Holy Office in the Republic of Letters: Roman Censorship, Dutch Atlases, and the European Information Order, circa 1660

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4qn3h3dq>

### Journal

Isis, 110(1)

### ISSN

0021-1753

### Author

Stolzenberg, Daniel

### Publication Date

2019-03-01

### DOI

10.1086/702875

Peer reviewed

# The Holy Office in the Republic of Letters: Roman Censorship, Dutch Atlases, and the European Information Order, circa 1660

---

Daniel Stolzenberg, *University of California, Davis*

**Abstract:** This essay reconstructs the story of hidden collaborations between the Amsterdam bookseller Johannes Janssonius and the Roman Inquisition in 1660. It provides evidence that the papacy tacitly permitted the circulation of an explicitly Copernican book at a surprisingly early date and that the Protestant publisher was eager to curry favor with the Holy Office by secretly submitting texts to Catholic censorship. Building on recent scholarship that depicts Catholic censors as mediators between the Church and Italian authors, the essay argues that, in the second half of the seventeenth century, they came to play a similar role in an international, multiconfessional context. Censorship should not be construed merely as an external force, impeding the creation and communication of knowledge; it was an integral component of the European information order, shaping scholarship and how it moved. The Holy Office was a node in the Republic of Letters.

## INTRODUCTION: SCIENCE, CENSORSHIP, COMMERCE

The *Celestial Atlas, or Universal Harmony*, by Andreas Cellarius is one of the most recognizable works in the history of science, its spectacular star maps and cosmological diagrams among the most successful scientific images ever printed. First published in Amsterdam in 1660, the plates were reissued numerous times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Today they are ubiquitous, illustrating countless books as well as a popular wall calendar. To offer only a few examples, they provide the cover art to the current edition of Thomas Kuhn's

---

Daniel Stolzenberg is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Davis. His research focuses on the history of knowledge in early modern Europe. He is currently at work on a book about scholarship, censorship, and the international book trade in the seventeenth century. Department of History, UC Davis, 1 Shields Avenue, Davis, California 95616, USA; dstolz@ucdavis.edu.

*Acknowledgments.* Thanks to my colleagues in the UC Davis Early Science Workshop, especially Claire Goldstein and John Slater, and to various audiences who listened to and commented on early versions of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> The engraved frontispiece gives the title as "Atlas Coelestis, seu Harmonia Macrocsmica." The title page has Andreas Cellarius, *Harmonia macrocosmica, seu Atlas universalis et novus, totius universi creati cosmographiam generalem et novam exhibens* (Amstelodami: apud J. Janssonium, 1661). The 1660 edition is rare, and I have not seen it. See Johannes Keuning, "The *Novus Atlas* of Johannes Janssonius," *Imago Mundi*, 1951, 8:71–98, esp. p. 91; and Robert van Gent, *Andreas Cellarius: Harmonia Microcosmica of 1660: The Finest Atlas of the Heavens* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2006).

*Isis*, volume 110, number 1. © 2019 by The History of Science Society.  
All rights reserved. 0021-1753/2019/0110-0001\$10.00.

*The Copernican Revolution*, Peter Dear's *Revolutionizing the Sciences*, the Wiley Blackwell *Companion to the History of Science*, and two bestsellers by Dava Sobel. The atlas's images, especially its diagrams of the Ptolemaic, Tychonian, and Copernican world systems, are well known; but the book in which they first appeared, which also contained over three hundred pages of Latin text, remains obscure.

The *Celestial Atlas* was not written for experts, and seventeenth-century astronomers and natural philosophers seem to have paid it little notice. (An exception was Christiaan Huygens, who noted that its diagrams contained errors and failed to take account of recent discoveries.) Cellarius presented his book as a kind of popularization, albeit one aimed at an elite, Latin-reading audience. Lamenting that many in the "Republic of Letters" shrank away from astronomy, put off by the difficulty of its subject matter and the rancor of its debates, he explained that his purpose was not to contribute new knowledge but, rather, to present accessibly the astronomical knowledge that others had achieved, including their contrary opinions.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the primary audience for the opulent, oversized volume consisted of wealthy bibliophiles and aficionados of cartography, who were not primarily drawn by the textual commentaries. Then, as now, the images were the main attraction. Cellarius's *Atlas* has been a famous and sought-after book but not a very influential one, which may be the reason for its neglect by historians of science. But influence is not the only measure of significance. The history of the production and reception of the *Celestial Atlas*—its text as well as its plates—rewards attention.

In 1660 the twenty-nine plates of the *Celestial Atlas* were examined by Catholic censors in Rome. This has been known for some time, thanks to a draft of a judgment (*censura*) prepared for the "Sacred Congregation" by Athanasius Kircher, which survives among the Jesuit scholar's manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> According to Kircher, there was no reason to prohibit Cellarius's representation of the Copernican system, since it was presented as a "hypothesis," a mathematical model, not as a description of reality. (See Figure 1.) The judgment would seem to have been heeded: the book was not placed on the Index of Prohibited Books and circulated in Italy without controversy. Kircher's report provides evidence that the *Celestial Atlas* was known in Rome in the year of its publication. It also would seem to indicate that its depiction of the Copernican system raised concern among the ecclesiastical authorities, leading the Holy Office or the Congregation of the Index to solicit a review. On the basis of this document, John Heilbron has described Kircher as helping to set the Church's increasingly lenient policy toward Copernicanism after midcentury.<sup>4</sup>

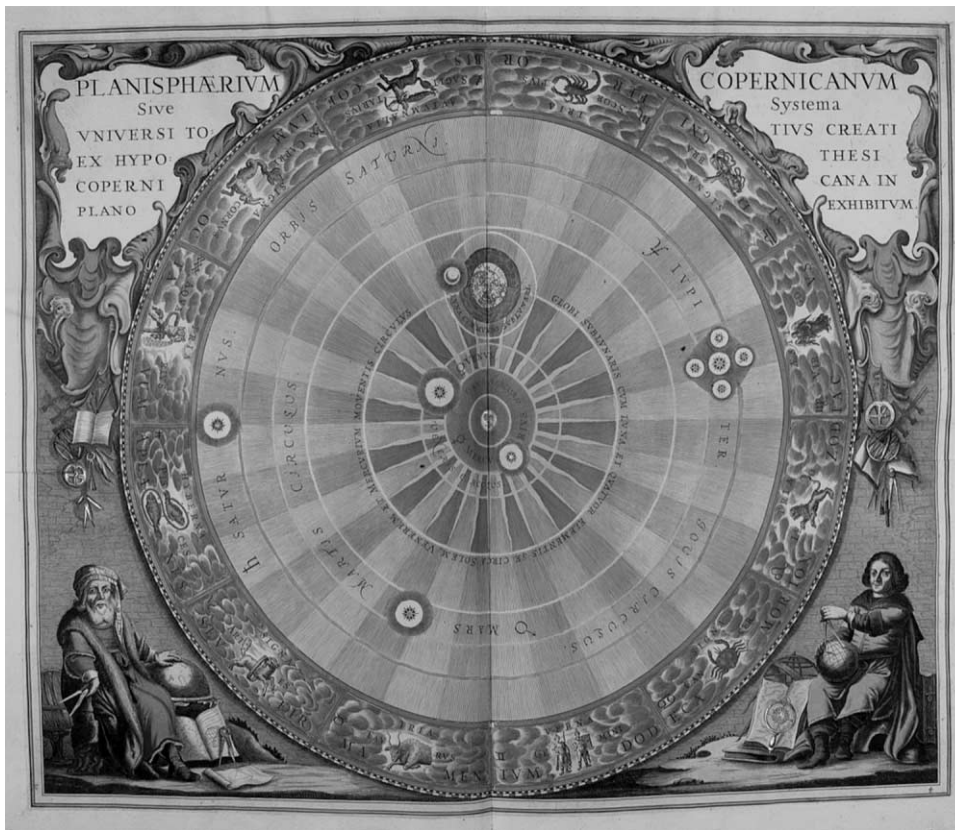
Like others who examined this document, Heilbron assumed that it was written after the book's publication. This was not the case. The judgment was written *before* the book was published. Kircher alluded to this fact, writing that he had examined only the diagrams of the *Celestial Atlas*, not the text, and that a definitive evaluation would not be possible until the complete work appeared.<sup>5</sup> Despite this statement, Heilbron understandably took it for granted that

<sup>2</sup> Christiaan Huygens, *Correspondance, 1660–1661* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1890), Vol. 3, pp. 446–447; and Cellarius, *Harmonia macrocosmica*, fols. 5v–6r, pp. 2–3.

<sup>3</sup> Athanasius Kircher, "Censura Operis Jansoniani qui Atlas Coelestis inscribitur," 4 July 1660, Archivio della Pontificia Università Gregoriana (APUG) 563, fol. 102rv. The earliest reference to this document that I am aware of is Maria Reindl, *Lehre und Forschung in Mathematik und Naturwissenschaften, insbesondere Astronomie, an der Universität Würzburg von der Gründung bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Degener, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> John Heilbron, "Censorship of Astronomy in Italy after Galileo," in *The Church and Galileo*, ed. Eman McMullin (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 279–322, esp. p. 291. See also Heilbron, *The Sun in the Church: Cathedrals as Solar Observatories* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Kircher, "Censura Operis Jansoniani" (cit. n. 3): "Utrum verò dictus Athlas Coelestis, in huius expositione systematis, hanc sententiam doceat, et defendat, tunc patebit cum opus integrum lucem aspexerit."



**Figure 1.** Cellarius explicitly labeled the diagrams of the Copernican and other systems as hypotheses, as visible in the fourth line of the cartouche, above: “The Copernican Planisphere or System of the Entire Created World according to the Copernican Hypothesis.” Andreas Cellarius, *Harmonia macrocosmica, seu Atlas universalis et novus*, Heidelberg University Library, A 776 A Gross RES, Plate 4. (CC-BY-SA 3.0.)

Kircher was writing about a “new astronomy book” —that is, a recent publication. After all, what other scenario would have generated the  *censura* ? The Congregation of the Index was not in the business of examining foreign, Protestant books before publication. The idea that a Dutch publisher would have submitted a forthcoming work by a Protestant author to the Roman censorship would hardly have come to mind; if it had, it would have seemed implausible, if not bizarre. But that is precisely what happened.

