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Trust in the Catholic Reformation. Genoa, 1594-1664

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Genoa, 1594-1664

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¹ “Beneath the dense blue sky, seabirds flash by, never pausing, driven by images below: Farther, farther!”. Trans. William W. Arrowsmith.

Introduction

On 8 April 1546, during a homily that he had been asked to deliver at the mass that preceded the fourth session of the Council of Trent, Friar Agostino Bonuccio spoke the following words:

... in wonderment at the disturbed, deformed state of the Church, many are practically giving up their faith. Surely they must think that Christ our Saviour is not so benign, powerful, wise, [and] certainly not very faithful; for in an unbecoming fashion he is allowing his Church – which He promised to maintain invincible and firm against all the power and work of the devil, and to preserve without stain and blemish as a devoted, reliable servant of the heavenly Father – to be defiled, overtaken, and almost destroyed by many powerful errors, by furious schism, by great moral corruption.¹

Bonuccio thus confronted his audience of cardinals and theologians gathered in the cathedral of Trent with an uncomfortable truth: a crisis of trust threatened the Church. He was the Superior General of the Servite Order and one of the few voting members at the Council who was thoroughly knowledgeable about the writings of the Protestant reformers.² Yet the fears that he expounded in his eloquent Latin were common among the Council fathers: Martin Luther's ever more popular movement coupled with "the great moral corruption" within the Church were cause for a widespread crisis of trust among the faithful. Throughout Europe, doubts had surfaced whether this institution, with its overt earthly weaknesses, really was the true and necessary mediator of divine grace, as it claimed. People were asking themselves whether the Protestant reformers were right in asserting that the institutional Church was a human invention that diverted people from what was truly necessary for

¹ Ercole Severoli ed., *Concilium Tridentinum* 5, 2 (Freiburg, 1911) 99, lines 2-8, I cite the translation by Robert E. McNally, 'Freedom and Suspicion at Trent: Bonuccio and Soto', *Theological Studies* 29, no. 4 (1986): 755.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 754.

salvation. The Council fathers acknowledged that a faltering trust in the Church could have grave consequences: there was no doubt that if people saw this institution “almost destroyed”, they would be tempted to renounce their faith and leave the Church. The gathering’s top priority was thus the “salvation of souls”, in particular the souls of those who might be on the brink of losing their trust.³ The care of souls (*cura animarum*) would continue to be the main concern for the many reformers who, in the following decades, developed new practices in the spirit of the Council and started to implement its doctrines.

In his insightful analysis of the role of trust in different societies, Geoffrey Hosking has rightly characterised the Reformation era as “a crisis of trust”: the central, mediating role of the Church in matters of faith was called into question by Luther and his followers.⁴ In some areas of Europe, this caused the “salvific apparatus of Catholicism” to be abandoned, whereas, in those parts that remained Catholic, it led to a progressive regulation of devotion and reform of traditional practices that in turn caused a sensation of unwanted change.⁵ According to Hosking, the decline of ecclesiastical mediation in the Protestant countries which caused the individual believer to be more solitary before God created a climate of fear and distrust; in areas that remained Catholic, a certain alienation from the changing forms of mediation by the Church had a similar effect (and, I would add, it also created anxiety among Catholics caused by witnessing the Church in a major crisis).

Departing from Hosking’s observation that a crisis of trust dominated post-Reformation Europe, this thesis aims to study how, in Catholic regions after the Reformation, many reform-minded people consciously tried to find an answer to this

³ John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 16.

⁴ Geoffrey A. Hosking, ‘The Reformation as a Crisis of Trust’, in *Trust and Distrust: Sociocultural Perspectives*, ed. Ivana Marková and Alex Gillespie (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008), 29–47. Hosking argues that the Reformation period was also a time in which the ways of trusting changed. The great societal and religious changes and challenges fostered fear and distrust that led to new forms of religion, politics, and community, and thus new forms of trust. His broader attempt to understand the history of trust and its role in different societies is reflected in his book *Trust: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵ Hosking, ‘The Reformation’, 33–36.

crisis. I study this attempt not on a theological but on a practical level.⁶ Since it is clear that at least part of the highest echelons of the Church acknowledged and understood that what was at stake was the trust of the faithful, as we read in Bonuccio's words, this thesis looks at the strategies that the Church used in order to avert this danger and gain or regain the confidence of believers. More specifically, it explores the practices of trust and distrust that ecclesiastics used in their attempt to foster the reputation of the Church in the eyes of the faithful. I furthermore study how contemporaries viewed the effectiveness of these practices.

My analysis concentrates on the Republic of Genoa in the seventeenth century (1594-1664).⁷ Genoa is an interesting case study, first of all because of its geopolitical position. At the beginning of the century, it was still closely tied by economic bonds to the Spanish crown, whose financiers were mainly Genoese. In the course of the following decades, freeing itself progressively from Habsburg influence, Genoa tried to find other means of safeguarding its independence amid the European great powers. Though generally rather successful in this endeavour, the Republic could not prevent French attacks in 1684. Genoa's favourable geographical position at a crossroads of several important routes for commerce and travel in the Mediterranean turned the city into an intersection of ideas and people. The city's wealth, or rather, the wealth of its wealthiest citizens made it attractive for religious initiatives that needed benefactors. Unlike Venice, the Republic was never in open opposition to the Pope. At the same time, the Genoese fought for their independence on all fronts: in international politics as well as in matters of jurisdiction, a field in which the Church was a key competitor. In close vicinity to Milan, the duchy that is well known for the Borromean Counter-Reformation, Genoa witnessed similar attempts at Church reform, especially during the time that Cardinal Stefano Durazzo was archbishop of the city (1635-1664). The city brimmed with different religious orders

⁶ See, for an extensive introduction to early modern theology: Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁷ I chose to include the years 1594-1664 in the title of this dissertation because 1594 is the year in which the *Medee* were formed, one of the earliest groups studied in this thesis. It is also the year of birth of Cardinal Durazzo, one of the protagonists of the Catholic Reformation in Genoa. The year 1664, on the other hand, marks the end of Durazzo's tenure as archbishop of the city.

and female convents, but lay religious life was also very dynamic. Confraternities, processions, and Marian devotions all played an important role in the life of the individual faithful. These are just some of the characteristics that suggest that this multifaceted city, which until now has been almost neglected in international scholarship on early modern Catholicism (while well studied by Italianists), represents a suitable laboratory in which to test the fruitfulness of looking at the Catholic Reformation through the lens of trust. With this experiment, I invite scholars of the early modern period to consider the historical dynamics of change and continuity in the light of trust, while offering students of early modern religion a window on the rather obscure but fascinating situation of the Church in Genoa.

Trust in the Catholic Reformation

What constituted the crisis of trust that the Church found itself in? Luther's two main charges against the Church identify its causes: they can be traced back to the doctrinal and the behavioural realm (*fides et mores*, as the Council defined it).⁸ Luther attacked the core of Catholic doctrine by questioning the Church's mediating role: the sacraments and the apostolic succession. Reflecting many earlier critical voices within the Church, Luther also fiercely criticised the moral stature of its hierarchy, in particular the papacy, which he came to loathe more than anything else.⁹ Consequently, those present at the opening of the Council of Trent were convinced that "the extirpation of heresies" could only be achieved through "the reformation of the Clergy and Christian people" so as to regain trust. After some discussion, mostly due to the different priorities of the two initiators of the Council – Pope Paul III, who stressed the importance of doctrinal clarity and preferred to keep reform issues under papal control, and Emperor Charles V, who favoured clerical reform in the hope of reconciliation with the Protestants – the members present at the opening of the Council decided to deal alternately with both reform and doctrine, as had been

⁸ O'Malley, *Trent*, 12–13; Idem, 'What Happened and Did Not Happen at the Council of Trent', in *The Council of Trent: Reform and Controversy in Europe and Beyond (1545-1700)*, ed. Wim François and Violet Soen, vol. 1, 3 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 2018), 49–68.

⁹ Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther* (New York: Random House, 2016), 371–72.

the custom at earlier councils.¹⁰ Although no session explicitly concentrated on redefining the Church, its role as the indispensable mediator of God's grace and the perpetuator of Christ's acts in time was clearly spelled out in the Council's decrees on justification and the sacraments. Once more the decrees underlined that justification was channeled in a certain and trustworthy way via ordained priests who could administer the sacraments, in spite of the fact that their hands might be stained with sin.¹¹

The Council's response to the overt abuses in the Church – simony, nepotism, absenteeism, and the selling of indulgences, among many others – could only be partial. Because of the continuous pressure from Rome not to touch the issue of papal and curia reform, no decree was drawn up for that purpose.¹² Instead, the Council mainly dealt with two other cornerstones of the Church hierarchy: the episcopacy, at which many of the reform decrees were directed, and the parish priests who were responsible for the care of souls. Yet even in this field, the decrees of Trent were merely instructions that still had to be put into practice. The historiography has shown that the full implementation of Tridentine reform decrees was a long-term endeavour, which continued until the eighteenth century and sometimes beyond. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that in large parts of Catholic Europe, the threat that Bonuccio described in the sixteenth century had essentially faded away by the end of the seventeenth if not earlier: by then, believers were no longer shifting in large numbers from one church to the other and they were more confident about the qualities of their church. In Italy, an important role in this development was given to repressive institutions like the Inquisition and the Index, that have already been thoroughly studied by Italian scholars.¹³ However, since the same result was reached in parts of Europe where those institutions were not as powerful or were even absent,

¹⁰ O'Malley, *Trent*, 13–14.

¹¹ J. Waterworth, ed., *The Council of Trent. The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 55. Hereafter: CT, Session VII, Canon 12. See also, with regard to the sacrament of penance: Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 13–14.

¹² O'Malley, *Trent*, 252.

¹³ See pages 19–25.

the role of the Inquisition and the Index on the Italian peninsula should not be overestimated. Other strategies for eliminating distrust and restoring trust were as important and might have reached people more in their day-to-day life than did the Inquisition or even the Tridentine decrees. My focus is on the reformers' attempts to restore the trust of the faithful. These attempts were predominantly carried out by reforming bishops as well as the many new religious orders and congregations.¹⁴ They were the onset of a broad and generally effective, albeit partial and slow, effort to counter the crisis of trust that had been made manifest by the Reformation.

Main question

The hypothesis that the Church's answer to the crisis of trust was only successful when accompanied by a trust offensive – i.e. by an effort to win trust in order to bring about the necessary changes – has prompted the questions that are central to this study. First, where do we see this trust offensive? Second, what impact did practices of trust and distrust have on the effectiveness of reforms? Third, how did the reformers themselves view the effect of their trust strategies?

To answer these questions, this thesis explores several features of the Catholic Reformation – the attempt to reform the secular clergy; new female religious initiatives; the effort to reform female cloistered life; and the establishment of new religious congregations with their drive for mission, both internal and overseas – in order to find out how the protagonists of these developments went about winning the trust they needed to reach their objectives.

I do not intend to measure in any way how successful the Catholic Reformation was or whether all Tridentine objectives were accomplished, nor to establish *if* or *when* trust in the Church was restored: these are questions that, if not impossible to answer, go far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I accept the invitation of Günther Wassilowsky “to try to discover the history of the subtler effects of the Council of Trent beyond the simplistic narratives of complete success

¹⁴ Simon Ditchfield, ‘De-Centering Trent: How “Tridentine” Was the Making of the First World Religion?’, in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 202–4.

or failure”.¹⁵ To do so, this dissertation studies what reforming looked like on a practical level and how practices of trust were used within larger strategies of reform. Studying reform from a trust perspective implies looking at practices of distrust as well: indeed, the importance of trust often surfaces only in cases of prevailing distrust or when an overt crisis of trust occurs.¹⁶

Three themes emerge while tackling the main subject of this dissertation: obedience, freedom, and the efficiency of reform tactics that hinged on trust. Studying trust will, first of all, help us understand better the practical implications of obedience as a central virtue in early modern Catholicism. Because of the importance of obedience in early modern religious thought and because of the hierarchical structure of the Church, historians tend to overestimate the power of top-down reform, of measures taken by powerful Church institutions, and of changes imposed from above. This thesis reveals that trust was necessary for obedience to become true compliance. That is why, notwithstanding the hierarchical structure of the Church, top-down reform was a slow and troublesome endeavour: reformers first had to win the trust of those needed to carry out the reform.

A second and related theme that emerges when studying the Catholic Reformation from a trust perspective is the relationship between rules, repression and coercion on the one hand, and freedom of choice, or agency, on the other. A tactic of repression may seem an easier method to effectuate change: it does not require trust in the people who have to undergo the reform, since they will be forced to cooperate. Yet, the reluctance of individuals to cooperate when they feel that they have no other option makes this reform tactic, paradoxically, less effective. By contrast, when trust is given and thus the freedom of the individual to cooperate is safeguarded, change will be slower (since the people have to be won over), but eventually more effective and permanent.

Third, when practices of trust were used in order to establish reforms and changes, these came about very slowly, precisely because complete obedience does

¹⁵ Günther Wassilowsky, ‘The Myths of the Council of Trent and the Construction of Catholic Confessional Culture’, François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 84.

¹⁶ Hosking, *Trust: A History*, 22, 24.

not occur without trust, and trust, in turn, does not grow without freedom. The freedom of all parties involved was needed in order to reform or profoundly change people and institutions. Yet those whose free cooperation was asked could use their position to make sure that, while collaborating, they also furthered their own interests. That reform was not a straightforward process, depending as it does on practices of trust, is one of the aspects that this thesis tries to disentangle and expound.

Catholic Reformation, Counter-Reformation or Early Modern Catholicism?

There is much that we already know about the reform efforts of the Church that followed the Council of Trent, and yet the complexity of the Catholic Reformation – starting from the designation itself – continues to intrigue historians.¹⁷ To understand what a trust perspective might bring to our current knowledge of the post-Reformation Church it is important to delve briefly into the historiography of the topic.

Historians from the nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century generally referred to the period of Church history after the Reformation as the “Counter-Reformation”. It was described as a one-dimensional, successful effort by the higher echelons of the Catholic Church to change “the Clergy and Christian people”, as the Council had intended. Depending on the side of the confessional divide to which they adhered, some historians labeled the Counter-Reformation as a glorious victory over the Protestants, while their opponents termed it a stifling and repressive period in which the Catholic Church was at the root of absolutist oppression. Around a century ago, the former started to adopt the more positive term “Catholic Reform” or “Catholic Reformation” in order to emphasise that post-Tridentine Catholicism was not just “reactive”, while sometimes also implying that the only true reformation was Catholic.¹⁸

¹⁷ Wietse de Boer gives an insightful analysis of how the terminology concerning the post-Tridentine period and its connotations developed over time. De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul*, 7–10.

¹⁸ John W. O’Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate?: Studies in Jesuit History* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 23–24.

In 1946, in an attempt to create some clarity regarding these terms, Hubert Jedin proposed to use the terms Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation to describe two distinct developments: the former referred to instances of self-reform and revival that had been initiated long before the Protestant Reformation and continued long after, while the term Counter-Reformation indicated the Church's militancy and self-defence against Protestantism. This militancy, in Jedin's reading, was mainly a response to the critiques of the Protestant reformers.¹⁹ In his groundbreaking article, Jedin gave particular weight to three agents of post-Reformation Catholicism: the Jesuits, the papacy, and especially the Council of Trent, the main object of his own research.

While Jedin and his followers succeeded in drawing attention to the complexity and breadth of Catholic reform, and showed that it went beyond a mere anti-Protestant, stifling reaction, others went further and focused on the parallels between the Catholic and Protestant Reformations. Many of them adopted the new historiographical approaches that gained prominence in the 1970s: on the one hand, the rise of comparative research, and on the other hand, "the cultural turn", i.e. the pursuit of broader research scopes that gave weight to the wider historical context and the use of interdisciplinary methods, combining history with sociology and anthropology.

As early as 1958, Ernst Walter Zeeden took an important step in this direction when he proposed a new field of investigation: *Konfessionsbildung*. With this term, he indicated the formation of confessionally distinct Church institutions which influenced all aspects of life, including politics and culture.²⁰ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Zeeden's theory was taken up by two other German historians, Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard. They coined the term *Konfessionalisierung*, a broader concept than Zeeden's *Konfessionsbildung*, with which they set out to explain changes in early modern European society as a whole, especially the relationship between

¹⁹ Hubert Jedin, *Katholische Reformation oder Gegenreformation? Ein Versuch zur Klärung der Begriffe nebst einer Jubiläumsbetrachtung über das Trienter Konzil* (Luzern: Josef Stocker, 1946).

²⁰ Ernst Walter Zeeden, 'Grundlagen und Wege der Konfessionsbildung in Deutschland im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe', *Historische Zeitschrift* 185 (1958): 249–99.

religion and early modern state formation.²¹ Schilling, Reinhard and others drew attention to the parallels between the post-Reformation history of Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist areas, in an attempt to do away with the false opposition between a “progressive” Reformation and a “reactionary” Counter-Reformation.²² In all cases, the churches managed to increase their grip on the population by creating a uniform identity within one territory with the help of regulations, disciplinary measures, and an expanding administration, as well as the teaching of a catechism that was in competition with the religious identity of others.²³ In this effort, the support of the secular powers was necessary for all churches. The religious uniformity and the potential for subjugation to the state that both Reformations presumably produced through social discipline, in turn, formed one of the backbones of early modern state formation and of modernity in general.²⁴

²¹ These two historians saw confessionalisation as a “sozialgeschichtlicher Fundamentalprozeß”. Cf. Heinz Schilling, ‘Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich. Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 246, no. 1 (1988): 4–5; Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Was ist katholische Konfessionalisierung?’, in *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung: Wissenschaftliches Symposium der Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum und des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1993*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995), 420.

²² Instead, they argued, these churches underwent parallel processes both “in their temporal aspect, [...] their material aspect”, and their origin. Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State. A Reassessment’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1989): 384–85.

²³ See: Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Gegenreformation als Modernisierung?’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte - Archive for Reformation History* 68 (1977): 226–252; Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Europa’, in *Bekenntnis und Geschichte. Die Confessio Augustana im historischen Zusammenhang. Ringvorlesung der Universität Augsburg im Jubiläumsjahr 1980*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (München: Verlag Ernst Vögel, 1981). Reinhard gives an insightful overview of the dimensions of confessionalisation, in: Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Was ist katholische Konfessionalisierung?’, in Reinhard and Schilling, *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 425–37; idem, ‘Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State. A Reassessment’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1989): 390.

²⁴ See, for a clear summary of this position: Luther D. Peterson, ‘Johann Pfeffinger’s Treatises of 1550 in Defense of Adiaphora: “High Church” Lutheranism and Confessionalization in Albertine Saxony’, in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2004), 104–5. See also: Reinhard, ‘Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State’, 403–4; Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550–1750* (London; New York: Routledge, 1989), 177; De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul*, 39–42.

Partially preceding and partially parallel to this successful confessionalisation paradigm,²⁵ whose exponents mostly but not exclusively focused on the German case and on attempts at “social disciplining” from above, other historians investigated sources that could shed light on the *effects* of this effort, i.e. on how the respective Reformations played out on the ground.²⁶ These historians, either inspired by or themselves as members of the French *Annales* school, focused on religion as it was experienced rather than professed; they tried to look at it from the viewpoint of the “chrétien quelconque”. In his seminal work *Le Catholicisme de Luther à Voltaire* (1971), Jean Delumeau had argued that the early modern period witnessed the crude imposition – by both Protestantism and Counter-Reformation Catholicism – of elite religion on the common people who, as he provocatively claimed, had until then been living in an effectively pagan world with some Christian overtones. John Bossy’s famous *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (1985) essentially followed Delumeau’s Christianisation thesis and described a change from a more community-focused experience of faith in the Middle Ages to the more rationalised, individualistic and bureaucratic forms of religion in the early modern period.²⁷ For these and other historians *le vécu religieux*, the lived religious experience of the populace as expressed in religious practices such as devotions and confraternities, religious images and missionary attempts, became a central interest in the historical endeavour.²⁸

²⁵ Heinz Schilling, ‘Die Konfessionalisierung von Kirche, Staat und Gesellschaft. Profil, Leistung, Defizite und Perspektiven eines Geschichtswissenschaftlichen Paradigmas’, in Reinhard and Schilling, *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 1.

²⁶ Schilling himself resisted the equation of confessionalisation with social disciplining. Ibid., 6. Reinhard, too, has emphasised that “the people” were never seen as passive recipients within the confessionalisation paradigm: Reinhard, ‘Was ist katholische Konfessionalisierung?’, 423. Still, the confessionalisation paradigm clearly favoured a top-down approach: Cf. Marc Venard, ‘Volksfrömmigkeit und Konfessionalisierung’, in Reinhard and Schilling, *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 258–70.

²⁷ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²⁸ Cf. Jean Delumeau, ed., *Histoire vécue du peuple chrétien*, 2 vols (Toulouse: Privat, 1979). Sources used to uncover this common experience were often administrative documents of a serial nature (revealing the intensity of devotions, participation at confraternities and associations, mass intentions, numbers of communicants and of vocations) or visitation reports. Willem Frijhoff, ‘Van “Histoire de l’Eglise” naar “Histoire religieuse”’: De invloed van de „Annales”-groep op de ontwikkeling van de kerkgeschiedenis in Frankrijk en de perspectieven daarvan voor Nederland’, *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 61, no. 2 (1981): 143.

A major shortcoming of the Christianisation thesis was the arbitrariness with which historians had established what constituted “real” Christianity. Moreover, just as adherents of the social discipline and confessionalisation thesis, the historians who followed the Christianisation paradigm tended to portray common people, though central to their study, as rather passive in the processes of religious change.²⁹ In reaction to these paradigms, historians in the 1990s started to indicate that there were limits to the possibilities of social discipline, and contradictions in the view that the Reformations led to modernisation. With the alternative term “early modern Catholicism”, first suggested by John O’Malley, he and Robert Bireley aimed to provide a neutral and “empty” designation that would enable scholars of post-Reformation Catholicism to go beyond some of the assumptions that accompanied earlier designations and paradigms.³⁰ They called upon historians to research the actions and choices of individual believers and the role of intermediaries such as the new orders and congregations, who, in Bireley’s words, were “the main agents of Christianisation and confessionalisation”.³¹ Others actually concretised this appeal and, from the 1990s onwards, began to focus not merely on the reception of reform from above, but on how people forged their own local Catholic identities in a continuous exchange between ordinary people and elite, laity and clergy. These

²⁹ Wietse de Boer, ‘Reformations and Counter-Reformations. The Contested Terms of Reformation History’, in *Martin Luther, A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)*, ed. Alberto Melloni, vol. 1 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 54. As Willem Frijhoff and others emphasised and showed, the next step in the *Annales* approach was to see religious developments as the product of interaction between people’s initiative and the Church. Frijhoff, ‘Van “Histoire de l’Eglise” naar “Histoire religieuse”’, 131.

³⁰ John W. O’Malley, ‘Was Ignatius Loyola a Church Reformer? How to Look at Early Modern Catholicism’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (1991): 177; Robert Bireley, ‘Redefining Catholicism: Trent and Beyond’, in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 146; O’Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate?*, 28–29; Robert Bireley, ‘The Religious Movements of the Sixteenth Century as Responses to a Changing World’, in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 29–48.

³¹ Citation from: Robert Bireley, ‘Neue Orden, Katholische Reform und Konfessionalisierung’, in Reinhard and Schilling, *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 156. New methods, chronology and new takes on religion have since expanded our views. See, for example, John W. O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

historians take into consideration local differences within areas belonging to the same confession, which neither the confessionalisation- nor the Christianisation paradigm could account for.

The Italian debate

Before delving into this new approach, it is expedient to examine the recent developments in Italian historiography on the early modern Church. In particular, I will discuss the positions of several prominent Italian historians who have continued to strongly emphasise the role of social discipline in post-Tridentine Italy.³² After the Second World War, academics who studied the Church in early modern Italy were largely divided into two groups. Several followers of Jedin wrote institutional histories of the papacy, the Church and its powerful institutions, while a second group of scholars tried to shed light on the individual experience of believers and the influence of the Roman Inquisition. The latter focused primarily on dissidents and studied the lives of these individuals or small groups through the lens of the local Inquisition files. Carlo Ginzburg's *Il formaggio e i vermi* (1976) is a prime example of this type of study.³³ Massimo Firpo subsequently combined these two approaches – the study of Inquisition archives and that of major Church institutions – and turned them into a history of the Roman Inquisition, focusing on the direction that the higher echelons of the Church took during the sixteenth century, under a papacy controlled by the Holy Office.³⁴ One of Firpo's other interests was the Italian Reformation (a term coined by Firpo himself), which has since then held many Italian scholars in its grip. Even though this Italian Reformation did not play a prominent

³² Cf. Simon Ditchfield, 'In Search of Local Knowledge: Rewriting Early Modern Italian Religious History'. *Cristianesimo nella storia* 19, no. 2 (1998): 257.

³³ Silvana Seidel Menchi gives an insightful overview of the historiography on the Counter-Reformation as it developed in Italy since 1939: Silvana Seidel Menchi, 'The Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Italian Historiography, 1939–2009', *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 100, no. 1 (2009): 204–5.

³⁴ Massimo Firpo, *Inquisizione romana e controriforma. Studi sul cardinal Giovanni Morone e il suo processo d'eresia*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992). Firpo also took the lead in the efforts that were made, from the 1980s onwards, to make the inquisitorial source material available in print. See for an overview of publications by Firpo: Seidel Menchi, 'The Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation', 198, footnote 23.

role in ecclesiastical and social life on the peninsula, research into sixteenth-century “heresy” has continued throughout the historiographical shifts described above.³⁵

Why has there been so much scholarly attention for the Inquisition, the small groups of Italian “heretics”, the Italian Reformation, and power struggles? Part of the answer can be found in the post-war conviction that (totalitarian) societies can best be understood by looking at how they treat minority groups.³⁶ Another reason is that several Italian scholars seem to see the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the light of their current positions vis-à-vis the Church.³⁷ As the (non-Catholic) historian Christopher Black writes, “modern historians of Italian Protestantism tend to be strongly biased towards Protestants, whether from a religious conviction [...], or from a left-wing political viewpoint, supporting the underdogs suppressed by an authoritarian [...] Catholic Church”.³⁸ Seidel Menchi confirms that in Italy, many scholars of the Catholic and Protestant Reformations “do not intend to write neutral history”. Instead, they openly acknowledge that they are personally invested in the issues they study and this is, in her opinion, what makes their research so alive.³⁹

³⁵ The intensity with which Italian historians have studied heretics is, according to Seidel Menchi, “far out of proportion to their numbers or influence in early modern Italian society”. Seidel Menchi, ‘The Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation’, 194. In the same article, Menchi even affirms that “[t]he field known in Italian universities as ‘Età della Riforma e della Controriforma’ [...] is a history of heretics.” Ibid: 197-8, 205-7.

³⁶ See, for instance: Norman Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (Sussex, London: Sussex University Press and Heinemann Educational Books, 1975).

³⁷ De Boer, ‘Reformations and Counter-Reformations’, 51. “That the study of the Reformation should flourish in Italy, where the heretical movements ended in fairly quick, aggressive suppression, may be seen as ironic, but it also indicates how the current fascination with minority groups has given new life to an old historiographic category, while an upsurge in studies on the Roman Inquisition has revitalised the concept of Counter-Reformation”. Ibid., 55-56.

³⁸ “Many such historians seemingly assume the Protestantism that would have prevailed, would have been ‘better’, intellectually and democratically” Christopher F. Black, *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Italy*, European Studies Series (Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3. See also: Simon Ditchfield, ‘In Sarpi’s shadow: coping with Trent the Italian way.’ In *Studi in memoria di Cesare Mozzarelli* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2008), 585-606, and Christopher F. Black, *The Italian Inquisition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), vii–viii.

³⁹ Seidel Menchi, ‘The Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation’, 216. Scholars from other traditions might however be surprised, for instance, at the ease with which Firpo polemically assumes that those who find some interest in a broader term of ‘early modern Catholicism’ must therefore negate the fact that “religious and political choices taken by the Roman Church as a reaction to the Protestant Reformation are still a relevant historical problem, deserving research and reflection”. Massimo Firpo, ‘Rethinking “Catholic Reform” and “Counter-Reformation”:

The personal engagement of Italian scholars of early modern Catholicism with their research subject may also be one of the reasons why the social discipline paradigm continues to be very popular among them: many see Baroque Catholicism, including institutions such as the Inquisition and the Index, as the main cause of the presumed decline of Italy's cultural relevance (another reason being the improved accessibility of archives such as those of the local Inquisitions).⁴⁰ Adriano Prosperi's seminal contribution, *I Tribunali della Coscienza*, for instance, published in 1996, emphasises the Church's capacity and intent "to control consciences" and stifle creative freedom. Admittedly, Prosperi's work also discusses another type of control, namely persuasion, as it recurred in the missionary efforts of the early modern period.⁴¹ Yet, because his goal is to describe how the Church developed a long-lasting

What Happened in Early Modern Catholicism—a View from Italy', *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 3 (2016): 296. People might also remain puzzled by the overtly polemical tones with which Firpo expresses himself in his recent article (on the reception of the sixteenth century Cardinal Giovanni Morone in historiography), accusing whole generations of "Anglo-Saxon" scholarship, Catholic and non-Catholic, of pursuing an apologetic agenda. Massimo Firpo, 'Salvatore del Concilio o eretico luterano? Giovanni Morone nella storiografia posttridentina', in *Trent and Beyond: The Council, Other Powers, Other Cultures*, ed. Michela Catto and Adriano Prosperi, Mul edition (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2018), 244–45, 264.

⁴⁰ Danilo Zardin acutely shows this in his historiographical analysis: Danilo Zardin, 'Il concilio di Trento e il rinnovamento cattolico dell'età moderna', in *Religione, cerimoniale e società nelle terre milanesi dell'età moderna*, ed. Danilo Zardin, Fabrizio Pagani, and Carlo Alessandro Pisoni (Germignaga: Magazzino storico verbanese-La Compagnia de' Bindoni, 2018), 34. In the same overview article, in which he animatedly writes against what he views as the unbalanced approach that dominates current Italian historiography, Zardin sums up how Italian historians have unjustly sketched an ineffective post-Tridentine Church that merely produced "a backward bureaucracy [that] opposed the growing wave of criticism by blocking all authentic experimentation, being intellectually closed off, the hardening of control, and blind submission to authority." *Ibid.*, 32. Zardin also writes that while in other academic environments a middle position has gained ground, in Italy, the Reformation / Counter-Reformation divide has retained its currency. Massimo Firpo indeed recently insisted on using only the latter term for early modern Catholicism: Firpo, 'Rethinking "Catholic Reform" and "Counter-Reformation"'.

⁴¹ Prosperi also acknowledges that from the last quarter of the sixteenth century the Inquisition progressively began to adopt a more pastoral approach. Adriano Prosperi, 'L'inquisitore come confessore', in *Disciplina dell'anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna: Convegno Internazionale di Studio, Bologna 7-9 ottobre 1993*, ed. Paolo Prodi and Carla Penuti (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1994), 217, 222–23. The Inquisition, after its initial decades, broadened its scope and became more educational and less punitive, targeting quasi-heretical beliefs, magical and moral issues. The institution attempted to follow due processes. Anna Schutte even remarked that it "offered the best criminal justice available in early modern Europe". Schutte, "Recent Studies", 93-5, cited in: Black, *The Italian Inquisition*, xi.

hold over Italian society, the main focus of his work is on the ever tighter grip of the Church on the people via the courts of the Inquisition and the confessional, which in his opinion was subordinated to the Inquisition.⁴² Though very insightful, Prosperi's work is at risk of overestimating the efficiency of the Church's institutions in imposing its norms on the people.⁴³

The work of Giovanni Romeo and Michele Mancino on criminal clergy is another recent example of Italian scholarship that views the early modern Church as a rather monolithic institution with an all-influential power on society. Its main thesis is that the Church could have reformed its clergy in due time, had it but wanted to.⁴⁴ However, since the priority of the Church was to safeguard its honour and keep up appearances, the so-called Tridentine reform never took place other than in the minds of a handful of reformers. It was not the local bishops but Rome that commanded, and Rome did not want real reform.⁴⁵ One example the authors give is that of the selection of clergy during the seventeenth century. They assume that, since a thorough selection of good parish priests often did not take place, this was because the Church did not want to select good priests but instead prioritised honour.⁴⁶ However, as I will show in chapter three, things were more complicated. Since good selection would in fact have led to a more honourable Church, it follows that, if Rome could have protected its honour straightforwardly in this way, it would

⁴² Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996); Idem, 'L'inquisitore come confessore', 190; Idem, 'Beichtväter und Inquisition im 16. Jahrhundert', in Reinhard and Schilling, *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 126. Prosperi in my opinion too readily assumes that rules which stipulated that issues pertinent to the Inquisition could not be absolved in the confessional reflect a widespread reality. In his review article of this book, Giovanni Romeo states that the large majority of confessors probably absolved even delicate cases completely autonomously, either out of ignorance of the rules, or because of certain privileges, or even to maintain a good relationship with the penitent. Giovanni Romeo, 'Sui Tribunali della coscienza di Adriano Prosperi', *Quaderni Storici* 35 (1999): 798. Prosperi himself acknowledges that it is very difficult to establish in what measure the rules were really followed: Prosperi, 'Beichtväter', 130.

⁴³ See, for instance: Prosperi, 'Beichtväter', 131.

⁴⁴ Though many tribunals either originated in the wake of Trent, or flourished in the same period, they did not help to reform the clergy, according to Giovanni Romeo and Michele Mancino. Giovanni Romeo and Michele Mancino, *Clero criminale: L'onore della Chiesa e i delitti degli ecclesiastici nell'Italia della Controriforma* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2013), V–VIII.

⁴⁵ Ibid., vi. My research, however, demonstrates that Rome certainly did not have overall command, and was by no means the main or only obstacle to reform (see chapter two).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 201.

probably have done so. The reason it did not was that the obstacles to a strict selection policy were many.⁴⁷ Moreover, priorities within Church ranks differed remarkably. The authors also overlook that the Church was only one player in a network of different powers and was embedded in a society that had different priorities. Their viewpoint should therefore be complemented by one that allows for a more nuanced context and studies individuals as they implemented their ideals.

The work of Massimo Firpo, too, seems to assume that the Church was rather monolithic, or at least its policies were monolithically determined, in his view, by the Roman Inquisition.⁴⁸ During two decennia of power struggles (in the mid-sixteenth century), the Inquisition first made sure that the papacy was calling its tune and all possible enemies were eliminated, then fought any occurrences of heresy, and subsequently banned every creative expression and moral deviation on the peninsula. Again, taking power as a starting point creates the impression that power struggles were the ultimate cause of all action, and other possible explanations for the absence of historical change have to be explained by unwillingness on the part of the Church.⁴⁹ Though Firpo concedes some explanatory power to the context (the

⁴⁷ In several other passages in their chapter on the seventeenth century (chapter six), Romeo and Mancino first state what the Church should have done in their eyes if reform was to be taken seriously, and subsequently conclude that, since there is no evidence that these steps were taken, *therefore* “the Church” did not want to act against certain abuses. See, for instance: *Ibid.*, 186–87. An evident example are the pastoral visitations. From other sources that we will encounter throughout this dissertation it will be clear that Cardinal Durazzo had some interest in shaping the clergy in line with Tridentine ideals. However, in his pastoral visitations little is said about the moral status of the clergy. Romeo and Mancini immediately link the general absence of this information in visitation reports with a presumed lack of interest in reform on the part of the bishops. *Ibid.*, 200. The case of Genoa already shows that such reasoning is flawed.

