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**Enlightenment on the Margins: The Catholic Enlightenment as Reflected in Ludovico Antonio Muratori's *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni De' Padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai***

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Enlightenment on the Margins: The Catholic Enlightenment as Reflected in

Lodovico Antonio Muratori's *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni*

*De' Padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai*

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

My research analyzes the way in which Lodovico Antonio Muratori portrayed marginal peoples of the New World in his *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni De' Padri della Compangia did Gesu' nel Paraguai*, published in 1743. I argue that Muratori used his portrayal of the native people of Paraguay as a means to express his ideas of how to reform the Catholic Church, at a time when Catholicism was just experiencing the first waves of enlightened influence from the north. I engage with scholarship that has addressed specifically the cultural impact of what has been called the Catholic Enlightenment in Italy. In this scholarship the *Cristianesimo Felice* has been virtually unrepresented, and I argue that it is a valuable resource in gaining a better understanding of the reform agendas of Muratori and the Catholic Enlightenment movement in Italy. I center my analysis on two specific elements in the *Cristianesimo Felice*. First, I address Muratori's assessment of the four political systems administered simultaneously by the native population, the Spaniards, the Mamelusses, and the Jesuits. Through my analysis of Muratori's representation of these systems, I situate him in the politically conservative Catholic Enlightenment and establish his commitment to the paternalistic social order prevailing in Europe in the eighteenth century. Second, I show that Muratori reveals broader ideas about religion and superstition as conceived by the Catholic Enlightenment movement in his account of the interaction between the Jesuit missionaries and the Paraguayans in the reductions. In conclusion, this study shows that the *Cristianesimo Felice* is a source that historians of the Catholic Enlightenment movement should revisit, as it represents Lodovico Antonio Muratori's

*Pubblica Felice* in the flesh.

## Chapter One:

### Introduction

My research analyzes the way in which Lodovico Antonio Muratori portrayed marginal peoples of the New World in his *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni De' Padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai*, published in 1743.<sup>1</sup> I claim that Muratori used his portrayal of the native people of Paraguay as a means to express his ideas of social and religious reform at a time when the Catholic Church was experiencing the first waves of enlightened influence from the north. In particular, I center my analysis on two aspects of *Il Cristianesimo Felice*. First, I show Muratori's assessment of the four political systems existing in Paraguay during the early eighteenth century: the constitution of the native population, the rule of the Spanish colonies, the regime of the Mamelusses, and the reductions of the Jesuits. My analysis of Muratori's political ideas reveals his preference for the conservative program invoked by the Catholic Enlightenment and his commitment to support the paternalistic social order prevailing in Europe in the eighteenth century. Second, I discuss Muratori's position on religion and superstition, demonstrating how his ideas reflected the broader agenda of the Catholic Enlightenment movement. I argue that in *Il Cristianesimo Felice* Muratori supported and promoted the Jesuits' colonial and missionary program of replacing a society that was primitive, superstitious, and void of reason with a society that was civilized, educated and religiously disciplined, and that

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<sup>1</sup> Lodovico Antonio Muratori, *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni De' Padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai*, Venice: Gianbattista Pasquali, 1743. For the purposes of this study I use the following English translation of the *Cristianesimo Felice*: Muratori, *A Relation of the Missions of Paraguay: Wrote Originally In Italian, By Mr. Muratori, and Now Done Into English From The French Translation*, London: J. Marmaduke, 1759. All references will be to this translation.

would have brought about “public happiness.” This study does not intend to gain a better understanding of the Jesuit missions in Paraguay or to contribute to the historiography of Latin American colonization.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the intent of this work is to present *Il Cristianesimo Felice* as a *manifesto* of Muratori’s position on the need for social and religious reform in Italy.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century scholars still struggle with how to define the Enlightenment. What was once a mostly monolithic interpretation centering on the ideas promoted by enlightenment thinkers is now manifold, with studies covering a myriad of topics such as political economy, religion, and geography, as well as looking at the Enlightenment movement from the perspective of its national and regional context and through the lens of social and cultural history.

The landmark works, by Ernst Cassirer and Franco Venturi addressed broad intellectual syntheses of the ideas of the Enlightenment, focusing mostly on the philosophies of the major thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Montesquieu, and their contributions to a cosmopolitan reform program, which was born in Paris during the early eighteenth century and then disseminated throughout Europe.<sup>3</sup> Such an interpretation gave the impression that enlightened thinkers were members of a transnational club of sorts whose ideas about government and economy were uniform and systematically introduced to royal courts and popular assemblies throughout Western Europe. This understanding of the Enlightenment, however, was challenged in the late 1960s. Inspired by a Marxist approach and the increasing restlessness of the political environment of the period, which questioned the validity of

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<sup>2</sup> An examination of how Catholic Enlightenment thinkers engaged with and envisioned natives of the New World is probably due.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951); Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 7 vols., Turin: Einaudi, 1969–1990.

established authority, a younger generation of historians began searching for methods of uncovering the history of the lower classes, and give a voice to the voiceless. It was during this period and the advent of “social history” that the face of the Enlightenment was significantly altered.

Evidence of the impact of social history on Enlightenment studies can be found in Peter Gay’s *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, volume I*, published in 1967. In this work Gay made overtures to placing the philosophes within their social contexts, but, according to Robert Darnton, scholarship continued in the tradition of writing a history of ideas; this was still history from the top.<sup>4</sup> Darnton, nearly twenty years Gay’s junior, would go on to firmly establish a true social history of the French Enlightenment when his *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* appeared in 1984.<sup>5</sup> This was perhaps an auspicious year in that it was shared with the publication of Venturi’s last installment of the *Settecento Riformatore*; a literary passing of the torch from the old school of ideas to the new school of working classes and social contexts. Darnton’s exploration of the concept of mentalité brought life and color to characters like Nicolas Contat, apprentice in Jacques Vincent’s printing shop, who had previously only served as history’s backdrop.

It was therefore in the decades between the late 1960s and the mid 1980s that the focus of Enlightenment studies changed from traditional examinations of the ideas of famous thinkers to uncovering the lives of the unprivileged classes. Social class, however, was not the only arena in which the Enlightenment was being scrutinized. Historians were also beginning to explore national boundaries and cultures as categories of analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Darnton, “In Search of the Enlightenment: A Recent Attempt to Create a Social History of Ideas,” *The Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971): 113-32.

<sup>5</sup> Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, New York: Basic Books, 1984.



Prior to the early 1980s the Enlightenment was seen as a uniform Europe-wide project, a view championed by Franco Venturi and his disciples throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Focusing on Italy, Venturi failed to recognize the multifaceted aspect of the enlightenment movement. It was Roy Porter who first suggested the need to place the reform movement within regional and national contexts, in 1981. In 1985 J.G.A. Pocock further reinforced this position by arguing that a single enlightenment did not exist. Instead, although sharing some common aspects across Europe and the Atlantic, the reform movement of the eighteenth century also developed regional and national specific traits and should have been studied in their specific contexts.<sup>6</sup> Although this new perspective allowed Enlightenment scholarship to move beyond the intellectual approach of Cassirer and Venturi, and, as John Robertson argued, it helped define the unique characteristics of the Enlightenment movements in Scotland and Naples, it also presented problems.<sup>7</sup> According to Robertson, if historians persisted regionalizing the Enlightenment and removing its cohesive bonds, then it would simply become a series of unconnected social and political reform projects happening independently throughout Europe, during the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Unwilling to write-off the Enlightenment in this fashion, scholars like Dorinda Outram have recently tried to accommodate both views of the Enlightenment by recognizing both the international characteristics of enlightened reforms as they moved across Europe and royal courts, and their regional traits, hence, presenting a nuanced view of how the reforms were adapted and implemented differently in different regions.<sup>9</sup>

Thanks to the work of a new generation of historians, to date the Enlightenment is

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<sup>6</sup> John Pocock, "Clergy and commerce: the conservative Enlightenment in England," in *L'età dei lumi: studi storici sul settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, vol.1, Naples: Jovene, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> John Robertson, "The Enlightenment above National Context: Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland and Naples," *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997): 667-697; John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-9.

<sup>9</sup> Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

understood as a loosely constructed reform movement that had an international identity in the sense that there were some tenets that were shared by its promoters across Europe and the Atlantic, like the idea of social betterment based on reason and the subjugation of accepted authority and of religion to the methods of the new science. In 2000, Thomas Munck pointed out that many of the enlightened thinkers of the eighteenth century were overtly trans-regional by virtue of their interest in other European and foreign cultures as much as they were in their own.<sup>10</sup> However, scholars have also recognized that the implementation of Enlightenment reforms took on different faces in different places, spaces, and confessions. So, as Outram argued, the Enlightenment was also uniquely regional as enlightened philosophies were used to approach different problems concerning different regions and peoples.<sup>11</sup>

In this thesis I will show how Lodovico Antonio Muratori advanced a project of social and religious reform in *Il Cristianesimo Felice*. Through his portrayal of the natives of Paraguay Muratori raised a tacit criticism to the Catholic Church's slow adaptation of the idea of reason as a fundamental guide in matters of governance. However, to put Muratori's reforms in context a brief discussion of eighteenth-century Italy is necessary.

Scholarship has paid little attention to Italy's eighteenth century, giving preference to either the Renaissance or the Risorgimento, the revolutionary era of the nineteenth century. However, one can still trace a distinct historiography of the Italian Enlightenment that began with the intellectual histories of Franco Venturi in the 1960s and 1970s and of Brendan Dooley in the 1990s, and is now dominated by the cultural histories of Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassing

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History 1721-1794*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness: Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007); Luigino Bruni, *Civil Happiness: Economics and human flourishing in historical perspective*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 1-9.