Another copy of Kircher’s judgment, hitherto unknown, is extant at the Archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition).<sup>6</sup> It is part of a large dossier that reveals the context of its production. In March 1660 Elizeus Weyerstræet, agent (and grandson-in-law) of the Amsterdam bookseller Johannes Janssonius, arrived at the gates of Rome on a sales trip, transporting over three thousand volumes. Customs agents seized his wares and turned them over to the Holy Office, thus setting in motion the gears of papal bureaucracy and generating the paper trail that has allowed

<sup>6</sup> Archive of the Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei (ACDF), S.O., C.L. 1655–1660, fol. 600r.

me to reconstruct these events.<sup>7</sup> In addition to books intended for sale, most of which were returned after inspection, Weyerstraet possessed materials related to two forthcoming publications. These materials were not confiscated, but Weyerstraet presented them to the Holy Office on his own initiative, requesting, as a favor, that it examine them. One of these was Gerardus Mercator's *Atlas minor*, a popular geographical work from Janssonius's back catalogue. The publisher desired the Holy Office to "correct" the text so that he might produce an edition acceptable for a Catholic audience. The other work was the *Celestial Atlas*, already in production but not yet published. Weyerstraet provided the Inquisition with copies of its engraved illustrations, which he asked them to review so that Janssonius could ensure that they would not raise hackles with an important market sector. The Holy Office obliged on both accounts, instructing its agents to proceed quickly and to treat the Dutch bookseller kindly (*humaniter*).<sup>8</sup>

Why would a Dutch publisher voluntarily submit to Catholic censorship? And why would the Inquisition and the Index use their limited resources to help a heretic businessman maximize profits? In answering these questions, this essay advances a number of related arguments about censorship, the international book trade, and scholarly communication between Italians and Protestants. With respect to Copernicanism, while recent studies have made the case for the papacy's relatively permissive attitude once the initial uproar of the Galileo affair died down, this essay provides evidence suggesting that it condoned the circulation of a pro-Copernican text decades earlier than previously known. More broadly, the episode reconstructed here illuminates a poorly understood moment in European cultural history—after the Peace of Westphalia, before the Enlightenment—when the long cold war between Catholics and Protestants continued to structure intellectual life but *de facto* practices of pluralism and toleration emerged, giving rise to unexpected phenomena. The discovery of cosmopolitan papal censors working with profit-seeking Dutch booksellers to facilitate cross-confessional communication points to the inadequacy of the usual ways of thinking about censorship. As the papacy shifted its focus from the external Protestant threat to the orthodoxy of Catholics within Italy, Roman censorship increasingly relied on cooperative, personal relationships between authors and censors.<sup>9</sup> I argue that, in the wake of the Peace of Westphalia, this censorship regime became permeable to Protestants, leading to forms of cross-confessional interaction unthinkable in the first half of the century. The international book trade, centered in Holland, drew the Roman Curia and Protestant merchants into mutually beneficial associations based on reciprocal concessions. Roman censorship is not adequately understood simply as an impediment to the circulation of knowledge. The Inquisition and the Index facilitated certain kinds of exchange at the same

---

<sup>7</sup> I will treat the entire episode in detail in a book-length study, currently in preparation.

<sup>8</sup> ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1665–1660, fol. 643r (statement, signed by Weyerstraet, describing confiscation of books and request to review atlases); and ACDF, S.O., Decreta, 1660, fols. 110r (command to treat the bookseller kindly), 112r (command to review the materials as requested by Janssonius).

<sup>9</sup> I use the shorthand "Roman censorship" to refer to the censorship regime of the papacy, which aspired to universality, although in practice its direct influence was confined almost entirely to the Italian peninsula. Its chief organs, the Roman Inquisition or Holy Office (founded in 1542) and the Index of Prohibited Books (founded in 1571), were separate institutions, with a history of rivalry owing to their overlapping mandates regarding censorship. By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, the Inquisition had established its primacy. Both played a part in the events treated in this essay, with the Index following commands issued by the Holy Office. See Marco Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell'Italia del seicento tra repressione e mediazione* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011); Elisa Rebellato, *La fabbrica dei divieti: Gli indici dei libri proibiti da Clemente VIII a Benedetto XIV* (Milan: Bonnard, 2008); Vittorio Frajese, *Nascita dell'Indice: La censura ecclesiastica dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2006); Gigliola Fragnito, ed., *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001); and Christopher Black, *The Italian Inquisition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2009), Ch. 7.

time that they blocked others. They were components of an international, multiconfessional information order, shaping scholarship and how it moved.

I use the expression “information order,” popularized by C. A. Bayly, to emphasize the entanglement of information (words, ideas, “content”) with the structures that condition its circulation (media, institutions, networks). As an analytic tool, “information order” helps the historian of knowledge to understand the activities of individuals or groups in terms of their position within systems of communication that are inseparable from social, political, and economic structures. It accommodates formal knowledge as well as implicit assumptions and habits of thought, while allowing for the heterogeneous and composite nature of such systems; one can conceive of different information orders overlapping with one another and of smaller ones as constituents of larger ones.<sup>10</sup> European scholars acted within an information order that was shaped by many elements, including the values and practices of the Republic of Letters, the economic logic of the book trade, and the power of political and religious institutions.

#### CENSORING THE *CELESTIAL ATLAS*

Johannes Janssonius (1588–1664) was a Dutch cartographer, publisher, and bookseller whose Amsterdam firm was one of the dominant players in the international book trade. His flagship publication, inaugurated in 1638, was the *Atlas novus*, an ever-expanding series of luxurious, double-folio map books that had evolved from Mercator’s groundbreaking *Atlas* of 1595. The *Celestial Atlas* constituted its spectacular finale. Much less is known about the book’s author, Andreas Cellarius (ca. 1596–1665). A German from the Palatinate, he studied in Heidelberg before migrating to the United Provinces, where he worked as a schoolmaster, settling in Hoom. Prior to the atlas for which he is remembered, Cellarius published a German treatise on military fortifications (1645) and a Latin description of Poland (1652).<sup>11</sup> The *Celestial Atlas* contained two parts. First was a general introduction, comprising an account of the origin and structure of the cosmos, a lengthy discussion of cosmic harmonies that emphasized alchemical astral medicine, and a disciplinary history of mathematics and astronomy from Adam to the present. The atlas proper consisted of a series of diagrams and star maps, accompanied by extensive textual commentary. Following its famous representations of the competing world systems, the bulk of the atlas depicted the universe from a geocentric perspective. Cellarius planned a second volume that would treat Copernican astronomy in more detail, but this never appeared.

Of the two works that Weyerstraet submitted for review, the *Celestial Atlas* was more urgent. The Holy Office assigned the task to two experts: Michelangelo Ricci, an in-house censor (*consultor*) with a strong background in mathematical sciences; and an external reviewer (*qualificator*), Athanasius Kircher, a mathematician and natural philosopher at the Roman College of the Society of Jesus. Both censors agreed that there was no reason to prohibit the plates. Ricci described the diagrams as “especially useful to geographers and students of celestial matters” and as containing “nothing contrary to good morals or faith.” Because the captions explicitly identified the diagrams as “hypotheses” (see Figure 1), he concluded that they were meant merely to explain the different world systems, not to assess their truth. The word “hypothesis” played a key role in debates over Copernicanism. Following traditional scholastic usage, it referred to a supposition that was not necessarily true; in astronomy, “hypothesis” was the term

<sup>10</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Information and Empire: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), esp. pp. 3–6. Simon Schaffer applies the concept to seventeenth-century European scholarship in “Newton on the Beach: The Information Order of *Principia Mathematica*,” *History of Science*, 2009, 47:243–276.

<sup>11</sup> Keuning, “*Novus Atlas* of Johannes Janssonius” (cit. n. 1); and Gent, *Andreas Cellarius: Harmonia Microcosmica of 1660* (cit. n. 1), p. 239.

for a mathematical model that was useful for calculating, irrespective of whether its premises corresponded to physical reality. Even as the word's meaning evolved during the seventeenth century, approaching its modern sense of an unproven but probable theory, for Catholic scholars "hypothesis" remained a powerful term of art that enabled heterodox ideas to be discussed in a permissible manner.<sup>12</sup>

Like Ricci, Kircher emphasized that the plates presented the different world systems hypothetically and were therefore unobjectionable. He explained that the Copernican system could be considered in two ways, either as a "pure hypothesis" for calculating the motions of the heavenly bodies or as a physical account of the true structure of the universe. While the Holy Office rightly condemned the latter, the former was not merely permissible but essential for the science of chronology. Kircher thus deemed the diagrams to contain absolutely nothing contrary to orthodox faith. But he noted that it would not be certain whether the *Celestial Atlas* upheld the illicit physical interpretation of Copernicanism until it was published with its textual commentaries. After receiving Ricci's and Kircher's judgments, the Holy Office decreed that, although it would still be necessary to see the texts, so long as they did not contain anything "absurd" (in 1616 the Holy Office had declared heliocentrism to be "philosophically absurd") the atlas would by no means be prohibited.<sup>13</sup>

#### CORRECTING THE *ATLAS MINOR*

The Holy Office responded to Janssonius's other request at a more leisurely pace. The *Atlas minor* was an affordable, small-format "pocket atlas," derived from the 1606 Amsterdam edition of Mercator's *Atlas*. First published in 1607, it had not been reissued in Latin since 1637, although recent German editions had been popular.<sup>14</sup> The original Mercator *Atlas* (1595) had been placed on the Roman Index at the turn of the century, primarily on account of its introductory chapters, which advanced the author's unorthodox views about the creation of the world.<sup>15</sup> The *Atlas minor* had never been specifically prohibited in Rome and did not contain the sections that had disturbed the censors of the 1595 *Atlas*. But the banning of the original edition, as well as the independent prohibition—"until corrected" (*donec corrigatur*)—of the *Atlas minor* by the Spanish Index in 1612, might have made Janssonius wary. Correcting a work—indicating every passage that must be revised—was significantly more laborious than simply determining that a work required correction or should be prohibited outright. As a consequence, despite grand ambitions at the turn of the seventeenth century, the Roman Index rarely carried out expurgations. Nonetheless, in March 1661, in compliance with a command issued by the Holy Office the previous June, the secretary of the Index ordered his staff to correct the *Atlas minor*, so that the "famous Amsterdam printer Janssonius" might publish an edition that would not

<sup>12</sup> ACDF, S.O., Decreta, 1660, fols. 112r, 118v (assignments of Ricci and Kircher); and ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1655–1660, fol. 599r (Ricci's judgment). Regarding "hypothesis" see John Russell, "Catholic Astronomers and the Copernican System after the Condemnation of Galileo," *Annals of Science*, 1989, 46:365–386, esp. pp. 369–370; and Marcus Hellyer, "'Because the Authority of My Superiors Commands': Censorship, Physics, and the German Jesuits," *Early Science and Medicine*, 1996, 1:319–354.