⁴⁸ “The goals that the Church was called upon to pursue [...] had been forged by the fierce battle which Gian Pietro Carafa [the leader of the Roman Inquisition and later Pope] and his Theatines had united against all forms of what they regarded as heretical deviations.” Firpo, ‘Rethinking “Catholic Reform” and “Counter-Reformation”’, 297.

⁴⁹ In a reaction to Firpo’s article, Dermot Fenlon emphasises that the dominance of the Inquisition over papal conclaves lasted only for two decades, and many influential Church leaders worked against this dominance (as Firpo himself acknowledges). “[T]he (scarcely uninfluential) circles of Carlo Borromeo (1538-84), Agostino Valier (1531-1606) and Federico Borromeo (1564-1631) utterly rejected and worked to bypass the [Inquisition’s] seizure of power.” Cf. Dermot Fenlon’s response to Firpo in: *Ibid.*, 308. In Firpo’s contribution, the power perspective influences not only the selection of sources but also his perspective on these sources: some of his most audacious conclusions, for instance that the Church constituted the strongest force against progress in Italy

centralism of the curia, the difficulty of changing the system of benefices, the privileges of many religious orders), he readily ascribes the failure of Trent to the unwillingness of the highest echelons of the Church, and to the primacy of obedience and orthodoxy over moral reform.⁵⁰ Other scholarship, however, suggests that the early modern Church in Italy can be better understood if we take into consideration different perspectives: even in a hierarchical structure in which obedience is an important value, people do not automatically lose their own agency, their own interests and ideals, and their own ways to act upon them.⁵¹

Hosking is right when he states that the use of power as a concept through which to see historical reality (as Foucault has proposed), produces as many pitfalls as insights: power easily becomes a vague and all-embracing concept, a phenomenon without a particular source or centre.⁵² A focus on power does not reveal how people made decisions and acted in specific social settings according to their various convictions and contrasting interests, appropriating and mediating the Tridentine religious culture.⁵³ It obscures the fact that early modern Catholicism in Italy continued (as elsewhere) to be “plural” and, as Danilo Zardin writes, “not rigidly ‘disciplined’ in the sense of levelled out”.⁵⁴ Nor does it allow us to see the ungoing “*dialogue and osmosis*” between secular and religious power, between Church and state, which, as Paolo Prodi has demonstrated, was formative for Europe’s course towards modernity.⁵⁵ We should therefore find an alternative that allows us to avoid describing the Church as a “coherent if not monolithic organisation” and to account

up until the nineteenth century, are based on merely one citation Ibid., 306. See also: Dermot Fenlons rebuttal on p. 307-8.

⁵⁰ Firpo, ‘Rethinking “Catholic Reform” and “Counter-Reformation”’, 300. Power and force trumped all other aspects of the Church as it developed in the early modern period, in Firpo’s perspective. Ibid., 305.

⁵¹ “The conflicts and tensions within the church system prevented the creation of an overweening church, left room for some dissent (if discreet), and debate” Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 227. See also: Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7–8.

⁵² Hosking, *Trust: A History*, 6.

⁵³ Ditchfield, ‘In search of local knowledge’, 286-7.

⁵⁴ “non rigidamente ‘disciplinato’ in senso livellatore”. Zardin, ‘Il concilio’, 41.

⁵⁵ Italics in the original. Paolo Prodi, ‘Europe in the Age of Reformations: The Modern State and Confessionalization’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (2017): 1-19.

for the fact that, as Christopher Black reminds us, “political monarchism [...] could hardly be enforced within the Papal State, let alone into state areas”, among other reasons because “the ‘Church’ itself was made up of competing institutions and individuals, following different ideal ‘models’, or selfish interests.”⁵⁶ In line with the work of the French scholar De Certeau, we should acknowledge the numerous ways in which common people used “the imposed system” in their everyday lives to their own ends, employing tactics that subverted, resisted or changed what was imposed upon them from above.⁵⁷ To do so, we are helped by turning again to the international scholarship on early modern Catholicism that, in the last two decades, has started to combine an interest in the top-down perspective with a reevaluation of initiatives from below. In contrast to the paradigms of the last century, historians no longer view lay people as passive recipients of beliefs and reforms imposed from above, but study them as protagonists in forging their own diverse confessional identities.

Identity, negotiation and persuasion

The work of Marc Forster is an early example of this new historiographical approach. In his 1992 book, he argued that the main change that occurred in the post-Tridentine era was that people *consciously* internalised their confessional identity. Using the example of the Bishopric of Speyer, he showed that this identity was not imposed from above, and that the genesis of a confessional culture could also happen without a strong state.⁵⁸ Instead, villagers themselves reshaped local Catholic identities and the practices through which these were expressed.⁵⁹ These practices, in turn, were accommodated by the Church hierarchy via a process of negotiation that

⁵⁶ Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 225.

⁵⁷ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), See also: Ditchfield, ‘In search of local knowledge’, 286-7.

⁵⁸ “Divisions within the clerical elite make the standard distinction between reforming elite and traditionalist population very problematic”. Marc R. Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 7.

⁵⁹ See for a recent article on an Italian example of this process: Celeste McNamara, ‘What the People Want: Popular Support for Catholic Reform in the Veneto’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (2016): 492-516.

took place within the boundaries of doctrine and was mediated by intermediaries such as members of religious orders and parish priests, but also by secular lords. These intermediaries were by no means passive “agents of the Counter-Reformation”, but pursued their own agendas and convictions.⁶⁰ Studying the situation in Bohemia, Howard Louthan has dealt with the ways in which Catholic identity became crystalised in the area: not only by force from above but also through persuasion. The missions that constituted an essential part of the re-Catholicisation of Bohemia show that early modern Catholicism was adaptable to local circumstances: missionaries to the rural poor attempted to meet the needs of the local people in order to be more persuasive.⁶¹ The adaptability of early modern Catholicism to local situations also comes to the fore in the work of Marie Juliette Marinus, who, already in the 1990s, wrote about the readiness of the clergy in Antwerp to adjust to the needs of the faithful, following the adage *cura animarum prima lex* (the care of souls [is] our first law).⁶² Marinus’s work shows the importance of religious orders as mediators in the exchange between the Church and the faithful in an urban context. Concentrating on the diocese of Grenoble, Keith Luria has shown that religious change came about in the interaction between local elites, such as a reforming bishop, and villagers.⁶³ Post-Tridentine Catholicism is revealed in the work of these researchers to be pluralistic and shaped by interaction between elites and the people.

⁶⁰ Forster, *The Counter-Reformation*. To understand local Catholic identities, Foster argued, we need to look at religious practices and consider that the role of the elites in determining these practices was limited. Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶¹ Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation*, New Studies in European History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶² Marie Juliette Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren 155 (Brussel: Paleis der Academiën, 1995), 293.

⁶³ Keith P. Luria, *Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Cf. also Keith P. Luria, “‘Popular Catholicism’ and the Catholic Reformation”, in *Early Modern Catholicism: Essays in Honour of John W. O’Malley, S.J.*, ed. Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar M. Pabel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 114–30.

Complementing the top-down perspective described in the previous section, several scholars of early modern Italy have recently adopted a similar approach and have focused on the initiatives of laymen and the lower clergy on the peninsula.⁶⁴ In the field of women's studies, for instance, Querciolo Mazzonis has highlighted the ways in which women exploited the possibilities that they had in the religious realm.⁶⁵ In his study of the local religiosity in Puglia, David Gentilcore has emphasised the importance of negotiation and mediation, much in line with historians like Louthan and Forster.⁶⁶ Celeste McNamara has recently done the same for the diocese of Padua.⁶⁷ Other historians have looked at local missions as focal points of the new religious orders or at different devotional and artistic expressions of Counter-Reformation religiosity. The recently published collection of essays on *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* (2019) has opened the door to a whole new and scarcely explored world of devotional life and religious initiatives from below, namely that which took place in family households.⁶⁸ Yet the most prominent field that uses a bottom-up perspective as a window onto the Italian Church is that of early modern confraternities (studied from the late 1950s onwards). Confraternities were the most common way in which people in early modern Italian cities engaged religiously and the Church itself relied heavily on them in its parishes.⁶⁹ Studying confraternities

⁶⁴ Black already emphasised in his overview work that “[t]he diversity of forces within the church, clerical lay, meant that when some cooperated, education was improved, philanthropy spread more widely, and religious culture became more exciting, varied and enticing”. Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 227.

⁶⁵ See pages 210-11. Yet, when writing about lay initiatives, Querciolo Mazzonis tends to see anti-institutional devout companies that sprang up in the first half of the sixteenth century as confessional groups “squeezed between the Catholic and Protestant Church”, a view which, in my opinion, reinforces the idea of a Church as a monolithic institution which it hardly was (even after Trent). Querciolo Mazzonis, ‘Reforming Christianity in Early Sixteenth-Century Italy: The Barnabites, the Somaschans, the Ursulines, and the Hospitals for the Incurables’, *Archivium Hibernicum. Irish Historical Records* 71 (2018): 271.

⁶⁶ David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d’Otranto* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 4–7.

⁶⁷ Celeste McNamara, ‘What the People Want’.

⁶⁸ Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, eds., *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, vol. 59, *Intersections. Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019).

⁶⁹ Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), xviii. Confraternities were “the most common way of organizing lay spiritual life through the early modern period. Nicholas Terpstra, ‘Ignatius, Confratello: Confraternities as

helps us to counter the tendency to privilege the institutional Church in our research: as Nicholas Terpstra put it, “brotherhoods were the most public face of the church, yet were almost entirely lay”.⁷⁰ Their number increased in the post-Tridentine period, and they were fostered by reforming bishops and new or reformed orders.⁷¹ By their mere existence and prominence, confraternities remind us that the post-Tridentine Church in Italy was shaped by interaction between initiatives from below and the ecclesiastical authorities as much as it was elsewhere in Europe.

Recently, scholars of early modern Catholicism have started to elaborate on the fact that such interaction must have been based on choices by Church members and lay people alike: both parties consciously engaged in a process of negotiation. Craig Harline and Eddy Put have vividly described the necessity of negotiation as a basis for reform in an urban context: disciplining alone cannot explain successful reform, since it was never simply accepted without negotiation.⁷² Judith Pollmann has underlined that reform, new initiatives, and new devotions all required a lot of money and energy, thus a conscious choice not only by ecclesiastical or lay initiators but also by those who chose to support them. With their choices, even less privileged individuals could influence the course that certain reforms would take: their support and engagement with, for instance, a new order, could secure its success in the future.⁷³ Persuasion and negotiation appear to have been paramount also in reform efforts from above, as people accepted authority only when persuaded that clerical

Modes of Spiritual Community in Early Modern Society’, in Comerford and Pabel, *Early Modern Catholicism*, 176. See also: Angelo Torre, ‘Faith’s Boundaries: Ritual and Territory in Rural Piedmont in the Early Modern Period’, in Terpstra, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 243–61; Danilo Zardin, ‘Relaunching Confraternities in the Tridentine Era: Shaping Conscience and Christianizing Society in Milan and Lombardy’, in Terpstra, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 190–209. Both Torre and Zardin have written extensively on the importance of confraternities in the post-Tridentine Church.

⁷⁰ Terpstra, ‘Ignatius, Confratello’, 177; Idem, ‘Introduction. The Politics of Ritual Kinship’, in idem, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 1.

⁷¹ Christopher F. Black, ‘The Development of Confraternity Studies over the Past Thirty Years’, in Terpstra, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 14.

⁷² Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop’s Tale: Mathias Hovius among His Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁷³ Cf. Judith Pollmann, ‘Being a Catholic in Early Modern Europe’, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. Alexandra. Bamji, Geert Herman Janssen, and Mary Laven (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 165–82.

leaders were working in their best interest.⁷⁴ In the absence of collaboration and persuasion, the choices that people made could just as easily lead to conflict between all parties involved.⁷⁵ The Catholic Reformation, including its authoritarian aspects, can thus be seen as an exchange between all parties involved.⁷⁶ Education and persuasion, disciplinary reform and the forging of confessional identity from below all required conscious cooperation between regular people and the elite, and between the laity and the clergy. Scholars of the global dimension of early modern Catholicism have come to the same conclusion: the peoples in areas that were reached by the Catholic mission were never passively ‘influenced’ by a religion imposed on them by an outside power, but always found ways to appropriate, shape, select from, copy, or change the message and practices of the missionaries.⁷⁷

Trust and distrust

The state of the debate, however, leaves the answer to one important question implicit: what was the basis of this cooperation and reciprocity when it took place? What triggered people in their choices to adhere to one initiative for reform rather than another, and what induced the ecclesiastical and political elite to give their consent to new initiatives started among the people or by the lower clergy? Historians have already pointed to financial motivations, the services offered, and the content proposed, which could all influence the choices of the lay people.⁷⁸ They have also stressed that cooperation between lay people and clergy was furthered when a

⁷⁴ According to Judith Pollmann, “most believers proved quite willing to accept clerical leadership, and indeed authority, as long as they were persuaded of its value and its relevance”. Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 201.

⁷⁵ Luria, “‘Popular Catholicism’ and the Catholic Reformation”, 126–27.

⁷⁶ Cf. Nicholas Terpstra, ‘Lay Spirituality’, in Bamji, Janssen, and Laven, *The Ashgate Research Companion*, 261–79.

⁷⁷ See Simon Ditchfield, ‘Decentering the Catholic Reformation. Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*. 101, no 1 (2010): 186-208, in particular p. 201; and Idem, ‘Of Dancing Cardinals and Mestizo Madonnas: Reconfiguring the History of Roman Catholicism in the Early Modern Period’. *Journal of Early Modern History* 8, no. 3 (2004): 408. For further reading on this topic and literature suggestions, see: Karin Vélez, Sebastian R. Prange, and Luke Clossey. ‘Religious Ideas in Motion’. In *A Companion to World History*, ed. by Douglas Northrop (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 352–64.

⁷⁸ Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen*, 194–202.

common interest was found in a process of negotiation.⁷⁹ The next step in furthering our understanding of the Catholic Reformation is to trace the dynamic that underpinned the cooperation, persuasion, and individual choices that were the basis of effective reform. This is where trust comes into play. Practices of trust, I will argue, made cooperation possible, led to certain choices, and helped efforts at persuasion.⁸⁰ A trust perspective clarifies how people came to share the same interest and thus work for the same goal, or failed to do so. Secondly, once we appreciate the importance of trust in the choices that people made, we need to find out whether contemporaries grasped its importance. Did they believe that in the context of a trust relationship cooperation and persuasion come about more easily? If they did, why did they not always apply practices of trust? What were the disadvantages or perceived disadvantages of a trust approach as a means to reform? The exploration of these two issues, the importance of trust for reform and contemporaries' awareness of it, will complement what we already know about early modern Catholicism in general, and the situation in Italy in particular.

My dissertation is not an attempt to downplay the importance of repression and authoritarian reform at play in the Church of early modern Italy. Instead, its goal is to further explore what Prospero described as the omnipresent “opposition between [strategies of] trust and distrust, mildness and persecution” and to see how these strategies played out at a local level in the seventeenth century.⁸¹ Such “local knowledge”, to use Simon Ditchfield's phrase, indeed helps us to reconfigure “the geography of power” and to study the “at times, bewildering variety of expressions”

⁷⁹ Marinus also describes the negotiation that surrounded popular devotions, which, as is clear from the example of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel in Harline and Put's work, could only become of major importance in the context of successful cooperation between different layers of society towards the same goal: *Ibid.*, 246–55, 284. Harline and Put, *A Bishop's Tale*, 92–108.

⁸⁰ Interestingly, Frijhoff already proposed similar questions in 1981: “Wat waren nu precies de machtsverhoudingen binnen de kerkelijke groeperingen, niet alleen op kerkordelijk gebied, maar ook in de sociaal-economische en culturele orde? Hoe waren top, buik en basis van deze groeperingen samengesteld en met andere vervlochten? Wie bepaalde in feite wat? In hoeverre werd gehoorzaamheid c.q. volgzaamheid ten aanzien van de gestelde doeleinden niet alleen axiomatisch verondersteld (of juist met systematisch wantrouwen tegemoet getreden), maar ook werkelijk bereikt?” Frijhoff, ‘Van “Histoire de l'Eglise” naar “Histoire religieuse”’, 152.

⁸¹ Prospero, ‘L'inquisitore’, 194.

that characterize the early modern Church in Italy.⁸² Historians such as De Boer and Prosperi himself have indicated that, for the Catholic reformers, there must have been a conscious choice to be made between “softness” and “harshness”, between persuasion and force.⁸³ To arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the post-Tridentine reality of the Church in Italy, both aspects – that of persuasion and spiritual renewal and that of tribunals and discipline - should be taken into account evenhandedly, and their weight in forming a pluralistic Catholicism (as opposed to a “disciplined” monolithic religion) should be taken into account.⁸⁴ Trust can help us explain how the choice between softness and harshness was made. Studying strategies of trust and distrust and their outcome may also nuance our understanding of the presumed capacity of the Church to control consciences. In short, it gives insight into the reasons why reform required cooperation, why it was a very slow and rather ambivalent endeavour, and why tactics of discipline and persuasion were tried alternately, with variable success. Finally, it sheds light on the often misunderstood concept of obedience that was pervasive in the early modern Church.

In carrying out this study, we are helped by another area of Church history as it is practised in Italy, which I have not yet touched upon: namely the countless local studies that give insight into individual religious orders, local bishops and Church reformers, local devotions, and many other aspects of the local churches on the peninsula. As we will see in the first chapter, existing studies on the Genoese reality constitute an indispensable support in our attempt to uncover the trust mechanisms at play in the seventeenth-century Church.

What is trust?

Over the last two decades, trust has become a topic of interest not only within but also outside academia: trust and its presumed decline in our societies are very much part of our common awareness. Trust-related topics like fake news, the financial

⁸² Ditchfield, ‘In Search of Local Knowledge’, 259.

⁸³ De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul*, 53. Hosking writes how “we need to replace [Foucault’s] ‘genealogy of power’ with a genealogy of trust”, and distrust, I would add. Hosking, *Trust: A History*, 7.

⁸⁴ Cf. Zardin, ‘Il concilio’. Ditchfield, ‘In Search of Local Knowledge’, 259-62.

crises, the loss of trust in European institutions, but also the loss of reputation of charity organisations, scholars, and churches, populate the headlines every day.⁸⁵ Yet what do we mean by trust? This a question that sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, philosophers, and economists have all tried to answer.⁸⁶ An early and significant contribution came from the sociologist Niklas Luhmann who described trust as an essential tool to reduce the “extreme complexity of the world”, which no one can withstand: “Without any trust [...] [a man] could not leave his bed in the morning.”⁸⁷ It is undeniable that trust is a human capacity that is vital for everyday life as well as for the most fundamental experiences of existence. The universality of trust does not, however, make the concept any easier to define or study. To use Martin Hollis’ phrase: trust “works in practice but not in theory”.⁸⁸ The philosopher Annette Baier rightly remarked that “we inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted”.⁸⁹ Its universality makes trust interesting as a prism through which to look at history, yet its elusiveness challenges scholars.

The definitions of trust are manifold and often contradictory. Some scholars argue that trust *increases* over time; the more experience one has with the actions of a trusted person, the more certainty about his or her behaviour can grow.⁹⁰ Others, who see trust as an act of blind faith, claim the opposite. Trust, they say, *decreases* with increasing experience; since one knows more about the trusted person; “blind” faith

⁸⁵ Rosalind Searle, Ann-Marie Nienaber, and Sim B Sitkin, ‘Introduction’, in idem eds, *The Routledge Companion to Trust* (New York: Routledge, 2017), xxix–xxx.

⁸⁶ For a recent overview, see: Searle, Nienaber, and Sitkin, *The Routledge Companion to Trust*. Interestingly, when Stefan Alexander Rompf writes about the flourishing field of trust research, he mentions all kinds of disciplines, except history: being of recent origin, historical research on trust has received little attention. Stefan Alexander Rompf, *Trust and Rationality: An Integrative Framework for Trust Research* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015), 15.

⁸⁷ “äußersten Komplexität der Welt” “Ohne jegliches Vertrauen [...] könnte er morgens sein Bett nicht verlassen”. Niklas Luhmann, *Vertrauen: ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1968), 1.

⁸⁸ Martin Hollis, *Trust within reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1998), 1.

⁸⁹ Annette C. Baier, ‘Trust and Antitrust’, *Ethics* 96, no. 2 (1986): 234. The same will prove to be true for historical studies of trust: crises of trust are easier to detect than functional trust relationships.

⁹⁰ This is, for instance, Geoffrey Hosking’s understanding of trust, in: Hosking, *Trust: A History*.

is less necessary.⁹¹ This contrast already shows that researchers often adopt completely conflicting approaches. The same goes for the distinction that is frequently made between trust as an attitude and trust as an act.⁹² A trusting attitude indicates the recurrence, in social situations, of the positive approach to the world and to others that is transmitted to an individual from childhood.⁹³ One can be more trusting in certain situations, for example among friends, because of earlier positive experiences, or less trusting, for instance when confronted with radically new situations. Trust can, however, also be described as an act or a practice. In the often cited definition of Russell Hardin, the trusting act consists of three parts: person A trusts B to do X.⁹⁴ Trust, by his definition, means that the trusting person has the positive expectation that the trusted person will act for his good according to his or her competences.⁹⁵ Marek Kohn added that such an act of trust requires freedom: to speak of trust, the trusted person should be able to refuse to carry out the given task or, instead, to go beyond his or her own interests in answering to the given trust.⁹⁶ In sociology, both appearances – trust as an attitude and trust as an act – have been

⁹¹ Cf. e.g. Annette Baier's comment: "The more one knows about people (oneself included), the less one has occasion strictly to trust them", Annette C. Baier, 'Trusting People', *Philosophical Perspectives* 6 (1992): 132. Using the contributions of others in the volume, Diego Gambetta however defines trust as "a particular level of subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) and in a context in which it affects his own action...[a probability] high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him". Diego Gambetta, *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1988), 217.

⁹² Trust has been described as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another". Two added conditions that the authors indicate are risk and interdependence: Denise M. Rousseau et al., 'Not so Different After All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust', *Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 3 (July 1998): 395.

⁹³ See e.g. Karen Jones, 'Trust as an Affective Attitude', *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political and Legal Philosophy*, no. 1 (1996): 4–25. See also: Eric M Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁹⁴ Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 9.

⁹⁵ Katherine Hawley adds that in order to speak of trust, the trustee should also have a commitment to do the task you give him. Katherine Hawley, 'Trust, Distrust and Commitment', *Noûs* 48, no. 1 (2014): 1–20.

⁹⁶ Marek Kohn, *Trust: Self-Interest and the Common Good* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

analysed extensively. Even though the starting point for this study has been a general attitude of distrust that characterised a particular historical situation, namely the post-Reformation period, I will show that for historical research it is expedient to consider not only attitudes but concrete acts, practices and strategies of trust and distrust as well, since these can be better studied from a historical perspective.

Interestingly, in the scholarly enterprise to better understand trust and its role in the most various ambits, social scientists usually do not see history as a separate discipline with its own contribution.⁹⁷ Despite that, they often use the historical dimension of their trust research to underline the presumed uniqueness of the modern situation.⁹⁸ Some scholars have argued that people have become less trusting in the modern period, because they rely more and more on people they do not know for important matters. The problematic result, these scholars claim, is that people are losing the willingness and ability for social cooperation. Martin Hollis, for example, has argued that the increasing rationality that he attributes to the post-Enlightenment period has eroded trust: people have come to treat each other in a more individualistic and instrumental way.⁹⁹ Marek Kohn has maintained that, in modern secular societies, trust has been replaced by contracts because there is no ultimate authority, God, to sanction trust relations.¹⁰⁰ Others, while agreeing that “trust is no longer the central pillar of social order,” claim that cooperation might take the place of trust and become the foundation of modern societies: in their opinion,

⁹⁷ In their introduction to their ‘companion to trust’, the three editors mention behavioural economics, cultural anthropology, organizational behaviour, management studies, political science, psychology and sociology as fields that have delved into the subject of trust, but not history. Searle, Nienaber, and Sitkin, ‘Introduction’, in idem, *The Routledge Companion to Trust*, xxix–xxx.

⁹⁸ “[B]uilding on the idea that during transition from constrained feudal toward more liberal European societies social relations became highly differentiated and rationalised, some social scientists have suggested that trust and distrust are modern concepts (e.g., Barber, 1983; Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1979; Seligman, 1997), tracing their origin into the 16th and 17th centuries.” Ivana Marková, Per Linell, and Alex Gillespie, ‘Trust and Distrust in Society’, in *Trust and Distrust: Sociocultural Perspectives*, ed. Ivana Marková and Alex Gillespie (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008), 18.

⁹⁹ Martin Hollis, for example, has argued that the increasing rationality that he attributes to the post-Enlightenment period has eroded trust: people have come to treat each other in a more individualistic and instrumental way. Hollis, *Trust within reason*.

¹⁰⁰ Marek Kohn has maintained that, in modern secular societies, trust has been replaced by contracts because there is no ultimate authority, God, to sanction trust relations. Kohn, *Trust*.

cooperation does not require trust but only shared interest and the reduction of opportunism.¹⁰¹ The problem is that such claims are often not based on the study of trust in actual historical societies.

Some inquiries, however, have gone further back in tracing the history of trust. Geoffrey Hosking's attempt to write a history of trust led him to conclude that, whereas our medieval and early modern counterparts relied mostly on what he defines as "strong thick trust" – a reliance for important matters on people one knows well – today's society is mostly based on what he calls "strong thin trust". This means that we have delegated vital aspects of our lives to people and institutions that we hardly know.¹⁰² Hosking writes that "strong thin trust is ever more prevalent in our social life today" without our being aware of it and as a result we have the impression of living in an era of little mutual trust (or even of a crisis of trust).¹⁰³ He concludes that some "strong thick trust" should therefore be brought back into our modern day social relationships. My research helps to nuance Hosking's thesis because it reveals the prominence of strong thin trust in a time and place that Hosking characterises as one of strong thick trust, namely seventeenth-century Italy: people's relation to the Church as an institution was one of strong *thin* trust. The Church was an institution on which people relied for something very vital – the salvation of their souls – and yet many aspects of it were unknown or far removed from them. Many Church leaders after the crisis of trust that we call the Reformation were conscious of the fact that some "strong thick trust" was to be brought back and reinforced in the Church's relation with the faithful in order for people to really be able to rely on its role as the mediator of grace.

Adam Seligman argued that the importance of trust – which, in his definition, does not include the confidence in people with whom one is familiar or in certain sanctioned role patterns but only reliance on virtually unknown people – is variable through time: although present throughout all ages, trust is more predominant in

¹⁰¹ Karen S. Cook, Russell Hardin, and Margaret Levi, *Cooperation Without Trust?* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2007), 1.

¹⁰² Hosking, *Trust: A History*, 47.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 47.

modern times. According to Seligman, nowadays the number of roles that exist simultaneously is higher and these roles are more negotiable than they were prior to the eighteenth century. Trust, meaning the reliance on another person who is completely unpredictable, has become more important now that roles are less well defined, Seligman argues.¹⁰⁴ My discussion of the attempts to improve the trustworthiness of early modern priests will show that even though institutional roles may have been more clearly defined in the seventeenth century, this clear delineation in itself created new trust-related problems.

Recently, historians of the early modern period have started to focus on trust as well. First among them were socio-economic historians who deployed the concept in order to interpret the functioning of pre-modern commercial networks and other economical interactions.¹⁰⁵ In non-commercial organisations that relied on long-distance communication, trust was an indispensable asset as well: a good example is *Propaganda Fide*, the papal Congregation in charge of the overseas missions.¹⁰⁶ The historiography of early modern long distance networks shows that trust and trustworthiness were consciously assessed by contemporaries, for example to further reciprocal economic interests.¹⁰⁷ Assessing trustworthiness was also essential in

¹⁰⁴ Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁵ Francesca Trivellato has studied the trust basis on which new commercial contacts were made. Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). See also: Zijlstra, Suze. "To build and sustain trust: Long-distance correspondence of Dutch seventeenth-century Merchants". *Dutch Crossing* 36, no. 2 (juli 2012): 114–31. Others have analysed the dynamic of trust and mistrust within the organisation of early modern chartered companies. See e.g.: Ann M. Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, "'Giants of an Earlier Capitalism': The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals," *Business History Review* 62, no. 03 (1988); "Agency Problems in Early Chartered Companies: The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company," *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 04 (1990).

¹⁰⁶ Heiko Droste, 'Sending a Letter between Amsterdam and Stockholm. A Matter of Trust and Precautions', in *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Hans Cools, Marika Koblusek, and Badeloch Noldus (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006); Thérèse Peeters, 'Trust and Mission. Seventeenth-Century Lazarist Missionaries in North Africa', *Trajecta* 26, no. 1 (2017): 90–106.

¹⁰⁷ See, among others: Sheilagh C. Ogilvie, *The Use and Abuse of Trust: Social Capital and Its Deployment by Early Modern Guilds* (Munich: CES, 2004); Laurence Fontaine, *The Moral Economy: Poverty, Credit, and Trust in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Ricardo Court, "'Januensis Ergo Mercator': Trust and Enforcement in the Business Correspondence of the Brignole Family", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35, no. 4 (2004): 987–1003.

obtaining other kinds of knowledge. Stephen Shapin shows that, in the seventeenth century, much of the knowledge, including scientific knowledge, found its basis in testimony and personal authority.¹⁰⁸ Barbara Shapiro similarly has studied how people tried to assess the trustworthiness of the news and of travel reports by evaluating the witnesses to these facts.¹⁰⁹ These and other studies not only reveal that early modern people consciously thought about whom to trust, but also that trust and trustworthiness are realities that can be studied historically.¹¹⁰ Peter Schröder has broadened the scope of trust research to the field of early modern politics, exploring the ways in which political thinkers of the seventeenth century willfully deployed trust as a possible solution to the political instability of the time.¹¹¹ My study aims to broaden the field even further by trying to understand the role of trust in the context of religion.

Ute Frevert has taken the first steps in this direction. Her emphasis, however, is on the meaning that people have attributed to the word trust rather than on the practical consequences of trust relationships. Using early modern German lexicons, she has argued that until the eighteenth century the word *Vertrauen* (trust) was mainly associated with trust in God.¹¹² In the Enlightenment period, according to Frevert, confidence in oneself and in others became more central to the discourse on trust.¹¹³ This shift in the meaning of the word also suggests some change in what trust meant for people who lived before and whose life was dominated by insecurities: according to Frevert, only in the late eighteenth century did the experience of trust and the

¹⁰⁸ Steven Shapin, *A social history of truth: civility and science in seventeenth-century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), xxvi.

¹⁰⁹ Barbara J. Shapiro, *A culture of fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁰ See e.g.: Toon van Houdt et al., eds., *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002). Instead of researching the role of trust throughout history, Ute Frevert and Dorothea Weltecke have dealt with the history of the word trust. Ute Frevert, 'Vertrauen - eine historische Spurensuche', in *Vertrauen, historische Annäherungen*, ed. Ute Frevert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 7–66; Dorothea Weltecke, 'Gab es "Vertrauen" im Mittelalter? Methodische Überlegungen', in Frevert, *Vertrauen, historische Annäherungen*, 67–89.

¹¹¹ Peter Schröder, *Trust in Early Modern International Political Thought, 1598–1713* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹¹² Frevert, 'Vertrauen - eine historische Spurensuche', 15.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.

concept itself become something thoroughly positive.¹¹⁴ In her contribution on trust in the Middle Ages, Dorothea Weltecke rightly argues that to further the debate on trust, scholars need to concentrate on individual actors.¹¹⁵ The part of my research that focuses on personal experiences of trust responds to this call. It shows that, contrary to what Frevert argues, also for seventeenth-century religious, trust in God and one's neighbour could constitute a thoroughly positive experience.

The work of all these different scholars helps us to better understand the phenomenon of trust. The insights offered by the social sciences make us more familiar with the concept; the contributions of scholars of the early modern period show us that trust can be studied historically; and Frevert and Weltecke's work demonstrates that we can explore how our historical subjects experienced trust. However, in the light of the wide-ranging (and sometimes even contrasting) uses that scholars have made of the concept, a precise conceptualisation of trust is expedient. A definition of trust that one applies to history should, in my opinion, take into account the following aspects. First, in order to study trust in a historical context one should acknowledge the importance of the dimension of time: trust is an expectation that can be proven as correct or false with the passing of time, and which can accordingly change.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, an act of trust requires one to assume that the trusted person *freely* wants to do what is expected of him or her: otherwise, instead

¹¹⁴ "Vertrauen und Misstrauen waren also auch in der Vormoderne keine unbekanntenen oder ungebräuchlichen Erfahrungen und Begriffe. Aber erst im späten 18. Jahrhundert erwarb Vertrauen jenen durch und durch positiven Nimbus, der ihm bis heute anhaftet. Das hat, wie zu zeigen sein wird, viel mit den gesellschaftlichen Umbrüchen, politischen Neuerungen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklungen zu tun, die Europa seit der Französischen Revolution erlebte". Ute Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen: Eine Obsession der Moderne*, 1st ed. (München: C.H.Beck, 2013), 26.

¹¹⁵ She also shows that for Luther, who, Weltecke argues, marked the turn from medieval thinking about *Vertrauen* to more recent uses of the word, trust in God was the only legitimate form of trust and all other trust was idolatry Weltecke, 'Gab es "Vertrauen"', 87–88.

¹¹⁶ "Eine Theorie des Vertrauens setzt eine Theorie der Zeit voraus" Luhmann, *Vertrauen*, 7. Also Hosking rightly remarks that past experience, that is, history, constitutes a fundamental aspect of trust. Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Why We Need a History of Trust*, (review no. 287a) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/287a>. Date accessed: 20 October, 2014. We should be well aware that in trusting someone, one does not only "embrace a hypothesis that seems secure enough to predict the other's action", as Schröder presumes, because the prediction that someone will do you harm is not captured by the word 'trust'. Schröder, *Trust*, 9. Trust, instead should be the prediction that one expects the other to do something that is for one's own good.

of trust, we would be talking about coercion.¹¹⁷ Thirdly, to speak of trust one should have the prospect that the other is *able* to do what is asked: one can trust someone to speak the truth only about the things that he or she knows.¹¹⁸ Finally, I consider as trust only those expectations that are based on earlier experiences (as opposed to “blind faith” – a form of trust that is impossible to detect in historical documents), because it is these expectations and the acts based on them that historians can find in the sources and thus describe.

These four premises can be summarised in the following definition: trust is an expectation based on experience that the other party, be it an individual or a group, will be *able* and *willing* to do what is expected.¹¹⁹ Certainly, one might contend that an early modern European would not recognise such a modern understanding of trust.¹²⁰ Yet, as Weil has rightly affirmed: trust “can be considered [...] a problem about which seventeenth-century people consciously thought rather than a concept imposed on the past by later historians”.¹²¹ Combining my own analysis of what seventeenth-century religious people thought about trust (as covered in chapter seven) with the results of modern research has resulted in a definition in which early modern people, in my opinion, could recognise themselves.

The primary objective of this thesis is not to explore the history of trust in the early modern age or to provide a conceptual analysis of how trust was expressed and experienced by seventeenth-century people. This would require a very different exploration from the one that I have undertaken. Instead, my goal is to verify the

¹¹⁷ The freedom of the other to act contrary to his or her earlier actions makes that the experiences on which one bases his or her trust never exclude at least some risk. Marek Kohn added that to speak of trust, the trusted person should be able to refuse to carry out the given task or, instead, to go beyond his or her own interests in answering to the given trust: Kohn, *Trust*, 14–17.