Roworth, Catherine M. Sama, and Rebecca Messbarger. These works have illuminated the way in which ideas moved and were given meaning in and through Italy by means of scholarly works, the scientific marketplace, and the Grand Tour. However, to truly gain an appreciation of the significance of the reform project set by Muratori, our gaze must be cast across the Atlantic to the Jesuit missions in Paraguay. For it was there that he found his exemplar of public happiness, defined by strong civil and religious leadership and a people willing to submit.

One of the ways recent scholarship has provided a nuanced view of the Enlightenment in Italy is by questioning the degree to which enlightened ideas permeated the Catholic Church. During the last decade, scholars such as Jonathan Israel and Ulrich L. Lehner have begun to debate the existence of a Catholic Enlightenment, particularly in Italy.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, these scholars have called attention to this project of defining the Catholic Enlightenment, particularly in Italy.<sup>13</sup> In *Enlightenment Contested*, Israel argued for a two-pronged reform movement within Italy. He identified a radical vein, which espoused deism and strict republican ideologies based on the philosophies of Baruch Spinoza, and a more moderate trait that was advanced by Muratori and his disciples, and that sought to reconcile the sacred doctrines of the Catholic Church with the science and values of enlightened thought from across the Alps.

The moderate reform movement identified by Israel is the central focus of Ulrich Lehner's essay, "What is Catholic Enlightenment?" In this study, Lehner aptly defines the Catholic Enlightenment as "...an apologetic endeavor designed to defend the essential dogmas of Catholic Christianity by explaining their rationality in modern terminology and by reconciling

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<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Westrick, Conference Review of "The Enlightenment Pope: Benedict XIV (1675-1758)," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 46 (Fall 2012): 171-74. To my knowledge, the individual works submitted for this conference have not yet been published, but the review written by Westrick is comprehensive enough to convey the diverse interpretations of "Catholic Enlightenment."

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006; Ulrich L. Lehner, "What is 'Catholic Enlightenment'?" *History Compass* 8 (2010): 166-178.

Catholicism with modern culture.”<sup>14</sup> Though Lehner’s essay is admittedly only one of many contributions to a larger discussion on Italian religious and social reform in the eighteenth century, in this study I subscribe to Lehner’s definition in order to place Muratori within the context of reform and continuity with traditional Catholic doctrine.

*Il Cristianesimo Felice*, like most of Muratori’s other works, is a useful document not least because Muratori was considered a leading contributor to the Enlightenment movement in Italy. Brendan Dooley in his introduction to his translation of Muratori’s *Against Academies* writes that Muratori “stood like a giant across the threshold of the eighteenth century.”<sup>15</sup> This is an apt description of Muratori given his role in introducing certain elements of the Enlightenment to Italy through the first half of the eighteenth century. Yet, with one foot in a reformist agenda, advancing empirical reasoning in the fields of science, agriculture, and government, his other foot was firmly planted in the defense of a conservative acceptance of authority in religious matters and a resistance to the imminent rationalization of the Catholic faith that would find such favor in the latter half of the century. His efforts to reform law codes that he felt marginalized the poor and his denunciation of what he considered superstitious church practices, like the persecution of witchcraft, put Muratori in the vanguard of the Catholic Enlightenment movement and an ideal representative of its tenets in general. Moreover, in *Il Cristianesimo Felice*, his account of the engagement of the Jesuits with the natives of Paraguay lends important insight into how the elements of New World native culture, such as diet, government, medicine, and religion, was perceived by Catholic Enlightenment thinkers. This will be a new interpretation of *Il Cristianesimo Felice*.

Previous scholarship, what little has been done, has tended to take *Il Cristianesimo Felice*

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 166

<sup>15</sup> Brendan Dooley, ed. *Italy in the Baroque: Selected Readings*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 622.

at face value.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, these analyses only began to uncover the wealth of information offered by the *Cristianesimo Felice* viewing it as either religious propaganda for the Jesuits or an erudite catalogue of the natural features of Paraguay and failing to recognize it as a valuable resource in the study of Catholic imperialism. Though it is impossible to determine with any certainty the motives behind Muratori's writing of the Jesuit Missions in Paraguay, a careful analysis of the text reveals Muratori's philosophical and moral posture toward the marginal peoples of Paraguay. His goal was to reform the undesirable state of the Paraguayans under Spanish rule by combining the belief in a system grounded in science and medicine, combined with the enforcement of blind faith in Catholicism. Therefore, *Il Cristianesimo Felice* is not just a lionizing account of the Jesuit's service to the Amerindians, or simply an informative travel account for curious Italian readers. Instead, *Il Cristianesimo Felice* should be read as a reflection of Muratori's struggle to reconcile Enlightenment ideas of empirical reasoning, rational thought, and responsible government with sacred Catholic ideals of religion informed solely by authority and a faith, he argued, should be divorced from reason.

In 1700, amidst the challenges of reform, Muratori began his career as the archivist and court librarian at Modena (a position he held until his death in 1750), developing and publishing his ideas on social and religious reform, as well as historical and theological works. During his tenure in the archives at Modena, Muratori set the precedent for utilizing the study of history for political gains when the de' Este family sent him to search libraries throughout Italy for historical documents to support their claims to hereditary lands confiscated by the pope. In representing his patrons against the papacy, he confirmed his position between two opinions: as

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<sup>16</sup> Two authors that come to mind here are Eric Cochrane ("The Vocation of a Historian" *The Catholic Historical Review* 51 (July 1965): 153-72) and R. B. Cunningham Graham (*A Vanished Arcadia: Being Some Account of the Jesuits in Paraguay 1607 to 1767*, Champaign, Ill, Project Gutenberg, 1990s) saw the *Cristianesimo Felice* as Muratori's tribute to the Jesuit's deft governmental skills. Graham used the *Cristianesimo Felice* as a source for geographical information as he wrote about South America.

an ordained priest, he upheld the absolute spiritual authority of the pope, while, as an enlightened thinker, he rejected the pope's claim to temporal authority. This would prove to be a foreshadowing of his two-front battle to advance enlightened ideals in secular fields, while defending the church against the rationalizing efforts of radicals in the 1730s and 1740s.

In the first chapter of this study I have addressed each of the four systems of power Muratori portrayed in *Il Cristianesimo Felice* to show his ideas about the intersection of religion and politics and belief that only the system promoted a Catholic and just, civil society. Using recent scholarship on the political economy of Enlightenment Italy, I establish Muratori's role as an intellectual gatekeeper for Italy, given that he was instrumental in introducing Jean-Francois Melon and Bernard Mandeville's theories on luxury, public happiness, and the role of government in both.<sup>17</sup> It is in this context that I explore Muratori's understanding of these concepts as they are reflected in the *Cristianesimo Felice*.

In the second chapter I examine Muratori's representation of the religious and medicinal practices of the indigenous peoples who were brought into the Jesuit reductions. I show that by using certain language to describe these practices, Muratori presented a community that, though religious, was deceived by empty superstition and was therefore vulnerable to exploitation, both by their own leaders as well as others, and, ultimately, unhappiness. These portrayals of indigenous life are consistent with and representative of Muratori's proposed role of the Catholic faith in Italian culture, and are reflections of his ideal socio-religious community. I use Muratori's disagreements with John Locke's proposed *tabula rasa*, and the subsequent advocacy of Lochean thought by Celestino Galiani, to establish Muratori's position as a conservative

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<sup>17</sup> Wahnbaeck, *Luxury*, 20-31. Mandeville was an eighteenth-century Dutch immigrant to England who claimed that private vices were necessary for the economic and moral wellbeing of a society, in his book *The Fable of the Bees* in 1723. Melon was an eighteenth-century French writer who reiterated the claims of Mandeville but removed the moral implications of Mandeville's argument, focusing solely on the economic prosperity offered by the exploitation of personal vices.

reformer.

Muratori's ideas for religious and social reform were also informed by historical analysis. Though he rejected Molinism and Jansenism, Muratori's expertise in the patristics of previous centuries led to his rejection of what he considered superfluous extravagances of the Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup> Muratori's social concerns were evident in his *La filosofia morale esposta e proposta ai giovani* (Moral philosophy explained and proposed to youths) as well as in his *Pubblica Felicità*. The *filosofia morale* was a new compendium of morality that was intended to replace the Aristotelian Ethics in the education of youths. In this work, Muratori argued against moral relativism espoused by Locke, maintaining that morality was based on reason; reason was God-given; and, if invoked, would ensure a rational, peaceful, and civil society. The *Pubblica Felicità* (1749) is a far more influential work than the *filosofia* or even the *Cristianesimo Felice* because it was written only one year before Muratori's death and is considered to be the cumulative product of his work on the role of government in the procurement of happiness. However, this should not detract from the importance of the *Cristianesimo Felice* in understanding Muratori's position on government and public happiness.

Because of Muratori's vast array of interests, historians of eighteenth-century Italy have sourced his work to support arguments in many fields. Franco Venturi draws on Muratori's battle against superstition and belief in witchcraft within Catholic Italy to illustrate the struggle of Enlightenment thinkers in Italy to establish reason as the foundation of society and religion, equating rationality with civility.<sup>19</sup> But, Venturi does not extend his analysis of Muratori's views

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<sup>18</sup> Molinism and Jansenism represented two extremes on the spectrum of God's grace in relation to his saving of human souls. Where Molinism in the sixteenth century emphasized the free will of humans in their ability to receive God's grace, Jansenism in the seventeenth century dismissed free will, favoring instead a predestinationalist view that God has already selected those to whom his grace will be given.

<sup>19</sup> Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment: Studies in a Cosmopolitan Century*, New York: New York University Press, 1972), 103-133.

on superstition to the popular religions of the New World, an opportunity provided by the *Relation*. Brendan Dooley in *Science and the Marketplace in Early Modern Italy* quotes Muratori to emphasize the latter's desire for natural philosophers to give more attention to agriculture.<sup>20</sup> However, because of the scope of Dooley's research (science and the marketplace) and the fact that he did not include Muratori's *Cristianesimo Felice*, he stopped short of realizing Muratori's hopes for an idealized Italian community reflected in his polished version of the Jesuit reductions and their positive influence of the native Paraguayans.