<sup>13</sup> ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1655–1660, fol. 600r (Kircher's judgment); and ACDF, S.O., Decreta, 1660, fol. 135r (decree about the atlas).

<sup>14</sup> Cornelis Koeman *et al.*, "Commercial Cartography and Map Production in the Low Countries, 1500–ca. 1672," in *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 3: *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 1296–1383, esp. pp. 1332–1333; and Johannes Keuning, "The History of an Atlas: Mercator–Hondius," *Imago Mundi*, 1947, 4:37–62, esp. pp. 46–47.

<sup>15</sup> Ugo Baldini and Leen Spruit, eds., *Catholic Church and Modern Science: Documents from the Archives of the Roman Congregations of the Holy Office and the Index*, Vol. 1: *Sixteenth-Century Documents* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009), Tome 3, pp. 2055–2067.

offend Catholic readers. The task was eventually completed by two consultants, Stefano Gradi and Giovanni Bona.<sup>16</sup>

The *Atlas minor* belonged to the genre of early modern cosmography that combined cartography (maps) with descriptive geography (texts). The concerns of the censors pertained to the latter. They were troubled by passages that spoke too negatively about Catholicism, too positively about other religions, or expressed political views at odds with those of the papacy. Thus Cambridge and Oxford were no longer to be described as “workshops of piety whence humanity and religion diffused to all the world,” and “heretics” were not to be given honorifics. For example, the phrase “the opinion of the great Scaliger,” referring to the famous Huguenot scholar, should be changed to “the opinion of Scaliger.” The patriarch of Constantinople should not be compared to the pope, and the Greek and Russian churches should not be described as denying purgatory. Saint Patrick was not to be called credulous, and the history of the wars of religion must not be told with a Protestant bias. A reference to Marsilio of Padua should be deleted, lest it arouse curiosity about his fourteenth-century critique of papal authority, and Charles V’s decree forbidding ecclesiastics from buying property without his consent should not be praised. These were the kinds of corrections—all easily implemented—that the censors recommended in 1663.<sup>17</sup> Presumably they were communicated to Amsterdam, although a corrected edition never appeared, perhaps owing to Janssonius’s death in 1664.

In 1666, however, Janssonius’s heirs published a different single-volume world atlas, the *Atlas contractus*, a splendid in-folio, featuring a selection of plates from the *Atlas novus*. The accompanying text did not follow the Roman expurgations, but one cannot say that it ignored them. The editors replaced most of the text of the *Atlas novus* and the *Atlas minor* with new material. Although it is impossible to know if the Roman censors’ reports played any role in this decision, one is struck by the extent to which the *Atlas contractus* refrained from discussing religion and politics in comparison to the earlier versions. (I could find only one instance in which the text of the *Atlas contractus* corresponded to a passage mentioned in the expurgations of the *Atlas minor*. This was a reference to a rock formation in Lower Saxony that resembled a rooster sporting a papal tiara, which the censor marked for deletion since, in his opinion, it made fun of popes. It was not excised.)<sup>18</sup>

#### THE ENIGMA OF THE CELESTIAL ATLAS

The *Celestial Atlas* was already in production when Weyerstraet brought the plates to Rome, and Janssonius completed the first edition after his assistant returned to Amsterdam. In effect, the *Celestial Atlas* had a secret imprimatur from the Roman Inquisition. It was not entirely unknown for Catholic censors and Protestants to collaborate. In the late sixteenth century, the Basel printer Ambrosius Froben worked openly with a papal censor to produce an edition of the Talmud that would conform to the Roman Index, at the behest of a Jewish patron.<sup>19</sup> In

<sup>16</sup> ACDF, Index, Diarii, Vol. 6 (1655–1664), fol. 98v. Gradi and Bona examined a copy of the 1621 edition: *Atlas minor Gerardi Mercatoris a I. Hondio plurimis aeneis tabulis auctus atque illustratus* (Amhemii: apud Ioannem Janssonium, 1621) (hereafter cited as *Mercator, Atlas minor*).

<sup>17</sup> ACDF, Index, Protocolli, L2, fols. 136r–141r (Gradi’s judgment), 144r–147v (Bona’s judgment); and ACDF, Index, Diarii, Vol. 6 (1655–1664), fol. 120v (receipt of the judgments).

<sup>18</sup> *Atlas contractus, sive Atlantis majoris compendium* (Amstelodami: Apud Joannis Janssonii p.m. Haeredes, 1666). I compared it to Gerhard Mercator, *Atlas novus, sive descriptio geographica totius orbis terrarum*, 3 vols. (Amsteoldami: Apud Henricum Hondium & Joannem Janssonium, 1637); and Mercator, *Atlas minor*. Gradi noted the offending description of the rock formation at ACDF, Index, Protocolli, L2, fol. 138v.

<sup>19</sup> Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 69–70; and Stephen Burnett, “The Regulation of Hebrew Printing in Germany, 1555–1630: Confessional Politics and the Limits of Jewish Toleration,” in *Infinite Boundaries: Order*,



the 1620s, the Congregation of the Index allowed a copy of its internal reports on Hugo Grotius's banned *De iure belli et pacis* to be leaked to the Protestant author in order to facilitate his preparation of a corrected edition. This exceptional gesture was part of a covert, high-level Catholic effort to convert the famous Dutch scholar. Grotius was deliberately kept unaware of the Curia's involvement in what, to him, seemed to be an unofficial overture from Catholic friends. Regardless, he declined to revise his work, much less change his faith.<sup>20</sup> Janssonius in 1660 is the only example known to me of a Protestant outside the papacy's jurisdiction requesting Roman censorship secretly and for works without a Catholic author. This does not mean that we are dealing with a unique occurrence—by nature a “secret imprimatur” eludes detection. As common or rare as such events might have been, the logic of Janssonius's action is easy to grasp. A Protestant, but also a devout capitalist, he wanted to sell the *Celestial Atlas* in Catholic territories like Italy without impediment from ecclesiastical censorship.

Weyerstraet provided only the plates of the *Celestial Atlas*, and the Holy Office conditioned its promise that the book would not be prohibited on the rectitude of its textual content. As it turned out, the published text was blatantly pro-Copernican. This important fact has gone almost entirely unnoticed in discussions of the *Celestial Atlas*, which have described Cellarius as impartial in his presentation of the rival cosmologies.<sup>21</sup> The misunderstanding may be attributed in part to the use of the term “hypothesis” in the plates. But it is due above all to the book's preface. There, Cellarius announced that he would not take sides in debates over the motions and arrangement of the Earth, Sun, and other heavenly bodies; he would simply illustrate the opinions of different authors with diagrams and explain the reasons by which each supported his claims. “It shall be left entirely to the kind and friendly reader,” he wrote, “to render his assent to the one which agrees with his judgment or which he may appraise to be closest to the truth.” This declaration was belied, however, by the textual commentary that accompanied the diagrams of the Copernican theory in the body of the work. There, Cellarius described Galileo's condemnation by the Holy Office as contrary to the opinion of “almost all the great mathematicians of our time,” referring readers to the works of Galileo, Gassendi, Kepler, and Lansberg, who had proven the Copernican theory with “certain arguments and geometrical principles.” Cellarius concluded his exposition by providing detailed “solutions” to the main arguments against heliocentrism—astronomical, physical, and scriptural—leaving little doubt that he considered it foolish to believe that such a “perfect hypothesis” did not correspond to physical truth.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the book's allegorical frontispiece (not submitted to the Roman censors with the other plates) depicted Urania, the muse of astronomy, holding a heliocentric sphere, while putti elevated a representation of the Copernican theory above its inferior rivals. (See Figure 2.)

---

*Disorder, and Reorder in Early Modern German Culture*, ed. Max Reinhart and Thomas Robisheaux (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1998), pp. 329–348, esp. pp. 337–344. I thank Anthony Grafton for calling this comparison to my attention.

<sup>20</sup> Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell'Italia del seicento tra repressione e mediazione* (cit. n. 9), pp. 128–132; and Nicholas Hardy, *Criticism and Confession: The Bible in the Seventeenth Century Republic of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2017), pp. 221–225.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., R. H. Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575–1750* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2002), pp. 235–236. William Ashworth, “Allegorical Astronomy,” *Sciences*, 1985, 25(5):34–37, notes that “it is usually presumed that [Cellarius] . . . was uncommitted to the question of the true structure of the universe” (p. 36) and argues that the atlas's frontispiece was a coded Copernican allegory; but he makes no reference to Cellarius's explicit textual defense of Copernicanism. Volker R. Remmert, “In the Sign of Galileo: Pictorial Representation in the Seventeenth-Century Copernican Debate,” *Endeavour*, 2003, 27:26–31, describes Cellarius in passing as sympathizing with Copernicanism (p. 28).

<sup>22</sup> Cellarius, *Harmonia macrocosmica* (cit. n. 1), fol. 6r, pp. 23–24, 36–43.



**Figure 2.** The muse of astronomy holds a heliocentric sphere while gesturing at a levitating emblem of the Copernican theory. At her sides in the foreground are Tycho Brahe and Copernicus. Ptolemy, in a turban, points to an open book, while a princely figure with a feathered cap holds a diagram of the heliocentric cosmos. Andreas Cellarius, *Harmonia macrocosmica, seu Atlas universalis et novus*, Heidelberg University Library, A 776 A Gross RES, Frontispiece. (CC-BY-SA 3.0.)

Other sections of the *Celestial Atlas* had the potential to raise inquisitorial eyebrows. In particular, the book began with a long account of the creation of the universe, elaborated around the Genesis narrative—precisely the kind of subject matter that led the Index to ban Mercator’s original *Atlas* of 1595. Cellarius’s cosmogony might have been less heterodox than Mercator’s, but topics such as the creation of human beings, the nature of the bodies of Christ and Adam, and the immortal human soul, all treated at length, were matters of grave concern to Roman censorship. Had the text been reviewed, it would certainly have been prohibited. But it wasn’t. After the prepublication review of the plates, initiated by the Dutch publisher, the *Celestial Atlas* was never further examined, even though it circulated in Rome and Italy soon after its publication.