¹¹⁸ These two aspects – ability and a benevolence, or willingness to act in favour of the one who trusts – are, together with integrity, the characteristics of a person in which we are likely to trust, according to our current knowledge. Michael D. Baer and Jason A. Colquitt, ‘Why Do People Trust? Moving toward a More Comprehensive Consideration of the Antecedents of Trust’, in Searle, Nienaber, and Sitkin, *The Routledge Companion to Trust*, 163, 168–72.

¹¹⁹ This definition is inspired by that of Annette Baier, who wrote that: “Trust is reliance on others’ competence and willingness to look after things one cares about which are entrusted to their care” Baier, ‘Trust and Antitrust’, 259.

¹²⁰ Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 7–13.

¹²¹ Rachel Weil, *A Plague of Informers: Conspiracy and Political Trust in William III’s England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 5. Cited in: Schröder, *Trust*, 2.

hypothesis that trust was central to the Tridentine reform attempts. This hypothesis first arose out of the work I had done on missionary correspondences, which suggested that a trust-approach had the potential to further the debate on the Catholic Reformation. In order to verify this hypothesis, I analysed different situations in which trust appears to be a decisive element, firstly, by looking at *words* in the sources that expressed such trust (not only *fiducia*, but also verbs like *confidare*, *fidarsi*, *credere*, and *dar credito*), secondly, by exploring the *practices* through which trust was asked, given or withheld, and finally, by studying something that is closely related to trust, namely the perceived *trustworthiness* of people. All this is not to deny, of course, that other dynamics besides trust also played a decisive role in the Catholic Reformation in general, or in the particular situations that I researched.

There are several advantages of using trust as a lens rather than related concepts such as respectability, belief, honour, truth and loyalty. First, trust constitutes an antidote to the current Italian paradigm in which the focus on power and discipline tends to obscure the plurality of the Italian Church in the seventeenth century. The concept moreover provides a key to explain several contradictions with which the current historiography on the Catholic Reformation confronts us¹²²: 1) the juxtaposition of instances of freedom and compulsion in the realm of female religiosity; 2) the contrast between the imposition of Tridentine mandates from above and the creative appropriation of the same Tridentine spirit from below; and 3) the paradoxical coexistence of very successful and very ineffective attempts to reform. Finally, trust offers the opportunity to consider a range of different situations that characterise the Catholic Reformation, and to analyse them together without infringing upon their singularity.

Approach and sources

In his book *Trust, a History*, Geoffrey Hosking has argued that historians influenced by Michel Foucault and Clifford Geertz have focused too much on power on the one hand, and meanings, representations and discourse on the other. Trust comes in where one wants to understand what connects ideas and perceptions with actual

¹²² See: Ditchfield, 'In search of local knowledge', 287, 290-91, 293-94.

actions, decisions, and the behaviour of real people outside the text. Moreover, by focusing solely on power, one cannot understand actions inspired by “people’s [...] lively and apparently ineradicable tendency to seek reciprocal relationships.” With his study, Hosking invites historians to investigate the basis for human interaction, and thus a crucial aspect of society.¹²³ Departing from a different angle, Brad Gregory, a historian of the Reformation, proposed a similar attitude when he wrote that historians of religion should try to approach their subject matter on the terms of the religious people whom they are studying.¹²⁴ In the footsteps of Quentin Skinner, Gregory claims that scholars should try to depict religious people “in a manner in which they would have recognised themselves”. In Skinner’s words, we should “approach the past with a willingness to listen”.¹²⁵ A study of the role of trust in the Catholic Reformation requires a combination of both methodologies. It necessarily centres around and acknowledges trust and distrust as basic motives of human interaction, specifically when confronted with novelty. At the same time, it presumes that one should take into consideration the religious assumptions, intellectual framework and goals that inspired people’s acts of trust and distrust. In my view, Hosking and Seligman, who both studied the historical dimension of trust, have in some sense failed to “see things their way” where they bring in religion. Both assume that in all belief systems, faith is a form of unverified, blind trust. Yet, *in the*

¹²³ Hosking, *Trust, a history*, 6.

¹²⁴ Brad S. Gregory, ‘The Other Confessional History: On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion’, *History and Theory. Theme Issue 45: Religion and History* 45, no. 4 (2006): 132–49. Where historians ceased to write confessional historiography, they, in his view, soon switched to a “secular confessional historiography”, unthinkingly bringing “undemonstrable metaphysical beliefs” in the practice of scholarship. (p. 136) Religion seen through the lens of modern social theory (as developed by Feuerbach and Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Freud and others) must be reducible to something else, whether it be political, economic, cultural or natural. In Gregory’s opinion, this approach leads to a biased account because “an action that might look non-religious and that could be interpreted plausibly in secular terms might have been motivated by and understood by its protagonists in religious terms”. (p. 133). These might seem very banal observations, yet, according to Gregory, they “run deeply counter to the dominant ways in which many historians of early modern Christianity [...] have tended in recent decades to approach their subject matter” (p. 135).

¹²⁵ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, 6. Cited in: Brad S. Gregory, ‘Can We “See Things Their Way”? Should We Try?’, in *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, ed. Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 25.

eyes of seventeenth-century Catholic ecclesiastics this was certainly not the case: as we shall see in chapter seven, they based their faith in God on concrete experiences just as they did with faith/trust in people.¹²⁶

For early modern people, faith and trust were basically the same experience, as – for many religious people – they still are.¹²⁷ It is not my intention, in this thesis, to delve into the theological meaning of trust and faith: a short glance at the Bible suffices, though, to see that the word belief is often used in a meaning that comes very close to, or even coincides with trust.¹²⁸ Since seventeenth-century people also experienced faith and trust in very similar ways, I will not make an artificial divide between the two. Still, the focus of this research is mostly on interpersonal trust. The lived experience of this interpersonal trust is, as we will see, closely related to values that were paramount to seventeenth-century religious life: values such as obedience and what should be the free pursuit of virtue and salvation.

Yet even “seeing things their way” cannot offer a complete picture of historical change, since the viewpoint of contemporaries is likely to be varied and limited. Besides the motives of trust, we should therefore also study the *outcome* of trust (or distrust) with respect to the envisioned reform. That is why I have looked for correspondence and other private documents that gave me insight into motivations, while supplementing these with juridical and institutional sources that

¹²⁶ A clear example of a reductive account of faith that largely overlooks the perspective of “what it meant to them”, is a chapter by Geoffrey Hosking about the importance of trust in religion. Hosking, ‘Godly homelands’, in: idem, *Trust: A History*, 50–80. Hosking’s views are not exceptional. Also Seligman, for example, argues that the ontological trust “which in fact bypasses all epistemological procedures of verification” that is required by the *Deus absconditus* of Calvinist belief, “has been, in one form or another, central to all religious thought”. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, 22. In my view, it is precisely the way of believing, of trusting, that makes religions different from one another, and in studying them we should do justice to these differences. For Luther’s take on trust: Sasja Emilie Mathiasen Stopa, “‘Through Sin Nature Has Lost Its Confidence in God’ – Sin and Trust as Formative Elements of Martin Luther’s Conception of Society”, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 5, no. 2 (2018): 151–71.

¹²⁷ The former leader of the Anglican Church, Rowan Williams, asserts that belief in God often starts “from a sense that we ‘believe in’, we trust some kinds of people. We have confidence in the way they live, the way they live is a way I want to live.” Hosking, *Trust: A History*, 51–52.

¹²⁸ Jesus often used the word belief in a sense that comes very close to trust (echoing the Old Testament), and Paul, too, explains faith as an absolute trust in Christ, through which one can be saved (central, obviously, in Luther’s *sola fide*).

highlight the results of strategies of trust or distrust. The sources that I used range from very personal, autobiographical letters of Jesuit novices to the repetitive decrees of diocesan synods; from anonymous letters of complaint by Genoese cloistered sisters to juridical documentation produced in the city's different courts; and from a religious congregation's internal correspondence to the pleas for material help from a lay woman running one of Genoa's largest charitable institutions. Though running the risk of being eclectic, the advantages of using such a wide range of sources are evident: they offer a many-layered glimpse into how contemporaries saw the importance of trust for the reforms, while at the same time enabling us to see the results of different approaches.

As Valeria Polonio wrote, for the different ambits of the Genoese ecclesiastical landscape in the early modern period we either have hardly any material, or the sources are abundant but barely researched.¹²⁹ The choice in favour of the sources that I used was partially determined by their availability: thus, I was helped by Jesuit and Lazarist correspondences that are respectively accessible in the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu* and available in print; and I made use of published manuscripts and edited sources on female religious individuals in seventeenth-century Genoa. However, I also studied many juridical and administrative documents as well as letters that can be found in the Genoese *Archivio di Stato*, the *Archivio Diocesano*, and the Vatican Archives. In these different archives, I mainly selected source collections that could teach me something about situations of distrust between religious or between religious and lay people (accusatory letters, investigation reports, and the institutional responses to this type of documents). Further research on, for instance, the popularity of certain religious orders might benefit from serial sources on donations or other financial documentation, as well as lists of entries in the different religious orders. Much of this material, however, is either lost or spread over the archives of the different religious institutions in Genoa or elsewhere (around the turn of the eighteenth century, when many religious groups were suppressed, their archives were dispersed). Pastoral visitations, in general an important source for the

¹²⁹ Valeria Polonio, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche della Liguria medievale*, vol. 67, Italia Sacra. Studi e documenti di storia ecclesiastica (Rome: Herder, 2002), IX.

kind of research that I have in mind, are not absent for Genoa in the seventeenth century, yet they predominantly provide descriptions of the different churches and their belongings, together with demographic information: there is little or no assessment of the population's or the clergy's religious habits and morals, and obstacles in the drafting and conservation of these visitation reports have made them less useful for our aim (even though in other areas of Europe they have proven very valuable).¹³⁰ Another important archive for the research I propose, that of the local Inquisition tribunal, has largely been lost.¹³¹

Overview of the dissertation

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how practices of trust and distrust were used to bring about reforms that were typical of the Catholic Reformation in Genoa in the first half of the seventeenth century until the end of Cardinal Durazzo's tenure (1664). This analysis resulted in a varied range of reform situations in which the role of trust and distrust comes to the fore. Before delving into these case studies, the first chapter sets the scene: it sketches the geopolitical and economic background of the Republic in the seventeenth century, introduces us to Cardinal Durazzo, the most prominent ecclesiastical personality of that time, and surveys the many local studies on the Genoese Church that constitute the fertile ground on which to conduct our trust research. Finally, the chapter delves into the role of the lay people in the Catholic Reformation as studied in recent scholarship on the Genoese situation.

Against this background, the second chapter uses three case studies to introduce the phenomenon of what I will call trust management, i.e. the strategy with which reformers tried to appease a certain group of people (be it other clergy or lay people) and convince them of a shared interest in order to win their trust. When they did, it was always with an aim that went beyond merely maintaining the trust of that

¹³⁰ Valeria Polonio Felloni, 'Le più antiche visite pastorali della diocesi di Genova (1597-1654). Presentazione di una fonte', *Serta antiqua et mediaevalia. Nuova serie* 1 (1997): 428–29; Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 79.

¹³¹ Paolo Fontana, 'L'Inquisizione a Genova e in Liguria. Situazione degli archivi locali e prospettive di ricerca sulla dissidenza religiosa nel tardo Settecento', in *Atti del Convegno. L'Inquisizione Romana e i suoi archivi. A vent'anni dall'apertura dell'ACDF (15-17 May 2018)*, ed. Alejandro Cifres (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2019), 1. Consulted on 28 June 2019 at: <http://www.memoriafidei.va/content/dam/memoriafidei/documenti/32%20Fontana.pdf>.

specific group. The three examples in the chapter demonstrate that this approach was not infallible, and could even result in an unintended loss of trust. Apparently, the use of trust management nonetheless appealed to many reformers because they often returned to such strategies to further their reform goals.

Winning or winning back the trust of the laity was a prime concern of the Council of Trent: its decrees insisted that a more trustworthy clergy was to set an example, in behaviour and devotion, and that the laity would follow. The third chapter illustrates why this effort to foster the trustworthy image of the clergy brought with it new trust-related problems. Focusing on the Tridentine regulations regarding clothing, we will see how the scandal provoked by a betrayal of trust – a trust that had been awakened by appearances but did not correspond with reality – was much greater than the indignity caused by a priest who openly lived a life that did not conform to Tridentine standards. Reform efforts such as these clothing regulations could thus backfire in unexpected ways.

The next chapter shifts our attention from male secular priests to the world of female religiosity in Genoa. In this environment, trust was a scarce good. Even though the Council of Trent had decreed otherwise, halfway through the seventeenth century the convent continued to be a place where the urban elite could safely put away their daughters, including those without a religious vocation. The tactic used to discipline these convents was one of distrust: rules, a tight control over the convents' visitors, and punishments for transgressors were intended to solve the problematic situation. My analysis of this situation will shed light on the efficacy of this method, and on the ways in which contemporaries experienced it.

The fifth chapter in turn investigates the ways in which an approach of distrust, the easiest reaction in the face of a new initiative and the logical approach in solving abuses, sometimes turned into trust. Initiatives of female religiosity outside the walls of the convent were looked upon with suspicion by the urban elites. Still, Genoa witnessed the birth of two initiatives of women who wanted to live a religious life in the world: the Medee and the Brignoline. The chapter also delves into the dynamics that underpinned the support given to the Turchine, a new order that observed strict enclosure. The trust that was eventually given to the three initiatives

was, as we will see, closely related to the level of personal freedom that their female founders managed to obtain.

The sixth chapter returns to the male clergy and centres on the intermediary groups that historians have identified as essential actors in the reform: religious orders and congregations. In particular, the analysis concentrates on the arrival in Genoa of the Lazarists, a young, French congregation of priests founded in 1625. In order to establish itself successfully in the city, not only did this new congregation need to win trust from different sides; its members also had to find out for themselves whom to trust in the new environment. In this chapter, I explore the thought process behind this endeavour and show that a new congregation like the Lazarists was well aware that trust was vital for success in a new area.

Finally, from the collective awareness of the importance of trust I zoom in on the experience of religious individuals. The letters of Genoese Jesuits who offered themselves for one of the many overseas missions give an exceptional insight into the personal considerations of these individuals. The candidates described with acuteness the experiences that infused them with the trust necessary for making the life-changing choice to go to Japan, China, Paraguay, or elsewhere. The letters therefore help us to further understand how contemporaries experienced trust. The chapter shows that a trust perspective not only offers a possibility to better grasp why some reform attempts were more effective than others; it also provides a vital key to witness the lives of those involved and understand their individual choices.

In the conclusion, I will take stock of the results of this experiment that involved looking at the Catholic Reformation through the lens of trust. Without any pretention to completeness, we will see what this approach brings, firstly to our understanding of reform mechanisms within early modern Catholicism; secondly, to the current insights in the seventeenth-century Church in Genoa; and, finally, to our present-day conceptualisation of early modern trust, especially in the context of religion.

1. Setting the scene. The Republic of Genoa in the seventeenth century

The situation of the Church in the Republic of Genoa some decades after the Council of Trent lends itself well to exploring the importance of trust. In this first chapter, I will briefly sketch the geopolitical and economic background of the Republic in the seventeenth century. Secondly, the chapter zooms in on the main protagonist in the Catholic Reformation in Genoa: Cardinal Stefano Durazzo. Then, a short historiographical overview will follow of the religious landscape of the city. Finally, I will delve into the only aspect of the religious history of Genoa that has been featured in English language scholarship, namely the importance of lay initiatives and popular devotion.

La Serenissima

In the seventeenth century, the Republic consisted of a relatively small strip of land along the Ligurian Sea: “a screen of barren mountains”, as one French diplomat put it, that reached up to the Mediterranean.¹ This strip was interrupted at two places: some 70 km west of Genoa was the Marquisate of Finale, purchased by the Spanish in 1598; Oneglia, a fief of the Doria family further west, was purchased by the Duke of Savoy in 1576 (but taken back by the Genoese in 1625).² Two major duchies, those of Savoy and Milan, surrounded the Republic, together with the smaller duchy of Parma and Mantua, the duchy of Modena, the Republic of Lucca and the Marquisate of Monferrato.

¹ Cited in: Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World, Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*; Vol. 3 (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 157.

² See, for a map of Genoa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with explanation: Thomas A. Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea: Policy and Power in an Early Modern Maritime Republic, 1559-1684* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 4–5.

In 1580, the city had some 48,000 inhabitants, a number that grew to around 72,500 in 1638. The disastrous plague epidemic in 1656-7, the greatest crisis in the history of early modern Genoa, reduced the population to around 40,000 inhabitants.³ Most inhabitants of the Republic lived in the capital or the surrounding villages.⁴ The rest of its territories were sparsely populated and did not feature any major cities: Savona, after Genoa the largest town, had around 12,000 inhabitants towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁵ Most commercial, political and religious activity was therefore to be found in the capital itself, which will be also the main (but not exclusive) focus of this dissertation.

La Serenissima is well known among international scholars for its fascinating maritime history and its impressive medieval trade empire.⁶ Genoa acquired its first overseas territories during the First Crusade and expanded progressively from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. Together with Venice, Genoa dominated medieval commerce in the Mediterranean area. With the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean and the expansion of Spain and Portugal in the west, Genoa lost its strong position and turned towards another occupation: in the sixteenth century, individual merchants became involved with the finances of the Spanish crown, which would prove to be a fortunate move.

From the fourteenth until the early sixteenth century, Genoa was alternately controlled by Milan, France and the Spanish Habsburgs. Yet, whilst previously such domination did not exclude a certain independence, in the first decades of the

³ Giuseppe Rocca, 'La peste di metà Seicento a Genova e in Liguria', in *La Storia dei Genovesi. Atti del convegno di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova. Genova 10-11-12 Giugno 1987*, vol. 8 (Genoa: Centro internazionale di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, 1987), 137–51.

⁴ In 1607, almost one third of the 360,000 inhabitants of the whole Republic except Corsica (i.e. the city of Genoa and its territories on the peninsula) lived in the city and surroundings. The total number of people in the Republic never rose above half a million during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thomas A. Kirk, 'A Little Country in a World of Empires: Genoese Attempts to Penetrate the Maritime Empires of the Seventeenth Century', *European Economic History Review* 25 (1996): 407.

⁵ Carlo Bitossi, 'L'antico regime genovese, 1576-1797', in *Storia di Genova: Mediterraneo, Europa, Atlantico*, ed. Dino Puncuh (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 2003), 412.

⁶ See, for instance: Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958-1528* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

sixteenth century Genoa turned into the plaything of foreign powers. This was a time in which internal rivalry between factions soared, causing Genoa to lose its sovereignty alternatively to France and Spain, which profited from the political instability.⁷ The famous reforms of 1528 of Andrea Doria, a condottiere under Charles V who, with the help of the Spanish, had occupied the city that same year, enforced a new institutional order that removed the sting from some of the fiercest factional conflicts. Consequently, internal division could no longer be used by foreign powers, while a contractual relationship with Charles V ensured stability for both parties. Genoa became a satellite state of Spain, and Andrea Doria himself rose to a powerful position within the Republic. Doria's reforms did away with some of the major tensions by organising the nobility in 28 *alberghi*, i.e. groups of aristocratic families. Via a complicated system, the 1528 laws effectively divided political power over these groups.

Initially, the new stability and the relative geopolitical neutrality ensured an incredible rise of Genoese influence, this time via its supremacy in European finance. The second half of the sixteenth century was the “golden age” of Genoese financial activity, whilst Genoese shipping decreased.⁸ Ferdinand Braudel famously called the period from 1557 to 1627 the “age of the Genoese”: seventy years “of a rule that was so discreet and sophisticated that historians for a long time failed to notice it”, and that had as its focal point not the Republic but “a handful of banker-financiers”.⁹ Being the leader of the *nobili vecchi*, Doria only allowed people from his own faction to get involved in Spanish finances. Thus, the internal differences with the opposite faction, the *nobili nuovi*, who were mostly involved with manufacturing and trade, grew.¹⁰

A second reform implemented by Doria, in 1547, favouring the *nobili vecchi* in political offices brought about an increase not only in economic, but also in political divisions. Even in terms of maritime policy these two groups had different interests:

⁷ Steven Epstein has listed all the Genoese revolts and changes in government up until 1528, thus giving an interesting insight into French and Spanish involvement. *Ibid.*, 327.

⁸ Kirk, ‘A Little Country’, 407–8.

⁹ Braudel, *The Perspective*, 157.

¹⁰ Kirk, ‘A Little Country’, 410–11.

the *nobili nuovi* pressed for a position of armed neutrality and the acquisition of publicly owned galleys, whilst the *nobili vecchi* accepted dependence on Spain for military support. These economic and political divisions led to a major uprising in 1575 during which the *nobili vecchi* were banned from the city. Things calmed down after new laws were issued in 1576 in which the *nobili nuovi* obtained equal political power. It was again agreed that every year members could be inscribed to the *libro della nobiltà*, the ranks of those eligible for political offices (people below a certain standing never became eligible). The civil war ended but the compromise did not remove internal contrasts among the patriciate, nor did it satisfy those who continued to be excluded from power.¹¹

In fact, in the first decades of the seventeenth century, conflicts arose again over who was allowed access to political power within the Republic. Those who had made their fortune in recent years – entrepreneurs, merchants, and artisans – saw their political aspirations frustrated again and again.¹² A conspiracy of 1628, whose most important representative was Giulio Cesare Vachero, an enriched non-noble, was a sign of a broader discontent: at the instigation of the Duke of Savoy (with whom, as we shall see, Genoa had been at war shortly before) the conspirators planned to eliminate many high-ranking politicians.

Although their plot was foiled, this crisis forced the ruling class to open up.¹³ Officially, among those who did belong to the nobility, power and rights were distributed equally. Yet social fragmentation created ever more divisions, and political power shifted towards a small group of very rich families: not only the Doria family, the Spinolas – Ambrogio Spinola, of course, became the famous condottiere for the Spanish crown – and other great names from the *nobili vecchi*, but also “new” families that had enriched themselves in the world of international finance: Brignole Sale, Balbi, Durazzo, Mongeglia, Invrea and Strata were all included in a powerful

¹¹ Gino Benvenuti, *Storia della Repubblica di Genova*, Storia e documenti 26 (Milan: Mursia, 1977), 133–34; Carlo Bitossi, *Il governo dei magnifici: patriziato e politica a Genova fra Cinque e Seicento* (Genoa: Edizioni culturali internazionali Genova, 1990), 32.

¹² Bitossi, ‘L’antico regime’, 394.

¹³ Ibid.; Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 105.

top layer of society.¹⁴ These families formed informal networks that conflicted with the supposedly equal division of power among all nobles.¹⁵

Starting from the first decade of the seventeenth century, the idea became increasingly accepted that the Republic should distance itself politically and diplomatically from Spain. One important reason was related to the various incidents regarding its sovereignty and autonomy around the turn of the century, among which was the controversial Spanish occupation of Finale.¹⁶ Yet while distrust was on the rise, the two remained mutually dependent: Genoa relied on Spain for protection and economically, whilst Spain needed Genoa's financial services and capital, and profited from its geographical position.¹⁷

The first decades of the seventeenth century were an era of fierce political debate, as reflected in many political treatises about the internal division of power as well as Genoa's position vis-à-vis the Habsburgs. Political writings were almost unanimously either cautious or openly against Genoese involvement in Spain but almost never asked for a radical break from its alliance.¹⁸ Both amongst the *nuovi* and the *vecchi*, internal divisions created groups of *filospagnoli*, *repubblicisti* and *filofrancesi* (those who opted for strengthening the bonds with France).¹⁹ Individuals within

¹⁴ For insight into the way these families were interrelated, see: Bitossi, *Il governo*, 124–35; Giorgio Doria and Rodolfo Savelli, “Cittadini di governo” a Genova’, *Materiali per una storia della cultura giuridica*, no. 2 (1980): 4–5.

¹⁵ They built Genoa's famous sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *palazzzi* (of the Via Nuova and the Via Balbi) that, according to a letter of Peter Paul Rubens, were somewhat similar to the dwellings of the great monarchs of the time: this ostentation stirred up even more ill feeling among the city's middle classes who were excluded from this power and excessive wealth: Rodolfo Savelli, ‘Genova nell’età di Van Dyck. Sette quadri con un epilogo’, in *Van Dyck a Genova. Grande pittura e collezionismo* (Milan: Electa, 1997), 1; Teofilo Ossian De Negri, *Storia di Genova* (Milan: Martello, 1974), 686–91.

¹⁶ De Negri, *Storia di Genova*, 702.

¹⁷ Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 96.

¹⁸ One of the most important political writers of the time was Andrea Spinola. Both he and Ansaldo Cebà in the 1610s and 1620s criticised Genoa's compliancy with the Spanish, as well as the concentration of power in the hands of the *Collegi* and the doge at the expense of the *Consigli* and the various *Magistrature di controllo*. Bitossi, *Il governo*, 198–99. On the culture of political debate in Genoa, see: Cees Reijner, ‘Gesprekken in Genua. Giovanni Costa over het Twaalfjarig Bestand’, *De Zeventiende Eeuw. Cultuur in de Nederlanden in interdisciplinair perspectief* 30, no. 1 (2014): 87–88.

¹⁹ Carlo Bitossi, ‘Patriziato e politica nella Repubblica di Genova fra Cinque e Seicento’, in *I Gesuiti fra impegno religioso e potere politico nella Repubblica di Genova. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi sotto l’Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica. Genova, 2-3-4- dicembre 1991*, ed. Claudio Paolucci, vol. 2,

these different factions could have opposing interests and express them in unexpected ways. It was possible to lean towards the French crown for geopolitical reasons and at the same time to continue to invest in Spanish finances for personal gain.²⁰ Also, different individuals and groups could be allies with respect to one issue, and enemies in another.²¹ It is therefore an arduous if not impossible task to identify exactly who belonged to which faction.²²

In the 1620s, Genoa was struck by several major crises. In 1625, a dispute over the Marquisate of Zuccarello, purchased by the Genoese from the Holy Roman Empire but also claimed by the Savoyards, led to an armed conflict. Helped by French troops, the Duke of Savoy managed to reach the walls of Genoa within just a few weeks. The support of the Spanish crown and its allies relieved the city and the same year the Republic restored sovereignty over its territories. The senate unanimously decided to erect a new sanctuary in honour of Nostra Signora della Vittoria, to thank the Virgin Mary for what they saw as her role in this victory.²³ In 1625, a secret truce and later a peace between Spain and France, was also forced upon their respective allies: Genoa and Savoy. Fighting between the two, however, continued on a smaller scale and culminated in the earlier mentioned coup of Vachero supported by the Duke of Savoy.²⁴ Spain's actions in the wake of the war, its continuous interference with local politics, and the crown's suspension of payments to its Genoese creditors in 1627 greatly increased resentment in the

Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrale di bibliografia e cultura ligure, V (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1992), 22–25.

²⁰ Carlo Bitossi, 'Un lungo addio. Il tramonto del partito spagnolo nella Genova del '600', in *La Storia dei Genovesi. Atti del convegno di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova. Genova 10-11-12 Giugno 1987*, vol. 8 (Centro internazionale di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, 1988), 120.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

²² See for a comprehensive study of the political ranks: Carlo Bitossi, 'Famiglie e frazioni a Genova, 1576-1657', in *Nobiltà e governo a Genova tra Cinque e Seicento: ricerche sulle fonti per una storia della Repubblica di Genova*, vol. 2, *Miscellanea storica Ligure 12* (Genoa: Università di Genova, Istituto di storia moderna e contemporanea, 1980), 59–139.

²³ De Negri, *Storia di Genova*, 705–10.

²⁴ Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 101–5.

Republic as it was already struck by years of poor harvests and famine (1622) and suffered from the high costs of war and internal political strife.²⁵

The 1630s were years in which Genoa sought to strengthen its position against internal and external enemies: many rich Genoese contributed to the new city walls built against a possible invasion. The *Inquisitori di Stato* were founded in reaction to the Vachero conspiracy of 1627 with the task of countering internal political threats by means of espionage and counterespionage.²⁶ Still, several other conspiracies, all encouraged by Savoy, followed in the 1630s and later decades. After the Spanish suspension of payments in 1627 and the peace with Savoy in 1633, the Genoese financial elite progressively disengaged from Spain: a new consciousness that Genoa had to become more independent became widespread.²⁷ A sign of this was the Republic's claim in 1637 to the status of a kingdom in matters of ceremony and diplomacy, on the basis of its reign over Corsica and the symbolic crowning of Mary as queen and patroness of the Republic that same year.²⁸ This move was clearly meant to emphasise both the Republic's sovereignty over its own territory and the Ligurian Sea, which Spain had repeatedly infringed in the previous years, and to underline its claim to equality with respect to the geopolitical powers of that time.²⁹

In the meantime, the political ranks continued to be divided on many issues. The year 1637 was marked by contrasts between the executive government, the *Collegi* - consisting of the senate and the *Camera* – and the *Supremi Sindacatori* who had

²⁵ Kirk, 'A Little Country', 413; Thomas A. Kirk, 'La crisi del 1654 come indicatore del nuovo equilibrio nel Mediterraneo', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 51, no. 1 (2011): 532–33.

²⁶ Bitossi, 'L'antico regime', 391.

²⁷ Claudio Costantini, 'La ricerca di un'identità repubblicana nella Genova del primo Seicento', in *Dibattito politico e problemi di governo a Genova nella prima metà del Seicento*, ed. Claudio Costantini and Carlo Bitossi, vol. 2, *Miscellanea Storica Ligure* 7 (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1976), 45; Bitossi, *Il governo*, 192–93.

²⁸ See: Paolo Fontana, 'Una Regina per la Repubblica. Una scelta tra politica, devozione e teologia' (Convegno sul cardinale Stefano Durazzo (1594-1667) nel 350.mo della morte- Roma 11 luglio 1667, Genoa, 2017); De Negri, *Storia di Genova*, 715.

²⁹ See, for the geopolitical significance of this move: Thomas A. Kirk, 'The Implications of Ceremony at Sea: Some Examples from the Republic of Genoa (16th and 17th Centuries)', *Great Circle: Journal of the Australian Association for Maritime History* 18, no. 1 (1996): 8.

the task of supervising the *Collegi*.³⁰ The election as doge of Agostino Pallavicini (1637), who was determined to take a new course and was seen by some as too authoritarian, also stirred up conflict. It proved to be impossible to overcome the divisions in the ruling class, which continued during the next decade, leading to major political instability. (We will return to these divisions when discussing Durazzo's position in the city's political landscape).³¹

In the mid-seventeenth century, a time in which Genoese politics were directed towards greater independence, opinions also differed on the policy that would be most effective to achieve this goal: Thomas A. Kirk explains how, when both the attempt to strengthen the Republic's military power and that of increasing their commercial influence via a joint stock company had largely failed, the Genoese reverted to "an alternative, 'passive' approach to projecting the Republic's power onto the sea, influencing shipping patterns, and to some degree directing commercial traffic in the Mediterranean".³² They did so via their free port, the roots of which lay in measures already taken towards the end of the sixteenth century. This approach allowed Genoa to become a focal point of the economic interests of several larger powers who would not let each other dominate the Republic. Genoa thus secured its neutrality in a rather successful way. However, it could not prevent a disastrous French bombardment in 1684, now that Spain was no longer the dominating force in the Mediterranean.³³

Stefano Durazzo

It was against this background that Stefano Durazzo became archbishop of Genoa in 1635. Together with Virginia Centurione Bracelli (who was canonised in 2003 and whom we will encounter in chapter five), Durazzo is probably the most well-known

³⁰ The *Supremi Sindicatori* tried to take more political initiative reinforcing bonds with the *Minor Consiglio*, one of the councils of the city.

³¹ Costantini, 'La ricerca', 51–58; Bitossi, *Il governo*, 245.

³² Citation from: Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 193. See also: Kirk, 'A Little Country', 419–20; Benvenuti, *Storia della Repubblica*, 142.

³³ Kirk, 'The Implications', 9.

exponent of the Genoese Church in the seventeenth century.³⁴ His metropolitanate encompassed the bishoprics of Albenga, Brugnato, Noli, and Bobbio (though the latter was not part of the Republic). The dioceses of Nebbio, Ajaccio-Mariana, Aleria and Sagona on the Island of Corsica fell under the dominion of the Republic but not under the ecclesiastical province and were being contested by the provinces of Genoa and Pisa. The Genoese cities of Savona and Ventimiglia were suffragan dioceses of Milan. Luni-Sarzana, instead, was semi-independent: on Genoese territory, it fell directly under the Holy See yet was also linked to the ecclesiastical province of Genoa.

Stefano Durazzo was born in 1594 to Aurelia Saluzzo and Pietro Durazzo.³⁵ His father was doge of the Republic from 1619 to 1621. Durazzo's extended family, his parents, uncles, and brothers and sisters with their many children, can be found at the centre of Genoese political life. They were related via marriage and bonds of godparenthood with several other important *casate*: the Brignole, Grimaldi, Pallavicini, Balbi, Saluzzo, Raggi, Giustiniani, De Franchi, Lercari, Adorno, and others, all of whom had their representatives in the political life of the Republic.³⁶ Stefano's brother Cesare, besides fulfilling many other political functions, was governor of Corsica from 1645 to 1647 and doge of the Republic from 1665 to 1667. His son Pietro Durazzo, a nephew of the cardinal, would become doge a few decades after his cardinal uncle passed away (in 1685-7). One of Stefano's direct cousins, Giovanni Battista Durazzo, was elected doge in 1639, during Durazzo's tenure. The family strategies of the Durazzo in the political sphere, keenly exploiting the possibilities at hand, enabled them to become one of the most influential clans in seventeenth-century Genoa.³⁷

³⁴ The *Archivio Storico Diocesano di Genova* organised a study day on 27 October 2017 centred around this famous cardinal, the proceedings of which will be published in the coming months.

³⁵ His brothers and sisters were Giacomo (who died at the age of 26), Mariettina, Nicola, Cassandra, Battista and Cesare. Luigi Alfonso, 'Aspetti della personalità del Card. Stefano Durazzo, arcivescovo di Genova (1653-1664)', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 12, no. 2 (1972): 456–57.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 492.

³⁷ Bitossi even writes of them: "La strategia familiare dei Durazzo, che si muovevano dentro le istituzioni così com'erano, volgendo a utile privato le iniziative innovative pubbliche, doveva rivelarsi in definitiva la più accorta, la più accettabile dai consorti, la più consona al governo dei pochi". Bitossi, *Il governo*, 289–90.

Stefano Durazzo contributed to the family's central position in the city by pursuing a prestigious ecclesiastical career. He was ordained in 1618 and began studying law in Rome. In the 1620s, Durazzo held various prominent positions at the papal court and even became general treasurer of the Papal State in 1627. He was created cardinal in 1633 and was sent as a papal legate to Ferrara from 1634 to 1636. It was during his time as a legate, that he was ordained bishop and appointed to the archdiocese of Genoa (in 1635). Although he did not personally reach the city until 1637, he immediately appointed a vicar with whom he established close contact to start managing his diocese.³⁸ Durazzo remained archbishop until 1664, when he resigned his office. He died in Rome in 1667.³⁹

One of the main political concerns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the relationship of the city's government with the Church, which on multiple occasions turned into a fierce power struggle, a phenomenon that was not unusual at the time.⁴⁰ The merging of religion and politics that had been exceptionally strong in late medieval Genoa, continued well into the seventeenth century.⁴¹ In 1593, the Republic instituted a special government institution, the *Giunta Ecclesiastica* (renamed *Giunta di Giurisdizione* in 1638) that was to defend the prerogatives of the secular government against affronts by the Church.