Muratori was in the vanguard of these moderate Catholic Enlightenment thinkers. Though, prior to 1740, he had been a person of interest for the Inquisition, he found himself under the protection of the papacy with the election of Benedict XIV. Muratori was an active Catholic priest who is best known to scholars today for his comprehensive history of Italy, as well as his role in the organization and cataloguing of archives during his tenure as the court librarian of the de' Este family in Modena, from 1700 until his death in 1750.<sup>21</sup> Though Muratori was successful in his dual vocations as priest and archivist, his interests extended far beyond the realms of the parish and the library. Contemporaries accepted his published works on politics, science, and medicine, as erudite and authoritative, which earned Muratori a respected position amongst enlightened Catholic thinkers of his day. It was only toward the end of his life, however, that Muratori cast his gaze across the Atlantic to the little-known territory of Paraguay.

There are certain characteristics about the *Cristianesimo Felice* that make it appealing and useful as a source. Written in 1743, Muratori's *Cristianesimo Felice* has existed only on the margins of the intellectual and political histories of eighteenth-century Italy. In fact, besides a 1965 article written by Eric Cochrane, one of the leading American authorities on Muratori, (and

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<sup>20</sup> Dooley, *Science, Politics, and Society in Eighteenth-Century Italy: The Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia and Its World*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991.

<sup>21</sup> Muratori, *Annali d'Italia*, Milan: Giambattista Pasquali, 1744-1749.



this was just a reference in passing), and a small nod from the British politician, explorer, Cunningham Graham in 1901, this work has remained largely unnoticed by Anglophone historians.<sup>22</sup> Also, Muratori wrote the *Cristianesimo Felice* entirely second hand. He states in the introduction that he had hardly ever left Modena, much less traveled to Paraguay. Therefore, though he is explicit in his descriptions of the people of Paraguay and their interaction with the European Jesuit missionaries, Muratori had no occasion to judge the Jesuit missions in Paraguay directly. This factor makes the book a valuable resource because it necessarily represents specific biases of Muratori. He chose the specific accounts of the Jesuit missions in Paraguay to use as sources.<sup>23</sup> In other words, this particular source can reveal more accurately Muratori's views on enlightened civilization, represented by the Jesuits, and how it could or should engage with uncivilized, marginalized peoples, than it does the actual, historical events of the Jesuits engaging with the natives of Paraguay. Not surprising, nearly all of Muratori's source material was written by Jesuits and excludes any critical judgments of their missions. This is not because such sources did not exist. For example, a particularly glaring source is that of Father Ibanez, an ex-Jesuit whose account of the missions in Paraguay casts the Jesuits in the most negative possible light. According to Ibanez, the Jesuits exploited the native population and withheld education from them as a means of control. Muratori chose not to include this account. In fact, I show in chapter three how Muratori represented the Jesuits as using education, rather than a

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<sup>22</sup> Eric Cochrane, "Muratori: The Vocation of a Historian" and R. B. Cunningham Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia*.

<sup>23</sup> The sources that Muratori lists are as follows: Composed by a Spanish Prebend and sent by Father Cattaneo to his brother, *A Relation of the Paraguay Missions*, 1690; Juan Patricio Fernandez, et al., *La Relacion Historial de las Misiones de los Indios, que llaman chiquitos*, Madrid: Manuel Fernandez, 1726; Among the annual report by missionaries of the Society of Jesus, Muratori cited: Jacobi Ransonier, *Annuae Paraguariae Annorum*, 1626 & 1627; Nicola Mastrilli, *Annuae Paraguariae Annorum*, undated; Francisci Lahier, *Annuae Paraguariae Annorum*, 1635 & *duorum sequentium, Adami Schimbeck Messis Paraguariensis, sive annals illius Provinciae, ab Anno 1638, ad 1643*; F. Philibert Moner, *A relation of Paraguay from 1635 to 1637*. Originally in Spanish but translated into French by Francis Hamal; Antonii Ruiz de Montoyo, *De Missa sub Christi jugum Paraguaria ... Nicolai del Techo Historia Provinciae Paraguariae Societatis Jesu*; Jacobi de Machault, *Relations de Paraguaria*

prohibition of it, as a means of control. Muratori does, however, present the natives as unskilled, undisciplined, and superstitious. He scorns their systems of government for being primitive and lacking a strong central power, a need filled by the Jesuit fathers. To be sure, Muratori presented the Jesuits as benefactors who provided the civilizing elements of western education, religion, and political structures, and created for the native Paraguayans a society that epitomized Muratori's ideal of public happiness. In the following chapters I will show how the *Cristianesimo Felice* is an important source that reveals Muratori's, and consequently the Catholic Enlightenment movement's agendas for social and religious reform in eighteenth-century Italy.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Power and Happiness**

Throughout the *Cristianesimo Felice*, Muratori repeatedly addressed systems of power that were present in South America during the time of the Jesuit reductions there. His discussion of the governments administered by the indigenous Paraguayans, the Spanish colonists, the Brazilian Mamelusses, and the Jesuits are the main focus of this chapter. I argue that in presenting these systems of power, Muratori intended to reveal his ideas about the intersection of religion and politics and represented the broader political agenda of the Catholic enlightenment movement. Furthermore, as a representative of this movement, Muratori's portrayal of these systems reveals his belief that reform and the establishment of an effective and rational government was the achievement of "public happiness."

Recent scholarship on the Catholic Enlightenment has enabled historians to identify two major elements of the movement's political agenda. First is the concept of "public happiness" and second is the crucial role of the prince, or central government, to provide for the public happiness of the society. Luigino Bruni, in *Civil Happiness: Economics and human flourishing in historical perspective*, argues that in the wave of post-Tridentine reform, society reverted to a more feudalistic, pyramidal pattern. This paternalistic model was promoted by the Catholic Enlightenment movement and was championed by Muratori. Bruni notes that the pursuit of

happiness is a concept that is generally thought to have originated in the French Enlightenment and then worked its way through the rest of Europe. He counters that assumption by showing that “happiness” was a unique part of the Italian tradition of political economy and that the phrase “public happiness” first appeared in the title of Muratori’s work, *Della Pubblica Felicità, oggetto dei buoni principipi* (On public happiness, object of good princes) in 1749.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, as the title suggests, Muratori considered public happiness the province of the prince or a strong centralized government, and by default, so were all the elements required for the public happiness, such as proper education, fair distribution of wealth, and agricultural technology. He wrote,

We therefore with public happiness intend nothing but that Peace and Tranquility, that a wise and lovely Prince, or Minister, tries to ensure to his people, as much as he can.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear from this passage that Muratori directs all burden of ensuring public happiness onto the prince or government. As the accepted leader of the Catholic Enlightenment movement, Muratori’s explanation can be viewed as representative of the movement in general. Brendan Dooley, in his introduction to Muratori’s *Against Academies* also connects Muratori to this paternalistic model of government by listing a number of attacks that Muratori made against current legal practices of the day.<sup>26</sup> His address to monarchs demanded better systems of public health, more equitable systems of taxation, and an end to damaging practices like mainmort that restricted the amount of available, farmable land. He also suggested a reduction in the number of

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<sup>24</sup> Muratori, *Della Pubblica Felicità, oggetto de buoni principipi*, ed. Cesare Mozzarelli, Rome: Donzelli Editore, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Bruni, *Civil Happiness*, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Dooley, *Italy in the Baroque*, 622-23.

feast days so workers could earn more money.<sup>27</sup> His attacks on these systems, according to Dooley, were intended to increase the quality of life for the poor, but reserved the executions of such reforms for the ruler. Chiara Continisio, in her article, “Governing the passions: Sketches on Lodovico Antonio Muratori’s moral philosophy” focuses explicitly on Muratori’s ideas of governmental reform, which she shows had already reached maturity by the time he was tutoring Francesco Maria, the eldest son of the Este family in 1714.<sup>28</sup> Her evidence comes from a series of notes Muratori compiled to assist in the young prince’s moral and political education. In these notes, Muratori expressed the urgency for the prince to be trained in justice, for justice was the primary function of the prince and the only hope for any possible happiness.<sup>29</sup> It should be noted here that Muratori throughout the rest of his career, continued to promote governmental and cultural reforms that benefited mainly the lower classes, but reserved the power to enact these reforms for the prince. In *Cristianesimo Felice* Muratori describes public happiness in this way, Well-regulated liberty, sufficient provisions of food, clothing, lodging, public peace and the soul’s tranquility, in my opinion are the true and only ingredients, which form the happiness of a people.<sup>30</sup>

In *Cristianesimo Felice* Muratori presented four distinctly different types of government models that existed simultaneously in Paraguay and Brazil: the system of the native Paraguayans, the Spanish colonial government, the government of the Mamelusses, and finally, the government of the Jesuit reductions. His discussion of these models can be viewed as reflections of the reform agendas for the Catholic Enlightenment movement in Italy and were constructed so

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 623-28.

<sup>28</sup> Chiara Continisio, “Governing the Passions: Sketches on Lodovico Antonio Muratori’s moral philosophy,” *History of European Ideas* 32 (2006): 367-384.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>30</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 125-126.

as to reinforce his argument that the best kind of society would be governed by a rational, just ruler with broad powers to ensure the happiness of the people. As mentioned above, Muratori understood happiness to include a rational approach to the legal system in which common people had access to the highest possible quality of life through equal distributions of land, wealth, and education. In the introduction Muratori explains how the reader will find

...a faithful account of that blissful country; he will see men, perhaps the most barbarous that ever were heard, changed into fervent Christians; commonwealthers, that scarce know any other laws than those of the gospel, and where the sublimest virtues of Christians are become, if I may use the expression, common virtues.<sup>31</sup>

By examining each of these systems as presented by Muratori, and drawing on secondary literature, I will show how none of these systems could result in “public happiness” except for the Jesuit reductions. In each of the four systems represented, Muratori places an emphasis on basic needs, personal freedom, Catholicism, and the presence of a centralized government. These models serve as examples of how crucial the balance between these elements was for public happiness.