We are confronted by several interrelated puzzles. Why did the preface of the *Celestial Atlas* promise to abstain from taking sides in the cosmological controversy when the relevant section of the book was a partisan defense of Copernicanism? If Janssonius was so concerned about Catholic censorship, taking the extraordinary measure of seeking approval of the plates from Rome, why did he publish a book that violated the Church’s ban on Copernicanism? And why did the Roman authorities nonetheless allow it to circulate in their jurisdiction?

#### THE CHURCH AND COPERNICANISM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The Church’s position on Copernicanism was ambiguous, ambivalent, and inconsistent. In 1616 Roman censors placed Copernicus’s *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* on the Index and banned all works teaching that the Earth moves and the Sun is motionless.<sup>23</sup> In 1633 the Holy Office found Galileo guilty of “vehement suspicion of heresy” for having upheld the Copernican doctrine, which was “false and contrary to the divine and Holy Scripture,” and prohibited his *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*.<sup>24</sup> In the centuries that followed there would be considerable debate as to whether the Holy Office had defined Copernicanism as heretical or as a theological error of a lesser sort and also about the nature of Galileo’s crime—was it heresy or disobedience? After 1633, no further books were banned by name on account of Copernican teachings, but the general prohibition of 1616 remained in force until 1758. (The prohibition on Galileo’s books was not lifted until 1835.) The dominant narrative of Italian history, going back at least to the nineteenth century, describes the Church’s rejection of Copernicanism, and the influence of the Inquisition and the Index more broadly, as all but extinguishing the flame of modern science and culture in Italy. But more recent studies, gaining pace since the opening of the Holy Office’s archives in 1998, describe a more complex and dynamic situation.<sup>25</sup>

After Galileo’s trial, the Curia exhibited no great enthusiasm for enforcing the ban on Copernicanism. Many papal officials found the decision unfortunate, if not an outright mistake,

<sup>23</sup> Significantly, Copernicus was not banned outright but instead received the milder judgment of “prohibited until corrected.” The required corrections amounted to a dozen small changes, easily implemented by pen. See Maurice Finocchiaro, ed., *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1989), pp. 200–201.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291; and Galileo Galilei, *Opere*, ed. Antonio Favaro, 20 vols. (Florence: Barbèra, 1890–1909), Vol. 19, p. 405.

<sup>25</sup> See Baldini and Spruit, eds., *Catholic Church and Modern Science* (cit. n. 15), Vol. 1, Tome 1, pp. 1–91; Maria Pia Donato and Jill Krayer, eds., *Conflicting Duties: Science, Medicine, and Religion in Rome, 1550–1750* (London: Warburg Institute, 2009), esp. the editors’ introduction and the contribution by Paula Findlen, “Living in the Shadow of Galileo: Antonio Baldigiani (1647–1711), a Jesuit Scientist in Late Seventeenth-Century Rome” (pp. 211–254); Francesco Beretta, “L’héliocentrisme à Rome à la fin du 17e siècle: Une affaire d’étrangers? Aspects structurels d’un espace intellectuel,” in *Savants étrangers et cosmopolitisme de la culture scientifique romaine*, ed. Antonella Romano (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2003), pp. 529–554; McMullin, ed., *Church and Galileo* (cit. n. 4); and Romano, ed., *Rome et la science moderne* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2008), esp. the contribution by Donato, “Scienza e teologia nelle congregazioni romane: La questione atomista, 1626–1727” (pp. 595–634).

and, in any case, astronomical doctrine was not a matter of great moment. (Within the realm of natural science, which was of less concern to the Inquisition and the Index than usually imagined, atomism was a more sensitive issue.) John Heilbron has advanced this viewpoint forcefully, arguing that Church officials significantly mitigated the Copernican ban by engaging in a deliberate policy of nonenforcement. He proposes a periodization of four phases between 1630 and 1820, in which Italians were able to discuss Copernican astronomy with ever fewer constraints and gyrations. He makes the years around 1670 an early turning point, when blanket condemnation of heliocentrism gave way to allowing discussion so long as it was explicitly defined as a hypothesis, citing Kircher's review of the *Celestial Atlas* as an example of how influential Jesuit astronomers prepared the way.<sup>26</sup> While this essay's reconstruction of the Curia's encounter with the *Celestial Atlas* confirms the broad contours of Heilbron's picture, it suggests that his second phase began earlier. Since the examination of the plates was not instigated by the Catholic authorities, as Heilbron assumed, but by the Dutch publisher, the episode offers no evidence that the Roman officials were concerned about the hypothetical treatment of Copernicanism in 1660. On the contrary, both Kircher and Ricci took it for granted that discussing heliocentrism as a hypothesis was unproblematic—as if they were ratifying a policy that was already established, rather than articulating something new or controversial. In the immediate wake of Galileo's spectacular failure to finesse precisely this issue in 1632, Italian censors and astronomical writers no doubt chose to err on the side of caution. But by 1660 talking about Copernicanism "hypothetically" seems already to have become accepted practice.

While it is not altogether surprising that the Roman authorities approved of diagrams depicting heliocentrism as a "hypothesis," that they allowed the *Celestial Atlas* to circulate in Italy despite the text's nonhypothetical endorsement of Copernicanism is a scenario that even the latest, most nuanced scholarship would not lead us to expect. It must be acknowledged that there is no direct evidence that officials within the Congregations of the Index and the Inquisition ever became aware that the text of the atlas violated their decrees. But, given that Janssonius sent a copy to the Vatican Library in 1661 (as we will see later in this essay), that the Holy Office had decreed that its approval was conditional on the textual content of the completed publication, and that the frontispiece of the work announced the book's partisan preference for heliocentrism, it is highly probable that some individuals within the Curia noticed that the *Celestial Atlas* was a Copernican work but chose not to make an issue of it. Even if it were the case that no curial official noticed the explicit Copernicanism of the atlas, we would still be left with a scenario in which the Roman authorities did not deem it a priority to ensure that Janssonius had complied with the Holy Office's decree. Francesco Beretta has found evidence of books espousing heliocentrism (probably from Germany) circulating in Rome in the 1690s.<sup>27</sup> But the fact that such a work circulated three decades earlier, under the benign neglect, and very possibly with the outright complicity, of the Curia, is a significant new finding for our understanding of the status of Copernicanism in seventeenth-century Italy.

#### PROTESTATIONS AND PROTESTANTS

The combination of an anodyne or apologetic preface with contradictory, controversial content was, in fact, not an uncommon phenomenon in early modern publications—specifically, in those produced under the pressure of Catholic censorship. The most famous example is the book that ignited the controversy that Cellarius described. Galileo's *Dialogue on the Two Chief*

<sup>26</sup> Heilbron, "Censorship of Astronomy in Italy after Galileo" (cit. n. 4), esp. pp. 290–292; and Russell, "Catholic Astronomers and the Copernican System after the Condemnation of Galileo" (cit. n. 12).

<sup>27</sup> Beretta, "L'héliocentrisme à Rome à la fin du 17e siècle" (cit. n. 25).

*World Systems* (1632) began with a preface—demanded by ecclesiastical censors as a condition for granting imprimatur—that praised the Holy Office’s wise condemnation of Copernicanism before presenting a forceful defense of its truth, albeit beneath a conceit of fictiveness.<sup>28</sup> Such “protestations” (*proteste*) of doctrinal innocence were a familiar feature in less famous works by Catholic authors espousing controversial opinions—unofficial hagiographies with introductions that denied that their subjects were saints, for example, or astrological prognostications whose prefaces disavowed the efficacy of astrology. It is tempting to view these practices as disingenuous, to think of *proteste* as subversive acts of subterfuge. But such a judgment misunderstands the papacy’s aims and attitude. Appearances mattered, and obedience in itself, as much as doctrinal conformity, was the desired outcome of Catholic censorship. As a visible act of submission, *proteste* could function as signs of deference to the Church’s authority. The atypical case of Galileo notwithstanding, the Roman censors were often satisfied by these disclaimers, which they sanctioned or even requested.<sup>29</sup>

As a German Lutheran living and publishing in the Protestant Dutch Republic, Cellarius was entirely beyond the reach of the Holy Office and under no pressure to disavow Copernicanism. Nonetheless, in light of the circumstances of the book’s production, which demonstrate Janssonius’s concern with appeasing Catholic censorship, we may fairly surmise that the declaration of cosmological neutrality was included in the introduction to minimize the chances that the work would be banned in Rome. The preface to the *Celestial Atlas* should thus be recognized as an example of a previously unidentified phenomenon: a *protesta* written and published by Protestants in order to satisfy Catholic censorship.

If my argument about the preface is correct, the content of the *Celestial Atlas* was substantively transformed by Janssonius’s voluntary engagement with Roman censorship. The encounter did not lead to a bowdlerized text—although Janssonius was prepared to take such measures in the case of the *Atlas minor*. But even if Cellarius’s endorsement of heliocentric astronomy remained in the body of the text, we should not underestimate the significance of a modified preface. Then as now, prefaces were among the sections of a book that were most likely to be read, which was precisely why censorship placed so much emphasis on them. Indeed, in the specific case of the *Celestial Atlas*, modern commentators have been misled about the author’s stance on Copernicanism as a result of not reading beyond the introduction. The firm denial of support for Copernicanism in the preface might well have allowed the book to circulate in Italy without interference from the Church.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of preventive self-censorship as a factor shaping the publications of Italian authors. The case of the *Celestial Atlas* and the *Atlas minor* suggests that the international nature of the scholarly book trade could also lead Protestants to respond to Catholic censorship with similar measures. Rodolfo Savelli has shown how publishers beyond the jurisdiction of the Spanish and Roman inquisitions—in Paris, Lyon, Cologne, Douai, and even Geneva—nonetheless responded to their decisions by producing editions of legal books that conformed to the corrections specified in the Spanish *Index Expurgatorius*. For booksellers, Spanish and Italian censorship created a niche market, which could be exploited by means of expurgated editions that were advertised as such on their title pages.<sup>30</sup> The *Celes-*

<sup>28</sup> Sergio Pagano, ed., *I documenti vaticani del processo di Galileo Galilei (1611–1741)* (Vatican City: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2009), pp. cxx–cxxii, 53–57.

<sup>29</sup> Marco Cavarzere, “The Workings of a Papal Institution: Roman Censorship and Italian Authors in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Praktiken der Frühen Neuzeit: Akteure, Handlungen, Artefakte*, ed. Arndt Brendecke (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), pp. 371–385, esp. pp. 379–380.