During Durazzo's tenure, the tensions between the two powers manifested themselves in disputes over issues of jurisdiction and precedence.⁴² They concerned

³⁸ See for a (somewhat hagiographical) biography of Cardinal Durazzo: Giovanni Andrea Musso, *Il Cardinale Stefano Durazzo, Arcivescovo di Genova (1596-1667)* (Rome: Artigianato Grafico C. Cappotto, 1959).

³⁹ Alfonso, 'Aspetti', 500.

⁴⁰ Bitossi, *Il governo*, 267. For an insightful overview of the fifteenth-century struggles between Church and state in Genoa, see: Danilo Zardin, 'Prerogative della Chiesa e prestigio della Repubblica. Dal primo Cinquecento alle riforme tridentine', in *Il cammino della Chiesa genovese: dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, ed. Dino Puncuh (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1999), 265–328. For the relation between Church and state in late medieval Genoa, see: Polonio, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche della Liguria medievale*, 67:289–390. Genoa's slow implementation of reforms 'from above' was in part due to opposition from the political elite who held the archbishops in its grip. Cf. Zardin, 'Prerogative', 297–306.

⁴¹ Zardin, 'Prerogative', 266–67.

⁴² It was often at the level of ceremonial that struggles between the two powers were fought out. Besides those mentioned, other controversies can be found in: Alfonso, 'Aspetti', 480–91.

such issues as the place of the archiepiscopal seat with respect to the throne of the doge; the order in which the archbishop and doge were to receive the incense and the sign of peace during mass, as well as the greeting from (Lenten) preachers; the title with which representatives of the Republic should greet the cardinal; and the ceremonial surrounding Durazzo's entrance into Genoa.⁴³ More explicitly political was the archbishop's refusal, immediately after his arrival, to crown Agostino Pallavicini as doge, since the latter pretended regal honours (on the basis of the Republic's recent claim to regal status). Some years before, Pope Urban VIII had decreed that cardinals were next in line to monarchs in terms of their status as dignitaries. Hence, they were to be addressed by representatives of a republic with the title *eminenza*. The Genoese government's reluctance to observe this ruling was one of the reasons for Durazzo's refusal to crown the doge. Therefore, the celebration had to take place in the abbey of Santa Caterina, whose abbot was willing to perform the ceremony. This conflict came to an end as soon as the highest secular and ecclesiastical offices were both held by members of the Durazzo clan. When, in 1639, the archbishop's cousin Giovanni Battista Durazzo was elected doge, his own son, who was appointed bishop of Brugnato at the suggestion of the cardinal, gladly celebrated the coronation ceremony.⁴⁴

After Durazzo returned to Genoa following a period of absence – he had served as papal legate to Bologna from 1640 until 1642 – disputes arose over the diocesan synod that Durazzo held in 1643. What most stirred up resentment among many Genoese *Collegi* was the decision taken at this synod on how ecclesiastical land taxes (*terratici*) were to be paid: they saw this measure as an infringement of the secular government's right to decide on similar financial issues within the borders of the

⁴³ See, for instance, Durazzo's *Ad limina* report of 1640 in which he writes about the senate's pretensions with respect to the doge's seat in the cathedral, in: Luigi Nuovo, ed., *Le relationes ad limina dell'arcivescovo di Genova Stefano Durazzo (1635-1664)* (Genoa: Brigati, 2002), 37. His reports of 1644 and 1655 also shed light on the struggles with the secular government. For contrasts regarding the jurisdictions of Church and state, see e.g. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter ASV), Segreteria di Stato (hereafter: Segr. Stato), Cardinali, Vol. XIV, f. 613-635, Letter from Cardinal Durazzo to Cardinal Panzirolo, 09-05-1648

⁴⁴ Fontana, 'Una Regina', 6.

Republic.⁴⁵ The senate issued decrees which strictly prohibited anyone from cooperating with the cardinal's policy, while Durazzo proclaimed the excommunication of all those who followed the senate's instructions. The dispute lasted from 1643 until May 1658, when both the cardinal and the *Serenissimi Collegi*, possibly because of pressure by Rome, revoked their respective edicts and the synodal chapter on this subject and apparently agreed on the mode of payment.⁴⁶

A part of the urban political elite saw Durazzo's determination in matters of jurisdiction, ceremony, and precedence as a threat to their authority within the Genoese Republic. Durazzo, in turn, saw the interference of the senators with ecclesiastical affairs as an inadmissible breach of his authority: their say in the diocesan seminary, in particular, was a thorn in his side (see chapter two). These conflicts between Church and state combined with many other issues led to a major political crisis in the 1640s. Tension within the patriciate concerned the relations with France and Spain, mercantile policies, political-institutional changes, and territorial expansion.⁴⁷ Protests, known as the *mobba dei gentiluomini*, broke out in 1646 over the issue of new ascriptions to the nobility, organised by two famous exponents of *nuove* families: Stefano Raggio and Gian Paolo Balbi. The harsh repression of these protests provoked yet another conspiracy (1648) led by Balbi with the support of France, and with the knowledge of some members of government amongst whom were several members of the Durazzo family. Balbi was discovered and exiled, together with relatives from the Balbi and Durazzo families. Under other pretexts, even the head of the Durazzo clan, Cesare Durazzo, brother of the cardinal and former governor of Corsica, was imprisoned for several months. While the political divisions of those years influenced how Cesare Durazzo's case was dealt with, part of the governing

⁴⁵ Bitossi explains it as follows: "Il 30 aprile 1648 [in which these struggles culminated] l'arcivescovo Durazzo aveva pubblicato un decreto col quale respingeva, appellandosi alle decisioni del sinodo Genovese del 1643, la disposizione impartita dai Collegi della Repubblica, che i possessori di beni ecclesiastici fossero tenuti a pagare avarie e terratici in moneta corrente anziché in moneta di cartulario, come era avvenuto sino ad allora". Bitossi, *Il governo*, 267. See also: Idem, 'L'antico regime', 454.

⁴⁶ Alfonso, 'Aspetti', 485–86.

⁴⁷ Bitossi, 'Patriziato e politica', 26. Bitossi even writes about "una acuta crisi politica", in: Bitossi, 'Un lungo addio', 125.

elite also used this move as a lever in the continuous tussles with the cardinal over matters of jurisdiction, in particular the land taxes (this conflict reached a climax in 1648).⁴⁸

Another part of the political spectrum did not agree with how the issue of Cesare Durazzo was handled. Probably out of protest against the senate's policies, the famous politician and senator Anton Giulio Brignole Sale – a protagonist of the political faction that included many Brignole, Durazzo and Raggios among its adherents – left politics in order to become a priest and a leading figure in the new group of elite priests that Durazzo (to whom he was remotely related) had initiated, only to join the Jesuits some years later.⁴⁹ Taken together, these events of the 1640s all involved four of the most powerful *nuovi* families – Balbi, Durazzo, Raggio and Brignole – who had strong links through marriage. In the 1650s, besides the continuation of these struggles including the discovery of yet another presumed conspiracy by Stefano Raggio and renewed troubles with Spain, the largest crisis was yet to hit Genoa: the plague epidemic of 1656-7, which took the lives of many lay people and clergy alike.⁵⁰

It was against this turbulent background that Durazzo tried to reform the clergy and society at large. To do so, he needed the cooperation of different parties within and outside the Church. The instances of friction described above may create the impression that collaboration between a reformer like Durazzo and the political elites was impossible. The chapters that follow show that this was not the case, and that cooperation did take place on various occasions.⁵¹ At the same time, new religious initiatives from below tried to win trust of both the Church authorities and the lay elite in order to secure the recognition and financial support necessary for success. Practices of distrust, too, are an important feature of Genoa's ecclesiastical

⁴⁸ Bitossi, *Il governo*, 268–70; idem, 'Patriziato e politica', 26.

⁴⁹ Bitossi, 'Patriziato e politica', 26. Anton Giulio was the brother of Maria Maddalena, who was the daughter-in-law of Durazzo's uncle Agostino Durazzo. Cf. See also chapter seven.

⁵⁰ On the political crisis of those years: Bitossi, *Il governo*, 251–90.

⁵¹ Cf.: Claudio Costantini, 'Tradizione repubblicana e riforma cattolica nella Genova del Seicento', in *I Gesuiti fra impegno religioso e potere politico nella Repubblica di Genova. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica. Genova, 2-3-4 dicembre 1991*, ed. Claudio Paolucci, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrale di bibliografia e cultura ligure, V (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1992), 17–20.

situation in the middle of the seventeenth century. Just as elsewhere in Catholic Europe, the Church hierarchy tried to bring about reform by means of strict regulations and firm discipline. Sometimes referred to as the Borromeo of Genoa, Durazzo made enemies with his determination to reform and defend the jurisdiction of the Church, just as his Milanese forerunner had done. This attitude was not unique though for the Genoese archbishop, and the struggles did not concern the person of Durazzo per se (as some historians have claimed), but rather resulted from the common defensiveness of both Church and state over their own jurisdictions in a time in which these matters were not yet settled.⁵² And, just like elsewhere, internal struggles between the different echelons of the Church, between different religious orders, and between parts of the lower clergy and the archbishop were also the order of the day.⁵³

Genoa's religious landscape

Unlike for the medieval period, no scholar has yet attempted to draw a general picture of the Genoese Church in the early modern period.⁵⁴ There are, however, many local studies that offer a useful window onto this reality. Particular to Genoa is the spiritual revival in the city around the turn of the fifteenth century, which centred on Ettore Vernazza. This Genoese notary became the founder of the Oratory of Divine Love, a religious confraternity that also had great success outside Genoa.⁵⁵ Following Caterina Fieschi Adorno (1447-1510), a mystic aristocratic lady who at the same time had been very active in assisting the ill and the poor, Vernazza and his group focused

⁵² Alfonso, 'Aspetti', 491.

⁵³ Ibid., 500.

⁵⁴ For an overview of the medieval history of the Church in Genoa: Polonio, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche della Liguria medievale*.

⁵⁵ Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci, *I devoti della carità: le confraternite del Divino Amore nell'Italia del primo Cinquecento* (Naples, La città del sole, 2002). See also: Cassiano Carpaneto da Langasco, *Ettore Vernazza. Un grande umanista* (De Ferrari, 2007); Vito Piergiovanni and Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci, eds., 'La "carità segreta". Ricerche su Ettore Vernazza e i notai Genovesi confratelli del Divino Amore', in *Tra Siviglia e Genova: notaio, documento e commercio nell'età colombiana: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi storici per le celebrazioni colombiane, Genova, 12-14 marzo 1992* (Milan: Dott. A. Giuffrè, 1994), 393–434.

on individual conversion and concrete expressions of their religiosity in assisting the needy.⁵⁶ This movement of spiritual revival thus reinvigorated Genoa's rich tradition of charitable institutions ranging from the *Pammatone* hospital founded in the fifteenth century to the foundation of the impressive *Albergo dei Poveri* in the seventeenth century.⁵⁷ Largely the result of - and dependent on - lay initiative, these hospitals and other charitable institutions, too, became the subject of jurisdiction struggles between the Church and the state.⁵⁸

The same happened with the many confraternities in Genoa, as they were among the most important urban expressions of religiosity: many citizens relied completely on confraternities and oratories for their religious activities.⁵⁹ The most significant confraternity of a parish could even take over the management of the

⁵⁶ Polonio, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche*, 382–90.

⁵⁷ Annamaria De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova* (Genoa: Termanini, 2016); Valeria Polonio, 'Ubi karitas, ibi pax: l'aiuto al più debole. Secoli IX-XVII', ed. Dino Puncuh, *Storia della cultura ligure*, Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria. Nuova Serie, 44, no. 1 (2004): 311–68; Riccardo Musso, 'La Repubblica di Genova e l'assistenza: la "Scuola dei Putti Orfani di S. Giovanni Battista"', ed. Claudio Paolucci, *San Giovanni Battista nella vita sociale e religiosa a Genova e in Liguria tra medioevo ed età contemporanea. Atti del Convegno di studi in occasione del nono centenario della traslazione a Genova delle Ceneri del Precursore. Genova, 16-17 giugno 1999.*, vol. II, Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrale di bibliografia e cultura ligure, XIII (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 2000), 231–70; Ennio Poleggi and Clara Altavista, 'L'Albergo dei poveri a Genova: proprietà immobiliare e sviluppo urbano in Antico Regime (1656-1798)', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 39, no. 1 (1999): 493–529; Riccardo Magaglio, 'L'assistenza a Genova nel '600: i Lomellini e Virginia Centurione Bracelli (1587-1651)', in *La Storia dei Genovesi. Atti del convegno 1985*, vol. 6 (Genoa: Centro internazionale di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, 1986), 323–41; Cassiano Carpaneto da Langasco, *Pammatone. Cinque secoli di vita ospedaliera* (Genoa: Ospedali civili, 1953).

⁵⁸ Even greater objects of conflict were the episcopal court and the Inquisition: both struggled to operate independently from the senate, but always saw their influence confined. Cf. Carlo Brizzolari, *L'Inquisizione a Genova e in Liguria* (Genoa: E.R.G.A., 1974).

⁵⁹ See, on confraternities in the Republic: Edoardo Grendi, 'Morfologia e dinamica della vita associativa urbana. Le confraternite a Genova fra i secoli XVI e XVIII', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 5, no. 2 (1965): 241–311; Edoardo Grendi, *In altri termini: etnografia e storia di una società di antico regime* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 2004); On the situation in Chiavari (part of the Genoese diocese), see: Luisa Puccio Canepa, 'Confraternite laicali a Chiavari. Dagli scopi religiosi e assistenziali alle committenze artistiche', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 53, no. 2 (2013): 205–38; Fausta Franchini Guelfi, 'La diversità culturale delle confraternite fra devozione popolare, autonomia laicale e autorità ecclesiastica', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 54, no. 2 (2014): 401–37; Rodolfo Savelli, 'Dalle confraternite allo stato: il sistema assistenziale Genovese nel Cinquecento', Dino Puncuh, *Storia della cultura ligure*, no. 2: 191–226.

parochial community.⁶⁰ According to Edoardo Grendi, who has done most to uncover the life of Genoese brotherhoods, at least 124 new ones were founded in early modern Genoa (starting from the year 1582).⁶¹ In the early nineteenth century, one-third of the adult men in the city were still members of a confraternity.⁶² Liguria was famous for a phenomenon called the *casacce*: originating as medieval flagellant groups, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Genoa these became conglomerates of brotherhoods that were particularly invested in the yearly Corpus Domini processions.⁶³ The *oratorii segreti*, a different type of confraternity, privileged other devotions such as the communal participation in indulgences over the Holy Week solemnities. Many brotherhoods were the religious and communal expression of one craft or one specific social group: a community of zealous people, clergy or lay, would consciously choose certain devout or charitable practices to exercise communally while honouring a specific saint or the Blessed Sacrament.⁶⁴ Having a similar patron saint or name could lead to extreme rivalry among confraternities. Their feasts, funerals, processions, and ceremonies were often charged with political meaning and neighbourhood competition. The importance of lay initiatives for the vitality of religious life, through confraternities and charitable institutions, characterises the Genoese Church in the early modern period.

Costanza Longo, who has done more than any other scholar to unravel the ecclesiastical reality of seventeenth-century Genoa, rightly underlines the importance of religious orders in bringing diversity to the post-Tridentine Church in the Republic.⁶⁵ Her research on some of the orders that came to the city reveals the

⁶⁰ Grendi, *In altri termini*, 57.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 45–48.

⁶⁴ Often, the rise in popularity of a new devotion was accompanied by the creation of a new confraternity: hence, the panorama of devotions connected to the Genoese confraternities was extremely rich. *Ibid.*, 53–54. Religious orders not infrequently began or encouraged new brotherhoods and tried to reach people in this way. The Jesuits, for instance, started many new confraternities, always directing them to more or less homogeneous social groups. With this ministry they tried to change society as a whole. *Ibid.*, 54–55.

⁶⁵ Costanza Longo, ‘Alcuni aspetti della Riforma Cattolica nella Repubblica di Genova nella prima metà del secolo XVII’, in *Genova, la Liguria e l’Oltremare tra medioevo ed età moderna. studi e ricerche d’archivio*, vol. 3 (Genoa, 1979), 117, 175.

importance of their preaching and catechesis for popular reform.⁶⁶ The Jesuits arrived in Genoa in 1554 and focused mostly on educating the elite. A competing order, the Theatines, came to the port city in 1572 and served the rich elite while also carrying out their original mission to the poor. The Somaschi who arrived in 1575 were specialised in helping orphans and the children of the poor. The Camilliani opened a house in 1594 and focused mostly on serving the sick in Genoa's hospitals. In this manner, many new convents – later including the Barnabiti and Scolopi – were added to the already established monasteries. Yet it was not easy for a new order to enter the city: housing for new groups was scarce and competition was fierce.⁶⁷ Each of these new orders therefore had to bring a (spiritual) service that was not yet provided.⁶⁸

Due to Genoa's central geographical position, the city could never close itself off from developments throughout Europe. Consequently, the situation in Genoa

⁶⁶ Costanza Longo Timossi, 'I Teatini e la riforma cattolica nella Repubblica di Genova nella prima metà del Seicento', *Regnum Dei* 43, no. 113 (1987); idem, 'L'impegno missionario e l'azione sociale dei Preti della Missione in Corsica', *Geostorie* 16, no. 2 (2008): 189–265; idem, *Pauperismo e assistenza: i Camilliani a Genova nel primo Seicento* (Genoa: Scuola tipografica sorriso francescano, 1992); idem, 'Alcuni aspetti'. Other historians have shed light on the strategies of settlement of these new groups in a city that already had many religious orders: Giuseppe Felloni and Valeria Polonio, 'Un sondaggio per le comunità religiose a Genova in Età Moderna', *Studi e Documenti di Storia Ligure. In onore di don Luigi Alfonso per il suo 85o genetliaco. Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 36, no. 2 (1996): 143–66; Ennio Poleggi and Clara Altavista, 'Ordini religiosi e strategie urbane a Genova in Età Moderna', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 39, no. 1 (1999): 475–92. See, for an elaboration of such a settlement issue: Paolo Fontana, 'Questioni territoriali e cerimoniale nei conflitti tra oratoriani e teatini nella Genova del Seicento', *Oratorium* 6 (2007): 245–22. For the history of the medieval orders of the Dominicans and Franciscans: Costantino Gilardi, 'Ut studerent et predicarent et conventum facerent. La fondazione dei conventi e dei vicariati dei Frati Predicatori in Liguria (1220-1928)', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 47, no. 1 (2007): 9–54. Alfonso Casini, *La provincia di Genova dei Frati Minori: dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Chiavari: Tipografia Moderna, 1985); Alfonso Casini, 'I frati minori di Liguria', in *Frati Minori d'Italia: le attività dei Frati Minori d'Italia attraverso i secoli, 1208-1981*, ed. Luciano Canonici (Città di Castello: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1981), 190–221. Claudio Costantini has made a first attempt to sketch the attitude of the Republican elite towards the new religious orders. Suspicious at first, the elites later started to consciously accommodate their efforts (the presence of many different groups offered valid alternative religious choices for individuals that might be politically opposed to one another), especially joining hands with the Jesuits. See: Costantini, 'Tradizione repubblicana'.

⁶⁷ Longo Timossi, 'I Teatini', 28.

⁶⁸ The Theatines, for example, entered only after several earlier attempts, managing finally to obtain the church of S. Maria Maddalena, with the support of the archbishop, Cipriano Pallavicini, some noblemen, and Filippo Neri, who declined to send his own Oratorians to the city. *Ibid.*, 25.

mirrors many processes in other parts of the continent: first, the influence of the Spanish Discalced Carmelites and the Jesuits, then the advent of the French movement of spiritual revival brought mainly by the Lazarists. Genoa's religious movements, in turn, also influenced the rest of Europe. The city functioned as a springboard for several orders and congregations: the Augustinians, the Discalced Carmelites, and the Capuchins all fanned out across the Alps in the second half of the seventeenth century starting from Genoa.⁶⁹ The Turchine, a new female monastic order founded in Genoa at the start of the century, spread rapidly throughout Europe.⁷⁰

In the last three decades, the *Quaderni Franzoniani* series, under the care of Claudio Paolucci, has done much to further examine Genoa's diverse religious landscape in the early modern period. Part of this series is an overview of the history of the Church in Genoa from its origins to the present: *Il Cammino della Chiesa a Genova* (1999).⁷¹ Though very general in scope, the volume constitutes a crucial point of departure for any scholar of Genoa's ecclesiastical history. Other volumes disclose particular aspects that prior to the series had remained rather obscure. Especially important are the *Quaderni* dedicated to Ligurian devotions throughout the centuries: the veneration of Mary and the urban devotion to John the Baptist, the patron saint of the city.⁷² Several volumes in the series have been dedicated to individual religious orders and congregations: the Jesuits, Augustinians, Discalced Carmelites,

⁶⁹ Longo, 'Alcuni aspetti', 181.

⁷⁰ See chapter 5.

⁷¹ The chapters of Danilo Zardin, Luigi Nuovo, and Paolo Fontana are of particular concern for the early modern period: Zardin, 'Prerogative'; Luigi Nuovo, 'Cure pastorali e giurisdizionalismo: il Seicento', in Puncuh, *Il cammino*, 329–59; Paolo Fontana, 'Tra illuminismo e giansenismo: il Settecento', in Puncuh, *Il cammino*, 361–401.

⁷² See: Claudio Paolucci, ed., *Genova e Maria. Contributi per la storia. Atti della giornata di studio (Genova, 24 novembre. 1990)*, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrale di bibliografia e cultura ligure, IV (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1991); Paolucci, *San Giovanni Battista*. An insightful overview of Marian devotion in Genoa is offered in: Giovanni Farris, 'La Guardia nel contesto del culto mariano in Liguria tra XV e XVI secolo', in Paolucci, *Genova e Maria*, 69–76. Other interesting contributions on local devotion: Claudio Bernardi, 'Corpus Domini', in Terpstra, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*; Giacomo Montanari, 'L'Impresa della Compagnia della Colonna: immagini e testi per una devozione', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 54, no. 2 (2014): 95–113.

Oratorians, and Capuchins.⁷³ Each time, the scope of the publications went beyond historical details of their presence in Genoa to their spirituality and artistic and architectural contributions. The 1995 volume published to mark the four hundred years of existence of the Medee, a unique Genoese congregation of lay women, was one of the first Italian studies dealing with the phenomenon of early modern female religiosity that occurred outside the traditional institutions of marriage and convent.⁷⁴ The *Quaderni Franzoniani* have thus highlighted three significant characteristics of the early modern Genoese Church: the importance of popular devotions and the pervasive lay religiosity; the presence of a large number of old and new religious orders; and lastly, the rich presence of female religiosity both inside and outside the many convents of Genoa.⁷⁵

⁷³ Paolocci, ed., *I Gesuiti*; idem, ed., *Gli Agostiniani a Genova e in Liguria Tra Medioevo Ed Età Moderna. Atti Del Convegno Internazionale Di Studi. Genova, 9-11 Dicembre 1993.*, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani, VII (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1994); Silvano Giordano and Claudio Paolocci, eds., *Nicolò Doria: itinerari economici, culturali, religiosi nei secoli XVI-XVII tra Spagna, Genova e l'Europa*, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani, IX (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1996); Claudio Paolocci, 'Giacomo Giscardi: dalla storia della Congregazione dell'Oratorio alla storia civile e religiosa del Genovesato', in *La Congregazione di S. Filippo Neri. Per una storia della sua presenza a Genova. Giornata di studio in occasione del quarto centenario della morte di S. Filippo Neri. Genova, 15 novembre 1995*, ed. Claudio Paolocci, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani, X (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1997), 169–218. Giuseppe Cosentino has described the history of the Jesuit order in Genoa: Giuseppe Cosentino, 'Il Collegio gesuitico di Genova fino alla soppressione della Compagnia', in Paolocci, *I Gesuiti*, 101–5. Besides the *Quaderni franzoniani* important work on the Genoese Jesuits has been done by Giuliano Raffo: Giuliano Raffo, 'I gesuiti a Genova dal XVI al XVIII secolo nella storia della casa professa', *La Civiltà cattolica* 3 (1997): 55–75; Giuliano Raffo, ed., *I gesuiti a Genova nei secoli XVII e XVIII - Storia della Casa Professa di Genova della Compagnia di Gesù dall'anno 1603 al 1773*, Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 36/1 (Genoa, 1996). For an overview of the history of the Discalced Carmelites in Genoa: A. Roggero, *Genova e gli inizi della Riforma teresiana in Italia (1584-1597)*, Institutum historicum Teresianum: Studia (Sagep, 1984).

⁷⁴ Claudio Paolocci, ed., *Congregazioni laicali femminili e promozione della donna in Italia nei secoli XVI e XVII. Atti della giornata di studio in occasione del quarto centenario delle Medee. Genova, 3 giugno 1994*, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani, VIII (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1995).

⁷⁵ The world of female convents in early modern Genoa has been uncovered in a recent project by Ezia Gavazza and Lauro Magnini, see: Ezia Gavazza and Lauro Magnini, eds., *Monasteri femminili a Genova tra XVI e XVIII secolo* (Genoa: DIRAS, 2011).

In recent years, the attention of scholars has shifted to the secular clergy.⁷⁶ In particular, they have dealt with the phenomenon of “criminal clergy”, who have been identified as a major obstacle to reforms.⁷⁷ Paolo Fontana has done much to unravel the archives of the diocesan tribunal and to reveal all possible forms of religious deviance. He has shown convincingly that the priests who appeared before this tribunal often belonged to the most important families of the Ligurian inland. They were particularly prone to violence and disobedient to the central authorities as their loyalty lay first and foremost with their kin.⁷⁸ In conflicts between local factions, the priest lost his common role as mediator and sided with his family instead. For these family factions, recourse to the tribunal was a means of conflict resolution.⁷⁹ Using the same type of sources, Elena Taddia has convincingly argued that many members of the clergy until well into the eighteenth century were completely immersed in a society where vendetta, banditry, family ties, and honour were paramount.⁸⁰ Flavia

⁷⁶ Longo, ‘Alcuni aspetti’, 120. For an insightful analysis of the secular clergy in the thirteenth century, see: John Benjamin Yousey-Hindes, ‘Living the Middle Life, Secular Priests and Their Communities in Thirteenth-Century Genoa’ (Stanford University, 2010).

⁷⁷ Longo, ‘Alcuni aspetti’, 120.

⁷⁸ See e.g.: Paolo Fontana, “Gente tanto inurbana e temeraria”. L’occhio del tribunale diocesano genovese su Moneglia in età d’antico regime’, in *L’Oratorio dei Disciplinati di Moneglia. Testimonianze di fede e di arte nella storia di una comunità. Atti del Convegno, Moneglia 10-11 ottobre 2008*, ed. Giuliana Algeri and Valeria Polonio (Chiavari: Accademia dei cultori di storia locale, 2012), 119–42. On the prominence of elite violence: Stuart Carroll, ‘Revenge and Reconciliation in Early Modern Italy’, *Past & Present* 233, no. 1 (2016): 101–42. Giovanni Assereto rightly underlines that the conflicts between factions “over the control of local offices, over the use of communal goods, over the distribution of scarce yields” were frequently a “struggle between miserable people”. “All’interno delle comunità [...] è tutto un ribollire di conflitti tra fazioni e “parentelle”, un agistarsi di “bravachioni” e “capelazzi” per il controllo delle cariche locali, per l’uso dei beni comunali, per la spartizione di magri proventi: una lotta tra miserabili, molto spesso.” Giovanni Assereto, *Le metamorfosi della Repubblica. Saggi di storia genovese tra il XVI e il XIX secolo* (Savona: Daner Edizioni, 1999), 63.

⁷⁹ Paolo Fontana, ‘I processi per avvelenamento e la giustizia ecclesiastica a Genova nel Seicento tra inurbamento del clero, faide e denunce’, in *Corpi Manoscritti. Archivi e Corporalità nell’Età Moderna. Atti del convegno, Genova 27-28 novembre 2015*, ed. Paolo Fontana and Elena Taddia (Genoa: Edizioni culturali internazionali Genova, 2017), 53–74; Fontana, ‘Gente tanto inurbana’.

⁸⁰ Elena Taddia, ‘La Corse terre d’exil. Prêtres génois bannis en Corse: sources, réflexions’, *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences Historiques et Naturelles de Corse* 740–741 (2012): 69–83. The clergy were leading figures within the local factions, and did not shy away from using violence: Elena Taddia, ‘Violences physiques et violences verbales: le prêtre criminel d’après les archives ecclésiastiques du diocèse de Gênes’, in *Violence(s) de la Préhistoire à nos jours*, ed. Marie-Claude Marandet (Perpignan: Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2011), 221–37. Taddia even asserts, on the basis of her findings from

Gattiglia, by contrast, has focused on how the image of the “good priest” (and its opposite, the criminal priest) was used in diverse types of communication from below with lay and clerical authorities. She also studied seventeenth-century moral treatises in which the “good priest” is presented as someone who is a perfect model for the faithful in his modesty and spirit of service. Separation from the laity was seen as a condition for the priesthood, but it was the one requirement that contemporary clergy did not accept easily: not only did they not align their behaviour with the Tridentine decrees on the separation between laity and clergy, but they saw the defence of their family reputation (if needs be by violent means) as an integral part of their duty.⁸¹ The reality of the seventeenth-century Church on Genoese territory as sketched by these historians is clearly one of persistent deviant behaviour among a clergy who did not conform to the Tridentine ideals, despite the many normative efforts.

As such, this situation forms an ideal case study for the subjects that I want to explore in this thesis. It leaves one to wonder how the Church hierarchy and other individuals and groups tried to deal with those members of the clergy who were reluctant to reform. The seventeenth century is of particular interest because it was a period of transition: reforms had been started (or attempted anew, after the setback of the last decades of the sixteenth century) but were far from being complete. In this transition period, negotiation was key to reform, and trust was needed to effectively align all parties involved in the effort.

both the diocesan archives and the *fondo iurisdictionalium* in the *Archivio di Stato*, that the separation between clergy and laity that Trent envisioned, in particular the renewed emphasis on celibacy, has caused further victims of clerical violence (instead of reducing them), namely those related to patrimony and illicit sexuality, and even infanticide Elena Taddia, ‘Fratelli preti e criminali: microconflitti e alleanze famigliari nella Liguria dell’età moderna’, *Popolazione e Storia* 15, no. 1 (2014): 39–56.

⁸¹ Flavia Gattiglia, “E come può esser rispettato dal Popolo colui che in nulla differisce dal Popolo?”: gli abusi del clero secolare nella comunicazione con l’autorità. (Repubblica di Genova, XVII secolo)’ (Università degli Studi di Genova, 2017), 209.

The lay perspective

In 1636, the unfortunate shipwreck of an Irish vessel in the harbour of Genoa led to a remarkable spectacle of popular devotion. An eighteenth-century account vividly recounts how, in the wake of a fierce storm, a miraculous statue was found that came to be venerated as the *Madonna della Fortuna* (Our Lady of the Storm).⁸² On 17 January 1636,

the libeccio [a southwesterly wind] stirred up such a violent storm that huge billows entered the harbour, [were] knocked around by the impetuous wind, and then again frighteningly regrouped. Many hawsers were ripped from the ships that lay at anchor. [...] After a few hours, a disastrous mass of wrecks of those big disconnected bodies could be seen floating in the harbour, miserably shattered on the rocks [...]. When the frightful storm calmed down [...] seamen rushed to gather here and there the unfortunate remains of what the voracious sea had left behind. Among these [...] was a statue [Simulacro] that had been left completely undamaged by the waves: it had been detached from the prow of the Irish ship [...] [and] represented a venerable lady, holding in her right arm an adorable child with a superhuman aura.⁸³

This heavily romanticised and partly censured story (1757) by Father Zignago – prior of the church where the statue eventually came to be located – was an attempt to persuade his eighteenth-century readers that the devotion towards the statue of the *Madonna della Fortuna* had been genuine and trustworthy from the time it was found

⁸² Tommaso Lorenzo Zignago, *Brieve notizia del successo per cui la chiesa parrocchiale di S. Vittore Martire eretta in Genova, abbia poi acquistata in Titolare la Vergine Madre sotto la invocazione di Madonna della Fortuna, dedicata alla nobilissima dama signora Maria Maddalena Durazza* (Bernardo Tarigo, 1757).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 19-20. “fu eccitata dal libeccio sì rabbiosa tempesta, che scaricandosi in questo Porto, dall’impetuoso vento urtati, e spaventosamente raggruppati i marosi, si strapparono in gran parte le gomene da’ loro legni fermati dall’ancore, e furiosamente insieme cozzando, e l’un l’altro con reciproche percosse fiaccando, tra poche ore videsi nel Porto galeggiare un funesto sfasciume di que’ gran corpi scollegati dal loro vicendevole dibattimento, e miseramente infranti dal ripercotimento negli scogli. Calmata poi a più ore una sì pertinace dalla mezza notte, fino quasi alla fine del vegnente giorno lugubre burrasca, accorse la sollecita marinaria a raccogliere quà, e là i dispersi infelici avanzi del mar vorace. Fra questi il più in mole, e comparse luttuoso fu un niente dall’onde offeso Simulacro, smembrato dalla poppa della sudetta Nave Irlandese, rappresentante una veneranda Matrona, stringente nel destro braccio un di aria più che umana adorabil Bambino”.

in the Genoese harbour, more than a century earlier. Indeed, the prow statue had immediately sparked enthusiasm among the poor fishermen and sailors in the harbour district of Genoa. In contrast to this, serious suspicion was the first reaction among the Church authorities, imbued as they were with post-Tridentine prudence towards new popular devotions.⁸⁴ The situation thus called for persuasion from below. The trust of the authorities in the legitimacy of the devotion towards this statue – necessary for it to become a success in post-Tridentine Genoa – could only be won in a process of negotiation between the seamen and the Church leaders. They alone could provide official approval of the religious fervour for this Madonna.

This particular instance of popular devotion transformed into a locus of negotiation has been eloquently described in Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser's book *Spectacular Miracles*, the only English language monograph dedicated to religion in Liguria in the early modern period (and beyond).⁸⁵ Although they did not focus on trust, the story they report illustrates its centrality in the success or failure of religious initiatives from below. First, to give the statue the allure appropriate for a reliable miracle-working object – which the seamen who found it soon believed it to be – they asked the parish priest of the nearby parish of San Vittore dei Marinari, Orazio Pizzarello, to accommodate it in his church. Pizzarello, according to Garnett and Rosser, was a real mediator “between his teeming maritime parish and the universal Church of which he was the representative”: though a learned man, he was willing to give his parishioners' fervour a chance and to accommodate the statue.⁸⁶ The surge in expressions of popular devotion that immediately followed this decision met with suspicion and resistance from both the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities.