First, Muratori described the distribution of power among the native Paraguayans to show the reader the inferior state of political organization practiced by the indigenous people. He represented this as ad hoc systems of allegiances amongst the different tribes, and gave the impression that the natives had considerable freedom in choosing to whose leadership they would submit. For Muratori, however, this system lacked discipline and was not conducive to rational thinking or the adoption of Christian virtues.<sup>32</sup> Muratori’s representation of the natives’

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<sup>31</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-30.

decentralized systems of power cast a sense of disorganization and unqualified claims to power by the native peoples. For a society not to have unconditional loyalty to a ruler was equal to disorder and chaos.

In his description of the natives' political hierarchy Muratori is careful to inform the reader that he is including this information so that one can see the contrast between how the natives used to live and how they currently lived within the Jesuit reductions, which was of course, in his account, positive.

Muratori described the natives as seeing themselves as completely free and not under the authority of any person or institution. They bore no loyalty to any lord or king, and had no laws or system of government for administering justice. Muratori cites the lack of the institutions of monarchy and civil government as the cause of the Paraguayans' lack of discipline and reason, which subsequently led to frequent wars with one another and even cannibalism.<sup>33</sup> It was because of these wars with neighboring tribes that chiefs, called caciques, were chosen for protection from among men who displayed prowess in battle or displayed supernatural abilities. Muratori maintained that the would-be cacique threatened sickness by means of magic if people did not vote for him. It is known from Muratori's previous writings that he denied the existence of diabolical witchcraft and therefore it is not surprising that he counted this practice of the caciques as hoodwinking (the practice of witchcraft and native religion is discussed in more detail in chapter two).<sup>34</sup> There was, however, no sense of loyalty to the caciques. Each family as well as each Indian saw themselves as completely free and at liberty to go wherever they wanted. So, by virtue of this freedom, and for any reason, each could relocate their family and belongings to reside under the authority of another cacique. Muratori

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>34</sup> Muratori under the pseudonym Antonii Lampridii, *De superstitione vitanda, sive censura voti sanguinarii in honorem Immaculatae Conceptionis deiparae emissi*, Milan, 1740.

cites Bartholomew De Las Casas' account that described the Indians as "careful to follow the dictates of true reason."<sup>35</sup> Muratori makes clear that this due to the fact that the Indians observed by De Las Casas in Mexico had a "king and a splendid court," and that "obeying their prince" had humanized them.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the natives of Paraguay were by no means inclined to follow reason or to act humanely and this was due to their lack of centralized power and loyalty to a monarch. At this point one might expect Muratori to look to the Spanish monarch as a sensible, expeditious remedy for such weaknesses. Instead, his opinion of the Spanish colonial officials, and more so, the colonists is such that an assimilation of the natives into the Spanish imperial machine might be the worst move the Paraguayans could make.

The second system addressed by Muratori was the imperial system of the Spanish monarch, which was administered by the royal corregidores and Spanish colonists. The Spanish colonial government, rather than having its own chapter, is treated by Muratori as a menacing force, always in the background but never far from the minds of the natives. I interpret Muratori's portrayal of the Spanish colonists as reminders that even civilized Christians can descend into barbarism and savagery if they are removed too far and for too long from the object of their loyalty; either their prince or the Church. Continisio points out that Muratori reminded the Este prince that God places a ruler, but that he still must earn the love of his people. He must serve them more than they serve him. He is the steward of his people's wealth.<sup>37</sup> These are attributes that are markedly absent from the Spanish colonial systems of power, as described in the *Cristianesimo Felice*. It is clear from the literature on Muratori and the Catholic Enlightenment that he maintained a commitment to the prevailing governmental model of a strongly centralized authority both politically and religiously. Till Wahnbaeck, in *Luxury and*

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<sup>35</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Continisio, "Governing the Passions," 373.



*Public Happiness*, calls Muratori “a man of the *ancien regime*.”<sup>38</sup> He also identifies Muratori as a mercantilist, who believed that “political and economic reform had to originate from the prince.”<sup>39</sup> In light of this, it is not surprising that in his discussion of the Spanish colonists, Muratori had only praise for the Spanish king. The shortcomings of the colonists were never a fault of the crown, but the result of being distant from the king’s positive influence.

For Muratori, the Spanish colonists were anything but an honorable representation of Christian virtue. He portrays them as savage and barbarous for abusing the natives and making them slaves, and considers them the single largest obstacle for the conversion of the native Paraguayans. He recounts that the “Spaniards took South America by force, killing millions.” If any were spared, it was to “make them slaves.”<sup>40</sup> He then reasons that it was natural that the Paraguayans due to their hatred for the Spanish would come to hate their religion as well. Though it is true that the Spanish colonists baptized the Indians in their colonies, Muratori writes that it is without “advantage to either soul or body” because, due to the unreasonable amount of work required of them, they can not attend mass, take the sacraments, or listen to sermons.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that Muratori often defends the Spanish monarch, however, on account of the king’s decrees designed to ensure the humane treatment of natives, but he condemns the Spanish colonists for being barbarous and negligent of these laws as well as poor representatives of the gospel. In fact, in many cases, it is the fear of becoming subjects of the Spanish crown that drives the natives to the Jesuit reductions. Furthermore, it appears that the colonists descended to this condition by means of their removal from their king’s direct sphere of influence, for Muratori praises the piety of the nation of Spain, but laments the lack of piety among those who

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<sup>38</sup> Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, 55.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>40</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 40.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

leave for America with impure motives and cause the Indians to despise the Catholic religion.<sup>42</sup> This is yet more evidence of Muratori's conviction that obedience to a king nurtures reason and Christian virtues. Muratori's assessment of the systems of power utilized by the Paraguayans and the Spanish Colonists demonstrated two opposite ends of a spectrum. On one end, the Paraguayans operated out of the belief that they were free and accountable to no one, while on the other end they were made slaves and perished at the hands of barbarous scoundrels, whose only concern was wealth and power.

If the indigenous political arrangements of the Paraguayans offered freedom with no government, and the Spanish colonists offered government (though useless to the Paraguayans) and no freedom, the Mamelusses provided both freedom and government, but without religion.<sup>43</sup>

The third system of power is the rebellious Brazilian community of the Mamelusses. Though this is not a community within Paraguay, I have included it here because Muratori thought it important enough to describe it in detail, and also because his description provides yet another dimension to his views on how to achieve public happiness (or in this case, how not to achieve it). The Mamelusses are Muratori's example of how liberty and laws, though typically good, in the absence of true religion will ultimately become barbarous and savage. Furthermore, any civilization, no matter how refined or steeped in religious doctrine, given enough opportunities, can descend into barbarism and savagery.<sup>44</sup> What began as a Portuguese, Christian settlement, the Mamelluses were the product of the intermarrying of Portuguese men and native women. Over time they forfeited their claim to the Christian faith and gave themselves over to depravity and lives of moral destitution. Their criminal activities that included robbery and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>43</sup> Mamelusses is the name assigned by Muratori to this group of third-generation Brazilian colonists. In various sources they are referred to by other names such as Paulists and Mamelucos, but are the same group described by Muratori.

<sup>44</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 40.

murder struck fear into peoples of every neighboring territory. They made their own laws, and lived as they pleased, following their passions. Though they were once under the authority of the Portuguese crown, they no longer submitted to his decrees. Though this group may resemble the native Paraguayan system of government, the primary difference for Muratori is that the Mameluses had no sense of restraint in regards to human passion. Scholars have established that this was a real fear for Muratori starting in the 1730s. Italian intellectuals' acceptance of John Locke's premise in the *Essay*, which claimed that morality was relative and human passions were impossible to control, prompted Muratori to reaffirm that abandoning expectations of self control would lead to the breakdown of society.<sup>45</sup> This scenario is clearly reflected in his account of the Mameluses' political structure, or lack thereof. For Muratori, it was the lay population, the commoners who were intended to be the beneficiaries of his reforms, which would be left in the lurch under the doctrines of Locke.

Muratori's indictment of the Mameluses was not based on their desire for freedom, for he makes clear that the desire to be at liberty is a natural inclination for all mankind.<sup>46</sup> Nor was it their ability to construct some formalized structure of power, for he praises the practice of constructing government institutions. It was their rebellious nature that drew his ire. Modern scholarship supports Muratori's claims that the Mameluses were a terror to neighboring tribes as well as the Jesuit reductions. According to A. R. Disney the community at Sao Paulo was originally a strategic Portuguese outpost that was overlooked by the government and also secluded, making it the ideal location for illegal or, at the very least, suspicious behavior.<sup>47</sup> As the Portuguese inhabitants of Sao Paulo increased and intermarried with the Amerindians, their

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<sup>45</sup> Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment*, Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1995, 177-78.

<sup>46</sup> Muratori, *Cristianesimo Felice*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 254-59.

offspring, called Mamelucos began to diverge from traditional Portuguese ways of life. As wheat production grew, so did the need for labor, which drove the Paulists into villages and the Jesuit reductions, capturing Amerindians to use as slaves.<sup>48</sup> It was the struggle between the Paulists and the Jesuits for control of the Amerindians (Paulists for slaves, Jesuits for neophytes) that Muratori had encountered in his sources that prompted him to contrast the rebel colony with the utopian reductions. Muratori focuses specifically on the fact that the Paulists were once a Portuguese colony under the authority of the King of Portugal and bound to the precepts of the Catholic Church complete with the establishment of a Jesuit college at St. Pauls. He goes on explain that the colonists began to intermarry with native women and produced a race “with all the defects of their mothers, and without any of their fathers’ virtues.”<sup>49</sup> Though they remained under the authority of these two institutions (crown and cross), they eventually cast out the Jesuit priests and only obeyed the governors of Brazil when it was in their best interests. Instead, they followed their own “particular laws.”<sup>50</sup> Eventually, this community became a refuge for outcasts and criminals with a reputation of ungodliness and crime. So, while the Paulists were, by most accounts, free, and they had some system of laws and governance, their rejection of the predominate social order that required loyalty to a sovereign and the discipline of a chaste and religious life obstructed this community from achieving what Muratori considered “public happiness.” Muratori’s assessment of the Mamelusses is supported by modern scholarship that confirms the Paulists’ rejection of Portuguese laws and their subsequent series of raids on the reductions and other native villages in search of Amerindians to sell in the Brazilian slave trade.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 254-59.