<sup>30</sup> Rodolfo Savelli, “Il libro giuridico tra mercato, censure e contraffazioni: Su alcune vicende cinque-seicentesche,” in *Itinerari in comune: Ricerche di storia del diritto per Vito Pierviviani* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2011), pp. 187–305, esp. pp. 204–205, 294–304. Re-

*tial Atlas* was different because it was issued in a single edition intended for Protestant and Catholic markets alike. It bore no visible sign of compliance with Catholic censorship. Janssonius never brought out a revised edition of the *Atlas minor*, but, had it appeared, it probably would have followed the model of the *Celestial Atlas's* uniform edition. In silently accommodating his product to the strictures of the Holy Office, Janssonius engaged in something more akin to the self-censorship common among Italian authors, who sometimes negotiated with their censors prior to publication.

There were, of course, great differences between the situation of Catholic authors in Italy and Protestant authors or publishers trying to reach Italian readers. For Italians, self-censorship was not motivated merely by the desire to disseminate one's work; it was also a matter of honor and social standing, on account of the penalties faced by and the stigma that attached to the author of a prohibited book.<sup>31</sup> For Janssonius, the motive was profit. While the particular circumstances of his atlases—the Dutch publisher sending materials to Rome and directly engaging the Holy Office in prepublication censorship—might have been unusual, the underlying rationale applied broadly. Other Protestant authors and publishers who hoped to reach multiconfessional audiences likely took similar measures, independently and undetectably, though how many did so is impossible to say. The impact of Catholic censorship might have extended much farther than we have imagined.

#### CENSORSHIP AND MARKETING STRATEGY

In 1660 Janssonius was eager to increase sales. Following two decades of unprecedented book production in the Dutch Republic, during which Amsterdam emerged as Europe's most important center of printing and distribution, his warehouses were bursting with stock, old and new. By one estimate, "Latin scholarly, semi-scholarly, and literary works" (the sort of books that made up most of the shipment that Weyerstraet transported to Rome) accounted for more than one third of Dutch book production in this period.<sup>32</sup> Competition among the major firms was sometimes friendly, sometimes bitter, but always intense. Not only did they regularly print versions of the same or similar works—most famously, the rival great atlases of Blaeu and Janssonius; as resellers, they vied with one another to supply foreign customers. As the Dutch book industry's growth rate slowed, pressure mounted to find new revenue streams. Weyerstraet's trip to Rome was not the only such initiative that Janssonius launched at this time. The *Celestial Atlas's* dedication to Charles II points to a parallel effort to tap into the English market, following the Anglo–Dutch War and the Stuart Restoration. Italy represented a large market for Dutch booksellers, who were also keen to import Italian books for resale to Northern European customers. The papers of Lucas Holstenius, Rome's most important librarian and intelligencer, record visits to Rome by members of the Elzevier, Janssonius, and Blaeu families in the 1630s, 1640s, and 1650s.<sup>33</sup> Occasionally Holstenius ordered books directly from Holland, but for the most part the Dutch firms relied on third parties for distribution. In the 1650s the Venetian partnership of Combi and La Noù emerged as the most important Italian reseller of Dutch and German books.<sup>34</sup>

garding preventive self-censorship see Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell'Italia del seicento tra repressione e mediazione* (cit. n. 9), p. 1; and Baldini and Spruit, eds., *Catholic Church and Modern Science* (cit. n. 15), Vol. 1, Tome 1, pp. 85–91.

<sup>31</sup> Baldini and Spruit, eds., *Catholic Church and Modern Science*, Vol. 1, Tome 1, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> W. T. M. Frijhoff and M. Spies, *1650: Hard-Won Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 277–278.

<sup>33</sup> For a visit by one of Elzevier's sons in 1642 see Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV) Barb. Lat. 2181, fol. 115; by one of Janssonius's sons in 1647, Biblioteca Vallicelliana MS Allacci CXLVI, fol. 344rv; by Blaeu's son Willem in 1656, BAV Barb. Lat. 6486, fol. 48.

<sup>34</sup> Alfonso Mirto, "Libri veneziani del Seicento: I Combi-La Noù ed il commercio librario con Firenze," *La Bibliofilia*, 1992, 94:61–88.

Commercial interests and the appetite for books pulled Italy and Protestant publishing centers closer together. But many obstacles came between supply and demand. Despite the remarkable growth of early modern trade and communication routes that was the precondition for the international book trade, moving printed material around Europe remained difficult and expensive. That books circulated in large quantities and across great distances was due to the industry and ingenuity of booksellers, whose success depended on managing financial risk in proportion to potential returns. Large shipments from the north typically made their way to Italy by sea, where water damage, shipwreck, and piracy were ever-present dangers. Periodic outbreaks of plague and Europe's ceaseless warfare caused frequent and sometimes long-lasting disruptions in trade. Insurance policies helped, but only so much. In 1637, while traveling to the Frankfurt Book Fair, one of Janssonius's sons was ambushed, killed, and devoured by a band of German peasants, ravenous from famine during an especially dark phase of the Thirty Years' War. Unable to resist the young Dutchman's plump frame, a contemporary observer reported, "They ate him raw. Even Cannibals don't go that far."<sup>35</sup> Censorship posed a notorious and very real threat. (Even though he acted at an auspicious moment and almost certainly in consultation with Roman advisors, Janssonius might have lost as much as 15 percent of the books transported by Weyerstraet to confiscation.) But it was one among many hazards that factored into the cost of doing business. And unlike shipwreck and plague, for the canny merchant censorship could be an opportunity as well as an impediment.

Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the dynamics of Italian censorship changed dramatically. The Holy Office and the Index by no means abandoned the fight against foreign heresy, but policing orthodoxy among Catholic authors in Italy became the priority.<sup>36</sup> Censors made increasing use of informal procedures and negotiation, which, given the practical limits of their power, proved more effective than coercion. These tactics depended on personal relations between censors and authors, who often belonged to the same cultural milieu. The result was a flexible enforcement regime characterized by a willingness to compromise, improvise, and make exceptions. Self-censorship and unofficial arrangements became as important as official judgments and decrees. In general, Italian authors participated willingly. This is not to say that they didn't resent the burden of censorship or find it wrongheaded, but direct resistance was rare. Not only did authors comply in the production of their own works; not uncommonly they assisted the Holy Office and the Index by serving as censors of works by other authors. Roman censorship's bureaucratic style, reliant on rules and protocols, was tempered by the conventions of a hierarchical *ancien régime* society, in which personal relationships, patron/client dynamics, and the exchange of favors were paramount. In general, erudite Latin works were subject to fewer restrictions than vernacular texts. While elite authors and readers were hardly immune from censorship, they were granted considerably more freedom than those of humbler station, leading historians to describe them as an "aristocracy of free readers," inhabiting a kind of "*zona franca*."<sup>37</sup> This could happen informally, through lax enforcement, or formally, as

---

<sup>35</sup> Claude Saumaise to [Jacques] Dupuy, Leiden, 3 May 1637, in *Les correspondants de Peiresc, V: Claude de Saumaise*, ed. Philippe Tamizey de Larroque (Dijon: Imprimerie Darantier, 1882), p. 174: "Ilz les devorent tous sanglantz. Les cannibales n'en feirent jamais tant." On the international book trade see Ian Maclean, *Learning and the Market Place* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); and Matthew McLean and Sara K. Barker, *International Exchange in the Early Modern Book World* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> The history of Italian censorship in the seventeenth century, especially after the early decades, remains understudied in comparison to the sixteenth. An important exception is Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell'Italia del seicento tra repressione e mediazione* (cit. n. 9), on which I here depend.

<sup>37</sup> Antonio Rotondò, "La censura ecclesiastica e la cultura," in *Storia d'Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), pp. 1400–1492, on p. 1415. See also Cavarzere, "Workings of a Papal Institution" (cit. n. 29), p. 224.

in the case of reading licenses, which granted individuals permission to read forbidden books.<sup>38</sup> Roman censorship was less rigid, fearsome, and conspicuous than one might imagine, but it was absolutely pervasive. It was woven into the fabric of intellectual life, its existence taken for granted as one more aspect of the production and dissemination of printed books.

Janssonius appears to have understood the possibilities afforded by the idiosyncrasies of Roman censorship and by the papacy's ambivalence about the repression of Copernicanism. He produced a pro-Copernican atlas for sale in Italy because he knew that he could—if he did it the right way. In submitting the engravings to the censors, it is unlikely that he was truly motivated by worry that they would be offensive. He would have known that it was acceptable to present heliocentrism as a clearly defined “hypothesis” alongside the other world systems. The more plausible source of his concern was the accompanying text that defended the truth of Copernican cosmology. He must have known that, if he submitted the text for prepress review, the Index would have no choice but to ban it. But he also seems to have grasped that, if Cellarius began with a preface that emphatically declared neutrality about the true structure of the cosmos, the author could get away with contradicting himself. Above all, Janssonius understood that how indulgently the Catholic censors would treat him depended on personal interactions.

While in Rome, Weyerstraet could have received advice that a *protesta* would mitigate the impact of pro-Copernican statements in the body of the book. Such advice might also have informed the decision to solicit the Holy Office to review the two atlases, which happened only in June, three months after his arrival. From surviving evidence, we know that he interacted with Athanasius Kircher, the well-connected Jesuit scholar, and that he conducted business with the prominent local booksellers Blaise Deversin and Felice Cesaretti. We also know that Weyerstraet communicated with Carlo Emanuele Vizzani in the latter's capacity as the Assessor of the Holy Office (something like the Inquisition's chief operations officer). A scholar as well as an official, Vizzani had published a book in Amsterdam in 1656, and it would not be surprising if he and Weyerstraet also conversed in less formal settings. When Weyerstraet departed Rome, he wrote the assessor a note, in which, on behalf of Janssonius, he offered Vizzani their services in Holland. Lucas Holstenius, custodian of the Vatican Library, who had met Janssonius's son (“a learned person, very well informed about every kind of book”) when the latter visited Rome in 1648, placed a book order with Weyerstraet during his visit.<sup>39</sup> Between his arrival in Rome in March 1660 and his departure in July, Weyerstraet almost certainly had conversations with scholars, bookmen, and curial officials beyond the handful that left traces in the archives. If he wished to do so, he had ample opportunity to discuss the content of the *Celestial Atlas* and the subtleties of Roman censorship with knowledgeable and sympathetic individuals.