⁸⁴ Garnett and Rosser note that “The clerical desire to monitor lay piety had been intensifying even prior to the emergence of the Protestant critique. The Fifth Lateran Council had in 1516 issued an important regulation concerning visions: any report of heavenly apparitions was to be referred to the Holy See for verification”. Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy, from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion, 2013), 65.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 73–80.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

Upon hearing about all kinds of alleged miracles and exorcisms worked by the poor laymen from the harbour on the authority of the statue (by making use of the oil from the lamps burning in front of it, for instance) the vicar general ordered

that a wall should be built around the same [statue], the ex-votos and the sacred furnishings which adorned it; and that this enclosure [...] was to be surrounded [...] by strong fences so that the people could not go near to it and tear down the wall.⁸⁷

The *Magistrato dei Poveri*, the city's department for poor relief and the provision of alms, was also alarmed by the situation and turned against two young girls who went into the streets of the city with their mothers, singing and dressed as angels to collect money to adorn the statue's place in church.⁸⁸

Despite the authorities' provisions, enthusiasm for their Madonna did not fade among the parishioners: they continued to flock to the wall around the statue to express their devotion. The mere fact that this popular devotion, which expressed a trust beyond doubt in the divine character of the prow statue, was practically unstoppable, constrained the authorities to give the devotion an official stamp. The outcome of the process of negotiation between the insistence of the statue's many devotees and the reluctant Church authorities was, one could say, a compromise on the "reliability" of the statue: in September 1636 the wall was torn down and a papal indulgence from Pope Urban VIII was issued for all visitors to the *Madonna della Fortuna*. Thaumaturgical rites by the populace were strictly forbidden as was the publicising of any presumed miracles. In this middle position, the statue of Mary – the "trust-inspiring statue" as Zignago described it⁸⁹ – found its eventual home: trusted by the people from the Genoese harbour as their ally in their difficult daily lives, and accepted by the authorities as a well-regulated, and thus reliable devotion

⁸⁷ "che fosse murato il medesimo, e con lo stesso rinchiusi i voti, e sacri arredi, che l'adornavano, e si circondasse la clausura del medesimo, in distanza di sette palmi, di forti cancelli, acciò il popolo non potesse accostarvisi, e smurarlo". Zignago, *Brieve notizia*, 29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 27. See also: Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles*, 75.

⁸⁹ Zignago, *Brieve notizia*, 10.

undone of its magical excesses.⁹⁰ Now that it had received the hallmark of trustworthiness the popularity of the *Madonna della Fortuna* only increased, not only among the people of the harbour but also among the ecclesiastical and political elites of the city and beyond.

A striking aspect of the attempt by the port workers to win the trust of their fellow citizens for the object of their devotion, prior to its official recognition, was their wish to carry the statue through the streets of Genoa as part of the yearly Corpus Domini procession that was held shortly after the catastrophic storm. In the eyes of the seamen, having the prow statue participate in the procession – “completely decorated by flowers, ... [and] preceded and followed by twelve seamen with lit torches in their hands” - would strengthen its aura of religious legitimacy and power: indeed it was carried in the midst of their exemplary order and, according to Zignago’s account, “wherever it passed by, one could see the packed crowds moved to tears of joy”.⁹¹

The importance that the devotees of the *Madonna della Fortuna* ascribed to the Corpus Domini procession as a possibility to win trust for “their” statue resonates with how Claudio Bernardi – in his English language contribution to *The Politics of*

⁹⁰ Garnett and Rosser describe the reached equilibrium as follows: “For the great majority of her devotees in the city of Genoa and in parts beyond, she continued to be much more than an object of prayer and a sign of the grace of the Virgin Mary – the qualities emphasised by the various mouthpieces of the Church. In the wider context, she remained, rather, a personal ally and a powerful source of magical aid.” Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles*, 80. The authors thus emphasise the continued magical character of the devotion and the opposition between the viewpoints ‘from above’ and ‘from below’. I instead think that the devotion could become successful because the way the people and the Church authorities started to view this *Madonna* largely overlapped after a negotiation process: “L’Eminentissimo Cardinale Spinola allora Vescovo di Sarzana, cui era giunta la fama e delle grazie, e de’ miracoli di cui si faceva rigoroso squittinio da Ecclesiastici, dotti in Riti, e sottilissimi speculatori della verità, poi a non guari che u arrivato in Genova, si portò alla Chiesa di Nostra Signora della Fortuna, e con interna spiritual consolazione celebrò al suo Altare la Santa Messa. Il simile fece il Cardinale Santa Cecilia, più, e più volte l’Eminentissimo Durazzo Arcivescovo di questa Città”. Zignago, *Brieve notizia*, 40. Obviously, it is quite possible that the seventeenth century prior was exaggerating in his description of the visits, but it is not unlikely that these different Church leaders with their presents affirmed the trust they had in this devotion towards the *Madonna della Fortuna*, after it came under ecclesiastical control.

⁹¹ “portato era in trionfo il Simulacro della Gran Vergine tutto adornato di fiori: prima, e dopo il quale s’incomminavano, e seguivano dodici marinari con le accese torcie nelle mani; e ovunque passava, si vedeva il folto popolo intenerito in pianto di contentezza”. Zignago, *Brieve notizia*, 25.

Ritual Kinship – characterises this specific Eucharistic devotion: Genoa’s Corpus Domini procession was a communal effort that could not succeed without cooperation and a certain level of mutual trust between all layers of society.⁹² This cooperation was so essential that it provided people from all ranks with ways to express themselves and their political and more general desires, just as the *marinari* did by carrying the newly found statue in the procession.⁹³ Bernardi rightly points out that the Corpus Domini procession was the most important religious and civic occasion of the year: “the event encapsulated the tension between the Christian ideal of brotherhood and its actual manifestation; for one day in the year at least, the earthly city sought to transform itself into its heavenly version”.⁹⁴

The negotiation process that was needed in order to let the procession succeed clearly shows, as Bernardi argues, that “the traditional image of a pyramid-like social organisation is misleading; relations between the component orders or estates were polyphonic, as in a choir or orchestra”.⁹⁵ The *marinari* from the harbour were just as important as the high-placed aristocrats who, “with a big enough retinue”, were to take turns in carrying the baldachin above the Holy Sacrament.⁹⁶ The procession of 1590 could, contrary to custom, only go “to the little chapel of the jetty, and not to its head” “because neither by the seamen nor by others [the jetty] had been covered with awnings or other protection from the sun”.⁹⁷ Any alterations to the procession’s course were immediately noticeable and damaged the “civic miracle” that the

⁹² The costs of the Corpus Domini procession were taken up by the community, reflecting the civic and communal aspect of the devotion. The list of expenses incurred in 1672 included costs for perfume, the decoration of the baldachin and the cathedral, the pay of a person who put all the guilds in the right order, and most of all: the reward for the different people who provided for the awnings or arranged for them to be placed in the streets through which the procession passed. Moreover, each year shop owners were picked by ballot and ordered to decorate a specific part of the route.

⁹³ Bernardi, ‘Corpus Domini’. Besides Garnett and Rosser, Bernardi is the only historian, to my knowledge, who wrote an English language article about early modern religion in Genoa.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 234–35.

⁹⁶ “con mobba sufficiente”. Archivio Storico Civico di Genova (ASCG), Fondo dei Padri del Comune 297, no. 100.

⁹⁷ “alla Cappelletta del Molo, et non in cima poiche per gli marinari, ne per altri se gli era stato coperto con tende ne con altro riparamento dal sole” On the Corpus Domini procession of 1590. Archivio di Stato di Genova (ASG), Archivio Segreto (AS) 474, f. 87v.

procession represented: even an individual neighbourhood or guild could thus pressure the rest to make certain compromises through their way of contributing to this communal devotion.

Individual citizens also needed to cooperate in order for the procession to be successful. Every year, the *Padri del Comune*, the government department that dealt with public spaces in the city, issued the notice that every citizen had “to observe at once that the streets where [the procession] usually pass[ed] by, be swept and cleaned before his own house, getting rid of any garbage or impediment that might be there”.⁹⁸ Apart from threatening to punish those who failed to obey this order, the instructions show that the authorities were aware that peer pressure and persuasion were more effective than punishment:

All those who have their house or rooms on the said route [...] should decorate everything they can with tapestries and devotional paintings in honour and reverence of the Holy Sacrament, imitating what people usually do in Christian countries. [The *Padri del Comune*] praise those who already started to do so and persuade them to continue in order that others learn from their good example to do the same.⁹⁹

The consuls of all guilds were instructed to gather early in the morning with their candles to accompany the procession, whereas all singers and other musicians of the city “on penalty of 50 silver *scudi* per person” were to adorn it with their music.¹⁰⁰ One musician, Francesco, nicknamed “il Ballarino”, upon being investigated about his alleged absence in 1672 replied that he had “served the procession up to the pier and that he then left when the strings of his harp had come loose because of the

⁹⁸ “da ogn’uno osseruerà prontamente, che detto giorno sij per la strada consueta passare spazzata, e nettata nanzi la sua casa rispettuamente togliendo uia ogn’immondizio, et impedimento che ui fosse sotto ogni graue pena a lor Signorie Illustrissime arbitraria”. ASCG, Padri del Comune 297, n. 350. Grida Per il giorno del Corpus Domini.

⁹⁹ “Auertendo di piu tutti coloro che hanno casa, ò stanze intorno la sudetta strada, che vogliono ornare tutto quello, che potranno di tapezzi e quadri di devozione ad honore, e riuerenza d’esso Santissimo Sacramento ad imitazione di tutto quello, che si suole fare nelle parti del Christianesimo lodando molto quelli che già hanno introdotto a farlo persuadendole a perseuerare acciò che gl’altri con loro buon esempio imparino a fare il medemo”, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ “sotto pena di scuti cinquanta argento per ogn’uno”, *ibid.*

gunshots” that were fired from the ships in honour of the Holy Sacrament.¹⁰¹ Not only musicians were warned and punished if they did not live up to their duty. In the same procession of 1672 several guilds that were missing, came late, or sent only one torchbearer instead of several, awaited the same fate.

Clearly, it needed the cooperation of not only the political and ecclesiastical elites to make this devotion work, but also of every neighbourhood, the different guilds and confraternities, the shop owners, the artisans who covered the streets with awnings and decorations, and those who fired the canons in the harbour when the procession arrived at the pier. The “social contract” necessary for success was based partly on the threat of punishments (that clearly did not impress everybody and were repeated every year) but mostly on cooperation, persuasion and the need to maintain trust-relationships, since every single contributor could at any moment make up his mind and hinder or alter the procession, putting a blemish on the communal effort.

Conclusion

Seventeenth-century Genoa was a city full of contrasts and divisions. The city’s geopolitical situation, however, forced the Genoese to always find some internal balance in order to keep out the neighbouring powers. Conflicts between the secular and the ecclesiastical powers were equally the order of the day. At the same time, just as in politics, there was some level of cooperation, because it was convenient for both the state and the Church, as we will see in the following chapters. Even internally the Genoese Church was divided. Political and ecclesio-political conflicts were expressed through tussles over precedent and ceremony, for instance during the communal devotion of the Corpus Domini procession. When these religious ceremonies and devotions went well, after a process of negotiation, they were a forceful expression of the restored balance of power within the city.

Division among the clergy was partially caused by the fact that, in the seventeenth century, the clergy were still very much tied to their own families and

¹⁰¹ “seruito alla processione sin’al molo e ch’essendosi scatenato l’arpa per le sparate egli poi sen’andò”. ASCG, Padri del Comune 297, n. 273.

the values of their community. This was particularly true for the rural clergy. These family ties formed an obstacle to the reform of the clergy as advocated by individuals such as Durazzo. Yet the higher clergy, too, continued to be bound to their families in the seventeenth century. Cardinal Durazzo would have probably been unable to obtain and maintain his archbishopric without the help of his wealthy and influential family members. It is clear, then, that in the seventeenth century, family ties remained essential to both high and low clergy.

From the two examples of communal devotions in Genoa, we learnt that these devotions, too, concerned the elites as much as the common people. All strata of society were equally involved in the surge of a new devotion around the miracle-working prow statue in 1636 and in the Corpus Domini procession that was held each year. These devotions are two prime examples of religious expressions of post-Tridentine Catholicism that could not succeed without a continuous process of negotiation, cooperation and persuasion.¹⁰² Central to these processes of negotiation is the issue of trust: suspicion had to be overcome between the port workers and the Church authorities in order that the devotion to the *Madonna della Fortuna* could exist inside the framework of the post-Tridentine Church. Only a well-regulated devotion, the fruit of negotiation, could elicit trust from all sides. Similarly, it was in cases of distrust or conflict that the Corpus Domini procession lacked its desired unity. Existing studies thus confirm the hypothesis from which my study departs: namely that trust constituted a pivotal element of post-Tridentine religiosity and Church organisation.

Since the two English language contributions regarding the religious history of early modern Genoa have worked at this from a bottom-up perspective (as did the extensive work of Grendi on confraternities), emphasizing the importance of initiative and persuasion from below, the focus of the chapters that follow will mostly lie elsewhere. Trust was not only central to the interplay between the Church hierarchy and the faithful, it was also necessary to whatever successful change and

¹⁰² Celeste McMamara describes a similar need of popular support for reformed practices in the rural parishes of the diocese of Padua, many of whose parishioners actually embraced baroque Catholicism. McNamara, Celeste. 'What the People Want?'

reform seventeenth-century ecclesiastics tried to bring about *within* the ranks of the institutional Church (both from above and from below). In the next chapters, the emphasis will therefore be on the many male and female religious and secular priests that one could encounter in the streets of Genoa. Attention will be paid particularly to the problems that came with ecclesiastical reform attempts that relied primarily on trust (chapters 2 and 3); the necessity of freedom and trust for effective (moral) change and the success of new religious initiatives (chapters 4 and 5); and, finally, the manner in which the religious fostered the trust relationships they needed in a historical context that saw obedience as a core religious value (chapters 6 and 7).

2. Trust management. Three post-Tridentine reform initiatives

Historians have long thought of the Catholic reform attempts after Trent as a top-down process.¹ In recent decades, however, we have come to understand that those post-Tridentine bishops who were both responsible for, and intended to carry out, reform in various ambits of their dioceses encountered resistance from different layers of the Church hierarchy. Reforming bishops needed their clergy to cooperate and financial resources to realise their aims: because they still operated within a complicated and hard to change system of benefices and conflicting jurisdictions, many reform goals were something of a long haul.² O'Malley reminds us that “[r]eform had financial implications [...] [which] affected virtually every reform measure the council undertook. Directly or indirectly, somebody had to pay for reform.”³ The interests of secular authorities and other lay people could therefore also form an obstacle for radical changes. Reforms often threatened to diminish lay influence on the local Church or burdened the community financially. Where reform did succeed, some awareness of a common interest and a certain form of cooperation both among clergy and between clerical advocates of reform and the laity were needed. Practices of trust made this cooperation possible and underpinned successful persuasion.

This chapter exemplifies how advocates of reform used trust strategies to achieve their goals. It sheds light on the fact that they consciously adopted different forms of trust management in their projects. I use this term to indicate the strategies with which reformers tried to influence a certain group of people and convince them

¹ The third section of this chapter, entitled “The Jesuits and their Genoese allies”, will appear in an Italian language volume on the *Indipetae* edited by Marco Rochini and Paolo Bianchini. The chapter’s title is: «Ad alcuni non si può mancare»: Riserbo, sospetti e strategie familiari nelle litterae indipetae genovesi del Seicento.

² Cf. O'Malley, *Trent*, 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 101.

of a shared interest in order to win or safeguard their trust, while at the same time directing these efforts towards an aim that went beyond merely maintaining the trust of that specific group. The three case studies that shed light on this phenomenon concern the secular clergy, the Lazarists, and the Jesuits respectively. They show that different exponents of the Genoese Church, starting with Cardinal Durazzo himself, consciously used trust management to further various reform goals. Their efforts, combined, were targeted at all levels of society: reforms were directed at the secular clergy, the peasantry, and the urban elites. Various forms of trust strategies were used to make these different groups cooperate with the Tridentine project.

The first case study exemplifies how Durazzo adopted trust management to counter one of the main issues of the post-Tridentine Church, that of the low moral and educational level of the secular clergy. Besides trying the rather ineffective measures of punishment and discipline, he promoted a new type of trustworthy clergy whose example other priests might imitate or else risk losing the support, including the financial support, of the laity. The cardinal thus tried to bring about change in the secular clergy of his diocese – and particularly of Genoa itself - by strategically and explicitly placing his trust in one elite group, while anticipating that others would conform out of envy (or enthusiasm) for the privileged position of those few.

The second case study shows how the ability of a particular congregation, the Lazarists, to elicit the trust of lay people was acknowledged and deployed strategically by both secular and religious authorities. The Lazarists focused primarily on the mission among the rural population. The rural missions were not only essential to their spirituality but also to their eventual popularity with the administrative elites and Cardinal Durazzo. The issue that Durazzo faced – and tried to solve by using the Lazarists' abilities – was that the Tridentine ideals had hardly trickled down to those rural areas of the archdiocese that were difficult to reach. With mere rules and instructions, it had proved impossible to extricate the sometimes poorly educated and poorly paid rural clergy from the mindset and circumstances in which they were embedded.⁴ The alternative method that Durazzo applied was to send the Lazarists

⁴ See pages 66-7.

who, in his eyes, had already shown their worth in winning trust and slowly changing the attitude of rural people and their ministers (see chapter six). The secular government encountered similar difficulties in their centralisation efforts, especially on the island of Corsica: in their eyes, the rural missions of the Lazarists could foster peace among the rural population and administrative control over these remote parts of the Republic. By helping the Lazarists to implement their trust management strategies, the secular and ecclesiastical authorities hoped to achieve their respective goals.

The third case study centres on the Jesuit settlement in Genoa. The emergence of the Society of Jesus has strongly marked early modern Catholicism also because of their main ambitions: to conduct missions in the most various and remote parts of the world. Yet in order to become successful in acquiring new members and in realising the aim of many of those who joined – namely to set off for the overseas missions – they needed to persuade important allies and avoid losing their trust. The third case study shows that the attempts of the Jesuits at trust management in this respect heavily influenced the choices that the Society made: to avoid losing the trust of important families, the wishes and callings of individual Jesuits were often set aside.⁵ Successful trust management helped the Jesuits integrate into the urban environment but at the same time it created a dependence that limited their freedom and ran counter to the Tridentine ideals.

Reforming the secular clergy

Secular priests were an important target of reform measures in the middle of the seventeenth century. The Council of Trent had turned to the bishops to take the necessary steps in this direction. The focus of the Tridentine decrees was not merely on repressing unwanted behaviour, but rather on creating a new type of trustworthy

⁵ This finding sheds light on what currently interests many historians of the early modern Society of Jesus: the relationship between Jesuits and their families. At the Sixteenth Century Conference that was held in Albuquerque (NM) from 1 to 4 November 2018, three panels organised by Alison Weber were dedicated to this theme. Hopes were expressed that the contributions would be published in an edited volume dedicated to Jesuits and their families.

priest via strict selection and education.⁶ Selection and education were not enough, though, to achieve this goal. Apart from these two tactics, Cardinal Durazzo also relied on a strategy of trust management: by creating an alternative, elite group of priests, he encouraged the established clergy to follow their lead. A short analysis of all four strategies - selection, repression, education and finally trust management - will shed light on the importance of trust for effective reform.

Selecting trustworthy clergy

The selection of trustworthy personnel happened at the gates of the religious life. The general trend after the Council was an increased vigilance on the part of the bishops who were held responsible for the intellectual and moral capacities of the candidates for ordination, and were to establish whether they had a true vocation.⁷ As early as 1588, the Genoese archbishop Anton Maria Sauli had ruled that the Tridentine decrees should be strictly followed on this matter. To enter the major orders, ordinations had to be announced publicly, and well in advance, so that any objection could be brought out in the open: birth, behaviour and sources of income should be checked; “and with regard to the newly ordained priests, we order that nobody dare to celebrate mass before he has learned the ceremonies well, and has given proof of this”.⁸ During the 1643 synod, Durazzo emphasised that any

⁶ Cf. Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 21–22. Paola Vismara, ‘Il sacerdozio come “professione”. Considerazioni sull’epoca moderna’, in *Una strana gioia di vivere. A Grado Giovanni Merlo*, ed. Marina Benedetti and Maria Luisa Betri (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 2010), 229–32. For insight into the professionalisation dynamics as they occurred in Southwest Germany, see: Forster, *Catholic Revival*, 173–84. Luciano Allegra instead writes that an ever stricter control mechanism was the focus of reform: “la riforma, quella vera, avrebbe dovuto trovare altre vie per imporsi: riorganizzare le diocesi, affidandosi alla spontaneità e all’iniziativa dei singoli vescovi, rinsaldare i legami all’interno della gerarchia ecclesiastica, potenziare gli apparati di controllo e quelli repressivi, ponendo così indirettamente le basi per un rinnovamento del basso clero”. Luciano Allegra, ‘Il parroco: un mediatore fra alta e bassa cultura’, in *Storia d’Italia. Annali 4*, ed. Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 897, 902.

⁷ Vismara, ‘Il sacerdozio’, 235. Xenio Toscani talks of a more general conviction that a large number of clergy was detrimental to their quality and their ‘utility’: Xenio Toscani, ‘Il reclutamento del clero (secoli XVI-XIX)’, ed. G. Chittolini and G. Miccoli, *La Chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all’età contemporanea*, *Storia d’Italia. Annali*, 9 (1986): 576.

⁸ “et quanto a gli ordinati di nuovo al Sacerdotio s’ordina che nessuno ardisca di celebrare la messa, se prima non haverà imparato bene le cerimonie, et fattone la prova”. Diocesan synod by Cardinal Sauli (1588), in: *SDP*, 548-9.

candidate to the major orders should have an attestation from his parish priest about his life and behaviour.

[T]hey shall also bring proof of whether they have worn the habit and tonsure, the church to which they belonged, [...] whether they frequented confession and Holy Communion at least on feast days, and whether they served laudably in the preceding orders [...].⁹

Convinced as he was that “the ecclesiastical discipline depends greatly on a judicious selection of people for the clerical orders”, Cardinal Durazzo was indeed particularly selective. Evidence for this selectiveness comes from three ecclesiastical censuses held during Durazzo’s tenure. In 1643, the number of clerics in Genoa amounted to 1288; nine years later it had dropped to 1028; and finally, in 1661, a total of 711 clerics were left.¹⁰ Even when we consider the loss during the years of the 1658 epidemic (when circa 200 priests had died and the general population had declined drastically), the decrease in the number of clergy is significant and suggests that Durazzo’s policy of stricter selection was effective.¹¹ The *Description of the clergy made in the year 1652* that Durazzo ordered, testifies to the importance that the cardinal attached to knowing all his clergy, their background, and whereabouts.¹² This extensive alphabetical list mentions where all the priests and minor clerics present in

⁹ “deferent etiam fidem qualiter habitum, et Tonsuram gestaverint, Ecclesiae, cui fuerint adscripti, inserviverint, doctrinae christianae vacaverint, confessionem, et sacram communionem diebus saltem solemnioribus frequentaverint, et in praecedentibus ordinibus, quos susceperunt, laudabiliter ministraverint” Diocesan synod by Cardinal Durazzo (1643), in: *SDP*, 749.

¹⁰ Luigi Nuovo, ‘La Chiesa genovese nelle “relationes ad limina” del cardinale Stefano Durazzo’, in *Le relationes ad limina dell’arcivescovo di Genova Stefano Durazzo (1635-1664)*, ed. Luigi Nuovo (Genoa: Brigati, 2002), 26.

¹¹ This is also what Luigi Nuovo, who has counted these numbers, assumes to have been the case: *Ibid.* Cf. also: Angelo Turchini, ‘La nascita del sacerdozio come professione’, in Prodi and Penuti, *Disciplina dell’anima*, 242–43. That this decrease started only later during Durazzo’s term of office is logical when we consider that clergy who passed away were not substituted by a large new ‘intake’. For an example of Durazzo’s selectiveness: ASV, Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari (CVR), *Positiones Episcoporum (PE)*, 1642 marzo-luglio, 31-07-1642, which is a complaint by a Genoese nobleman, Ottavio Grimaldo to Rome in which he asserted that Cardinal Durazzo did not want to ordain him (without mentioning the reasons).

¹² Archivio Storico Diocesano di Genova (ASDG), *filza 16. Descrizione del Clero fatta l’anno 1652. Per ordine dell’Emin’mo et R’mo Sig’r Cardinale Durazzo Arcivescovo di Genova.*

the city were born, where they were ordained, and where they currently lived. It also details whether they were following any education, whether they were allowed to hear confession, and what the individual priest's tasks were (for instance, to hear confession in a certain convent, to say mass at a particular nobleman, or to serve a particular confraternity).

However, stricter selection did not directly influence the many clergy who were already in office. Moreover, it sometimes encountered resistance from other parties that had a say in the selection of candidates for the priesthood. Many parishes continued to be financially dependent on the patrons or benefices that were connected to them; these often influenced the selection of new parish priests, leaving little room for the local bishop.¹³ Besides, some of the better educated secular clergy ended up choosing a career by which they avoided becoming a parish priest: in many areas, the latter vocation continued to be very poorly paid.¹⁴

Attempts were made to force those already in office to conform to the Tridentine ideals: rules were issued during the various synods and ecclesiastical censures applied to those who would not comply. These censures, however, often proved ineffective. In February 1636, the villagers of Bastelica – a small town in the mountainous interior of Corsica – complained to Rome that their parish priest, Pietro Paolo Cuneo, had abandoned his parish more than three years earlier. Rome's suggestion to the bishop of Ajaccio was to force this priest to return using “those punishments that the Sacred Canons of the Council of Trent prescribe”.¹⁵ A letter from the Congregation of the Bishops and Regulars, however, proves that nine months later nothing had changed for Bastelica: excommunication did not make any impression on Father Cuneo, who had not returned to his duties.¹⁶

¹³ Nicole Lemaitre, ‘L'idéal pastoral de réforme et le Concile de Trente (XIVe-XVIe siècle)’, in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 28; Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 83–84. See also: Barbara McClung Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform, and the Church as Property* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁴ Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 89–92.

¹⁵ “con quelle pene che le uengono soministrate da Sacri Canonî [del] concilio di Trento”. ASV, CVR, *Registra episcoporum* (RE), vol. 80, 34v, 15-02-1636, letter to the bishop of Ajaccio.

¹⁶ ASV, CVR, RE, vol. 80, 34v, 15-02-1636, letter to the bishop of Ajaccio; and ASV, CVR, RE, vol. 80, f. 106r, 14-11-1636, letter to the bishop of Ajaccio.

Ecclesiastical measures (and also more “worldly” punishments) were rather ineffective because the Genoese Church often did not have the means to enforce them. As Archbishop De’ Marini wrote, his “tribunal remains so short of servants, that many offences remain unpunished, and the ecclesiastical discipline suffers in many ways”.¹⁷ This problem was even more pronounced in the Ligurian inland, since it consisted almost entirely of mountainous regions that one could reach only on foot or on the back of a donkey.¹⁸ Moreover, those clergy who got involved in criminal activities were often part of powerful rural families with large family assets on which the ecclesiastical structures in the countryside depended.¹⁹

Compounding these difficulties was the fact that regulation – especially in those cases that were implemented with either violence or the threat of excommunication – was frequently met with resistance by the clergy themselves. Such was the case when “all the clergy of Sarzana” – if we may believe their petition from 1642 – protested against their bishop after he held a diocesan synod. According to the accusations, during this meeting the bishop threatened to use violence to enforce his new decrees “because many of the [...] priests did not want to give him their consent in all things the way he wanted”:

there was a lay nephew of his who said ‘we should force the consent [of the gathered clergy] by way of beatings’, and thus [i.e. under this threat] many issues passed.²⁰

We do not know whether this really was the bishop’s approach, but we can infer that with regard to new regulations, local priests and their bishops were not always on the same page.

¹⁷ “Tribunale resta si mal proueduto di ministri, che molti delitti uanno impuniti, et in molte cose patisce la disciplina Ecclesiastica”, ASV, CVR, PE, 1632 gennaio-maggio, Genoa, 18-03-1632, letter from Domenico de’ Marini to Antonio Marcello Barberini. For the execution of sentences, the ecclesiastical tribunals usually relied on the secular authorities.

¹⁸ Taddia, ‘Fratelli preti’, 41.

¹⁹ Fontana, ‘Gente tanto inurbana’, 139.

²⁰ “tutto il clero di Sarzana” “ui era un suo nipote secolare doue disce che bisogna far dar il placet a forze di bastonate e cosi si diferi molti capiij” “perché li detti Preti non li uoleuono dar il placet in tutte le cose a suo modo”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1642 marzo-luglio, 18-07-1642, Sarzana.

The obstacles to education

Since contemporaries were aware of the ineffectiveness of merely imposing rules, the Council fathers believed education to be a pivotal step in convincing the clergy to conform to the Tridentine ideal, and thus moulding a trustworthy clerical class.²¹ Various types of education for priests had existed before Trent, but none as systematic as the proponents of reform demanded at the Council, dwelling on the example of the recent Jesuit colleges.²²

While in numerous dioceses bishops founded seminaries soon after Trent, others delayed the matter for various reasons. Financial difficulties forced many bishops to close their seminaries soon after their foundation, although some managed to procure a stable income.²³ The decrees of the Council indicated that the income of the seminaries should come from a special tax on ecclesiastical benefices, yet such measures met with much resistance from the benefice holders.²⁴ An example is the seminary of Ventimiglia that in 1610 was “on the verge of dissolution because of the priests who [did] not want to contribute”.²⁵ Rome ordered Ventimiglia’s

²¹ Writing about the Council of Trent a century later, in 1657, the historian Sforza Pallavicino claimed that, according to many Council fathers, the seminary was “the only means that they continued to see as effective in order to mend the diminished discipline: since it is a certainty that in every Republic the citizens are such as we raise them.” [“quell’unico mezzo il quale si conserva per efficace a riparare la scaduta disciplina: essendo regola certa, che in ogni Repubblica tali habbiamo i cittadini, quali li alleviamo”] Cited in Maurilio Guasco, ‘La formazione del clero: i seminari’, in *Storia d’Italia. Annali 9: La Chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all’età contemporanea* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), 631. Kathleen M. Comerford, ‘Clerical Education, Catechesis, and Catholic Confessionalism: Teaching Religion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in Comerford and Pabel, *Early Modern Catholicism*, 241.

²² Maurilio Guasco, ‘Per una storia della formazione del clero: problemi e prospettive’, in *Chiesa, chierici, sacerdoti: clero e seminari in Italia tra XVI e XX secolo. Siena, Archivio di Stato, Seminario arcivescovile, 21 maggio 1999*, ed. Maurizio Sangalli (Rome: Herder, 2000), 25. For the influence of the Jesuit colleges on Trent’s decisions: Heinz Finger, ‘Das Konzil von Trient und die Ausbildung der Säkularkleriker in Priesterseminaren’, in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 50.

²³ Guasco, ‘Per una storia’, 26. See also: Carlo Fantappiè, ‘Problemi giuridici e finanziari dei seminari’, in Sangalli, *Chiesa, chierici, sacerdoti*, 108–9.

²⁴ Finger, ‘The Council’, 41.

²⁵ “in termine di dissolversi per causa de’ Preti, che non uogliono contribuire” ASV, CVR, RE, vol. 44, 94v, 01-10-1610, to the bishop of Ventimiglia.

bishop to “proceed against all by confiscating the revenues of their benefices regardless of any dispensation that they might have obtained”.²⁶

In Genoa, Archbishop Geronimo Sauli had founded the seminary and one of his successors, Antonio Sauli (then auxiliary bishop of Archbishop Cipriano Pallavicino), had secured funding for it from the government (in 1586) so that it could actually house some students.²⁷ In several *Ad Limina* reports, the Genoese archbishops subsequently presented the institution as one of the pillars of reform.²⁸ Another seminary was added to the diocesan seminary and the Jesuit college (1553) at the beginning of the seventeenth century: this was a college for aspirant priests, founded in 1612 by Gerolamo del Bene, which he entrusted to the care of the Jesuits.²⁹ In his *Ad Limina* of 1640, however, Cardinal Durazzo pointed out that his diocesan seminary had neither “a house of its own nor a stable income, but [it was]

²⁶ “proceda contro tutti per uia della sequestratione de’ frutti dei loro beneficij non ostando ancora qualuq’ inhibitione, che hauessero ottenuta” ASV, CVR, RE, vol. 44, 94v, 01-10-1610, to the bishop of Ventimiglia.

²⁷ Arturo Colletti, *Il cardinale Stefano Durazzo arcivescovo di Genova* (Genoa: A.G.I.S., 1951), 10–16.

²⁸ Cf.: ASV, Congregazione del Concilio (Congr. Concilio), Relationes Dioecesium (Relat. Dioec.) 415A Ianuensis, 7r-15v, 1598, Relatio by archbishop Matteo Rivarola (f. 8r “Seminarium ad Conc’i trident’ praescriptum institutum quidem est, atq. in eo clerici non modo litteris cantuq’ musico, uerum etiam ac multo magis bonis moribus, ac pie uiuendi praeceptis imbuuntur”); ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 17r-21v, 1605, Relatio by archbishop Orazio Spínola, in which Spinola recounts how the seminary has grown to 30 students (19v). “Seminarium clericor’ institutum est in quo mensibus praeteritis numerus ex decem et octo ad triginta fuit auctus: pueri bonis moribus imbuuntur ac litteras edocentur: redditus perpetuos non habet nec beneficia simplicia sunt in dioecesi quae applicari possint: sustentantur ex libri quinquemillibus quotannis a senatu magistratib’ Diui Georgij et Misericordiae praestari solitis quae licet sint ad tempus designatae tamen prorogari consueuerunt”); ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 22r-25v, 12-01-1616, Relatio by archbishop Orazio Spínola; ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 26r-29v, 02-07-1619, Relatio by archbishop Domenico de’ Marini (f. 26v. “Seminarij alumni uiginti septem numerantur quorum quinq’ aluntur legato perpetuo cuiusdam ciuis primarij defuncti reliqui expensis et collatione trium magistratuum reipublicae cum tenuitas beneficiorum dioecesis non patiat ut possit ex eis aliquid subtrahi ad praescriptum Concilij Tridentini quod si fieret plenum illius regimen a sola archiepiscopi auctoritate penderet et uberiores fructus ecc’ae Genuensis ex eo collegeret”) ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 30r-31v, 10-03-1622, Relatio by archbishop Domenico de’ Marini (f. 30r “clerici seminarij triginta duo elemosinis Reip’cae et pio’ oper’ uiuentes litteris, et festis diebus seruitio Ecclesiae incumbunt.”) ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 32r-39v, 1626, Relatio by archbishop Domenico de’ Marini (in this ad limina De Marini mentioned that there were still 32 seminarists).

²⁹ Colletti, *Il cardinale*, 48.

supported by payments from the patrons of Monte San Giorgio [a bank], and from other pious funds”.³⁰ Not having a stable income of its own, the seminary depended on the secular authorities for financial help: the patrons of the San Giorgio (state) bank, the government’s *Magistrato della Misericordia* (the department that decided on all charity expenses) and a substantial legate of Franco Lercaro made up the biggest part of the income.³¹ To avoid this dependence, in October 1647 Durazzo revolutionised the administration of the seminary, implementing the Tridentine instructions (after a first attempt in 1645).³² He issued a decree in which he asked for a contribution of “four per cent each year” to be applied to his own revenues, to those of the chapter of the cathedral, “and to all other ecclesiastical benefices [...] of our city and diocese of Genoa.”³³ Two years later, many had indeed started to pay their contributions, while others - mostly rural clergy - were again exhorted by a decree to do so on penalty of excommunication.³⁴

Clergy as well as lay people voiced their disagreement.³⁵ Rural communities complained before the senate that their parish priests, out of financial need, had become less lenient towards the poor who could not pay the duties for funerals or other functions:

now [these priests] go about clamouring that because of the [...] aggravating tax they cannot accept less than the standard amount, and it even seems that it will turn out that, if the poor cannot [pay

³⁰ “neque domum propriam neque firmos redditus [...], sed certis praestationibus partim a protectoribus Montis Sancti Georgii, partim ex aliis piis operibus aluntur.” *Le relationes dell’arcivescovo Durazzo*, Nuovo ed., 40.

³¹ ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1078, no. 98.

³² Nuovo, ‘La Chiesa genovese’, 23–24, 28–29; Colletti, *Il cardinale*, 68–72.

³³ “una portione di quattro, per cento l’anno” “e di ogni altro Benefitio Ecclesiastico [...] della Città, e Diocesi, n’ra di Genoua” ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1081, no. 2, edict by Cardinal Durazzo, 05-09-1650.