<sup>49</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>51</sup> Disney, *A History of Portugal*, 254-59; Abou, *The Jesuit “Republic,”* 81.

None of these systems of power were, for Muratori, conducive to public happiness. On the one hand, the Paraguayans in their self-constructed systems of power were free, but they did not have enough clothing, housing, or food, at least by eighteenth-century European standards. Neither did they have tranquility of soul, since they were without the Catholic Church. On the other hand the alternative offered by the Spanish may have exposed them to the Catholic religion and supposedly provided ample food, clothing and shelter, but left the Paraguayans stripped of their freedom. In the middle was the unacceptable option of the Mamelusses whose freedom and self-governance were canceled out by the absence of a powerful sovereign and Christian virtue. These portrayals of power, were reflections of Muratori's own views of power and the roles of government that informed his agenda for social reform in Italy, which included educational reform, more equal distributions of wealth, and the advancement of agricultural technology. All of these elements in Muratori's agenda of reform can be summed up in what he called *Pubblica Felicità* (public happiness), and all, according to Muratori, were the responsibility of the monarch or prince.

If public happiness were the responsibility of the ruler, then it would follow that loyalty to the ruler was paramount. For Muratori, a monarch or prince whose policies were mid-spectrum between the freedom of the Paraguayans and the accommodating slavery of the Spanish would rule the ideal community. I maintain that the Jesuit reductions, the fourth system discussed by Muratori, provided the perfect example of this type of community.

The fourth system that Muratori addressed is the governance of the reductions run by the Jesuit Missionaries. This system is given preference by Muratori, as it represents what he believes to be the most ideal synthesis of the elements, listed above, required for a happy and productive Christian community and are consistent with his ideas of social reform in Italy during

the initial stages of the Catholic Enlightenment. Eric Cochrane in his article, “The Vocation of a Historian,” describes the Paraguayan reductions as “the last of the Counter-Reformation utopias.”<sup>52</sup> He sees Muratori’s interest in the reductions as a desperate attempt to put flesh on his ideas of reform. Although I believe Cochrane is correct in his claims that the reductions seemed to fulfill Muratori’s agenda of political and cultural reform, we should broaden our scope to see the *Cristianesimo Felice* in its entirety. Muratori does not just write about the reductions, but he leads up to them by first presenting other models that did not work. The reductions were the climax, the perfect ratio of liberty, religion, equity, and authority, and they were not just theoretical. Of course, not the least appealing aspect of these government systems was that all of them actually existed and had been documented in the sources used by Muratori. As a historian/erudite, Muratori would have wanted to validate his ideas with evidence, and the reductions in Paraguay, with the surrounding systems of government provided just what he needed.

In *The Jesuit “Republic” of the Guaranis (1609-1768)*, Selim Abou identified two ways in which the Jesuit reductions in Paraguay have been known since the late seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> On one hand the reductions have been described by enlightenment authors as utopias, being given almost mythical status, while on the other hand, historians have analyzed them to reveal some socialist or communist ideology at their root.<sup>54</sup> For example, Francis Bacon saw a new Atlantis and Voltaire saw another Sparta, while historians like Cunningham Graham, founder of the Labor Party in England, saw a socialist paradise. Abou, however found it ironic that scholars missed the very conspicuous methods followed by the Jesuits in constructing the reductions,

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<sup>52</sup> Cochrane, “The Vocation of a Historian,” 165.

<sup>53</sup> Abou Selim, *The Jesuit “Republic” of the Guaranis (1609-1768) and its Heritage*, New York: UNESCO Publishing, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

methods that were taught in the Jesuit universities. Abou's description of the administration of the reductions supports Muratori's account. Abou, however, went into greater detail in explaining the hierarchy of power that was based on the Spanish model. The Jesuit fathers had supreme control, then the Cavildo, which was an assembly that enjoyed judicial, executive, and legislative powers, then the chiefs, who were convinced that recognizing the central authority of the Jesuits was crucial to the wellbeing of the community. These methods, according to Abou, can be summed up in simply following the spirit of St. Ignatius who instructed the Society to treat the Amerindians as humans. This in turn was with the intent to make the natives equal to the Spanish and Portuguese colonists, which would ultimately invalidate any claims by the colonists to enslave the Amerindians. Of course, we should also consider the appeal of the reductions for Muratori. Why should these communities be the epitome of his agenda of governmental reform? Could he have simply been seduced by the legend of the perfect republic of the Jesuits in Paraguay just like the Enlightenment thinkers across the Alps, or did he have what he felt was validation for real reform in Italy?

Muratori divides the administration of power in the reductions into three "governments," ecclesiastical, civil, and military, and gives to each its own chapter.<sup>55</sup> For the current chapter of this study, it will suffice to discuss only the account of civil government of the reductions, while the ecclesiastical government will be addressed in the next chapter and the military government will be left for study in the future. At the beginning of his chapter on the civil government of the reductions, Muratori clarifies the elements necessary of the happiness of a nation: well regulated liberty, plentiful necessities of life, sufficient housing, peace, union, and concord.<sup>56</sup> All of these, claims Muratori were present in the reductions thanks to the careful attention of the Jesuit

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<sup>55</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, Chapters XIV, XV, and XVII.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 125-126.

missionaries. His account of the “happy” life of the Christians in the reductions can be broken down into three general categories: The natives’ relationship with each other; the natives’ relationship to the monarch; and the distribution of resources among the natives.

Muratori began by declaring that the natives governed themselves. He claimed that this was possible because the natives’ sole objective was the public well-being and so they would work in harmony to achieve this end. This vision of self-rule is overshadowed, however, by Muratori’s assurance that the otherwise “disinterested” missionaries were “vigilant” and “take care that no one abuses the power he has by his office.”<sup>57</sup> Though Muratori seems to praise the idea of self-rule, his example is tainted by the specter of firm Jesuit control. Furthermore, punitive actions in the reductions were rarely carried out to their fullest extent. This was done for the express purpose of not destroying morale and was presented by Muratori as a means of supporting his claim of self-rule. Again, though, his argument that no judgment could be cast without first securing the approval of the missionaries fails to persuade.<sup>58</sup> So, while he was wrong in his claims of self-rule in the reductions, perhaps Muratori was correct in describing the natives’ liberty as regulated.

As mentioned above, the relationship between a benevolent monarch and his people played a significant role in public happiness, for Muratori. He addresses this in the context of the reductions by explaining the advantages granted by the Spanish monarchs to those natives who had converted to Christianity and were living peacefully in the reductions. First, the tax burden was minimal. Residents of the reductions were only eligible for taxation between the ages of 12 and 50, and the taxes they do pay are minimal.<sup>59</sup> Because they take their payments directly to the royal officials in the colonial capitol, Muratori concludes that tax collectors were

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 127-128.



not necessary; however, he goes on to explain that the payments were regulated by the missionaries and the officers of the reductions. We, then, can only assume that neglect to pay these taxes would be punished with penalties administered by the Jesuits. Sure, the natives brought their own tributes to the king's officials, but not necessarily, as Muratori implied, out of joyful hearts. The Spanish monarch, according to Muratori, was worthy of such homage, however. He gave far more to the reductions than what he gained from them, and was happy to do so. His gifting of a bell to every new church and his provision of military defense on behalf of the reductions were testaments to his kindness and virtue, both necessary qualities in the ruler of Muratori's happy society.<sup>60</sup> Finally, Muratori concluded that every family had a parcel of land large enough to support each person living upon it. This is combined with the instruction on how to properly use farming tools and methods to maximize crop production. This speaks to his ideas concerning the fair distribution of resources within a community, and is consistent with his views on welfare and public health.<sup>61</sup> Of course, the allotment of these parcels were overseen by the Jesuit fathers, reminding us that Muratori maintained a very conservative position on the role of government and the administration of power.

In conclusion, Muratori intended to present in the *Cristianesimo Felice* the picture of a utopian society in which there existed a self-governing people, whose laws and penalties were dutifully and justly administered; a society in which wealth and resources were fairly distributed to the people, who had the skills to maximize the utility of such resources; and whose only objective was for the happiness of the whole society. In this, Muratori succeeded. However, in his presentation he also included the institution of an absolute authority, which was, first, the monarch, and, second, the Jesuit. While transalpine enlightenment authors were simultaneously

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 128-130.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 131.

criticizing the Jesuits for their religious inhibitions to modernity, and praising them for their utopian republic in Paraguay, Muratori saw the sacred doctrines of the Catholic Church as essential not just for the civilizing process of humans, but also for the ultimate happiness of any society. Muratori did not see the discrepancies in his account of the reductions civil government as problematic. A very strong, if not absolutist, benevolent central power was critical for public happiness, as it was the ruler's province to administer that happiness. In other words, within the rules of the benevolent ruler, there would be much freedom. And, though he was careful to establish the crucial role of the Spanish monarch in the success of the reductions, it is clear that the real power belonged to the Jesuit missionaries, as Muratori credits them with teaching the natives how to live in a civilized manner and how to think in a rational way. Hopefully, I have shown that the self-governing society of the reductions, as Muratori described it, was an illusion and that the Jesuit priests exercised very strict control over the residents of the reductions by creating spheres of power to which the natives submitted, securing a positive change in the native culture, from the perspective of Muratori. When placed in juxtaposition with the contemporary political and culture climate in Italy, this account of the civil government in the reductions begins to exhibit on a didactic quality that is consistent with Muratori's agenda of social reform. In the century after Muratori's death, one of his disciples, Chateaubriand, deftly summed up his teacher's convictions on the role of religion in society and culture when he wrote, "It is with religion and not with abstract philosophical principles that people are civilized and that empires are established."<sup>62</sup> In the next chapter I will address Muratori's accounts of the roles of education and ritual in the administration of the Jesuit reductions in order to show how they reflect his agenda for religious reform in Italy.