It was advantageous for Janssonius to submit works to the Roman censorship because doing so allowed him entry into a powerful network of reciprocal relationships, which would help him to exploit the larger Italian information order. It is very possible that his primary concern was not in fact with the *Celestial Atlas* or any specific book. Janssonius's real aim might have been to lay the groundwork for a long-term business relationship by voluntarily subjecting a few

---

<sup>38</sup> Ugo Baldini, “Il pubblico della scienza nei permessi di lettura di libri proibiti delle Congregazioni del Sant'Ufficio e dell'Indice (secolo XVI): Verso una tipologia professionale e disciplinare,” in *Censura ecclesiastica e cultura politica in Italia tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, ed. C. Stango (Florence: Olschki, 2001), pp. 171–201; Vittorio Frajese, “Le licenze di lettura tra vescovi ed inquisitori: Aspetti della politica dell'Indice dopo il 1596,” *Società e Storia*, 1999, no. 86, pp. 767–818; and Hannah Marcus, “Bibliography and Book Bureaucracy: Reading Licenses and the Circulation of Prohibited Books in Counter-Reformation Italy,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 2016, 110:433–457.

<sup>39</sup> ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1655–1660, fols. 643rv, 644rv; and Biblioteca Vallicelliana, MS Allacci CXLVI, fols. 344rv, 301rv. On Vizzani's career see note 45, below; for Weyerstraet's encounter with Kircher see note 48, below.



token books to Catholic censorship, thereby paying homage to the authority of the papacy. In other words, the gesture of deference, respect, and good will might have been more important than particular books and their content. (This interpretation of Janssonius's strategy finds support in the fact that the shipment of books that Weyerstræet brought to sell contained several copies of an old edition of the *Atlas minor*, as if Janssonius did not assume the work to be impermissible.)<sup>40</sup> The Curia likely felt the same way. Janssonius wasn't trying to trick the Holy Office; he was playing their game, by their rules. As an inextricable element of Italy's information order, censorship was not merely an obstacle that Janssonius had to negotiate; it was an essential medium through which he engaged Italian culture and expanded his business. In 1661, he shipped a crate full of copies of the *Celestial Atlas* to Livorno, with instructions for one copy to be sent to the Vatican Library.<sup>41</sup> It appears to have been a gift.

#### THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS IN THE HOLY OFFICE

Less obvious is why the papacy was so willing to assist Janssonius, devoting the perennially overburdened resources of the Congregation of the Index to help a Protestant businessman increase his profits. At the beginning of his report on the *Atlas minor*, the censor Stefano Gradi noted the singularity of a foreign heretic voluntarily submitting to the authority of the Holy Office. It did not escape him that Janssonius was motivated by lucre, not respect for the Catholic Church. To justify collaboration with the Protestant bookseller, he drew comparisons to two episodes of conversion from the early history of Christianity: the story of Saint Cecilia's husband, Valerianus, who was led to Christ by his "vain desire" to see an angel, and Saint Paul's indulgent approach to proselytizing as expressed in the Epistle to the Philippians. With these analogies Gradi was giving voice to the views of Alexander VII, who had significantly altered papal policy toward Protestants and their culture. Conversion—especially high-profile conversions among the nobility and prominent scholars—remained a major focus of Catholicism's confrontation with Protestantism, and the city of Rome retained its role as an instrument of propaganda. What was new was the conviction that the Church, and the Eternal City in particular, should be as welcoming as possible, so that Protestant visitors would leave with positive impressions, admiring the cordiality, openness, and urbanity of its inhabitants, especially those who represented the Curia in some capacity. This was soft power as a missionary strategy: Rome as a theater that would so beguile "non-Catholic Christians" (a term that began to be used as a euphemism for "heretics") that some would be led, without coercion, to embrace the true faith.<sup>42</sup>

Gradi's comments demonstrate that the Curia viewed Janssonius through such a lens. When the Congregation of the Holy Office declared the importance of treating the Protestant publisher "kindly," it was enacting the pope's program. (This need not imply that papal officials seriously expected to convert Janssonius, but only that behaving this way would contribute to a more conducive environment for converting Protestants in general.) All four censors assigned to review the works that Janssonius asked the Holy Office to evaluate were members of Alexander VII's circle and actively involved in his missionary charm offensive. One of them, the aristocratic Cistercian Giovanni Bona, among the pope's closest friends, was on ongoing assignment to act as an unofficial guide to cultured Protestants visiting Rome.<sup>43</sup> Alexander VII's policy goes some way toward explaining the Holy Office's accommodating stance toward Jans-

<sup>40</sup> The Index did not deem the old edition of *Atlas minor* suspect and returned all copies to Weyerstræet without scrutiny: ACDF, S.O., C.L. 1655–1660, fols. 657, 661.

<sup>41</sup> Johannes Janssonius to Leone Allacci, Amsterdam, 12 Aug. 1661, Vallicelliana MS Allacci CXLVII, fol. 301rv.

<sup>42</sup> ACDF, Index, Protocolli, L2, fol. 136rv (Gradi's comments); for Alexander VII's policies see Irene Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero: Forestieri e Inquisizione a Roma in età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2018), esp. Ch. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, pp. 189–190.

sonius and its apparently indulgent treatment of the *Celestial Atlas*. The climate that it fostered might have encouraged Janssonius to send Weyerstraet to Rome in the first place.

There were other reasons for the Romans to help the Protestant bookseller. At all levels the Curia was staffed by members of the Republic of Letters. That is to say, many of the individuals working for the Holy Office and the Index, as censors or in managerial positions, were scholars with interests and ambitions that reached beyond Italy and beyond the Catholic world. Such concerns coincided with a worldly outlook and, in many cases, a relatively open-minded attitude toward intellectual matters, including Copernicanism. Gradi, for example, was a poet and an accomplished mathematical scientist in the Galilean tradition. When he published a collection of physico-mathematical treatises in 1681, he did so with Daniel Elzevier in Amsterdam. “What is not exact in the balance of perfect reason,” he wrote, “can, by no means, be of Galileo.” Gradi was not the only Galilean working as a papal censor. Michelangelo Ricci, the consultor assigned to review the *Celestial Atlas*, had been a student of Galileo’s friend and disciple Benedetto Castelli, corresponded with his most active defender, Vincenzo Viviani, and collaborated on experiments with Evangelista Torricelli, his successor as official mathematician to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Ricci was a first-rate mathematician; his treatise *Exercitatio geometrica de maximis et minimis* (Rome, 1666) was reissued in London by Moses Pitt, printer of the Royal Society, in 1668. In turn, Ricci contributed to the dissemination of British and French experimental science in Italy as one of the founders of the *Giornale de’ Letterati*, which was notable for its open attitude toward atomism at a moment when the doctrine was under fire for its heretical implications. The other censor of the *Celestial Atlas*, Athanasius Kircher, also held unorthodox views regarding astronomy and cosmology. His major treatise on those topics, published in 1656, had generated fierce controversy within the Society of Jesus owing to its anti-Aristotelianism and depiction of a quasi-infinite universe.<sup>44</sup> The selection of two censors known for their open-minded views on astronomy—as well as close ties to Alexander VII—may indicate that powers high up in the Curia desired a positive outcome.

Though not a mathematician, Carlo Emanuele Vizzani—who, as Assessor of the Holy Office, oversaw the Curia’s interactions with Weyerstraet and Janssonius—was cut from similar cloth. A patrician from Bologna, Vizzani was a successful university professor before moving to Rome to pursue a career in the Curia as a protégé of Cardinal Francesco Barberini. In 1646 he published an edition and translation of a Greek treatise attributed to Ocellus Lucanus, a pre-Socratic Pythagorean philosopher. In the late 1640s Vizzani accompanied the cardinal to France, where he proved himself a skilled book hunter, acquiring titles for the Barberini library in consultation with Lucas Holstenius. He went on to become a close collaborator of Alexander VII, who appointed him to the prestigious office of assessor in 1657. While rising through the curial ranks, he continued to pursue scholarship and developed a relationship with Joan Blaeu, who published the first edition of Vizzani’s legal-antiquarian treatise *De mandatis principum* in 1656 and reprinted his edition of Ocellus Lucanus in 1661.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ivica Martinović, “Stjepan Gradić on Galileo’s Paradox of the Bowl,” *Dubrovnik Annals*, 1997, 1:31–69 (quotation on p. 38); Francesco Bustaffa, “Ricci, Michelangelo,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 87 (2016); Athanasius Kircher, *Itinerarium extaticum* (Romae: Typis Vitalis Mascardi, 1656); and Carlos Ziller Camenietzki, “L’extase interplanétaire d’Athanasius Kircher: Philosophie, cosmologie et discipline dans la Compagnie de Jésus au XVIIe siècle,” *Nuncius*, 1995, 10:3–32.

<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi* (Bologna: Nella stamperia di S. Tommaso d’Aquino, 1790), Vol. 8, pp. 196–199. For Vizzani’s book hunting see BAV Barb. Lat. 6495, fols. 161–169. For the publications see Carlo Emanuele Vizzani, *De mandatis principum, seu de officio eorum qui in provincias cum imperio mittuntur* (Amstelodami: Ex typographejo Johanne Blaeu, 1656); and Vizzani, *Ocellus Lucanus philosophus de universi natura* (Amstelodami: Apud Joannem Blaeu, 1661).

Ambitious scholars in Rome knew that the best place to publish books was Amsterdam, where production quality was high and distribution unrivaled. Vizzani's relationship to Blaeu highlights some of the implications. The man in charge of the censorship of the books that Weyerstraet brought to Rome had a personal history of friendly relations with Dutch Protestant booksellers and an authorial self-interest in maintaining them. When Pieter Blaeu came to Rome seeking collaborators for his father's city atlas project in the spring of 1660—coinciding with Weyerstraet—Vizzani welcomed him and went on to become the most important contributor to the volumes on Italy.<sup>46</sup> Blaeu might or might not have made money from the reprint of Vizzani's edition of Ocellus Lucanus in 1661. But as a favor to the Assessor of the Holy Office of the Inquisition it was unquestionably a smart investment. Weyerstraet and Janssonius knew that their rival had done well to form a partnership with Vizzani. But other desirable Romans remained untaken.