³⁴ “li Ministri della nostra Mensa Arcivescouale, e gli Vffitiali del CApitolo della Cathedrale prontamente pagate le loro portioni, come pur hanno fatto la maggior parte di d’ti Benefictiati, e particolarm’te quelli della Città”. Ibid.

³⁵ Nuovo, ‘La Chiesa genovese’, 23–24.

the due amount for the priests' services] they will claim it from [the rest of] the community.³⁶

Others expressed the fear that the clergy would be “burdened more than [they] can bear, and [...] the people will be indirectly troubled by [the archbishop's] edicts”.³⁷

Durazzo's primary motivation for changing the sources of income was that of gaining authority over the seminary, its administration, and its admissions.³⁸ A chart with the seminary's old and new sources of income shows the (financial) effects of reform: whereas the seminary used to be mainly paid for by governmental and other lay resources, Durazzo ensured that almost half of the income came from the tax on ecclesiastical benefices, thus gaining greater control over the seminary.³⁹ In addition, the cardinal personally sponsored the purchase of new housing in order to be able to accept more seminarians and he asked his wealthy friends to do the same.⁴⁰ That he did not limit himself to regaining authority over the seminary but also made personal investments, is evidence of the fact that the reorganisation of the seminary was one of the cornerstones of Cardinal Durazzo's reform efforts.⁴¹ Another sign of

³⁶ “hora uanno uociferando che atteso il sudetto graua [...] tassa non solo non potranno prendere meno del rigore, ma pare anche che questo negotio s'incamini à pretenderlo contro la Communità se i poueri non potessero” ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1078, no. 98

³⁷ “grauato più di quello [che] può portare, et [...] li popoli suoi saranno con li suoi editti indirettamente danneggiati”. Ibid.

³⁸ Supporting the seminary financially, the secular authorities also wanted to have control over it. When the secular authorities controlled the seminary, it was not unusual for them to allow young men to enter who wanted to benefit from the education offered, while having no intention of becoming a priest Colletti, *Il cardinale*, 19–20. Apparently, many seminarians left the seminary before being ordained: Cf. Ibid. 51.

³⁹ ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1078, no. 98. The chart also indicates that already from 1525 or 1626 the *Camera* no longer contributed and therefore also had no say among the governors of the seminary; clearly, the person who paid also decided. In response to the cardinal's measures, the senators, who in many instances were at odds with Durazzo, also sought to cancel one of the remaining sources of income: a legate from Franco Lercari. ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1081, no. 2. (see for the origin of this legate: Ibid., 12.) Another reading of the situation is that in response to Durazzo's demand for more authority over the seminary, the government withdrew its subsidies. Nuovo, ‘La Chiesa genovese’, 23.

⁴⁰ Durazzo reports this initiative in his *Ad limina* report of 1655, in: *Le relationes dell'arcivescovo Durazzo*, Nuovo ed., 51-2. See also: Nuovo, ‘La Chiesa genovese’, 29–30. Genoa also had another seminary, “Il Collegio Del Bene” named after its founder, that was run by the Jesuits, a Jesuit college and a house for Jesuit novices.

⁴¹ The seminary was not the only issue on which the archbishop was opposed to the secular authorities. Other points of struggle were Durazzo's refusal to crown doge Agostino Pallavicini,

this is that he did so openly in the face of both the secular authorities and many clergy.

In the wake of Trent, the ideal of bringing about a new type of cleric was sought through the education of new priests who should eventually set a trustworthy example for the rest. Gaining more control over the seminary also enabled Durazzo to have a closer bond with his clergy.⁴² Yet, like selection, the education of priests via an independent seminary was not without obstacles, primarily those posed by secular authorities and existing clergy. More importantly, the seminary did not educate all diocesan clergy, many of whom continued to reach the priesthood via ways that Trent had not closed off – that of “apprenticeship” training or via theological training at other colleges – nor did it directly affect the education of the existing group of priests.⁴³ In order to reach *all* pastors, Durazzo reverted to the alternative strategy of trust management: he created an elite group of clergy whom he trusted, and who were to set the example for the rest. Since many priests in Genoa were working in education as private teachers or in (catechism) schools, it is not hard to imagine that these priests, in turn, were seen as an important force in changing society as a whole.⁴⁴

An alternative strategy

In a later chapter we will see how the cardinal introduced the Lazarists into his diocese, entrusting them not only with the missions to the countryside but also with the education of the urban clergy.⁴⁵ Pleased with their work, Durazzo envisioned a priestly congregation of his own similar to the Lazarists but within the urban environment, since the missionary work of the Lazarists focused on the

his pretensions on how he was to be addressed, matters of ceremony in the cathedral, the control over hospitals and confraternities et cetera. See chapter 1 and: *Ibid.*, 18, 21–24.

⁴² Finger, ‘The Council’, 56.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 55; Comerford, ‘Clerical Education’, 255; Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 118; Colletti, *Il cardinale*, 11.

⁴⁴ See: ASDG, *filza* 16. *Descrizione del Clero fatta l'anno 1652*

⁴⁵ See chapter 6.

countryside.⁴⁶ Durazzo's ideal priest combined the older *modello carolino*, i.e. the priest as envisioned by Carlo Borromeo, with the more recent French school of spirituality that emphasised the priest as *alter Christus*, and found one of its first concrete expressions on the Italian peninsula in the French Lazarists.⁴⁷ In 1653, he founded a kind of priestly elite corps that aimed explicitly at following the decrees of the Council of Trent. The Council had reminded priests of the fact that nothing could do more to further piety and devotion to God than the life and example of the ministers of the Church.⁴⁸ The rules of the new congregation (that stem from 1697) instructed its members on this point:

In one word, [the members] should behave so that all their actions cause admiration; otherwise, [...], this objection will certainly be raised: 'Physician, heal thyself; why do you say things that you yourself do not act out? While teaching others, you do not teach yourself?'⁴⁹

The first concern expressed in the statutes was thus the priests' responsibility for setting a trustworthy example.

Durazzo's initiative was at first called the *Missionarii urbani* and subsequently named the Congregation of the Urban Missions of Saint Charles Borromeo after the famous champion of the Counter-Reformation effort. Its members lived separately

⁴⁶ Whereas the Congregation of the Mission "following its own statutes conduct[ed] its missions not in the city but in the diocese" "ex proprio instituto non in civitate sed in dioecesi suas missions exercet". From Durazzo's *Ad limina* report of 1655, in: *Le relationes dell'arcivescovo Durazzo*, Nuovo ed., 53.

⁴⁷ Luigi Nuovo has pointed out that Cardinal Durazzo took Carlo Borromeo as a model for his work as archbishop of Genoa. Nuovo, 'La Chiesa genovese', 22. For the role of the French school on the Italian peninsula see: Guasco, 'La formazione', 658–68; and Guasco, 'Per una storia', 29. For the difference between the French and the Borromean model of priestly education, see: Finger, 'The Council', 46–49. One can see Durazzo's preference for these groups of clergy also in the fact that he highlights them in his *Ad limina* report of 1655: *Le relationes dell'arcivescovo Durazzo*, Nuovo ed., 51–3.

⁴⁸ *Regulae Seu Constitutiones Congregationis Missionis Urbanae Sanctae Caroli Genuae Ex Typographia Faziola MDCCCXLIV* (Genoa, 1844), 5. On page 2, the author states that these rules are an exact copy of the 1697 rules.

⁴⁹ "uno verbo, ita se gerant, ut eorum actiones cunctis afferant venerationem; alioquin cum alios in sacris concionibus vitia declinanda edocebunt, certo sibi obiiciendum noverint: Medice cura te ipsum; quare quae tu dicis ipse non facis? alios docens, te ipsum non doces?" *Regulae*, 5.

but gathered every week to read the Scriptures and meditate together.⁵⁰ They were asked to hold spiritual exercises for the citizens of Genoa four times a year. According to Durazzo's *Ad limina* report of 1655, the *Missionari urbani* provided catechesis for the Genoese and were instructed to "urge people to piety and console them, [...] and now and then even go around the streets and squares" of the city.⁵¹ That they were indeed doing so is suggested by the fact that none of them survived the plague epidemic of 1656-7, after which the congregation needed to restart from scratch.⁵²

The statutes also explicitly instructed the priests of the congregation to excel at all the usual duties of priesthood. They had to recite the divine offices "with great reverence and with inner and outward attention, fully pronouncing the words, and not confusing them because of inappropriate haste".⁵³ They were to make time for mental prayer each morning, follow the spiritual exercises each year, and celebrate the feast day of their patron saint. The congregation's communal spirit was important too: members were to help each other, obey their superiors, refrain from gossiping about other members, give solace when death was approaching, and willingly accept criticism.⁵⁴ A new member was admitted only after a trial period, when the other members agreed and trusted that the applicant would behave according to their high standards.⁵⁵ Not living up to those standards, for example by missing the communal meetings, or behaving in ways "unworthy of the meritorious ministries of the congregation", resulted in expulsion from the congregation.⁵⁶ Membership of this

⁵⁰ Their weekly encounters should help in their spiritual growth and in the correct celebration of the sacraments, by reading together spiritual literature, the missal and the Bible. *Regulae*, 14.

⁵¹ "ad pietatem exhortari et consolari, interdum etiam per vicos et plateas circuire." Cardinal Durazzo's *Ad Limina* report of 1655. *Le relationes dell'arcivescovo Durazzo*, Nuovo ed., 53.

⁵² Cardinal Durazzo's *Ad limina* report of 1659, Luigi Nuovo, ed., *Le relationes ad limina dell'arcivescovo di Genova Stefano Durazzo (1635-1664)* (Genoa: Brigati, 2002), 58.

⁵³ "magna cum reverentia et attentione tam interiori quam exteriori recitent, verba integer pronunciantes, et non importuna festinatione confundentes" *Regulae*, 3-4.

⁵⁴ *Regulae*, 6.

⁵⁵ For the voting procedure on new admissions, see: *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

elite group thus depended on the ability to uphold the ideals that were set to provide an example to other clergy and attract the esteem of the laity.⁵⁷

By placing his trust in one elite group of secular priests – and apart from this community, in other new religious congregations like the Jesuits and the Lazarists – Cardinal Durazzo consciously tried to bring about a change in the secular clergy of his diocese. The dynamic behind this reform strategy was that these trusted priests could elicit the envy or enthusiasm of other priests because they formed a more attractive alternative for the laity (or because, having witnessed this example, the other clergy themselves felt called to live in this different way). The risk of losing the trust of the laity in the face of such an exemplary group was meant to urge others to imitate the *Missionarii urbani*.

The threat of losing trust

An interesting anonymous letter to Rome, allegedly written by Genoese priests in 1654, confirms that Cardinal Durazzo's policies regarding the clergy centred on the issue of trust. The authors of the letter, who called themselves the “poor priests of Genoa”, complained that the church in their city was in a “very unfortunate state because of the bad government of [...] Cardinal Durazzo”.⁵⁸ Precisely because the letter was accusatory and hardly meant to do the cardinal a favour, it does reveal that Durazzo's policies – to the annoyance of the letter writers – made themselves felt. The unfortunate situation of the Church was allegedly caused by the fact that Durazzo had let himself be influenced by some “fathers and three priests”: “whatever they say is carried out even though it is far from just”.⁵⁹ Furthermore, according to the letter, Durazzo made the secular priests of his diocese “cough up money” for his policies: with this comment, the authors maybe hinted at the reform of the seminary.

⁵⁷ A person's membership of this elite group was mentioned in the list that Durazzo had had drawn up of all priests in the city and their occupations. ASDG, *filza* 16. *Descrizione del Clero fatta l'anno 1652*.

⁵⁸ “noi poveri Preti di Genoua” “stato infelicissimo per il mal gouerno del signor Cardinal Durazzo” ASV, CVR, PE, 1654 maggio-agosto, 21-08-1654, anonymous letter to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

⁵⁹ “quel che quelli dicono uien il tutto esseguito benche sia lontano dalla giustizia”. Ibid.

They also wrote that “one cannot say that he has tried to help them in Genoa in any way; instead [he has tried] to harm them in everything”.⁶⁰ Durazzo was even accused of disobedience to the Pope and of “loving discord more than anything”, thus causing scandal among the Genoese.⁶¹

Their letter confirms that Durazzo’s reforms had an impact on the trust relationships between the Genoese and their clergy:

Because of him, his priests have lost all credit in the eyes of everybody in Genoa, [...] they are scorned, [and] the citizens have greater esteem for, and more faith in their servants than in priests.⁶²

According to the accusations, the actions of an ill-advised cardinal caused the Genoese to lose trust in their “old” priests. A painful consequence of this loss of trust, if we may believe the letter writers, was that they progressively failed to “find resources from which to live”.⁶³

Durazzo’s preference for a new type of priest (namely those educated in his reformed seminary, his *Missionari urbani* the Lazarists and others whom he supported) earned these new clergy so much trust and importance in the ecclesiastical landscape of the city that the old clergy felt seriously disadvantaged: “because of him [...] all the laity [...] resorts to friars; because of him they have taken away our tax [exemption] [...]; because of him no churches have been built for the secular clergy. Instead they built churches for friars [i.e. regular clergy]”.⁶⁴ The “poor priests that go about asking for help at the houses of the lay” were, if we may believe the letter, the victims of Durazzo’s reform efforts who favoured a new type of clergy at the expense of the others.⁶⁵ His trust strategies – creating clergy who would on the one hand

⁶⁰ “sborsar danari” “in Genoua non si puo dire che habbia cercato di giouarli [i suoi Preti] in minima cosa, ma bensì in tutto di nocerli”. Ibid.

⁶¹ “ama[re] piu la Discordia che altro” over die ongehoorzaamheid: so that according to the authors, one should not be surprised if also “the Lutherans do not want to obey the Church”. Ibid.

⁶² “per lei [i.e. Durazzo] i suoi Preti in Genoua hanno perso appresso tutti il Credito [...] i cittadini piu stimano et han piu credenza a suoi seruitori che a Preti”. Ibid.

⁶³ “non trouano piu d’onde uiuere”. Ibid.

⁶⁴ “il tutto ricorre a frati, per lei ci hanno leuate le gabelle [...] per lei non vi sono fabricate Chiese da secolari che cosi hanno fabricato chiese de frati”. Ibid.

⁶⁵ “poueri preti che uanno a domandar aiuto da secolari”. Ibid.

further his reform goals and on the other attract the support of the laity – clearly did not miss their target.

We have considered two methods of reform that were central to Durazzo's efforts. On the one hand, the introduction of new types of clergy and better educated priests who should set an example for the rest, and, on the other hand, stricter criteria for admission to the holy orders. The stricter selection was intended to make the ecclesiastical corps in its integrity less susceptible to scandal and more prone to setting a good example. Both practices relied on the dynamic of trust and persuasion: experiencing the good example of a particular priest should persuade others, both clerics and lay people, to follow this trustworthy example. The anecdotal evidence presented here certainly does not suffice to show that tactics that relied on trust and on the freedom of others to follow a trustworthy example were *more* effective than the enforcement of rules in bringing about moral change. We can, however, say that a reformer like Durazzo relied predominantly on the former approach to achieve his goals, and that such trust strategies clearly made themselves felt.

The Lazarists' missionary efforts

Besides urban priests, the rural clergy and population also were an important target of Catholic reformers like Durazzo. To bring both the clergy and the countryside closer to the Tridentine ideals, the cardinal asked the French Lazarists to work for him in the rural parts of his diocese. The Congregation of the Mission (also called the Lazarists after their mother house at Saint-Lazare in Paris), had been founded in 1625 by Vincent De Paul.⁶⁶ From the start, the Congregation's missionary work was specifically directed at the rural poor. Missions among Europe's rural population were one of the most distinctive features of early modern Catholicism and in many ways they transformed the culture of the European countryside.⁶⁷ Priests from the

⁶⁶ See for a recent, insightful overview of De Paul's thought and activities: Alison Forrester, *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁶⁷ From the early sixteenth century, the newly established order of the Capuchins reverted to the ideals of Saint Francis by completely devoting their life to preaching, followed half a century later

old and new orders and congregations would travel around different villages of a diocese, halting at each parish for some days or weeks to preach, teach the catechism, and call people to the sacraments, each following his own particular methods.

The result of successful rural missions can be described in terms of power: the missionaries gained some kind of pastoral power over the converted souls, who became dependent on them as guarantors of salvation, as Alessandro Guerra, drawing on a Foucauldian analysis, asserts.⁶⁸ Yet, in my estimation, when the people were won over to this dependence, it was not by coercion but by a form of trust management: seventeenth-century missionaries understood that profound religious changes came about slowly, and that, in order to see change among the people of the countryside, it was not enough to tell them how to live or what to do.⁶⁹ Indeed, as Louis Châtellier already emphasised, the country people were no passive recipients of the missions.⁷⁰ Advocates of the missionary fervour of the seventeenth century were conscious of the fact that only by setting a good example, sharing the needs of the people, and thus winning their trust, could the clergy, from the bishop to the parish priest and local missionary, also elicit a positive response from those they tried to convert.⁷¹

The rural missions were an asset for both political and ecclesiastical elites. The greater administrative control over the region and the peace among the populace that

by the Jesuits who travelled across Europe to conduct missions in the areas that promised to be most fruitful, including the Protestant lands. Louis Châtellier, *La religion des pauvres: les missions rurales en Europe et la formation du catholicisme moderne, XVIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1993), 22–26.

⁶⁸ Alessandro Guerra, 'Per un'archeologia della strategia missionaria dei Gesuiti: le Indipetae e il sacrificio nella "vigna del Signore"', *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 13 (2000): 125–26.

⁶⁹ Châtellier, *La religion des pauvres*, 125–26.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 118. Using the example of Bohemia, Howard Louthan shows how Catholic identity, particularly in the Czech countryside, was formed by what Andrew Pettegree calls a "culture of persuasion" that had the rural missions as its backbone. Louthan, *Converting Bohemia*, 320. Although violence and legislature against Protestantism played a role in reconverting the country, the aspect of persuasion via the missions was also essential and implied a conscious audience. The aim of these missions was to convert the souls by winning the trust of the people. Missionaries "adapted their message and ministry to local culture and traditions [...] and] were critical of those misguided 'religious zealots' whose rigorist approach risked alienating those who were likely to convert if more sensitive and compassionate means were used. Ibid., 187–88.

⁷¹ Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire: les missions françaises au XVIIe siècle, 1600-1650* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 73.

could result from the preaching were promising prospects for secular authorities. The Republic of Genoa in the seventeenth century offers a good example of this strategic use of rural missions by the political elites. From the early seventeenth century onwards, efforts had been made by the city elite, supported by the senate and the Genoese archbishop Cardinal Orazio Spinola (1600-1616), who personally contributed, to set up a foundation that aimed to improve the material and spiritual state of the churches in the countryside. This organisation would eventually evolve into one of the *Magistrati* of the Republic, uniting a charitable aim with the political purpose of taming the lands of the *Serenissimo Dominio*.⁷²

In 1652, the senate sent the Lazarists to the island of Corsica, which at that time was under Genoese dominion. Funding the costs of these missions, the secular authorities also indicated the most problematic and criminal areas to which the missionaries should travel.⁷³ The Republic hoped that their missionary activities would somehow “civilise” these regions of Corsica and make them more obedient to the central authority.⁷⁴ That the Genoese senate thought the Lazzarist missions to Corsica were serving their purpose can be inferred from the fact that several years later the Lazarists were called again to preach on the island. In this cooperation between missionaries and the state, the Lazarists eventually founded a house in the town of Bastia in 1678 (something which Cardinal Durazzo had already aspired to during his lifetime).

Church authorities like Durazzo also saw major advantages in Lazarist missions on Corsica and in the rural hinterlands. Providing his flock with able

⁷² Liana Saginati, ‘Aspetti di vita religiosa e sociale nelle campagne Liguri: le relazioni al magistrato delle chiese rurali’, *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 19, no. 1 (1979): 231–39. By mid-seventeenth century, the organization had been split into two parts, the *Opera Laica* run by the Republic, and the *Opera Mista*, controlled largely by the archbishop, each with the same aim. *Ibid.*, 240.

⁷³ Longo, ‘L’impegno missionario’, 206–7.

⁷⁴ The same policy that combined charitable piety with political interests (that of keeping people obedient and maintaining the status quo) motivated the Genoese Senate to its works of assistance among the inhabitants of Genoa and the people living in the desolated mountain villages of the inlands, for example that of the *Opera delle chiese rurali*, financed entirely by private citizens with the support of the government. Saginati, ‘Aspetti’, 235–36, 239. See also: Longo, ‘L’impegno missionario’, 191–93.

preachers was one of the responsibilities that the Council of Trent explicitly ascribed to bishops.⁷⁵ The great difficulty of staffing the countryside with competent priests could partly be remedied by these rural missions.⁷⁶ The Lazarists were not the only ones working in the rural missions. The Jesuits had been preaching missions in Corsica and on the mainland from the time of Landini. They had founded a college in Bastia in 1602, and later also in other Corsican villages.⁷⁷ Durazzo knew that missionaries like the Jesuits and the Lazarists could, at least temporarily, bring the situation of local rural parishes closer to the ideals of Trent and even induce the local pastors to conform more to the Council's idea of a good priest. Several ecclesiastics from the Ligurian countryside, for instance, adhered to the Lazarists' call to attend their annual spiritual retreats and even took the trouble of travelling to the capital after attending one of their rural missions, showing a clear interest in this new ideal.⁷⁸

The rural missions of the Lazarists thus formed a real advantage for the political and ecclesiastical elites in the capital. Not surprisingly, the senate, Archbishop Durazzo, several Corsican bishops and individual Genoese noblemen all financially supported the Lazarist work on Corsica.⁷⁹ Moreover, the Lazarists started their mission on the island only after having visited the local authorities and having received letters of recommendation directed at the civil and ecclesiastical authorities that the missionaries would find along their way.⁸⁰ The support of regional

⁷⁵ O'Malley, 'The Council', 54.

⁷⁶ Bernadette Majorana, 'Une pastorale spectaculaire. Missions et missionnaires jésuites en Italie (XVIe-XVIIe siècle)', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57, no. 2 (2002): 297; Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 208.

⁷⁷ Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), MED 98, 20r, *Annali del Collegio della Bastia*. In 1634 they also took over a college that was founded to provide education for clerics, especially priests that would go to Corsica. Raffo, *I gesuiti*, 1996, 159. Besides the Lazarists and Jesuits, Observants, Franciscans, Capuchins, Servites, Dominicans and several female congregations were also active on the island. Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 194–95. See for examples of Jesuit missions in Liguria.: ARSI, MED 80, *Storia del Collegio di Genova, dai suoi principi nel 1553 fino al 1772 scritta in gran parte dal P. Nicolò Gentile e dal 1689 continuata da vari. Con aggiunta di altre memorie diverse*, 9r, 13v, 14v, 15v, 16r, 18r, 19v.

⁷⁸ The same was true for the Corsican clergy. Cf.: Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 229.

⁷⁹ Among whom Emanuele and Carlo Brignole, Agapito Battista Centurione, Giacomo and Giuseppe Durazzo, Ambrogio Carmagnola, and *principe* Giustiniani. Salvatore Stella, *La Congregazione della Missione in Italia* (Paris: Pillet et Dumoulin, 1884), 41; Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 206.

⁸⁰ Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 224.

and local clergy and governors in De Paul's eyes was a condition for an effective mission.⁸¹

Missionary strategies

The Lazarists carried out a job that the ecclesiastical and political elite in Genoa saw as beneficial by focusing their efforts on trust management. They aimed at winning the trust of the rural people in order to effect a change in them and in their relationship with the local clergy.⁸² The Lazarists' strategies were not obviously successful: the local people often showed some resistance to the arrival of foreign missionaries.⁸³ They therefore consciously adopted strategies to win their trust. Their technique was one among many approaches used by the different orders and congregations in the early modern period, ranging from *la pastorale de la peur* that Jean Delumeau described (consisting, for instance, of “a series of sermons, often outdoors, followed by penitential processions, with intense flagellation encouraged by Capuchins, and the singing of *laude* or other religious texts”⁸⁴) to *il modo soave* with which missionaries, as in the case of the Lazarists, tried to minimise any disruption to the local customs and needs.⁸⁵

First, the Lazarists refused any financial or material contribution from the people amongst whom they conducted their missions. Indeed, at the start of each

⁸¹ Jesuit instructional tracts for missionaries also always advised people to first contact the local clergy before starting a mission. Jennifer D Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils: The Jesuits' Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (Aldershot; Burlington (Vt.); Rome: Ashgate; Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004), 161.

⁸² “The mission of priests is really very necessary because the people do not have confidence in their parish priests”, one missionary report read. The writers might have hinted at the local conflicts that not infrequently infringed the trust between parish priests and their community. ASDG, *Durazzo città AB*, 88r-89r. “La Missione de Sacerdoti è ueramente necessarijssima per non hauere i Popoli confidenza con i loro Parochi”.

⁸³ Longo, ‘L'impegno missionario’, 196.

⁸⁴ Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 128.

⁸⁵ Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of the Western Guilt Culture, 13th-18th Centuries*, Later Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990); Peter A Goddard, ‘Missionary Catholicism’, in *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2017), 310–12. See, for the differences between various congregations concerning their missionary strategies: David Gentilcore, ‘Accomodarsi alla capacità del popolo: strategie, metodi e impatto delle missioni nel regno di Napoli, 1600-1800’, *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 109, no. 2 (1997): 689–722.

mission they would tell them that they did not seek their riches but rather their souls: “non vestra sed vos”. They also explicitly informed the public:

we live at our own expense and do not charge anyone; not only do we not charge anything, but our rule is even not to accept any gifts that you would like to give us on your own initiative.⁸⁶

Not allowing themselves to live from the favour of a particular benefactor guaranteed that they could not be influenced by anyone.⁸⁷ At the same time, the Lazarists’ modest position was a way to gain trust similar to the pastoral approach of Bishop Etienne Le Camus. Keith Luria describes how Le Camus, a reform-minded bishop of Grenoble in the second half of the seventeenth century, on his visitations to the rural parishes would impress the villagers and assumedly win their trust by his self-mortifying behaviour, not accepting privileged treatment from the rich, and giving alms to the poor.⁸⁸ Generosity and austerity were virtues that spoke to the peasant population and were ways to make them receptive to the message.

Secondly, the Lazarists tried to adapt the form of their missions to the needs and expectations of the villagers. At the beginning of a mission they would tell their audience:

[Y]ou have to know that we have not come from so far away to this your dear village for any other aim than to procure the salvation of your beautiful souls, and to put them all back in the Heart of this most lovable Lord, from Whom they may have departed for such a long time. And since we care about all your interests and comforts, as if they were our own, we have thought of distributing the services of the Holy mission in such a way that they will take as little time as possible from your necessary work, and so little that it is almost nothing, and this [we do] so that all

⁸⁶ “Non sono le vostre ricchezze che noi cerchiamo, ma le vostre anime, non vestra sed vos”. “Così è bene ed anche necessario dirvi che noi viviamo a spese nostre, e che non siamo di carico a nessuno, non solo non domandiamo nulla, ma per di più ci facciamo una legge di rifiutare i doni che vorreste farci di vostra iniziativa” J.J. Jeanmaire, *Sermons de Saint vincent de Paul, de ses coopérateurs et successeurs immédiats pour les missions des campagnes*, I, Paris 1859, 24, as cited in: Luigi Nuovo, *La Predicazione missionaria Vincenziana tra '600 e '700: al di qua dei monti dal 1655 al 1800* (Rome: C.L.V. - Edizioni Vincenziane, 1987), 37.

⁸⁷ As Nuovo assumes in: *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁸ Luria, *Territories of Grace*, 63.

will be able to profit of this mission that God has sent wholly for you.⁸⁹

Adapting their mission to the needs and rhythm of the rural populace was thus a way to win their trust.

Last, it was the content and way of preaching that should elicit trust from the audience. In contrast to other rural missions, the Lazarist method was one of modest, simple preaching and a focus on confession and catechesis, avoiding large penitential processions, theatre plays and grand sermons. Starting with the opening lecture, the goal was to make the villagers feel that they were respected and esteemed, as the missionaries presented their mission as a special grace from God:

Sent as sacred ministers of the great and most loveable God and approved by the Holy Church, we come to you [...] to exhort you from the start with lively sentiments of heart to make good use of the present mission, that God [...] has designed for your great spiritual benefit. He has looked upon you with such benign, such distinct, [and] such favourable gazes, that, forsaking many other people that with very urgent requests sigh for such a sign of favour from heaven, He has deigned you all worthy of such a great gift [...].⁹⁰

⁸⁹ “Dilettissimi dovete sapere, che noi non per altro fine siamo venuti così da lontano in questo vostro caro paese che per procurare la salute delle vostre belle anime, e tutte riporle nel Cuore di questo amabilissimo Signore, da Cui forse da tanto tempo si sono partite. E siccome ci stà à Cuore ogni vostro interesse, e vantaggio, come se fosse nostro proprio, abbiamo pensato di distribuire le funzioni della Santa missione in maniera tale che vi tolgano dalle vostre facende e lavori necessarii meno di tempo che sia possibile e tanto poco, che è quasi niente, e questo acciò, che tutti possiate approfittarvi di questa missione che Iddio ha mandato tutta per voi.” Archivio Storico della Congregazione della Missione a Genova (ASCMG), Giovanni Francesco Mazzuchi, *Prediche di Missione dedicate alla Gran Madre di Dio Maria Santissima in Genova nella Stamperia della penna MDCCLXXV*, 24v.

⁹⁰ “Sacri Ministri del Grande amorosissimo Iddio spediti, é da S. Chiesa approvati, a voi ne veniamo [...] ad esortarvi sulle prime con i più vivi sentimenti del cuore a far buon uso della presente Missione, che Iddio [...] destinata ha a gran vostro spirituale profitto. Vi ha egli rimirato con sguardi sì benigni, sì distinti, sì parziali, che lasciando addietro tant'altri popoli, che con calde pressantissime istanze un si segna alto favore del Cielo sospirano, e un si gran dono degnatosi [...].” Ibid., 1r.

Vincent de Paul wanted his missionaries to use simple language with concrete, familiar examples and a natural voice. He also advised them not to speak for too long and to avoid harshness

even against great sinners, using preferably compassion rather than passion, abstain from shouting too loud and too long, but listening to oneself and observing the movement for the epilogue [conserving one's power for the final part] and even there one should be moderate.⁹¹

Nobody should feel offended or personally accused, since this would forfeit their trust and possible conversion. The Lazarists' attitude of graciousness, their well-chosen words and their willingness to adapt to the audience's needs were all ways to win trust and convey their message.

The first missions in the villages on the Ligurian coast seemed to yield the devotional response that the Lazarists were hoping for.⁹² Already in 1647, two years after the Lazarists first came to Genoa, Étienne Blatiron wrote to Paris how “seven bandits were converted, and a Turk employed in the service of a gentleman asked for baptism”.⁹³ Other successes were reported after one of the earliest missions, during which animosities were resolved

which had caused twenty-four or twenty-five murders. Most of those involved, having obtained in writing the pardon of those offended, were able to secure a favourable verdict from the prince and have since returned to full favour in the town.⁹⁴

⁹¹ “usando piuttosto compassione che passione, astenendosi dal gridar troppo forte e per troppo tempo, ma ascoltando se stesso osservando I movimento per l'epilogo [conservando le forze per il finale] e ivi pure devono essere moderati.” Luigi Mezzadri, ‘Il metodo missionario vincenziano’, in *Le missioni popolari della Congregazione della missione nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, ed. Luigi Mezzadri and Adele Bollati, vol. 1 (Rome: CLV, 1999), 81.

⁹² See e.g. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, in: Pierre Coste, *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, 14 vols (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1900). [hereafter: *CED* + letter number], no. 942, 03-05-1647.

⁹³ “sept bandits se sont convertis et un Turc employé au service d'un gentilhomme a demandé le baptême”. Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1003, 16-12-1647.

⁹⁴ Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Books 1-3, trans. John E. Rybolt, 1993, book 2, chap. 1, sect. 4, 66.

Even nobles from the city of Genoa came to attend a mission in the nearby countryside in 1647, because they apparently were attracted by the Lazarists' new ways of preaching.

According to the Lazarist correspondence with their mother house (which, of course, tended to be much more explicit about successes than about difficulties), in many instances the rural people responded to the suggestion of founding a Confraternity of Charity, as the Lazarists usually proposed at the end of each mission in order to solidify the changes that were made.⁹⁵ In Bogliasco, a town of less than a thousand inhabitants some ten km from Genoa, Étienne Blatiron established the *Compagnia femminile della carità* (in 1654). The original statutes tell us that this group was to consist of 33 ladies who, under the supervision of the parish priest and two male *protettori*, were to provide for “both the spiritual and the corporal needs of the poor and sick of the parish”.⁹⁶

Similar confraternities were founded in various towns of the diocese, “at the orders of the most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal Stefano Durazzo, Archbishop of Genova,” as the title of the Bogliasco statutes suggests.⁹⁷ Yet their success was not necessarily permanent. After a while the confraternities often lapsed and the Lazarists would find that few things had changed when they returned to a certain place. The downside of an approach that relied on winning trust was that, since it relied on the freedom of the individual believer, profound change only came about slowly, and continued to depend on the free choices of the faithful and their offspring.

⁹⁵ Ibid., book 2, chap. 1, sect. 4, 68. The oldest extant statutes of a Confraternity of Charity in the archdiocese of Genoa are those of the female confraternity of Bogliasco. They offer a very interesting insight into the aims and functioning of these confraternities. *Regole della compagnia di carità. Archivio parrocchiale di Bogliasco, 1654*. (Gruppo di Volontariato Vincenziano, 2012). Mezzadri, ‘Il metodo missionario vincenziano’, 30.

⁹⁶ “bisogni si spirituali come corporali dei poveri e infermi della Parochia” *Regole della compagnia*, 12.

⁹⁷ “d’ordine dell’Eminentissimo et Reverendissimo Stefano Cardinale Durazzo Arcivescovo di Genova” Ibid.

The Corsican missions

A similar dynamic is apparent in the Lazarists' missionary efforts on Corsica.⁹⁸ In an extensive report about the fourth mission to the island, Étienne Blatiron recounted how the missionaries went to the valley of Niolo, a place that could only be reached by challenging routes over the highest mountains of Corsica. In this gathering place of “the bandits and bad guys of the island”, many people were ignorant of the most basic tenets of the Christian faith: to ask them which of the three divine persons became man “was like speaking Arabic to them”.⁹⁹ The people of Niolo, according to the Lazarists, indulged in two major vices: concubinage and incest. In his report, Blatiron wrote how more than a hundred people lived together outside marriage, of whom 80 were in “incestuous” relationships (i.e. breaking the strict rules on degrees of kinship applied in the seventeenth century¹⁰⁰), including several clerics “who foment[ed] these disturbances by their bad examples and who commit[ted] incest and sacrilege with their nieces and relatives”.¹⁰¹ If we may believe the report, the Lazarists, exercising great patience, managed to induce many of these excommunicated people to feel contrition and promise to live separately, after which the missionaries publicly absolved their sins.

Yet, according to Blatiron, the greatest achievement of the Corsican mission lay elsewhere. He reported how, in the Niolo valley, vendettas were so common that children learned of them before they could walk.¹⁰² This was not a typically Corsican problem, quite the contrary: reconciling the rural populations constituted one of the main tasks of missionaries all across Europe.¹⁰³ To get these people who carried weapons even when attending church to reconcile with their enemies was quite a

⁹⁸ See, for an extensive analysis of the work of the Lazarists on Corsica, the relationship between the Republic and Corsica and the population. Longo, ‘L’impegno missionario’.