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<sup>62</sup> Abou, *The Jesuit "Republic,"* 21.

## Chapter Three:

### Education and Ritual

In 1743 Lodovico Antonio Muratori wrote, describing the religion of the natives of Paraguay:

When it thunders, the Americans *imagine* the storm is raised by some of their deceased enemies to revenge the shame of their defeat. All the Indians are very *superstitious* in their enquiries after what is to happen; and for this purpose they often observe the singing of birds, the changes that happen to trees, and the cries of some animals. These are their oracles and they believe that they can receive from them a certain knowledge of the *accidents* (emphasis mine) wherewith they are threatened.<sup>63</sup>

This passage, taken from his *Cristianesimo Felice*, reveals Muratori's portrayal of the Paraguayans as superstitious. By using the words "imagine," "superstitious," and "accidents" he dismissed the beliefs of the Paraguayans as unreal and irrational. In this chapter I show how Muratori constructed an image of the native culture and religion of Paraguay in a way that evokes feelings of inferiority, impotence, and childishness. Furthermore, I argue that just as Muratori portrayed systems of power in the new world to reflect possible outcomes of different

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<sup>63</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 25. Emphasis mine.

systems of government and to support his social reform agendas in Italy, his representation of the Jesuit reductions in Paraguay as the ideal Christian society validated his agenda of religious reform in Italy, at a time when Catholicism was enduring the crucible of enlightened influence. The means by which the Jesuits achieved this happy society, according to Muratori, can be summed up in their promotion of education and rituals, two crucial elements for Muratori's happy society.

In his *Cristianesimo Felice*, Muratori gave a detailed account of how the Jesuit missionaries engaged with native culture in Paraguay by consolidating various groups of indigenous tribes into singular communities and then catechizing them through formal education and participation in religious rituals. Upon close examination of the sources used by Muratori as well as the language he used to portray the natives' religious customs, it is clear that he had ulterior motives for recording these aspects of native culture and the subsequent advent of Jesuit influence.<sup>64</sup> In his preface Muratori wrote that his *Cristianesimo Felice* served a twofold purpose. First, he wanted to provide curious Italian readers the experience of Paraguay with all of its marvelous natural beauty without having to share in the "fatigues" of the travelers. Second, he desired that Catholic readers experienced the glorious works of compassion and conversion that the Jesuits accomplished amongst the native peoples.<sup>65</sup> One has to question why Muratori, who was so deeply invested in the social reform movement and considering the delicate state of affairs in Italy in 1743, at the time of its publication, would have chosen such a topic. As a respected author of polemics, both political and religious, Muratori's time might have been best spent focusing on these issues, rather than writing a lionizing account of the Jesuit missions in Paraguay for armchair travelers. It should be noted that in 1749, a year before his death, he

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<sup>64</sup> See quote above.

<sup>65</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, x-xi

published his most popular work on civil government, the *Pubblica Felicità*, which was anticipated by the *Cristianesimo Felice*. In the previous chapter I argued how the *Cristianesimo Felice* anticipated the *Pubblica Felicità* in the areas of social reform. In this chapter I will show how Muratori used the Paraguayan missions as a mouthpiece for the Enlightened Catholic movement, construing them as a model for the proper and reasonable incorporation of religion into civil society.

In eighteenth-century Italy, Catholic Enlightenment reformers were agitating for a more meaningful engagement with the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment, namely the new science of Isaac Newton and *René* Descartes. During this time, the values and philosophies of the Enlightenment were spreading through Italy, heralding the transformation of the religious landscape. Religious leaders feared that once the tenets of the Enlightenment took root, they would prove difficult to keep in check, much less be removed. For enlightened reformers like Muratori who envisioned a civil happiness built on the foundations of faith and reason, it was imperative that the functions of both be clearly understood and implemented properly. This is one area in which the Catholic Enlightenment movement differed from the more mainstream Enlightenment in the north. Whereas religious programs were not a priority for many Enlightenment writers, it was of great importance to the leaders of the Catholic Enlightenment. Besides a strong central government responsible for administering just laws and penalties based on empirical reason, civic happiness also required attention to proper religious programs that were best realized by means of formal education and religious ritual. Indeed, this religious foundation would ensure a strong moral fiber that could support the needs of civil happiness.

The tensions in Italy, as discussed in chapter one, stemmed from the serious consideration of northern European ideas by Italian intellectuals. In the realm of social reform

this resulted in the pursuit of “public happiness” through an enlightened ruler presiding over a just and reasonable legal system. However, in the religious sphere the pursuit of “public happiness” opened the door to questions regarding the role of authority, that is, received authority such as church teaching and the canon of scripture versus the role of reason.<sup>66</sup> For Muratori, there was no question as to which spheres were appropriate for the use of authority and reason, and for most of his career he wrote to defend the sanctity of spiritual authority in the religious sphere on the one hand, while on the other hand argued for the necessity of empirical reasoning in matters of government and law. This two-front campaign became the basis of the Catholic Enlightenment movement’s religious reform agenda.

While these challenges of reform were disruptive for Italian culture as a whole, they were particularly divisive within the Catholic Church.<sup>67</sup> Venturi wrote that while the battle between faith and reason that was unfolding in France upon the publication of the *Encyclopedie* was “free and open and marked the birth of modern atheism,” the dispute in Italy was “still confined within the armour of erudition and doctrine.”<sup>68</sup> In Italy, the stronghold of Catholicism, the promotion of reason to a position equal to or greater than faith was still a proposition only considered in secret amongst the most radical intellectuals.<sup>69</sup> However, reasonable faith, a faith that recognizes a clear end that is established by God and pursues it by reasonable means, was a more palatable option and became the cornerstone of religious reform for leaders of the more conservative Catholic Enlightenment. According to Vincenzo Ferrone, a disciple of Venturi, Muratori clarified his position on the proper functions of faith and reason, as early as 1714 in the *De*

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<sup>66</sup> In this study I use the term received authority to mean an unquestioned, traditional belief in the inherent truth of a source. In this case, Muratori preserved the belief in the received authority of scripture, rather than subjecting them to the scrutiny of scientific inquiry. I use reason to mean knowledge that can be empirically tested and proven.

<sup>67</sup> Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*, 176.

<sup>68</sup> Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, 103.

<sup>69</sup> Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 513-28.

*igeniorum moderation.*<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Ferrone centers on this relationship between faith and reason as a key component of Muratori's plan for religious reform. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century the question of reason and faith had become a problem for many enlightened thinkers. As mentioned above, many intellectuals north of the Alps were moving toward a rational approach to religion, exploring the intrinsic rationality of Christianity. For Muratori, embracing this approach was counterproductive for his own agenda, because it blurred the lines between authority and reason. According to Ferrone, Muratori's stance, unwavering throughout his career, was to embrace both authority and reason but to assign to them their proper spheres.<sup>71</sup> On one hand, authority was not enough for the study or explanation of science, politics, and philosophy. There needed to be rational arguments in order to convince others of their truth. On the other hand, for matters of religion, authority was not only sufficient, but *categorically* sufficient in that true religion was made by God and therefore should only be approached through revelation from God. In other words, authority and reason both had their places in civil society as long as they remained within their proper spheres to accomplish the purposes assigned to them by God. What did this mean for the role of religion in society and how did Muratori, in light of his ideas for civil happiness, incorporate religion? The unquestioned acceptance of biblical truth together with the teachings of the Catholic Church provided the foundation for the moral philosophy of society, while reason, informed by erudition offered the framework for politics and government.<sup>72</sup>

In the 1730s, however, Muratori's position was challenged by the supporters of John Locke. His *Essay on Human Understanding*, which included the concept of the *tabula rasa*, was

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<sup>70</sup> Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*, 103.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-79.

<sup>72</sup> Continisio, "Governing the Passions."

finding an audience in Italy, and was defended by priest, Celestino Galiani.<sup>73</sup> The discourse that centered on the writings of Muratori and Galiani, who competed for the prize of shaping the minds of Italian youth, came to represent the larger struggle of the Catholic Church for maintaining its grip on society without compromising its sacred doctrines.

During this period Italian intellectuals were searching for an alternative to the outdated Aristotelian ethics for the education of their youth. In response to this need Muratori and Galiani both provided their own, very different proposals. For Muratori it was his *La Filosofia morale esposta e proposta ai giavani* (*Moral philosophy explained and proposed to the youths*, 1735), while Galiani's contribution was the *Della scienza morale*.<sup>74</sup> In Muratori's view, Locke's idea that humans were born with no innate sense of morality was dangerous and unacceptable, and had no place in Italian culture. If, he reasoned, there was no absolute, single morality, then any possible understanding of virtue and law would be subject to relative interpretations and result in the ultimate breakdown of civil society and the Catholic faith. His reasoning was simple: God had provided each person with a particular type of reason; a reason designed specifically for the discernment between good and evil. This being the case, it was entirely possible to enforce a single model of virtue and piety to which the youth, and society as a whole, could be subjected. In sharp contrast to *La filosofia morale*, Galiani's *Della scienza morale* was a work that subscribed completely to the affirmations of Locke and embraced an entirely rationalized approach to ethics without any obligation to a religious cosmology. This contrast was due to the different nature of the research interests of Muratori and Galiani.<sup>75</sup> Where Muratori was simply interested in explaining religiously conservative norms of behavior and presenting them for the

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<sup>73</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Indianapolis, IN, Hackett Publishing, 1996.