In 1661 Janssonius concluded a contract with Athanasius Kircher in which he agreed to pay the Jesuit scholar the considerable sum of 2200 *scudi* for the rights to print and sell all of his past and future works.<sup>47</sup> This arrangement is well known, but until now the story of its origin remained hidden: the partnership was forged in person during Weyerstraet's previously unknown visit to Rome.<sup>48</sup> Weyerstraet and Kircher met and conducted business while the former was waiting for the Holy Office to sift through his confiscated books and review the *Celestial Atlas*, which the latter was assigned to censor. In a letter finalizing their contract, Janssonius and Weyerstraet referred to their anticipated publication of Kircher's *Mundus subterraneus* as “a compliment [*complimento*] for our atlas.” They may have simply meant that Kircher's richly illustrated exploration of the Earth's interior would, in a way, complete—or complement—the terrestrial and celestial images of the *Atlas novus*.<sup>49</sup> Still, the fact that Kircher wrote a favorable review of the *Celestial Atlas* while negotiating a publishing contract with Janssonius may smack of a *quid pro quo*. But there is no reason to think that Kircher otherwise would have judged the plates more critically, and, in Janssonius's calculation, the profitability of Kircher's books was doubtless paramount. Kircher was a marketable commodity, a well-known, popular author who produced a steady stream of new books, with prearranged privileges from his patron, the Holy Roman Emperor, protecting against pirate editions. And his value did not end there. After 1660 Kircher became a *de facto* agent of the Janssonius firm in Rome, particularly useful because of his connections to powerful individuals like the pope. The example of Kircher, like that of Vizzani, makes it clear that Rome and Italy had more than customers to offer Northern booksellers.

For Kircher, the partnership with Janssonius solved a long-standing problem. By 1660, the Jesuit author had acquired an international reputation and readership, but he was essentially self-publishing most of his books in Rome. Distribution, especially to Northern Europe, where much of the demand for his work was to be found, was a constant problem. For years Kircher had sought to make deals to sell large portions of existing print runs to booksellers in Holland,

---

<sup>46</sup> Joan Blaeu, *Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae, ad aevi veteris & praesentis temporis faciem expressum*, 3 vols. (Amstelredami: Typis Ioannis Blaeu, 1663); and Alfonso Mirto, *Stampatori, editori, librai nella seconda metà del Seicento*, Pt. 2: *I grande fornitori di Antonio Magliabechi e della corte Medicea* (Florence: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 1994), p. 55 n 15.

<sup>47</sup> “Estratto dalle lettere di Sig. Jansonio ed Eliseo Weyerstraed Mercanti de libri in Amsterdam intorno la vendita de libri del P. Atha. Kircher,” Amsterdam, 29 July 1661, APUG 563, fol. 244r.

<sup>48</sup> Athanasius Kircher to [Johannes Janssonius and Elizeus Weyerstraet], draft or copy, 27 Aug. 1661, APUG 565, fol. 265r. Kircher refers in this letter to “the agreement made between me and S. Weyerstraet”; but before my discovery of Weyerstraet's visit to Rome the significance of this statement was not evident.

<sup>49</sup> “Estratto dalle lettere di Sig. Jansonio ed Eliseo Weyerstraed” (cit. n. 47), fol. 244r: “si servirà per il complimento del nostro Atlante.”

including Blaeu and Janssonius. Despite interest on the part of Northern booksellers, his efforts met little success, in part owing to the logistical challenge of transporting large quantities of books from Rome to Amsterdam.<sup>50</sup> Kircher's first Amsterdam publication, the magnificent *Mundus subterraneus*, appeared in 1666, its gorgeous production and international impact amply validating the reputation of the Dutch book industry. By that time Janssonius had died, but the business passed on to Weyerstraet and Janssonius's son-in-law, Johannes van Waesberghe. Continuously active until his death in 1680, Kircher published almost all his subsequent works—more than a dozen editions—with the Amsterdam firm.

To assert a conjunction between the Holy Office and the Republic of Letters may seem contradictory, if not perverse. The former notoriously used force to protect the purity of the Catholic faith from infection by heresy and heterodoxy. The latter represented the ideal of an autonomous community of scholars of different creeds and nations, bound by a code of behavior that emphasized civility and the free exchange of information.<sup>51</sup> The contradiction was real, but so was the conjunction. The standard interpretation of the Republic of Letters as opposed to political and religious chauvinism and intolerance is, at best, incomplete and misleading.<sup>52</sup> The collective fantasy of a commonwealth of learning that transcended religious and political borders did not promote pluralism and toleration *per se* but, rather, created a virtual open city, where scholars divided by religion and politics could interact with regard to matters of common concern, even as they enthusiastically applied their energies to divisive agendas in other contexts. Catholic intellectuals who served the Curia were typical, not unusual, in having to negotiate their “dual loyalty” to partisan religious and political causes, on one hand, and the universal Republic of Letters, on the other.<sup>53</sup> Even at the institutional level, as the episode reconstructed in this essay shows, the ethos of the Republic of Letters informed the actions of the Curia in consequential ways, and scholars and bookmen were able to engage the Holy Office as a facilitator of scholarly communication across confessional divides.

#### BETWEEN WESTPHALIA AND ENLIGHTENMENT

If many of the events recounted here seem surprising, that is due in part to powerful stereotypes that continue to shape our perception of early modern Italy and the papacy. It may strike us as paradoxical that daily operations of the Inquisition were in the hands of a cosmopolitan intellectual who collaborated with Protestant cartographers. But this was not how things looked to the seventeenth-century protagonists. In acknowledging Vizzani's vital contribution to his city atlas, Joan Blaeu praised the Italian's generosity and described him as having been “promoted to the honorable position of Assessor of the Holy Office on account of his multifaceted erudition.” In the 1660s the Dutchman had no difficulty associating the Holy Office with learning. Compare this to a recent article on cartography in the Low Countries, which quotes this very

<sup>50</sup> See Barthold Nihus to Kircher, Amsterdam, 16 Dec. 1647, APUG 557, fol. 227r; Joannes Blaeu to Kircher, Amsterdam, 29 Mar. 1649, APUG, fol. 393r; Kircher to [Louis Elzevier], [Rome, ca. May–June 1651], APUG 561, fol. 79r; and Caspar Schott to Kircher, Mainz, 4 Oct. 1655, APUG 567, fol. 51rv.

<sup>51</sup> Herbert Jaumann, “Respublica litteraria/Republic of Letters: Concept and Perspectives of Research,” in *The European Republic of Letters in the Age of Confessionalism*, ed. Jaumann (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), pp. 11–19; Marc Fumaroli, “The Republic of Letters,” *Diogenes*, 1998, 143:129–152; and Daniel Stolzenberg, “A Spanner and His Works: Books, Letters, and Scholarly Communication Networks in Early Modern Europe,” in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton*, ed. Ann Blair and Anja-Silvia Goeing (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 157–172.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1995); Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), Ch. 14; and Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des lettres* (Paris: Belin, 1997). These works differ on details but agree in associating the Republic of Letters with a worldview in which politics and confession should be segregated from scholarship.

<sup>53</sup> On “dual loyalty” see Bots and Waquet, *La République des lettres*, pp. 65–66.

passage but elides the reference to the Holy Office, describing Vizzani merely as “an Italian philosopher and lawyer.” That the republican of letters was also an inquisitor did not compute, and the twenty-first-century authors passed over it.<sup>54</sup>

These events also defy expectations because they belong to a distinct but poorly understood historical moment. In the 1640s, for example, it would have been beyond the pale for the Assessor of the Holy Office to collaborate with Dutch cartographers and publish books in Amsterdam with a Protestant imprint beneath his ecclesiastical title. In the first half of the seventeenth century, openly publishing with Protestants was taboo for Catholic authors in Italy. At best it was unseemly, at worst scandalous, and a Protestant imprint was widely understood to be a significant impediment to a book’s distribution. For example, in 1622 the scholar-librarian Leone Allacci arranged the printing of a friend’s treatise on celestial motion in Catholic-occupied Heidelberg, where he had been dispatched to oversee the transport of the Palatine Library to Rome. The imprint identified the printer, G. Vögelin, a Protestant, but omitted the place-name, a standard practice to facilitate sales in Catholic territories. But this did not assuage the author, Giulio Cesare Lagalla, a professor at the University of Rome, who pleaded with Allacci to print an alternative title page, naming a Catholic place and printer, lest sales of his book not be permitted in Italy.<sup>55</sup> Catholic authors and Dutch publishers had collaborated since the beginning of the century, but always furtively, making use of false imprints or pseudonyms. (Blau’s participation in this lucrative trade was well known and frequently maligned by fellow Protestants.) Then the taboo suddenly vanished. In 1655 the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini received permission from his superiors to collaborate with Blau on the publication of a Chinese atlas, the earliest instance known to me of a Catholic author with a prominent ecclesiastical position (such as a member of the Curia or a religious order) openly publishing with Dutch Protestants.<sup>56</sup> After 1655 the phenomenon became more common, culminating with Kircher’s role as the Janssonius firm’s star author.<sup>57</sup> These arrangements were part of a larger shift in Catholic–Protestant relations made possible by the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the papacy’s response to the new political and religious landscape it created.

Alexander VII (r. 1655–1667), born Fabio Chigi, was the first pope to begin his reign after 1648. His policies were informed by earlier experiences on the frontlines of the Catholic–Protestant conflict in Germany from 1639 to 1651. As papal nuncio in Cologne and mediator at the treaty negotiations that resulted in the Peace of Westphalia, Chigi simultaneously upheld the Holy See’s hard line and exhibited a pronounced concern for the papacy’s positive reputation among Protestants. While scrupulously avoiding direct interaction with heretics, which he deemed inconsistent with his role as the Holy See’s representative, he cultivated such relationships through intermediaries, going out of his way to win Protestants’ favor through acts of courtesy.<sup>58</sup> Chigi was responsible for the Holland Mission and maintained a secret informant in

<sup>54</sup> Blau, *Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae* (cit. n. 46), Vol. 1, fol. a1v: “ob multifariam eruditionem ad Assessoris in Sacto Oficio dignitatem evectus est . . .” Cf. Koeman *et al.*, “Commercial Cartography and Map Production in the Low Countries” (cit. n. 14), p. 1337. I take poetic license in calling Vizzani, a top administrator of the Inquisition, an “inquisitor,” a specific office that he did not hold.

<sup>55</sup> Curzio Mazzi, “Leone Allacci e la Palatina di Heidelberg,” *Il Propugnatore*, 1892, 5(25–26):187. See also Jonathan A. Hill, Bookseller, *Fine and Important Manuscripts and Books, Catalog 213* (New York, 2015), no. 48. I thank Nick Wilding for bringing this information to my attention.