⁹⁹ “bandits et mauvais garnements de l’île”, and “c’était leur parler arabe”. Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1514, 07-1652.

¹⁰⁰ John Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2013), 181.

¹⁰¹ “ecclésiastiques qui fomentaient ces désordres par leurs mauvais exemples et qui commettaient des incestes et des sacrilèges avec leurs nieces et parentes.” Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1514, 07-1652.

¹⁰² Longo, ‘L’impegno missionario’, 201.

¹⁰³ Châtellier, *La religion des pauvres*, 197. On the culture of revenge in early modern Italy, see: Carroll, ‘Revenge and Reconciliation in Early Modern Italy’.

challenge. If we may believe Blatiron, towards the end of the mission, when all preaching seemed to have made no impression whatsoever on the audience, at the cry of a Franciscan who condemned the stubbornness of the people, one priest whose nephew had been killed stepped forward. He prostrated himself on the ground, called upon the murderer of his nephew who was also present, and embraced him.¹⁰⁴ Many followed his example so that “for an hour and a half nothing was to be seen but reconciliations and embraces”.¹⁰⁵

One such mission was not enough to bring about a definite change of mentality: when the Jesuit Giovanni Battista Cancelotti came to Niolo in the early eighteenth century, he still found the same culture of vengeance.¹⁰⁶ But even temporary reconciliation with one’s worst enemy required an effort that was apparently appreciated by those who supported the Lazarist missions: their approach and results earned them the recognition of a number of members of the Corsican clergy and the local elite. Many of them accompanied the missionaries to the ships sent by the senate in order to pick them up, greeting them with gunshots.¹⁰⁷ That also the Genoese ecclesiastical and secular elites acknowledged the benefits of the Lazarists’ strategies of trust, is evident from the ever more frequent requests that their Corsican missions be extended and that they start a permanent house on Corsica (which, as I mentioned, happened in 1678).¹⁰⁸ The secular authorities were eager to see some concrete changes in the uncontrollable rural areas, while the highest ecclesiastical authority, Cardinal Durazzo, valued their contribution to the

¹⁰⁴ “un cure, de qui le neveu avait été tué, et le meurtrier était présent à cette predication, vient se prosterner en terre et demande à baiser le crucifix et en meme temps dit à haute voix: ‘Qu’un tel (c’était le meurtrier de son neveu) s’approche et que je l’embrasse’.” Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1514, 07-1652.

¹⁰⁵ “pendant l’espace d’une heure et demie on ne vit autre chose que reconciliations et embrassements”. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Armando Guidetti, *Le missioni popolari: i grandi gesuiti italiani: disegno storico-biografico delle missioni popolari dei gesuiti d’Italia dalle origini al Concilio Vaticano II* (Milan: Rusconi, 1988), 187. Putting an end to the culture of vengeance and of the incestuous relationships had already been a priority at the time of Silvestro Landini. ARSI, MED 98, *Relatione d’alcuni particolari della uita et attioni del P. Siluestro Landino della Compagnia di Giesu in Corsica*, 13r.

¹⁰⁷ See, for the reception of the missions: Longo, ‘L’impegno missionario’, 216–22.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

much needed reform of the clergy and education of the laity in the remote parts of his diocese.

The Jesuits and their Genoese allies

The Society of Jesus and their position in the Republic of Genoa in the seventeenth century offers a final window onto the phenomenon that I refer to as trust management. From the time of its foundation in 1554, the Jesuit presence in the city was an important stronghold for the Society on the Italic peninsula.¹⁰⁹ The Jesuits also immediately became an influential voice within Genoa's religious and political landscape itself.¹¹⁰ The popularity of the Jesuits among the elite was strong. In the chronicles of the *Casa Professa*, the second house of the Jesuits in Genoa (founded in 1603 and intended for novices), most of the city's aristocratic families are mentioned as important benefactors. Moreover, during the first half of the seventeenth century, twenty-five of these families had relatives among the ranks of the Society.¹¹¹ The decoration of the chapels in the *Gesù*, the Jesuit church built next to the *Casa Professa*, in the political and religious heart of the city and in proximity to both the cathedral and the *Palazzo Ducale*, were sponsored by families that formed the highest elite of

¹⁰⁹ Giuseppe Cosentino, 'Potere religioso e potere politico nella Repubblica di Genova (secc. XVI e XVII)', in *La Storia dei Genovesi. Atti del convegno. 1985*, vol. 6 (Centro internazionale di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, 1986), 281–82.

¹¹⁰ In order to measure the political weight of the Jesuits in comparison to other religious orders, Giuseppe Cosentino has studied their share in the homilies held on two important political occasions: the numbers clearly show that the new religious orders were invited more often than any of the orders that predated the Reformation. Of these new religious orders, the Jesuits clearly had the largest share. Edoardo Grendi adopted another important strategy to measure the Jesuits' interaction with the elite and common people alike, namely by studying confraternities. The Jesuits took the lead in organising confraternities for different groups of people divided by age and social background. *Ibid.*, 284–89; Grendi, 'Morfologia', 275–84. Starting from Lainez, the Jesuits did not refrain from addressing all kinds of political and economic topics in their preaching, and commenting on the geopolitical policy of the Republic. Giuseppe Cosentino, 'Il Collegio Gesuitico e le origini dell'Università di Genova', ed. Daniele Bo and Giuseppe Cosentino, *Miscellanea storica ligure* 14, no. 2 (1982): 65. Cosentino, 'Potere religioso', 291 et seq.

¹¹¹ Raffo, *I gesuiti*, 1996, 57–58.

the Republic: ideal places for a prestigious family tomb, the aristocracy had them adorned by famous artists, among whom was Peter Paul Rubens.¹¹²

The Society's connections with the urban elite were indispensable for it to flourish, and yet they could also form an obstacle: their links to different factions could land them in political conflict.¹¹³ When possible, the Genoese Jesuits tried to stay neutral. During the civil unrest of 1575, for instance, Father Benedetto Palmio wrote that he remained "on good terms with both sides" of the conflict.¹¹⁴ Even though both the *nuovi* and the *vecchi* factions tried to win his backing, Father Palmio insisted on keeping the middle ground: "Both parties listen to me with eagerness and great attention, and take from what I say that which is in their favour, because I talk in a way that suits both parties."¹¹⁵ Palmio's strategic talking was intended to avoid losing the trust of either of the rival factions. Similar tactics of trust management were dominant in the Jesuits' dealings with the Genoese elite and, as we will see, even affected the selection process of Jesuit missionaries. The balancing act that resulted from the Jesuits' reliance on aristocratic families and the consequent need to please them on the one hand, and their wish to stay independent with regard to internal decisions on the other, often caused problematic situations that required a form of trust management.

¹¹² Raffo, 'I gesuiti', 1997, 57–08; Raffo, *I gesuiti*, 1996, 161. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Gesù would indeed become the "chiesa della Repubblica", where senators and doge attended the liturgy on official occasions. The chronicles of the Casa Professa of the Jesuits recount: "In questo tempo venivano spesso da noi il serenissimo doge e i magistrati dei due college, circondati da tutta la classe dei nobili. Sembrava che la nostra Chiesa fosse la Chiesa della repubblica; ma questo onore si mutava in un onere, poco desiderabile per l'avvenire: infatti nei giorni più solenni disturbava non poco le nostre funzioni ordinarie e la partecipazione ai sacramenti, e recava disagio alla pietà di molti." Giuliano Raffo, ed., *I gesuiti a Genova nei secoli XVII e XVIII - Storia della casa professa di Genova della Compagnia di Gesù dall'anno 1603 al 1773*, (hereafter: *Storia della casa professa*), 263 no. 240.

¹¹³ Disagreements between the Jesuits and the Theatines over land led to a major rupture in the city's political landscape in the early seventeenth century. Cosentino, 'Il Collegio', 105–8. For insight into the Genoese political system composed of multiple factions, see: Edoardo Grendi, *Lettere orbe: anonimato e poteri nel Seicento genovese* (Palermo: Gelka, 1989), 20.

¹¹⁴ "confidente a tutte due le parti" ARSI, ITAL 147, c. 215, 19-05-1575 cited in: Cosentino, 'Il Collegio', 110. See also footnote 31, p. 130.

¹¹⁵ "tutte e due le parti mi ascoltano volentieri et con grande attentione, et pigliano in favore loro l'una parte, et l'altra, cio ch'io dico, perche ancora io parlo in tal modo sia per giovare a tutte le parti" ARSI, ITAL 147, c. 185, 14-04-1575, cited in: Ibid., 10–11. See also footnote 31, p. 130.

Trust management

The need for a form of trust management was especially urgent when a son's religious aspirations opposed the wishes of his parents. Adriano Prosperi's recent work on Jesuit vocations extensively shows that such a conflict of interests occurred regularly, even before a boy entered the Society.¹¹⁶ The Jesuits recruited young men from the elite by inviting them to a confraternity or to their school.¹¹⁷ From after the founding of the Jesuit college in Genoa, the fear that their boys would be seduced to join the Society alarmed many parents. In reaction to the news that many acted upon these fears by taking their sons out of the school, Ignatius of Loyola wrote that "it should be very clear to them that their children will not be accepted without their consent".¹¹⁸

Yet the Jesuits did not always give in to pressure from relatives: at times, they even helped a boy with the desire to join their ranks against his parents' will.¹¹⁹ This happened in 1561 to Gerolamo Giustiniani, who,

though his family members tried to impede his good intentions, by the goodness of God has won all the battles against the domestic enemies; because a few days ago he left for Florence without saying anything to his family.¹²⁰

Local fathers helped Gerolamo when he arrived in Florence, and so did even Superior General Lainez who then sent him to Loreto, far away from his family. According to a letter from the Genoese Jesuits, this way of dealing with the situation was not without consequences: "[it] has caused us much hatred and persecution on

¹¹⁶ Adriano Prosperi, *La vocazione. Storie di Gesuiti tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2016). See in particular chapter 12.

¹¹⁷ Cosentino, 'Il Collegio', 74.

¹¹⁸ "bene che siano chiariti, che senza loro consenso non si accetteranno i loro figlioli" Alessandro Monti, *La Compagnia di Gesù nel territorio della provincia torinese*, (Chieri, Stabilimento tipografico M. Ghirardi, 1943), 43, cited in: *Ibid.*, 74–75. Cf. also: Prosperi, *La vocazione*, 144.

¹¹⁹ See e.g.: *Ibid.*, 119.

¹²⁰ "benché i suoi parenti habbino cercato di impedire questo suo buon proposito, nientedimeno per la bontà di Dio [...] ha vinto tutte le battaglie degli inimici domestici; imperoché pochi di fa se n'andò a Firenze senza dir niente ai suoi parenti" *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu Litterae Quadrimestrae*, 7 voll. (Madrid-Roma, 1896-1932), vol. VII, p. 2. Cited in: Cosentino, 'Il Collegio', 74–75.

the part of his family, in particular from his mother who loved him more than anyone else”.¹²¹ Often, it was indeed the mothers of the youngsters who most fiercely opposed their sons’ profession or departure for the mission. Gerolamo’s mother, according to the Genoese Jesuits, went to the archbishop and to the city authorities “in order to complain about us”.¹²² A degree of trust management was direly needed to prevent conflicts from escalating. Indeed, according to the letter writer, it was necessary “that the father rector goes to the senate to purge himself from the accusations”.¹²³ Only the fact that it had not been Genoese but Florentine fathers who helped Gerolamo escape from parental authority prevented a major crisis.

It could also happen that, instead of preventing someone from entering, an important family instead demanded the opposite, namely that their relative should stay in the Society even though the Jesuits themselves were opposed to it.¹²⁴ This was the case when Superior General Claudio Acquaviva sought to dismiss Giovanni Simone Garibaldi from the Society because he had been involved in a duel. His uncles Giovanni and Bartolomeo Garibaldi started to complain about Acquaviva’s decision and their opinion was not easy to dismiss. In the *Storia della Casa Professa*, which chronicles the history of the Society in Genoa from 1603 until 1773, we can read that Bartolomeo was “one of the twelve senators of the city [and] during his whole life he was a friend and benefactor of our house”.¹²⁵ He even planned to leave a large sum of money to the Society upon his death. In an attempt to manage the situation tactfully and please this major benefactor, some of the Jesuits in Genoa recommended the case of the two uncles to the Superior General. Acquaviva, however, did not give in to any pressure. Even though the reckless Giovanni Simone

¹²¹ “ci ha causato tanto odio et persecutione delli parenti, et massime della madre, la quale l’amava più che nessun’altro”. Ibid.

¹²² “se n’è ita all’arcivescovo et in Signoria a lamentarsi di noi”. Ibid.

¹²³ “che l P. Rettore andasse in Signoria a purgarsi da quello che se l’imponeva” Ibid.

¹²⁴ The constitutions of the Society of Jesus include a part on “the dismissal of those who were admitted but did not prove themselves fit”, which explains “who can be dismissed, and by whom”. *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George E. Ganss, 1st ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 290.

¹²⁵ “uno dei dodici senatori della città [e] per tutta la vita fu amico e benefattore della nostra casa”. *Storia della casa professa*, 238, no. 166.

had presumably changed his mind and was ready to stay and behave well, the Superior General wrote to his uncles:

I know your fondness towards the Society well and it deserves thankful correspondence in every sense, [...] but up to this moment things have got so out of hand that I have to consider very well what is expedient for the greater service of the Lord and of the order, wherefore I hope that you will do me the honour of favourably receiving what we will decide in time.¹²⁶

This decision turned out to be negative: Giovanni Simone was dismissed from the Society against the wishes of his uncles. It is interesting to note that the Superior General tried to make sure that this decision would not result in a loss of support from the part of the Garibaldi family, writing them that he hoped that “because of your piety, you will accept the decision that we took”.¹²⁷ Moreover, the Jesuit fathers who had supported the case of the Giovanni Simone, recounting how he had changed over time, were now asked to cooperate “to have the uncles calm down” and to convince them that this was the best decision.¹²⁸

Convincing one's family

Upon entering the Society of Jesus, a Jesuit was meant to leave all worldly ties behind. Ideally, the decision to ask to be sent to one of the far-away missions of the Jesuits was made without any constraints, or rather with one's conscience and obedience as the only guides.¹²⁹ For this reason, one candidate for the mission, Cosmo Bacchetta,

¹²⁶ “Io so bene l'amorevolezza di V.S. uerso la Compagnia e merita ogni grata corrispondenza, [...] ma le cose sono passate sin' hora tant'oltre, che mi è necessario considerar molto maturatamente quello che conuiene per il maggior seruitio del Signore e della religione per la quale spero che [...] mi fara gratia di riceuer in ottima parte quanto col suo tempo si risoluerà.” Letter to Giovanni Garibaldi, Rome, 10-09-1613, ARSI, MED 23, 306v-307r.

¹²⁷ “per sua pietà piglierà in bene la determinatione presa” Letter to Giovanni Garibaldi, Rome, 11-10-13, ARSI, MED 23, 308v.

¹²⁸ “far quietar li zii”. Letter to fr. Marcello Pallavicino, Rome, 11-10-13, ARSI, MED 23, 803r .

¹²⁹ Though also conscience and obedience at times could contradict each other. For how such friction was dealt with, see: Emanuele Colombo, ‘In virtù dell'obbedienza. Tirso González de Santalla (1624-1705) missionario, teologo, generale’, in *Avventure dell'obbedienza nella Compagnia di Gesù. Teorie e prassi fra XVI e XIX*, ed. Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 97–137.

underlined that he had heard about others who were rejected because they had not written on their own initiative. He wisely assured Superior General Vitelleschi that in his own missionary vocation “no one else is involved except the blessed God”.¹³⁰ Others asked for secrecy about their vocation and subsequent request in order to avoid being influenced by others. Giacomo Maria Strata wrote in the summer of 1634: “whether you allow me [to go] or not, [may] none of the others, whose business this is not, know about my request or its [possible] approval; so that I can silently depart or remain, away from family and friends”.¹³¹

Trust only exists and endures under the umbrella of a common interest: in order to speak of trust, one party should expect the other party not only to be able, but also *willing* to behave in a certain way. In case the other party is not *willing* to cooperate, as often was the case for the missionaries’ relatives, trust can only be built by convincing the other that there actually *is* a common good that is deserving of support. Most of the time, the Jesuit fathers who desired to go to the mission were asked to do this and convince their own family members. Their superiors thought that efforts to personally persuade relatives of the importance and holiness of the missionary vocation and the glory it would bring to one’s family, were more likely to succeed.¹³² Aware of this fact, the candidates themselves often took the initiative of trying to convince their family.

¹³⁰ “non vi ha parte altro che Dio benedetto”. Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa, 10-03-1616, ARSI, *Fondo Gesuitico* (FG) 735, no. 403.

¹³¹ “ò mi conceda [di andare in missione], ò non [lo] vogli fare, che non si risappia da alcuno de gl’altri a quali non s’aspetta questa mia domanda, o concessione; acciò tacito mi possa, et spedito da parenti et amici, partire, ò trattenerne” Giacomo Maria Strata, Genoa, 08-06-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 124.

¹³² One letter of the Superior General to Costantino della Rovere, for instance, testifies to the fact that the first was happy that Costantino himself had convinced his father that he should enter the Society. Letter to Costantino della Rovere, 12-09-1613, ARSI, MED 23, 307r. On the role of elite families and the benefit they saw in supporting the Jesuit missions from the urban context of Milan, see: Aliocha Maldavsky, ‘Mobilités religieuses - Société urbaine et désir de mission’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 56, no. 3 (2009): 7–33.

A good example is the case of Ippolito Durazzo, nephew of Cardinal Durazzo. Born in Genoa in a noble and pious family (nicknamed the “house of angels”¹³³), he became prelate at the young age of 21 and was given a high function at the papal court. A collection of Jesuit biographies from 1730 tells how Ippolito, “living more as an enclosed monk than as a prelate of the [papal] court [... and] having overcome all the obstacles of the world, the flesh and the blood”,¹³⁴ joined the Society a few years later thereby renouncing his chances of obtaining “the cardinals’ purple that he was about to receive”.¹³⁵ Apparently, his entrance in the noviciate already encountered resistance from relatives who were not easily thwarted: his grandfather was Agostino Durazzo, a nobleman who sponsored a richly decorated chapel to the Gesù (Agostino was an uncle of Cardinal Stefano Durazzo).¹³⁶ His father, Giacomo Filippo Durazzo, Durazzo’s cousin, was one of the main benefactors of the Society in Genoa.¹³⁷ The Jesuits would record in their chronicle: “[his] remembrance will forever be blessed, especially in our house [...]. In life and death, he loved our order so much that he seemed one of us: as long as he lived he covered us with benefices, and when he died he left our house 1000 lire a year for ten years”.¹³⁸

For the Jesuits it was vital not to lose the support of such a family.¹³⁹ Ippolito therefore announced that he himself would solve any family issues that might arise over his choice to leave for the faraway mission.

¹³³ *Menologia di pie memorie d’alcuni Religiosi della Compagnia di Gesù, raccolte dal padre Giuseppe Patrignani della medesima Compagnia e distribuite per quei giorni dell’anno ne’ quali morirono, dall’anno 1538 all’anno 1728* (Niccolò Pezzana, Venezia 1730) vol. II, 221.

¹³⁴ “Vivendo più da religioso claustrale che da prelato di corte [...] [e] superati tutti gli ostacoli del mondo, della carne e del sangue” *Ibid.*, 222.

¹³⁵ *Storia della Casa Professa*, 279, no. 287.

¹³⁶ *Storia della Casa Professa*, 238, no. 168. Alfonso, ‘Aspetti’, 465.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 468. Giacomo Filippo – a cousin of Cardinal Durazzo – was married to Maddalena Brignole, the sister of Anton Giulio Brignole Sale. The latter in turn was a cousin of Emanuele Brignole, a close collaborator of the cardinal.

¹³⁸ “il cui ricordo sarà sempre benedetto, soprattutto nella nostra casa [...] egli in vita e in morte amò tanto il nostro Ordine, che sembrava uno di noi: finché visse ci colmò di benefici, e quando morì lasciò alla nostra casa 1000 lire all’anno per 10 anni” *Storia della Casa Professa*, 286, no. 308. The chronicle mentions how, apart from the money, Giacomo Filippo also gave two sons to the Society, Ippolito and Vincenzo, who gave all their possession to the Society upon entering.

¹³⁹ For all donations, legacies, and other connections of Ippolito Durazzo’s family with the Jesuits, see: *Storia della Casa Professa*, p. 25, no. 18, p. 241, no. 175 e no. 176, p. 244, no. 185, e p. 265, no. 246.

With regard to my family [...] I want that everything be on my shoulders as far as getting them to give their full consensus is concerned.¹⁴⁰

In a subsequent letter that he wrote after the Superior General had already given his consent for departure, Durazzo was less confident that he would manage to gain the support of his relatives. Instead, he asked not to “consider the sentiments that others might have towards this concession”.¹⁴¹ This request might seem a rather bold one, but it actually happened rather frequently that the troubles one experienced with one’s family were used as an argument in favour of selection: leaving for a faraway place sometimes was the only way to find the rest that allowed one to live according to the Jesuit lifestyle.¹⁴² In Ippolito’s case, ignoring the wishes of such an important family was impossible. Ippolito had to spend the rest of his life in Italy, where he became teacher in Milan, rector of the Genoese college, and superior of the *Casa Professa*.¹⁴³

A crisis of trust

Fear of opposition to one’s departure could become a great source of distrust between a candidate for the mission and his relatives. This was the case for Luigi Doria, a Genoese Jesuit from the illustrious Doria family who had been generously supporting the Society from their arrival to the city.¹⁴⁴ He had already obtained the missionary status when his own mother, Benedetta Doria, insisted in 1646 that he stay (not an uncommon reaction¹⁴⁵). This immediately gave rise to great distrust: Luigi suspected his fellow Jesuits in Genoa – where he was staying on his way to the

¹⁴⁰ “Per quello che spetta ai miei parenti le soggiungo [...] che [...] perche prendo questo sopra di me, e uoglio che sia tutto à carico mio il fargli dare a ciò un pienissimo [...] consenso” Ippolito Durazzo, Milan, 22-06-1661, FG 747, no. 115/5.

¹⁴¹ Ippolito Durazzo, Milan, 30-11-1661, ARSI, FG 747, no. 124/6.

¹⁴² Emanuele Colombo and Marina Massimi, *In viaggio. Gesuiti candidati alle missioni tra Antica e Nuova Compagnia* (Milan: Il Sole 24 Ore, 2014), 117.

¹⁴³ Raffo, *I gesuiti*, 394, footnote 76. He died in 1675. See chapter 7 for another example of family pressure that impeded a candidate to leave for the mission, namely Giovanni Agostino Spinola.

¹⁴⁴ Cosentino, ‘Il Collegio’, 108.

¹⁴⁵ Prosperi, *La Vocazione*, 200.

mission – of having persuaded Benedetta to hinder his departure.¹⁴⁶ Luigi's story shows that trust management was a delicate issue with no sure outcome.

The letters between Benedetta Doria and Vincenzo Carafa testify to the climate of distrust that could surround the departure of a missionary and thus strongly influence the selection process. In May 1646, the Superior General in the first instance assured Benedetta that he believed her to have “the best intentions” in asking that her son stay: the years that Luigi would continue studying in Italy could help to assure her “of the perseverance of the young man in his saintly resolutions”.¹⁴⁷ Somewhat later, however, Carafa changed his mind, most probably after receiving an indignant letter from a disappointed Luigi. In early June, the Superior General reminded Benedetta with less indulgent words, that she had previously given her consent to Luigi's departure: how could she now change her mind? Carafa also stated that it was against his conscience to impede someone who had already obtained a licence for the Indies:

As far as I am concerned, Brother Luigi can go, because he has already received the cross [of those leaving for the mission]. [...] If you are not happy with this, you should write to him to postpone his journey and stay, but then all the responsibility for impeding someone called by the blessed God will be yours.¹⁴⁸

To Luigi himself the Superior General wrote: “Since I gave you permission with the consent of your mother, I have no reason to withdraw [...], [but] this affair is in your

¹⁴⁶ See ARSI, MED 28, 523r; that Luigi Doria himself suspected his fellow Jesuits is clear from: ARSI, MED 28, 536v, 23-06-1646.

¹⁴⁷ “ottima intenzione” “della perseueranza del giouane ne suoi santi proponimenti”. Letter to Benedetta Doria, May 1646, ARSI, MED 28, 529r. To Marquis Filippo Spinola who had supported Benedetta's case, Caraffa wrote that “in riverenza del commandamento di V.E. ch'io stimo per singularissimo favore, si differisce l'andata del fr. Luigi Doria all'Indie e credo che sia disposizione divina manifestata per mezzo di V.E.”. Letter to Marchese Spinola, May 1646, ARSI, MED 28, 529v. The Superior General thus gave in to pressure from the Genoese elite and showed, at least in words, some trust in their good intentions.

¹⁴⁸ “per me il fr. Luigi havendo gia havuto il crocifisso può andare ma se V. S. Illustrissima di questo non si contenta, li scriva che differisca e si trattenga, ma tutto lo scrupolo resta in V.S. Illustrissima in impedir uno che è chiamato da Dio Benedetto”. Letter to Benedetta Doria, 09-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 533v.

hands, [so] reach an agreement with *la Signora Madre*.¹⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that the Superior General insisted on the fact that this was an issue that should be sorted out between family members: in this way, he could avoid the Society as such offending a distinguished lady.

Carafa's involvement, however, did not end here: he simply could not ignore the requests of such an eminent lady: "I am not letting the matter pass silently and I remain honoured by [your] commandments", he wrote Benedetta somewhat later.¹⁵⁰ At the same time he advised Luigi to stop involving his mother "because I understand that this has confused our affair".¹⁵¹ On the same day, Carafa wrote to the rector in Genoa that if Luigi did not manage to persuade his mother, his departure would have to be delayed until he finished his studies and was ordained.¹⁵² Apparently, a good relationship with the Doria family was more important than the wishes of brother Luigi.

Carafa also ordered the local superior in Genoa to find out who had discredited the mission in the eyes of Luigi's mother. He understood well that the whole affair was not beneficial to a climate of trust, neither among the Jesuits in Genoa, nor between the Society and the elite families closely related to them. Indeed, he wrote that everything should be done "so that the evil does not continue".¹⁵³ Yet, the confusion only increased when it turned out to be unclear who had convinced Benedetta to obstruct her son's departure. Some said it had been one of the Jesuits while others suspected someone from outside the Society.¹⁵⁴ Whoever it may have been, it had been enough to convince Benedetta not to give in, even after Luigi had renounced his inheritance and had thus broken every possible material bond with his

¹⁴⁹ Letter to Luigi Doria, 09-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 532v.

¹⁵⁰ "non la passo in silentio e [...] rimango honorato con comandamenti di V.S. Illustrissima." Letter to Benedetta Doria, 16-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 535v.

¹⁵¹ "perche intendo che questo ha intorbidato il nostro negotio" Letter to Luigi Doria, 16-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 535r.

¹⁵² Letter to the rector in Genoa, and letter to Michel Maria Gonzales, 16-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 536r.

¹⁵³ "accio che il male non vada più avanti". Letter to the superior in Genoa, 16-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 534v.

¹⁵⁴ Letters to the Father Superior, 23-06-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 536v and 14-07-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 543r. Letter to the rector, 04-08-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 548v.

mother.¹⁵⁵ The whole affair imbued Luigi with such suspicion and hostility towards his family and fellow Jesuits that he decided to leave his native city.

To make things worse, he was not allowed to proceed with his studies in Rome (where he had started them), because “seeing someone return who has left for India [i.e. for the mission] [...] would have a bad effect on those who have this vocation”.¹⁵⁶ Observing how unhappy Luigi was in his native city, Carafa proposed an alternative:

If you want, you can go to Bologna to study this year. I believe that it will bring consolation to be far from your family. [...] In that college you would be received with charity. In the meantime, things might change and when the year has finished, or even before, we can make a firmer decision.¹⁵⁷

During the following year, Luigi wrote several other requests to be sent to the mission, but to no avail. Three years later, having finished his philosophy studies, he still cherished some hopes that his mother would finally cooperate since she “was given what she had asked for, namely that we would wait until after philosophy”.¹⁵⁸ That Benedetta still opposed the matter is apparent from the fact that Luigi made another attempt in 1652: in his last request, Luigi explained that his mother had finally changed her mind. We do not know whether this was indeed the case. We do know however that Luigi probably never left for the mission: he died in 1675 in Rome.¹⁵⁹ His story shows how suspicion and confusion could feed a climate of

¹⁵⁵ Letter to Luigi Doria, 21-07-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 545v, and letter to the rector, 21-07-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 544v. Apparently his family would not give in, because his departure was deferred indefinitely. See also the letter of the Superior General to Father Guidito Vincenzo ARSI, MED 28, 549v in which the Superior General expresses that he was convinced by Vincenzo’s reasons not to send Luigi, without mentioning, unfortunately, what these reasons were.

¹⁵⁶ “il veder tornar indietro uno partito per l’India [...] cagionerebbe poco buon effetto a quelli che hanno questa vocazione.” Letter to Luigi Doria, 25-08-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 555r.

¹⁵⁷ “Se uolete andar à Bologna à studiare quest’anno, credo che restarete consolato, allontanato da Parenti, et in quel Collegio sarete riceuuto con carità. Intanto forse le cose si muteranno, e finito l’anno ò prima che finisca si potrà prender più ferma resolutione.” Letter to Luigi Doria, 15-09-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 562v. See also the letter to Luigi Doria, 06-10-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 568v.

¹⁵⁸ “quietarsi essendogli stato concesso ciò che dimandò, cioè che si aspettasse doppo la filosofia”. Luigi Doria, 29-03-1650, ARSI, FG 746, 35r.

¹⁵⁹ Josephus Fejér, *Defuncti secundi saeculi Societatis Jesu: 1641-1740*, vol. II, D-H (Rome: I.H.S.I., 1989) 51.

distrust that in turn formed an insurmountable impediment to an individual's departure for the mission: maintaining the trust of an important lady from the Doria family was more important than Luigi's own plans.

The strong position of the Jesuits among the political and financial elites of Genoa indicates that they were particularly successful at trust management: they made sure not to lose the trust of powerful allies by appeasing them as much as possible with the goal of furthering the interests of the Society. Yet this success came with a downside: often, though not always, this trust management implied a compromise or even the sacrifice of desires of individual Jesuits and particular projects of the Society.¹⁶⁰ This was especially the case when candidates did not manage to persuade their own family members into supporting their missionary dreams.

Conclusion

Different forms of trust management were adopted by the reformers, and especially by Cardinal Durazzo, to advance the Tridentine ideals. In this chapter, we have explored what trust management entailed by looking at three areas: the reform of the priesthood, the Lazarist missions to the countryside, and the overseas missions of the Jesuits – all focal points of the Catholic Reformation and of Durazzo's tenure, as witnessed by the Jesuit father Tomaso Campora, who wrote: “the delights of the Cardinal were the rural churches, the seminary, and the mission”.¹⁶¹ The approach used in these areas entailed winning the trust of a certain group of people, respectively the urban secular clergy, the people in the countryside, and the urban elites, while at the same time directing these efforts at an aim that went beyond merely maintaining the trust of that specific group. The concept of trust thus sheds light on what the logic of power cannot explain: if those in power could simply

¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, the example of the Jesuit Antonio Canavera offered by Adriano Prosperi, shows that the opposite was true when the opposing family member was not a rich patron but a poor lady from the countryside. Prosperi, *La Vocazione*, 186.

¹⁶¹ Tommaso Campora, *Vita del p. Ippolito Durazzo, della Compagnia di Gesù...* (Genoa: Anton Giorgio Franchelli, 1690), 25–26.

enforce reform and the changes they envisioned, there would have been no need for the Republic, for instance, as the supreme political authority in the area, to support missionaries who went to the rural areas trying to win the trust of the people. Instead, precisely because the choices of many individuals were involved, including those at the bottom of the hierarchies of power, winning trust was often a more efficient means to change the mentality of people and encourage them to adopt certain behaviours.

Yet this strategy also had a clear downside. At times, the importance of maintaining the trust of certain groups or individuals trumped the interests of the reformers. For the Jesuits, family members who were important allies in many respects could refuse to align themselves with the interests of the Society and thus obstruct its goals. The people whom the Lazarists encountered and persuaded to form new charity groups in their parish could change their minds and choose other priorities in which to invest their time and resources. In Durazzo's project to improve the secular clergy, the price of generating trustworthy elite groups was the resentment experienced by many other priests who felt disadvantaged by this policy. Relying on trust and trust relationships was therefore not an infallible method (nor was it the only one adopted by reformers like Durazzo). However, becoming aware of the pervasiveness of practices of trust in concrete attempts at reform helps us better understand why, more often than not, reform was a messy and troublesome process: relying on trust management implied the free involvement of – and negotiation with – very diverse groups whose interests and convictions did not always align with those of the reformers themselves.

3. Beyond appearance? Trusting and distrusting the secular clergy

Dio vede nel cuore, e gli uomini, secondo l'oracolo del Vangelo, vedono nella faccia, e nell'apparenza¹

Giovanni Battista De Luca

In 1643, a 22-year-old brother called Filippo Maria Antonio confessed at the archiepiscopal court that one day, on his way back home to his convent, he had ended up going to an *osteria* instead.² Chatting with some strangers and in order to earn their respect, he had responded affirmatively when being asked whether he was a priest. Though not allowed to do so since he was not an ordained priest, Antonio even promised to read mass for these people the next morning. Once in court, the inquisitor read the following accusations to Antonio:

[E]quipped with the priestly vestments, you started the mass but you deny having gone beyond the canon, or better the Sanctus, because, having arrived at that moment, you were assailed by fear and shame which almost left you paralysed; [you claim] that, by your own decision [...], you left that consecrated altar table all confused while telling them that something happened to you that did not permit you to continue mass. This was the remedy that you thought to be expedient in order to avoid tumult among the people.³

¹ “God sees in the heart [of men], and men, according to the oracle of the Gospel, see in the face, and in the appearance”. Giovanni Battista De Luca, *Il religioso pratico*, 17.

² Paolo Fontana has made important steps in bringing the two rather ephemeral cases of people faking being priests used here to the surface. Paolo Fontana, “Con sacrilego ardore”. La minaccia dei finti preti nella Genova di metà Seicento’, *Studi e Ricerche di Storia Ligure*, 1997, 7–19. Imposture was central to the theological debates of the early modern period. See e.g.: Sascha Salatowsky, ‘From the Devil to the Impostor: Theological Contributions to the Idea of Imposture’, *Intellectual History Review* 28, no. 1 (2018): 61.

³ “apparato delle vesti sacerdotali cominciasti la messa negando però d'essere arrivato più oltre del canone, o per dir meglio del Sanctus, che giunto a quel momento fusti stato assalito d'un tremore

That Antonio did not actually proceed to celebrate the sacrament may have saved him from capital punishment: he was only asked to abjure his errors and heresy in front of the inquisitors. Some months before and in similar circumstances, Andrea Gianei had suffered a different fate. He was shown no mercy when convicted of celebrating the mass without being ordained. Following the procedure established by the Genoese Inquisitor in 1625, the Inquisition handed him over to the secular authorities who publically beheaded Andreas on the pier of Genoa in the spring of 1642.⁴

That these were not isolated cases is evident from a warning that the Genoese Inquisitor sent to the Holy Office in Milan. In 1643, he notified his Milanese colleague that there were around twenty “fake priests” in the diocese “who, wandering around the world, present[ed] themselves as priests though they [were] not”.⁵ The Genoese Inquisition then asked for information about “a young boy, around 24 years old [...] who claims to be called Carlo Francesco Ferrari [...] and has been imprisoned on our orders because we were notified that he goes around saying mass without being a priest”.⁶ Paolo Fontana, who traced these cases in the

e rossore che ti rese quasi immobile che però da te stesso [...] partisti tutto confuso da quella mensa consacrata dell'altare ma che le dicessi esserti avvenuto un accidente onde non potesti proseguire detta messa fu rimedio giudicato da te ispediente per levare il tumulto del popolo.” ASG, AS, 1401, 10-12-1656.