<sup>74</sup> Muratori, *La filosofia morale esposta e proposta ai giovani*, Verona: Tasco, 1735); Celestino Galiani, "Della scienza morale," unpublished manuscript, in Vincenzo Ferrone, *Scienza, natura, religione – mondo Newtoniano e cultura italiana nel primo '700*, Naples: Jovene, 1982), 420-442.

<sup>75</sup> Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*, 178.



education of the youths of Italy, Galiani searched for new foundations of morality, exclusively by means of reason, a position that Ferrone suggests puts Galiani closer to an enlightened mode of thinking than Muratori's and confirms Venturi's description of Muratori as a "pre-Enlightenment" thinker.<sup>76</sup>

Within the two decades between 1730 and 1750 Italian culture experienced significant change. There was a call for Enlightened Catholics to defend the faith against the more radical ideas of Baruch Spinoza.<sup>77</sup> Other factors that contributed to this intellectual shift include the publication of the new edition of Pierre Costa's translation of Locke's *Essay*.<sup>78</sup> Many Italian scholars began accepting Locke's ideas because his emphasis on the immaterial nature of God seemed to be their only defense against the radical materialism of Spinoza. Another factor was the increased acceptance of Newtonian science in Italian universities.<sup>79</sup> Another very important event that contributed to the cultural shift in Italy was the election of Pope Benedict XIV, a recognized scholar and supporter of the arts, in 1740. He attempted to curtail the authority of the Inquisition, and also exchanged friendly letters with Voltaire and Montesquieu. Such a close relationship with the Enlightenment movement across the Alps makes it no surprise that the pope put sympathizers of the Catholic Enlightenment like Muratori under his protection and greatly advanced the cause of the conservative Catholic Enlightenment movement.<sup>80</sup>

Muratori's strong convictions regarding the foundational role of education were conveyed in his essay "Against Academies."<sup>81</sup> In this work, Muratori laments the state of Italian

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<sup>76</sup> Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots* 179-80.

<sup>77</sup> Baruch Spinoza was a seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher who came under fire for his supposed atheism and radical, democratic ideas. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 43-51.

<sup>78</sup> According to Israel and Ferrone the *Essay* was barely noticed before this translation was published in 1729, Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 514; Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*, 180.

<sup>79</sup> Muratori was a staunch supporter of Newton, which made him an object of interest to the Inquisition early in his career.

<sup>80</sup> Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 513-28.

<sup>81</sup> Dooley, *Italy in the Baroque*, 622-28.

universities and their lackluster display of meaningful research. He complained that the lectures consisted only of professors reciting obsolete, self-aggrandizing works that had little impact on the culture of Italy and, worst of all, allowed other nations such as England and France to achieve greater recognition in letters, a prize that according to Muratori should rightfully belong to Italy. Muratori ascribe these shortcomings in the universities to laziness. He believed that simple lethargy was to blame for Italian culture's slip into obsolescence during the seventeenth century, and was convinced that a reformed program of education was the path to reclaiming Italy's former glory. But a reclaimed glory was not the only end to this revived educational program. It was also the means by which Italy could enjoy the most happiness for its people. However a secular education would not do. According to Muratori the universities were encouraged to instruct in matters of religion as well for the purpose of producing a public reverence for the church. One of the means by which this could be accomplished were rituals, essential requirements for the happy Christian society.

Muratori embedded his ideas of religious reform in the *Cristianesimo Felice* and more specifically in his account of the Jesuit reductions. Galiani may have explored the "science" of morality, but Muratori gave a living example of how his proscription of such secular and radical ideas would lead to a harmonious balance between authority and reason.

By the time he wrote the *Cristianesimo Felice*, Muratori's activism on behalf of enlightened reform in the Church had already been evident in previous writings.<sup>82</sup> As Franco Venturi has deftly shown, Muratori's campaign against the persecution of witches in Italy clearly defined his position against the dangers of superstition within the Catholic Church and his denial of the existence of witchcraft and the direct interference of demonic activity in human affairs.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Muratori, *De Superstitione*.

<sup>83</sup> Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, 103-133.

This is not to assume, however, that Muratori condoned witchcraft or viewed it as benign. For Muratori the real danger in practicing magic was the belief in superstition and rejection of reason. It is also wrong to assume that Muratori did not believe in the demonic. He was mostly concerned to show that it did not directly interfere in the physical world.<sup>84</sup>

On these grounds, I suggest that, for Muratori, the absence of reason and presence of superstition was the best evidence of demonic activity which needed to be ejected from the Catholic doctrine. For him, superstition was an indicator of demonic, savage, and uncivilized behavior. Enlightened Catholicism, on the other hand, was essential for civility. In Italy, he saw the Catholic Church as slipping into a dangerous place of obscurity because of its reluctance to consider such new ideas as the science of Newton and the rationalism of Descartes, which he believed, were essential for reform.<sup>85</sup> In light of these positions, Muratori straddled the divide between the encroaching secularism in the north that embraced the new Enlightenment thought and science, and the religious doctrines of the Church that were rooted in faith. In the *Cristianesimo Felice*, Muratori portrayed the natives of Paraguay as superstitious, complete with all the consequent failings that accompany that condition, such as susceptibility to enslavement, hedonism, laziness, and general naivety. He centers on these qualities of the natives in order to communicate the imminent dangers awaiting Italian society and the Catholic Church if they refused to embrace reason and enlightened thought. In other words, for Muratori true religion, in the absence of reason, equaled superstition.

Muratori was an activist against the persecution of witchcraft. His opposition was based on the belief that witchcraft and magic did not actually exist; a belief congruent with the tenets of the Enlightenment. Though, by this time, the age of witch hunting had all but officially ended,

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<sup>84</sup> Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, 109.

<sup>85</sup> Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*, 104-5.

the Church was still convinced of the devil's ability to interfere directly in human affairs through magic and sorcery. For Muratori, the Church could not afford to maintain this position and still fill a leading role in an age of reason. In light of the precarious state of affairs in Italy and Muratori's earlier brushes with the Inquisition for his less than orthodox positions, he chose to represent the natives of Paraguay as the embodiment of superstition and the Jesuits as the light of reason and true religion. Therefore, while fighting against witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, the Jesuits of Paraguay were actually battling ignorance, superstition, and savagery, a battle with which Muratori was all too familiar.<sup>86</sup> But, how did the Jesuits ensure that the neophytes would remain orderly and submissive? Much like the administrative policies mentioned in the previous chapter, in the reductions the Jesuits relied on a program of community participation in various religious activities to maintain religious cohesion. Two ways in which they engaged the natives to this end are religious processions and formal, religious education.

At least since 1975, with the publication of Natalie Zemon Davis' essay "The Reasons for Misrule," historians have argued that a fundamental element in Catholic worship and a method of establishing and affirming social and political order was the practice of processions (whether in formalized pageantry or the carnival).<sup>87</sup> In her essay Davis cast a new interpretation on the practice of carnival in Lyon at the turn of the sixteenth century. Davis rejected the argument that carnivals and abbeys of misrule were simple safety valves used by the upper classes to relieve the lower classes of their pent up discontent. Instead, she argued that carnivals were actually a method used by the lower classes to ensure solidarity and survival by negotiating with the ruling classes. Edward Muir's analysis of the social and political roles of processions in *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* is also a useful framework for understanding the function of

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<sup>86</sup> Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots*, 176-82; Dooley, *Italy in the Baroque*, 622-23.

<sup>87</sup> Davis "The Reasons for Misrule."

the processions in the Jesuit reductions.<sup>88</sup> Muir argued that processions and rituals in renaissance Venice were not only a tool for consolidating power from the top, but also a means of negotiation for those at the bottom of the social ladder. Though the residents of the reductions were not participating in carnivals (at least in Muratori's description), they are given ample room for expression during the procession for Corpus Christi, the day appointed for solemnizing the feast of the sacrament of the altar. Muratori describes in detail the decorations used by the Indians to line the streets and the fronts of their houses. Most of these decorations consisted of colorful birds (dead and alive) that were caught near the river Paraguay, of colorful foliage, and even large beasts such as tigers and lions.<sup>89</sup> Through rituals and processions, the Jesuits gave the members of the reductions the space to participate in a meaningful and personal way to religious practices. In line with the methods used to delegate authority within the reductions, as discussed in chapter two, Jesuits gave tribal chiefs some power over the other members in matters of religious expression hence conferring a sense of agency and self-governance to the local population while still leaving room for the Jesuit priests to exercise ultimate power.

Another means that the Jesuits utilized to maintain control over the Paraguayans in the reductions was education. Muratori claimed that the Indians of Paraguay lacked humanity on account of poor education; and by education he meant the example set by parents. The Jesuit schools in the reductions, of course, remedied this. In these schools the priests educated the natives on how to live a "social life" and in this way they introduced Christianity to men who were

dispersed like wild beasts, retired very far into the thickest forests, or lurking in dens, always at variance, never fixed in one place, continually in wars with each

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<sup>88</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.

<sup>89</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 79-94.

other, breathing nothing but revenge, and carrying barbarity to that excess, as to make their most delicious meals on the flesh of their fellow creatures.<sup>90</sup>

Muratori drew a parallel between the work of the Jesuits among the natives and the Romans who labored to “civilize the savage nations that filled Asia and Europe” and invoked Cicero’s instruction in how to train the “barbarians” to live a civil life. However, where Cicero sought to make barbarous peoples civil, the Jesuits sought to make them Christian, which, for Muratori, was essentially the same thing.<sup>91</sup> It was in proper, public education that Muratori found hope for establishing public happiness and defending society against superstition. His description of the Paraguayans religious practices illustrate his point.