<sup>56</sup> Martino Martini, *Novus atlas Sinensis* ([Amsterdam]: Blau, 1655).

<sup>57</sup> To be clear, I am talking about authorized publications (works published with the involvement of the author) rather than unauthorized reprints of books first published by Catholic printers.

<sup>58</sup> This behavior and the positive reaction it supposedly elicited among Protestants was an important theme in Alexandrine propaganda, as can be seen by the emphasis it receives in the posthumous biography by Sforza Pallavicino, *Della vita di Alessandro VII* (Prato: Giachetti, 1839–1840), Vol. 1, pp. 132–133 and *passim*.

Amsterdam, Barthold Nihus, a Catholic convert from Lutheranism. Employed as an editor at Blaeu's shop, Nihus was privy to the latest information from Protestant scholarly networks, which he conveyed to Chigi, who passed his reports on to Rome. At the same time, Chigi orchestrated, and sometimes subsidized, the publication in Amsterdam of Catholic devotional texts and works by Roman authors. Among these publications, which were overseen by Nihus and printed by Blaeu using false Cologne imprints, was a collection of Chigi's own Latin poetry. (In 1660 Blaeu reprinted it with a genuine imprint.) Later, as Innocent X's secretary of state, Chigi oversaw the secret deliberations that led to the sensational conversion of Queen Christina of Sweden. Her meticulously staged arrival in Rome during the first year of his papacy would be the prototype of his policy toward Protestantism.<sup>59</sup>

One should not exaggerate the contrast between Alexandrine Rome and the earlier period. Chigi's cultural policies, aimed at Protestant conversions, built on papal strategies from earlier in the century. The phenomenon of scholars in the Curia combining service to the Church's organs of intellectual discipline with participation in the Republic of Letters neither began nor ended with his papacy, and there was much continuity between Chigi's inner circle and those of his recent predecessors. What was decisive, however, was not simply the outlook of the pope and other powerful individuals in the Curia but the larger geopolitical context in which they operated.

In 1648 the long struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism had ended in a confessional stalemate that constituted a decisive victory of secular political power over religious authority. As the Holy See's envoy, Chigi publicly protested the Treaty of Münster, whose terms represented a massive defeat of the papacy's spiritual, political, and economic interests. As pope, he steadfastly asserted the traditional ideal of the universal Church against the legitimacy of religious pluralism. But his actions revealed his grasp of the new, post-Westphalian status quo. Without renouncing the papacy's claim to international political relevance, Alexander VII's policy toward Protestants was rooted in an understanding that the Church's European ambitions were most effectively pursued by winning hearts and minds—by persuasion and culture, rather than coercion and decree. His own vocabulary, which made frequent recourse to the restrictive expression “Catholic religion” (*religione cattolica*), pointed to the emergent possibility of imagining a Catholicism that was not co-extensive with Christianity. It implied—perhaps unconsciously, and certainly regretfully—the finality of the division of Christianity (*cristianesimo*) into multiple “religions” and the passing of the ideal of Christendom (*christianità*) as a singular, organic community.<sup>60</sup> By permitting, and even promoting, the cooperation of Catholic scholars and institutions with their Protestant counterparts, the papacy under Alexander VII

---

<sup>59</sup> As in the practice of *proteste*, discussed above, Chigi's use of false imprints should be understood as an act of compliance with Catholic censorship rather than an act of subversion. On Nihus, Chigi, and Blaeu see Anselm Schubert, “Kommunikation und Konkurrenz: Gelehrtenrepublik und Konfession im 17. Jahrhundert,” in *Interkonfessionalität—Transkonfessionalität—binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität: Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz et al. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003), pp. 101–131; and Thomas Cerbu, “Conversion, Learning, and Professional Choices: The Case of Heinrich Blume,” in *Die Praktiken der Gelehrsamkeit in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Zedelmaier and Martin Mulsow (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 179–220. On Chigi's career, dealings with Protestants, and Christina's conversion see Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, trans. Ernest Graf, Vol. 31 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957); Hermann Bücker, “Der Nuntius Fabio Chigi (Papst Alexander VII.) in Münster 1644–1649: Nach seinen Briefen, Tagebüchern und Gedichten,” *Westfälische Zeitschrift*, 1958, no. 108, pp. 1–90; Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero* (cit. n. 42), pp. 177–205; and Richard Krautheimer, *The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655–1667* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985).

<sup>60</sup> Alphonse Dupront, “De la Chrétienté à l'Europe: La passion westphalienne du Nonce Fabio Chigi,” in *Forschungen und Studien zur Geschichte des Westfälischen Friedens*, ed. Max Braubach (Münster: Aschendorff, 1965), pp. 49–84. See also Derek Croxon, *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), esp. pp. 307–308.

acknowledged in practice the pluralistic reality that it continued to deny in its official pronouncements.

The particularity of this period of European cultural history—after the Peace of Westphalia, before the Enlightenment—has been difficult to discern, masked by continuities that coexisted with its novel features. Under Alexander VII, for example, canon law continued to forbid Protestants from visiting Italy and required Catholics to denounce them to the Holy Office. While reality never matched the ambition of the law, in the first part of the seventeenth century the effect was substantial. In 1622, for example, Girolamo Aleandro, a Roman scholar in the court of Francesco Barberini, described the situation in a letter to a French friend who wished to put him in contact with a Calvinist savant. “It is not appropriate,” Aleandro explained, “for someone in my position to have commerce with people known to be heretics . . . it could be much too detrimental.”<sup>61</sup> Over the course of the seventeenth century, interaction with heretics was increasingly normalized. By 1660, not only did papal policy aim to entice Protestant visitors; it had become the duty of learned representatives of the Curia to treat them hospitably. More broadly, after 1648 theology and confessional debates continued to dominate European intellectual life, as they had since the beginning of the Reformation (this is the significance of describing the period as “pre-Enlightenment”), but the possibilities for compartmentalizing those conflicts and engaging in cross-confessional communication multiplied—even in Italy, even in Rome, even in the Palace of the Holy Office.

#### CONCLUSION: THE HOLY OFFICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

In an important study of seventeenth-century censorship, Marco Cavarzere argues that, as the papacy’s effort to protect the book market from doctrinal impurity shifted to Catholic authors and readers within a “pacified” Italy, rather than the external Protestant threat, Roman censors came to function as cultural mediators within Italian society. The practices that characterized censorship in this period, based on the shared culture of censors and authors, were a product of this new monoconfessional context. Censors, who were themselves men of letters, straddled the literary and ecclesiastical worlds, facilitating a kind of *convivencia* between authors and the Congregations of the Index and the Inquisition. Modifying Robert Darnton’s model of the “communications circuit” in which early modern books were produced, exchanged, and used, Cavarzere argues that, *within Italy*, censorship should not be viewed as an external force interfering with communication but, rather, as an integral part of the circuit.<sup>62</sup> By inserting Roman censorship into a multiconfessional, European context, the present essay aims to modify and expand, rather than contradict, this picture. The censorship regime that developed in the seventeenth century, tailored as it was to the task of policing Catholics, unintentionally made commerce with Protestant culture easier, at least in the second half of the century. It was precisely because of the form that Roman censorship had taken, based on a monoconfessional, peninsular outlook, that Northern Protestant printers like Janssonius and Blaeu could and would participate in the Italian information order, once political conditions allowed. After a period of reduced contact, the diminution of the Protestant threat within Italy, and the gradual acceptance of permanent religious division without, allowed the Inquisition and the Index to act as nodes in the networks that connected Protestant and Catholic Europe. The notion of Catholic censors as cultural mediators

<sup>61</sup> Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero* (cit. n. 42), pp. 31–32, 191 (legal status of Protestants in Italy); and Cecilia Rizza, *Peiresc e l’Italia* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1965), p. 79, cited in Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell’Italia del seicento tra repressione e mediazione* (cit. n. 9), p. 126 (Aleandro’s letter).

<sup>62</sup> Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura nell’Italia del seicento tra repressione e mediazione*, esp. pp. xii–xiii, 61ff, 214; and Cavarzere, “Workings of a Papal Institution” (cit. n. 29), p. 373.

operating from within the world of scholarship should be extended to the international, multi-confessional Republic of Letters.

Commerce, in the form of the international book trade, also drew the two Europes together. It was a commonplace of early modern thinkers like Locke and Voltaire that commerce and religious toleration were mutually reinforcing, a notion that echoes in contemporary scholarship that would trace the origin of modern liberalism to the Enlightenment.<sup>63</sup> Such a narrative is by no means entirely wrong. This essay has emphasized the crucial role of profit-seeking booksellers in enabling intellectual exchange across imposing confessional barriers. It does not, however, offer a simple moral in which the rationality of the market trumped opposing repressive forces. The complex relationship between censorship and communication cannot be reduced to the dynamic of the former impeding the latter, with commerce acting as counterforce. The market exacted compromises on both sides. It provided Catholic readers in Italy access to books and ideas that otherwise would have been unavailable; but it also led booksellers in Holland—where censorship laws were the most liberal in Europe—to engage voluntarily in forms of self-censorship that affected books intended for circulation in Protestant as well as Catholic lands. A total absence of censorship might have made business easier for a merchant like Janssonius. But given the existence of censorship throughout Europe, the presence in a large part of the Catholic world of a centralized, bureaucratic censorship system ensured booksellers a relatively reliable and uniform policy over a large geographic range.

To treat censorship simply as a negative force, blocking the flow of ideas, is implicitly to assume that freedom of the press is the natural state of affairs. But such liberty existed nowhere in Europe at this time, when the very idea of freedom of speech was just coming into existence. If, instead of assessing censorship's impact in terms of an ahistorical normative ideal, we treat it as a constitutive element of the broader information order—an institutional or structural element, akin to libraries, court patronage, or the postal system—we are better able to discern its impact. In terms of communication between Italy and Protestant Europe, the system of ecclesiastical censorship that prevailed in mid-seventeenth-century Italy created both obstacles and opportunities. The Copernican *Celestial Atlas* circulated in Italy because of, not despite, the Holy Office.

---

<sup>63</sup> For the Enlightenment association of commerce and religious toleration see Henry Kamen, *The Rise of Toleration* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 223–227. For a recent work that locates that association in a genealogy of modern liberalism see Margaret C. Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 2016).