Muratori portrays the Paraguayans as so ignorant in their original state that many of them do not worship either “God or Devil,” but are merely convinced “of the existence of the latter, and have a great dread of him.”<sup>92</sup> This in turn led them to perform rituals and ceremonies that were represented by Muratori as exercises in deception. In one case, Muratori relates a ritual in which the Indians attended a large ceremony where the gods appeared to them and encouraged them to eat and drink as much as possible. He explained that this apparition of the gods was in reality just tribe members dressed in costumes. During these ceremonies, the chief went behind a curtain to ask questions of the gods. The chief would then reappear with the gods’ responses were given in the form of vague oracles and received by the Indians as truth. The superstition of the Indians allowed them to be tricked into believing these “ridiculous” oracles.<sup>93</sup> This account conveyed a sense of naivety on behalf of the suppliants and established a clear link between superstition and vulnerability. Of course, it also provided a warning for the Church of its own

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>92</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 39.

vulnerability in an uncertain time. Other examples of the superstitious beliefs of the Indians, such as their belief that the moon was their mother and their shooting of arrows toward the sky during eclipses, were seen by Muratori as childish concerns that could have been avoided with a scientific understanding of heavenly bodies.<sup>94</sup> It was a traditional belief held by the natives that the moon was their mother, a belief handed down through generations and accepted without question. But, the natives in this would have benefited from an appeal to reason rather than to authority. Muratori placed these superstitious practices in contrast to the science and religion of the Jesuits. In the *Cristianesimo Felice*, Muratori portrays the Jesuits as the deliverers not just of spiritual salvation but also of civil society and science. Perhaps the starkest contrast that Muratori made between the natives and the Jesuits can be seen in his descriptions of the Paraguayan's practice of healing.

It is no coincidence that Muratori included the healing practices of the Indians in his chapter on religion. For Muratori the two are related in that, in Paraguayan culture, they are both void of reason and therefore primitive. For example, Muratori wrote that some natives were entitled to practice "physic" by virtue of the fact that they had frequent engagements with wild beasts, and could prove from the scars in their bodies that they had been bitten by these animals.<sup>95</sup> These physicians had only two methods of curing the sick. The first involved questioning the patient about his activities in the days leading up to the illness. If the patient had spilled any *chicha* (a type of beer made by the natives) or wasted any food by throwing it to the dogs, then the physician assumed that the gods were simply angry and had punished the patient with illness. The doctor (Muratori used the words "physician" and "doctor" interchangeably) then sucked the ailing part of the body and beat the ground around the patient with his club

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<sup>94</sup> For Muratori, the eclipse was scientific and therefore warranted an appeal to empirical reasoning.

<sup>95</sup> Muratori, *A Relation*, 37.

pretending to ward off the bad spirits. Muratori explained that the patient did not improve, but the doctor was given all the best food that the patient's family could offer. Meanwhile, the patient wasted away having been given only dried corn to eat. As a missionary reported, the "sick die rather of hunger and want, than of the illness they suffer."<sup>96</sup>

The other method of cure, which Muratori defined as "very cruel and barbarous," was to blame the distemper on the malice of a woman. In this case, the woman was typically "dispatched," meaning she was relieved of her life.<sup>97</sup> We would be amiss to overlook the parallel between such an unfortunate woman targeted by the Paraguayan doctor and the innocent women targeted by the Inquisition for witchcraft. Both were victims of misguided leadership that was reacting to a threat that did not actually exist.

Muratori concluded his anecdote on native healing by marveling that the natives, in spite of the evidence that their methods were not effective, continued to believe that "distempers proceed from external causes, and not from any internal alteration of the humours."<sup>98</sup> He did assure us, however, that these "ridiculous methods of cure" were abolished wherever the Jesuits established reductions. By including this description of healing practices in the chapter on Paraguayan religion, Muratori made clear that to him reason was the lynch pin of not only true religion, by which he meant Catholicism, but also of effective science and medicine. In other words, without reason, religion was nothing more than superstition and the practice of healing and the use of medicine became "ignorance," "abuse," and "cruelty."<sup>99</sup> His portrayal of the Paraguayans as ignorant and naïve established a point of reference in regards to his agenda in Italy. If the educational institutions of Italy were not equipping students with the tools necessary

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 39, 38, 40.



to practice effective medicine, but also to recognize quackery, then Italians could only expect to descend into ignorance and trickery. These concerns were in accord with Muratori's dual vocations as priest and archivist/erudite. On the one hand, he was concerned with collecting and organizing knowledge in text and making it accessible to the literate Italian public. On the other hand, he lionized the efforts of the Jesuits for their self-sacrificial services to the "wild Americans" of Paraguay.

In this chapter I have shown that Muratori was doing more than just giving an account of the Jesuit missions or writing an informative account of the native peoples of Paraguay, as other scholars have argued. In the *Cristianesimo Felice* Muratori expressed his own concern for what he viewed as the demise of Italian culture. His image of the natives in Paraguay as superstitious was a vehicle by which to identify the outdated and unenlightened strongholds within the Catholic Church. Furthermore, his portrayal of the natives progressing from savagery toward salvation and civility, gives insight into how Catholic Enlightenment thinkers defined the goals of their movement and what was ultimately at stake in Catholicism and Italian culture during the early decades of the eighteenth century.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Conclusion**

The historiography of the Catholic Enlightenment movement in Anglophone scholarship has overlooked the importance of Muratori's *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni De' Padri della Compangia di Gesù nel Paraguai*. Though the most important scholars of Muratori's life have acknowledged its value as a resource for Jesuit missionary ventures as well as its important perspective on Paraguay during the age of colonization, they have neglected to analyze the *Cristianesimo Felice* within the broader context of the Italian Catholic Enlightenment, examining the agendas of the leaders of the movement, like Muratori. This neglect is unwarranted.

In this study, I have shown that the vision of Catholic Enlightenment reformers in Italy was to achieve "public happiness," a term coined by Muratori, according to which Italian society should have had the resources necessary to thrive within its own appropriate means of prosperity. For example, peasants should have been given adequate land and should not be prohibited from farming because of too many feast days. Furthermore, the wages of agricultural workers should have been fair in order to provide for each member of their families and not live in destitution. The upper classes should be allowed to purchase luxury goods and employ craftspeople to produce said goods so that their wealth could be disseminated and benefit everyone. This concept was paired with the sanctity of Catholic Church doctrine that would provide the moral impetus to keep the citizens always mindful of their fellow members, a necessary behavior to prevent the hoarding of resources, general greed, and the abuse of power.

The main components for such public happiness can be distilled into three basic elements: a strong central power; a program of formal, accessible education; and a platform of rituals in which all citizens are expected to participate. Though Muratori, the recognized leader of the Catholic Enlightenment movement, outlined these programs in many of his works spanning almost four decades, his account of the Jesuit reductions in Paraguay provides a case study of how these programs may have been implemented, as well as their outcomes. On one hand, leaders of the movement were fighting to retain the traditional, sacred doctrines of the Catholic Church at a time when more mainstream enlightened authors further north were calling for a more rational examination of Christianity by subjecting it to the rigors of scientific inquiry. On the other hand, they were advocates of the new science of Newton and Descartes, promoting the use of reason and logic in the fields of government and law. In other words, the programs outlined by these reformers were intended to create distinct spheres of influence. In the religious sphere, a reliance on faith and received authority were preferable to a deferment to rationalism and scientific inquiry. In the sphere of government and law, reason and philosophy should reign, leading enlightened rulers to enforce laws that were fair and accommodating to the poor so that they could earn money and perhaps receive an education, while also giving the elite classes the income to invest in luxuries. Muratori's *Cristianesimo Felice* is a reflection of these programs in a historical setting.

Muratori understood that the reductions were seen as a utopian type of community and it was onto that image that he projected his own agendas. In the *filosofia morale* and *Against Academies* he made clear his conviction that education was foundational for the wellbeing of a civil society, so in the *Cristianesimo Felice* he included commentaries on the lack of education among the native Paraguayans and on the highly effective systems of education introduced by

the Jesuits. Beginning at a young age the neophytes were indoctrinated into the ways of western thinking through a humanist education in reading, writing, and math. At the same time they were also catechized in the doctrines of the Catholic Church through a program of religious education and ritual. In both, the neophytes were given opportunities of personal agency as the Jesuits wove native culture into the rituals and programs of study. The example of the processions given above shows how the Paraguayans provided the décor for the processions from the animals they had hunted and foliage they had collected. Though distinctly different from the processions in Europe, the Jesuits knew that the achieved purpose was the same, to create a sense of agency for the neophytes. This perceived agency would ensure capitulation of the community and Jesuits' complete control of the native population.

Muratori's position on the role of government within a happy society was represented by his commentaries on the four systems of power that were simultaneously at work in Paraguay and Brazil during the time of the reductions. He organized his descriptions of the political structure of the native Paraguayans prior to European colonization, the Spanish colonists, the Mamelusses of Brazil, and finally, the Jesuit reductions. His commitment to the predominate political systems of his day is evident in his conclusion that a strong, central government should bear the burden of the happiness of the people and to provide the other essentials for that society to prosper. In Muratori's portrayal, the Paraguayans' indigenous system lacked loyalty to any central authority. This lack of organization deprived the Paraguayans of civility and led, according to Muratori, to cannibalism. The remaining three political systems were of European origin and represented the shortcomings of governments that suffered from lack of religion, in the case of the Mamelusses, the lack of liberty and education in the case of the Spanish, and the lack of discipline in both cases. This left the Jesuit reductions as Muratori's exemplar political

system.

Having read this text against the grain it becomes more than just an account of the Jesuit reductions in Paraguay, it takes us back to Italy where reform-minded, yet conservative Catholic leaders were waging war against those who had gone too far. Throughout his career Muratori defended a view of Catholicism that required an unchallenged acceptance of received authority in religious doctrine, while conceding the necessity of empirical reasoning in matters law and government. Though he explicitly outlined this agenda in works such as *La filosofia morale* and the *Pubblica Felicità*, he provided a lucid vision of how these reforms would look in a living society in the *Cristianesimo Felice*. Accepting that the work is historically unreliable and riddled with problems due to Muratori's biased selection of sources and his need for the Jesuit reductions to fit his criteria, its most valuable contribution is its reflection of Muratori's struggle to promote the values of a socio-religious system that had already begun to disintegrate.

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