⁴ ASG, AS, 1402, 22-05-1642. See also: Fontana, ‘Con sacrilego ardire’, 7. The Genoese Inquisition had established the following procedure: “Coloro che celebrano la messa e ascoltano le confessioni de penitenti non essendo sacerdoti, che negano la santissima Trinità, la divinità del nostro Signor Gesù Cristo, la purissima sua concettione per opera dello spirito santo, l’amore ch’egli patè per redimerci e la verginità della santissima madre di Dio non devono [ancorché pentiti] riceversi a misericordia, ma rilasciarsi al braccio secolare; se però al supremo principe non piacesse [usando della singolare sua benignità] altrimenti verso loro operare” Eliseo Masini, *Sacro arsenale ovvero pratica dell’Officio della S. Inquisitione ampliata, Genova 1625*, 318, cited in Fontana, ‘Con sacrilego ardire’, 16.

⁵ “i quali vanno vagando per il mondo facendosi tenere per sacerdoti se ben non sono tali” ASG, AS, 1401, 18-03-1643.

⁶ “un giovane di anni 24 incirca all’aspetto di statura alto con poca barba, o sia pongente di color castagna il quale dice nominarsi Carlo Francesco Ferrari [...] [che] di ordine nostro è stato carcerato per esserci stato dato avviso che esso vadi celebrando messe per il mondo quantunque non sia sacerdote.” ASG, AS, 1401, 18-03-1643. This letter of the Genoese Inquisition shows that information about identity of alleged criminals was interchanged between different cities. See, for a similar dynamic: Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You?: Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2007), 78.

archives, called the phenomenon “a real conspiracy” of fake priests.⁷ Though I find it more likely that these individuals operated independently, there is no doubt that the possibility of faking priesthood was a great danger in the eyes of contemporaries. The ensuing distrust was something that the Church tried to avoid at all costs.

In Genoa’s ecclesiastical landscape of the seventeenth century one could also encounter other forms of dissimulation. There were various cases of clergy who challenged the episcopal authority by pretending to be of a higher rank than they actually were. The bishop of Brugnato, for example, complained in 1665 that there were priests who pretended to be of the nobility “even though they [actually] were of very low birth and without studies”. In this deceitful way, they obtained the title of protonotary (i.e., an honorary prelate with special privileges) “by virtue of which they presumed to wear the habit of a prelate, in defiance of the customs” of the diocese.⁸ Others, the bishop continued, wrongfully obtained privileges from the nuncio “in order to escape the jurisdiction of the bishop”.⁹ This kind of dissimulation was mainly disturbing to the authorities rather than causing scandal among the faithful.

Dissimulation, deceit and lying were the subject of important debates in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and as such they have rightly received much attention from historians in recent decades.¹⁰ Although “as widespread as the world and as old as nature itself”, as one historian writes, the phenomenon of dissimulation particularly occupied the minds of early modern Europeans.¹¹ New institutions were set up to reveal false identities and unmask impostors, in what historians have called

⁷ “una vera e propria congiura”, Fontana, ‘Con sacrilego ardire’, 11.

⁸ “alcuni di questo clero per render impune le loro dissolutioni, seben di nascita bassissima e di niun studio, o lettere, mandano costì fedì di Nobiltà fatte da persone private e ne ottengono protonotariati [...] in virtù de quali *pretendono di portar habito da prelato* contro la consuetudine della metropoli”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1665 settembre-dicembre, 13-11-1665.

⁹ “per sottrahersi dalla giurisdittione dell’ordinario”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1665 settembre-dicembre, 13-11-1665, letter from the bishop of Brugnato.

¹⁰ Miriam Eliav-Feldon, ‘Introduction’, in *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzog (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1. Eliav-Feldon also provides a good overview of the historiography.

¹¹ Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying. Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1.

an almost obsessive preoccupation with deceit, and its acceptable and unacceptable forms.¹² On the Italian peninsula “[t]he early modern fascination with ideas of simulation and dissimulation, combined with older forms of anti-clerical sentiment” gave rise among certain intellectual groups to suspicion against the priesthood as such.¹³

People pretending to be priests, as in the two cases mentioned above, could indeed provoke a crisis of trust among the faithful. Such cases impaired the ultimate check against distrust that the Council of Trent had put into place: that is, the trust in the validity of the sacraments administered by ordained priests. The Tridentine decrees had reiterated the fundamental doctrine – already extensively expounded by medieval scholastics – that the sacraments were valid regardless of the moral stature of the ministering priest.¹⁴ The tradition of the Church, realism about the sinful nature of men, and the desire to answer to one of the Protestant criticisms led the Council fathers to reassert that *trust* in divine grace, in the validity of the sacraments, and in the dignity of priesthood should not depend on the person of the priest.¹⁵ This belief allowed the bishop of Sarzana to write about one of his subordinates: “This priest possesses nothing good, whether in his nature or in his morals, except the sacred ordination to the priesthood.”¹⁶ A person who faked priesthood, therefore,

¹² See e.g. Houdt et al., *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty*, 29.

¹³ James A. T. Lancaster and Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, ‘Priestcraft. Anatomizing the Anti-Clericalism of Early Modern Europe’, *Intellectual History Review* 28, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 10.

¹⁴ See page 11, footnote 11.

¹⁵ Following the doctrine of the sacredness of priesthood as radically distinct from any other characteristic, the laity’s trust in the essence – the salvific ministry of the Church’s ministers – should never be impaired by the behaviour of the individual priest. The Jesuit Luis de La Puente described the theological attitude well when he pointed out that “when we honour priests who, for their bad conduct, do not merit being honoured, we honour Christ in them, and only for his love we honour his ministers, and in them we honour only the dignity received from Him, nor is their bad conduct reason to deprive them of the honour.” “onorandosi i sacerdoti, che per la loro mala condotta non meritano di essere onorati, chiaramente dessi ad intendere, che in loro si onora Cristo, e che pel solo suo amore si onorano i ministeri suoi, e che in loro solo si stima la dignità da Lui ricevuta, né basta il mal viver loro a privarli dell’onoranza” Luis de La Puente, *Il sacerdote perfetto ovvero del sacramento dell’ordine, Dello Stato, e della Perfezzione, che appartiene a tutti gli ecclesiastici* (Rome 1691), 300. Also cited in Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 42.

¹⁶ “questo prete [...] altro non possiede di buono così nel naturale, come nel morale che l’ordine sacro di sacerdote”, ASV, CVR, PE, 1662 aprile-luglio, 2 giugno, Sarzana. Cited in: Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 140.

betrayed the most fundamental form of moral trust: by offering invalid sacraments to trusting lay people, he endangered the salvation of their souls.

In the early modern period, clothes were the most evident way to mark one's status. Not only in Europe but also in China and other missions across the globe, the clergy had to carefully consider the type of clothes that would give them the appropriate status.¹⁷ Contemporaries associated competence and reliability with the type of clothes one wore.¹⁸ In the seventeenth-century, observation was thought to be a more evident and trustworthy means of acquiring knowledge than the spoken or written word. The Jesuit writer and philosopher Baltasar Gracián argued:

Much of our lives is spent gathering information. We see very few things for ourselves, and live by trusting others. The ears are the back door of the truth and the front door of deceit. Truth is more often seen than heard. Seldom does it reach us unalloyed, even less so when it comes from afar. It always bears something mixed in by the minds through which it has passed.¹⁹

Appearance, in the eyes of contemporaries, conveyed the true nature of an individual: changes of dress were therefore seen as markers of an interior transformation.²⁰ Clothing in general and liturgical clothing in particular seemed a promising way in which all clergy could, and, according to Trent, should distinguish themselves from the rest of the people.

Clerical clothing thus became a means of reform. To protect the faithful against frauds and to guarantee the validity of the sacraments, the Tridentine Church

¹⁷ Matteo Sanfilippo, 'L'abito fa il missionario? Scelte di abbigliamento, strategie di adattamento e interventi romani nelle missioni ad haereticos e ad gentes tra XVI e XX secolo', *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 109, no. 2 (1997): 601–20.

¹⁸ See e.g. Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Cf. Groebner, *Who Are You?*, 8, 11, 80. The fierce struggles that arose among different orders about the type of clothing that should be worn in the mission hints at the intrinsic meaning that early modern people attached to dress. Sanfilippo, 'L'abito', 607–8.

¹⁹ Baltasar Gracián, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom: A Pocket Oracle*, trans. Christopher Maurer (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 45, cited in: Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 4 (I followed Snyder's alterations in the translation).

²⁰ Angelo Turchini, *La nascita del sacerdozio come professione*, 231.

had dictated that priests had to be recognisable by their comportment and apparel. As a consequence, however, those pretending to be priests – like brother Maria Antonio – could thus do so by wearing certain vestments that people rightly associated with the priesthood and so elicited trust. In this chapter, we will further explore why clerical appearance, though meant by the Council fathers to foster the trust of the laity, also produced new trust problems.

Historiography

The marked distinction between clerics and the laity, as the Council sought, was not self-evident. Zooming in onto the streets of Genoa during the high Middle Ages, John Yousey-Hindes has shown that secular priests and clerics were crucial mediators between religious and lay people on all practical fronts and thus belonged to both spheres.²¹ The Council fathers themselves promoted the clergy's liminal position of being in the world but not of the world. Their otherness was to be emphasised via different forms of clericalisation, but at the same time, priests bore a clear responsibility as mediators amidst their faithful. They were to be an active, trustworthy presence in society, and examples for their flock.²²

Several historians have described the development of the new type of priest as a form of professionalisation of the clergy. Angelo Turchini has argued that the “birth of priesthood as a profession” can be seen as a development that was parallel to the professionalisation of other institutions in the early modern period: the Church, too, adopted tactics to create a unified, coherent corps of motivated officials through the formalisation of their office.²³ For the priest appointed to the care of souls, explicit rules and procedures outlined a specific ideal that had already been in place but was promoted with more rigour after Trent.²⁴ A uniform education was

²¹ Yousey-Hindes, ‘Living the Middle Life’, 226–27.

²² Cf.: Paola Vismara, ‘Il “buon prete” nell’Italia del Sei-Settecento: Bilanci e prospettive’, *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 60, no. 1 (2006): 50, 53. And: Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 32.

²³ Turchini, ‘La nascita’, 255–56.

²⁴ It is good to remember that canonically there were no radical changes. Paolo Vismara asserts that the reforms were realised relatively quickly because the terrain had already been prepared for a long time, in terms of setting the ideal. The emphasis on having the norms respected, increased. Vismara, ‘Il sacerdozio’, 233.

combined with active separation from the lay in order to foster the clergy's easy recognisability: both aspects, education and separation, were to induce the priest to conform himself to the ideal set by the norms.²⁵ Paola Vismara has emphasised that the general implementation of the Tridentine ideal was a long-term development.²⁶

In the previous chapter we have seen how Cardinal Durazzo tried to effect a change in the secular clergy of his diocese through the seminary and priestly congregations like the Lazarists and the *Missionari urbani*. If the professionalisation of the clergy was a difficult endeavour in the city, in the hinterlands it was even more troublesome, as Elena Taddia and Paolo Fontana have shown. In many Ligurian towns, the priesthood continued to be a choice that was largely motivated by family strategy. Dedicating one's son to the priesthood could simplify heritage issues, while adding to the family prestige: a priest occupied a central role in the community.²⁷ Instead of pursuing the ideal of "being in but not of the world", many Ligurian clergy were completely immersed in the community to which they were sent. As a consequence, the mentality and values of the Genoese clergy were very slow to change. Flavia Gattiglia has demonstrated how, in the eyes of a seventeenth-century Ligurian priest and his parishioners, a good Church minister bore the responsibility not only of behaving morally but of protecting his (family) honour and keeping up the reputation of the community.²⁸

²⁵ Toscani, 'Il reclutamento'; Guasco, 'La formazione'; Guasco, 'Per una storia'.

²⁶ She has also argued that the priest *in cura animarum* did not see the multiple roles he used to perform in the Middle Ages diminish, but rather change. Only during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century did the priesthood as such turn into a "true and authentic profession", as Vismara calls it, with its own communal spirit. Vismara, 'Il sacerdozio', 236; Vismara has also pointed at the importance of permanent education (that continued after ordination) in the form of (weekly) gatherings, and spiritual exercises, to bring about this communal spirit Vismara, 'Il "buon prete"', 56–59.

²⁷ Taddia, 'Fratelli preti', 40. Moreover, like elsewhere in Europe, Ligurian society continued to be dominated by violence and local power struggles that involved the clergy as much as the lay people. Taddia, 'La Corse', 82. For examples from the rest of Europe, see: John Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe', *Past & Present* 47, no. 1 (1970): 55–56.

²⁸ Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 209. At the same time, contemporaries lamented those instances when, e.g. because of local power struggles, priests neglected their pastoral duties to the community. The seventeenth century, Gattiglia concluded, was a period in which the new ideal of 'professional' priest gained a foothold, also in the minds of the common people, while older values like family honour continued to be pervasive. *Ibid.*, 212–14.

That besides the ideal of the professional good shepherd who was in the world but not of the world, older values and priorities continued to be dominant in the minds of seventeenth-century (rural) pastors and their parishioners, partially explains why clerical reform was a slow and troublesome process. Looking at the issue from the perspective of trust provides further insight. In this chapter I argue that professionalization was a process full of obstacles also because attempts to foster the trust of the lay people in their clergy by increasing clerical recognisability and separation – moral and physical – from the laity, in turn created new trust-problems. To explore this paradox, this chapter looks at clothing as a practical example of a deeper problem that touches upon the relation between essence and appearance. First, I will focus on how Catholic reformers tried to enhance trust in their clergy by issuing specific clothing regulations. Secondly, I will shed light on the trust problems that were generated by the creation of a clear outward distinction between the clergy and the laity. Finally, I will zoom out and examine what this phenomenon tells us about the paradoxical disadvantages inherent in reform attempts that centred on trust.

Sources

Sources that can give us insight into the local reality of clerics in the Genoese Republic are plentiful, but they usually draw attention to the devious behaviour of some clergy, rather than to the normality of the priestly life of many others. Writing about the early modern priesthood, Paola Vismara rightly notes that “normality and *mediocritas* [...] leave far fewer traces of themselves”.²⁹ One rare source from the Genoese diocesan archives can shed light on this normality. In an undated report (probably from the first half of the seventeenth-century), two Theatine fathers reported on the churches, parish priests, and people whom they encountered during

²⁹ Vismara, ‘Il sacerdozio’, 234. Writing about the Middle Ages, Christopher Haigh rightly affirms that “historians have too often selected dramatic anecdotes from the court records, without placing them in their context” Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Clarendon Press, 1993), 45. See also: Larissa Taylor, ‘Society and Piety’, in Hsia, *A Companion to the Reformation World*, 31.

their mission to several villages no further than 20 km from Genoa.³⁰ According to these fathers, the priests they encountered were working diligently: in the village of Bisagno, for instance, one parish priest was “very much accepted by that people”, another one was “a very virtuous man”, while a third priest served his community “with great diligence”, taught catechesis, and was “held in much esteem by the people”.³¹ The archpriest of San Siro di Stroppa was even described as “a very virtuous old man, who is very much accepted by his people and diligently attends to the care [of souls], exercising the office of *buon pastore*”.³² Another one was depicted as a “young but virtuous man educated in the seminary”.³³ The overall impression that this report gives is that of well instructed, diligent priests. Since we do not know the motivations of these missionaries, it might well be that they omitted some less convenient facts, possibly at the insistence of others, thus offering a partial view of the rural clergy.

We can raise similar doubts, however, about the second type of sources from the same archives: the many letters sent to either ecclesiastical or secular authorities by communities that denounced their own priests or bishops for unpriestly behaviour.³⁴ The accusations in the many complaints to the authorities may reflect conflicts between priests and accusers, rather than actual clerical behaviour. What these sources do tell us is how local communities tried to solve internal struggles that involved clerics by making use of external authorities, in this case the diocesan

³⁰ ASDG, *Durazzo città AB*, 88r-89r. The report is from Cardinal Durazzo’s time or earlier, certainly after 1572 when the Theatines arrived in Genoa.

³¹ “si porta bene et è molto accetto da quel Popolo” “è persona molto degna”. Ibid.

³² “un vecchio molto da bene, accettissimo al suo popolo, attende con diligenza alla sua cura facendo l’ufficio di buon pastore” “uiue in pace col suo popolo [e] si porta bene”. Ibid.

³³ “giouane ma virtuoso alleuato in questo seminario”. Ibid.

³⁴ Paolo Fontana, who has mainly studied letters that arrived at the diocesan tribunal in Genoa, rightly emphasises that the documents from this criminal archive do not give a complete overview of ecclesiastical reality: crimes by priests may have occurred frequently without ever being reported to the Genoese authorities. Fontana also points out that contemporaries do not seem to have been overly interested in the moral behaviour of their clergy, and never did the latter constitute the main accusation that arrived at the ecclesiastical court, unless this behaviour added to - or was related to - issues deemed more important, such as fights, favouritism, ceremonial abuses, and the like. Fontana, ‘Gente tanto inurbana’, 140.

tribunal.³⁵ This is also true for another type of accusatory letter, namely the letters written to the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. Both the Congregation of the Council and the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars dealt with clerical misconduct and with relations between the Church and lay society.³⁶ The letter writers petitioned the different Roman institutions to take action against a local priest or bishop, especially in cases where they distrusted the willingness or efficiency of local ecclesiastical structures to deal with the issues raised in their letters. A final method of calling upon higher authorities was to write to the Genoese senators. A law of 1607 authorised citizens of the Genoese Republic to communicate their grievances, anonymously if they preferred, to the central authorities.³⁷ The complaints were usually written by exponents of the rural upper classes and were rooted in local conflict: in order to gain the support of the central authorities for their own cause, people might accuse a priest who was part of the opposite faction.³⁸ Other letters came from local officials whose task it was to inform the central government about what happened in the rural areas, and who often forwarded the accusations that arrived on their desk.³⁹ Many of these letters have ended up in the *fondo Senarega* of the *Archivio di Stato*.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁶ Most sources in the archives of these institutions came from the Papal States and the south of the Peninsula, but some also reached Rome from the northern part of Italy, including the Genoese Republic. Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 112, 117. For some insight into the archives of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, see: Francis X Blouin, *Vatican Archives: An Inventory and Guide to Historical Documents of the Holy See* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 68–70. For the working of the Congregation of the Council, cf: Federica Meloni, 'Le rôle de la Sacrée Congrégation du Concile dans l'interprétation de la réforme tridentine', in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 371–94.

³⁷ Edoardo Grendi has delved into this genre of letters and their political and social implications for the seventeenth century Republic in: Grendi, *Lettere orbe*.

³⁸ Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 73. About the role of the central government as mediator above local factions: Assereto, *Le metamorfosi*, 88.

³⁹ See, for understanding who these local officials were and what their tasks comprised: Assereto, *Le metamorfosi*, 9–76; Carlo Bitossi, 'La nobiltà genovese e l'amministrazione del dominio di terraferma nella prima metà del Seicento: il caso degli uffici intermedi', in *La Storia dei Genovesi. Atti del convegno di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova. Genova 25-26-2 Aprile 1985*, vol. 6 (Centro internazionale di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, 1986), 137–53.

⁴⁰ Flavia Gattiglia has studied the letters that regarded ecclesiastics from the years 1630-1675. Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 69. A part of these letters to the government, however, were directed

To add to the findings of Gattiglia, who has studied the *fondo Senarega* extensively, I have mainly used letters from the archives of the *Giunta di Giurisdizione*.⁴¹ This government department dealt with issues of contested jurisdiction between Church and state.⁴² It therefore contains many records of legal cases in which one's belonging to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was contested. These records offer much insight into how contemporaries viewed clerical clothing. Upon arrest and in order to be tried in the ecclesiastical court, a suspect might try to prove his belonging to the Church hierarchy which, in some cases, was advantageous.⁴³ Early modern people generally were well aware of how to use the cracks in various judicial systems: a decision to take recourse to either the episcopal or the secular court was made on the basis of one's aims and estimation of that court's dealings with the matter.⁴⁴ In order to make a strong case for one's belonging to the ecclesiastical order, the suspect should show his status by wearing clerical clothing. Antonio Bagnasco for example, was arrested while carrying a pistol and going around "without a habit but with a soutane, that seem[ed] more like a tunic". Because of his ambivalent clothing, the secular authorities did not immediately believe that Antonio fell under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court, as he claimed.⁴⁵ In such

at individual departments of the Genoese Republic, the *Magistrati*, and can be found in their archives Grendi, *Lettere orbe*, 12.

⁴¹ The *Giunta Ecclesiastica* was founded in 1593, and started to be called *Giunta di Giurisdizione* in 1638. Grendi, *In altri termini*, 60, footnote 44.

⁴² Cf. Taddia, 'Fratelli preti', 40–41.

⁴³ Marco Cavarzere has shown for the bishoprics of Sarzana and Brugnato that the punishments in the ecclesiastical court were not necessarily more lenient than in the secular court, although they did not apply the death penalty or imprisonment. Frequent punishments in the ecclesiastical courts were exile or fines, some of which could be mitigated after the verdict by having recourse to a complete or partial pardon of the punishment. Practical conditions played an important role in the outcome of a case both before and after the sentence: among these were the status of one's family or one's connections with the judge, and whether one was able to come to an extra judiciary agreement with one's adversaries (which normally led to closure of the case). Secondly, the arbitrariness of the individual judge, i.e. the bishop or his vicar, played an important role: he might, for instance, accept a donation and then close the case. These two factors probably account for the attractiveness of ecclesiastical courts in the eyes of some people. Marco Cavarzere, *La giustizia del vescovo: i tribunali ecclesiastici della Liguria orientale (secc. XVI-XVIII)* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2012), 38–45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁵ "senza habito con pero una sottana, che sembra più presto casacca". ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1088, no. 28 (1655).

ambivalent cases, the secular authorities collected witness statements to clarify whether a suspect belonged to the secular or the ecclesiastical jurisdiction.⁴⁶ These witness statements about a person's past behaviour and apparel therefore tell us much about the importance of appearance in the eyes of contemporaries.

This chapter draws from sources which convey the narratives of people who, for whatever reason, denounced the behaviour of clerics to higher authorities, as well as from witness statements on people's appearance. I also use some prescriptive documents, particularly the statutes of ecclesiastical synods.⁴⁷ They reveal the priorities that the subsequent archbishops set in their attempt to change clerical behaviour.

Appearance and trust

From the thirteenth century onwards, clerical clothing worn in public spaces had been the subject of many episcopal and papal instructions.⁴⁸ The Council of Trent, too, stated that,

though the habit does not make the monk, it is nevertheless needful that clerics always wear a dress suitable to their proper order, that by the decency of their outward apparel they may show forth the inward correctness of their morals.⁴⁹

In 1589 Pope Sixtus V issued the apostolic constitution *Cum Sacrosanctum* in which he reiterated the decrees of Trent, ordering all clergy to wear a cassock when in public, on pain of being deprived of their function, dignities, and the revenues of their benefices.⁵⁰ Another possible punishment was refusal of absolution if a priest

⁴⁶ Local administrators were instructed to defend the secular jurisdiction and be diffident towards any claims on prerogatives of the local Church. Assereto, *Le metamorfosi*, 52–53.

⁴⁷ For the archdiocese of Genoa these statutes of diocesan and provincial synods are gathered in a nineteenth-century printed edition: *Synodi Dioecessanae et Provinciales S. Genuensis Ecclesiae* (Genoa 1833).

⁴⁸ Louis Trichet, *Le costume du clergé. Ses origines et son évolution en France d'après les règlements de l'Eglise* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), 15.

⁴⁹ CT, 116-7, Session XIV, chapter 5.

⁵⁰ Trichet, *Le costume du clergé*, 129.

did not appear at the confessional in his cassock.⁵¹ As happened with many Tridentine reforms, the apostolic instruction by itself had little effect: a sure sign of this is that it was to be followed by episcopal synods and exhortations that throughout and beyond the seventeenth century continued to stress the importance of specific clothing. Already during the sixteenth century, the cassock's shape, length and colour became increasingly fixed, evolving from a piece of underclothing (worn underneath the liturgical vestments at mass) to the full clerical robe.⁵²

In France, until the middle of the seventeenth century the rules varied from diocese to diocese: some bishops made the cassock compulsory for all clergy whereas others obliged only benefice holders, those who received the major ordinations, or just those with a priestly ordination to wear the clerical garb. Even in those dioceses where the bishop made exceptions for travelling clerics or priests working in the countryside, the cassock was usually required when appearing in public, in the presence of lay people and especially in one's own parish.⁵³ The latter emphasis on the public appearance of a priest reflects the importance contemporaries attributed to avoiding scandal. A priest who went about his own town in secular clothing would cause more scandal than he would elsewhere. The community of his parishioners knew him well and ought to be able to trust him for their spiritual well-being: wearing the proper dress was a means of expressing his trustworthiness.

Clothed with Christ

With regard to the sacred liturgy, the regulations were unequivocal in all dioceses: without a cassock worn underneath the liturgical garments, a priest was not allowed to approach the altar.⁵⁴ The colour and fabric of a cassock had to be modest: black, woollen clothing was the standard.⁵⁵ This dress code was meant to signify a new type of priest, one who "has to make himself noticed because he has nothing that can

⁵¹ Ibid., 161.

⁵² Ibid., 132–33.

⁵³ Ibid., 134, 140.

⁵⁴ See, for example, the diocesan synods of Orazio Spinola and of Stefano Durazzo, in: *SDP*.

⁵⁵ Trichet, *Le costume du clergé*, 146.

make him conspicuous, nothing exceptional, nothing excessive”.⁵⁶ Modesty in clothing, behaviour and attitude was to distinguish the men of God.⁵⁷

The liturgical garments, by contrast, had another function: they expressed the splendour of Christ rather than the modesty of the priest.⁵⁸ These garments were also strictly regulated: each piece of clothing carried its own symbolical meaning. Just as the sacred priesthood was to inspire awe and trust in the faithful that was independent of the priest’s behaviour, so too, were the liturgical garments to be respected by both the faithful and the priest. Thomas Aquinas wrote that “the ministers of the altar are attired in more costly apparel than others, not for the sake of their own glory, but to indicate the excellence of their office or of the Divine worship”.⁵⁹ By wearing the amice, alb, maniple, stole and chasuble, the priest literally clothed himself with Christ who became the true actor of the sacraments.

The story of Father Evangelista de Marchi, the parish priest of Montemarcello – a small *borgo* on the south-eastern outskirts of the Republic –, testifies to the way in which contemporaries viewed the sacredness of the liturgical garments. On Holy Friday in the spring of 1635, Father De Marchi sent a strong complaint to Rome about something that happened to him that very day. He wrote that he had to interrupt the divine offices of Holy Friday because several candles had started to go out. Immediately after finishing the prayers, he had turned to the people and said: “If the divine offices were not recited with the usual solemnity, people should not blame me, but the lack of candles.” This, according to the rector, was the

⁵⁶ “deve farsi notare perché non ha nulla che lo possa far notare, nulla di eccezionale, di eccessivo” J. Goichot, ‘Sacerdos alter Christus, Modèle spirituel et conditionnement social dans les ‘Examens partikuliers’, in *Revue d’histoire de la spiritualité*, 51 (1975), n. 1-2, p. 94, cited in: Guasco, ‘La formazione’, 667.

⁵⁷ Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 35. See e.g. Decrees of the provincial synod by Archbishop Cipriano Pallavicino (1567), in: *SDP*, 76: “Sit eorum incessus ad modestiam, gravitatemque compositus, in oculis cum decoro conjunctus pudor eluceat.”

⁵⁸ Cf. Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81.

⁵⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Second and Revised Edition, 1920), IIa-IIae, q. 169, art 1, ad 2.

responsibility of the “workers of the church”.⁶⁰ That this liturgical shortcoming was just the tip of an iceberg of mutual resentment between certain parishioners and their priest is evident from the reaction that, according to Father De Marchi, followed:

After I said these words, the layperson Giulio Cesare Remedio immediately stood up and publicly told me with a loud voice [...]: ‘you are a sly and dishonourable man, go away and dishonour you know whom’. I did not rebuke him, and I said that he should keep silent and show respect to the Most Holy Sacrament, if he did not want to show it to the surplice and stole with which I was clothed. Nonetheless, he repeated the same insulting words several times.⁶¹

Taking a closer look at the charges that the parish priest brought against Remedio, we notice that Father De Marchi not only asked for justice with regard to Remedio’s grave offence against the Holy Sacrament by shouting inside the church. He also pointed out that the offender had already made a fundamental transgression by dishonouring his pastor’s priestly garments with his insults.⁶² As the words of Montemarcello’s rector indicate, even though Giulio Cesare might have serious problems with the *person* Evangelista de Marchi, this should not interfere with trust in and reverence for his divine priesthood. The liturgical garb that could be worn exclusively by priests during the celebration of the liturgy expressed most clearly the dignity of the priesthood.

Putting on the priestly vestments provided a priest with a dignity that went beyond his own person. To put it more precisely: it was the priesthood itself that constituted a distinct, trustworthy dignity that in turn was expressed in clothing. Thus, it followed that an offence against the priestly liturgical garb, such as the insults echoed in the church of Montemarcello, constituted an offence against Christ

⁶⁰ “[A]l popolo e disse che se li divini officii non si erano recitati con la solita solennità non incolpassero me, ma il mancamento delle cere”; “operarii della chiesa”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1637 gennaio-giugno, 01-05-1637.

⁶¹ “Dette queste parole subito si levò in piedi Giulio Cesare Remedio laico, e ad alta voce coram populo disse contro di me [...], ti sei un furbo disonorato, va, e levi l’honore a chi tu sai: io non lo ripresi, e disse che tacesse e portasse rispetto al santissimo sacramento: se non lo voleva portare alla cotta, e stolla de quali ero vestito; con tutto ciò per quatro e sei volte replicò, coram populo, l’istesse parole ingiuriose [...]” Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

himself. Just as *trust* in ecclesiastics according to the Tridentine ideals was to be strengthened at two levels, the theological and the moral level, so too the priestly *appearance* indicated two distinct layers of trustworthiness: the liturgical garments were to express unmistakably the sacredness of the priesthood, whereas the cassock was merely meant as a means to demarcate a group of supposedly trustworthy individuals who together formed the clergy. In the remainder of this chapter I will concentrate on the latter: that is, on the particular effort of demarcating the group of clergy who were supposed to inspire trust, during and outside the liturgy.

Clothing regulations

While the pace at which clothing regulations were issued and implemented varied greatly from one diocese to the other, there was generally a renewed awareness that the moral improvement of the clergy should be accompanied by a change in and the uniformity of their appearance. This was certainly true for the most prominent reformers in France, both reforming bishops and the leaders of the *École française* whose example Durazzo hoped to follow. They aspired to impose the cassock and to simultaneously convince priests that by wearing this garment faithfully they would be helped to become better ministers.⁶³

Only four years after the closing of the Council, the Genoese archbishop Cipriano Pallavicini had ordered during a provincial synod that “all ecclesiastical people [...] should wear [a full-length cassock] down to the ankles in the city as well as in the villages; but in the rural townships and when travelling they might wear it

⁶³ The soutane was considered a sign of priestly dignity as well as a condition for an effective ministry. Trichet, *Le costume du clergé*, 154. Writing about the situation in England where priests were forced to operate in disguise, John Bossy’s research interestingly shows that this situation could induce priests to assimilate to the other roles they were made to adopt, and thus to conform to their disguise. John Bossy, ‘The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism’, *Past & Present* 21, no. 1 (1962): 51–52. However, the opposite could also be true. At times, being forced to lay off the cassock fostered a certain kind of professionalism in English priests; it helped them to perceive the priesthood as a precise, internalised task. The lack of appropriate clothing prevented people from automatically ascribing certain characteristics to the priest: more than others, a priest who was forced to dress like the laity was to show his priesthood through his behaviour. John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), 250.

somewhat shorter, but [it should be] black or another modest colour”.⁶⁴ The decrees of the synod continued with regulations on every possible detail: tonsure, shoes, collars, rings, shirts and the like all had to be sober and according to one’s rank. Some decades later, referring to these precise descriptions, Cardinal Sauli ruled that “the clerics who transgress with regard to the habit [are to be punished with] a fine [...], the loss of whatever garments that [goes] against the orders of the said Council, and, in addition, incarceration of three to eight days”.⁶⁵ In the early seventeenth century, Archbishop Orazio Spinola again emphasised the importance of modest, simple clothing outside the church, furthermore obliging clerics to wear their surplice at all times when in church.⁶⁶ Durazzo added that this surplice had to be “bright, and clean as a sign of purity, through which it should be apparent that one is a cleric”.⁶⁷ We can tell how much clothing in the eyes of the reformers was linked to behaviour from his additional comment that: “Nothing defiles the clerical habit more than the bad behaviour of those who, while chosen for the Lord’s cause, forget about their proper dignity.”⁶⁸

The repeated exhortations did not, however, result in general compliance, not even with regard to the vestments that were compulsory for mass. At times, it was not unwillingness but rather the inability to dress according to the required standards, if we may believe a letter from the “simple priests” of Ventimiglia. In 1644, they complained that the vicar and canons prevented them from “using the garments [...]

⁶⁴ “[...]. omnes ecclesiasticae personae [...]; clerici item omnes [...], talaris in urbe vestes, necnon in castellis, atque oppidis ruri vero, et in itinere dum erunt, aliquanto breviores, nigri tamen, aut alterius honesti coloris, arbitrio Ordinarii, gestent: At vero sericis vestibus ne utantur. Quadrato birreto coopertum caput habeant omnes”. Decrees of the provincial synod by archbishop Cipriano Pallavicino (1567), in: *SDP*, 75.

⁶⁵ “i Chierici transgressori quanto all'habito pena di due lire di questa moneta, et perdita delle vesti di qual si voglia sorte contrarie all'ordine del Concilio predetto, et di più pena di carcere da tre in otto giorni”. Diocesan synod by Cardinal Sauli (1588), in: *SDP*, 547-8.

⁶⁶ Synod of Orazio Spinola (1603), in: *SDP*, 601-2. During his apostolic visitation Francesco Bossi had already issued a similar order. Decrees of the apostolic visitation by Francesco Bossy (1582), in: *SDP*, 321.

⁶⁷ “nitidis, et mundis in signum puritatis, qua Clericum oportet esse conspicuum”. Diocesan synod by Cardinal Durazzo (1643), in: *SDP* 755.

⁶⁸ “Nulla res est, quae magis clericalem habitum deturpet, quam pravi eorum mores, qui in sortem Domini electi, propriae sunt dignitatis immemores”, *ibid.* 754.

of the public sacristy of the Cathedral” in order to celebrate mass decorously, while they conceded all this to “foreign priests”.⁶⁹ Whether this lament was honest or not, it is not unthinkable that extreme poverty was the actual reason behind a priest’s inability to wear appropriate vestments.⁷⁰ In fact, in the missionary report that I cited above, several churches were described as “very poor” and in dire need of altar cloths as well as priestly vestments.⁷¹ The repeated episcopal clothing instructions show firstly that the Church hierarchy in Genoa considered the regulation and uniformity of clerical dressing a vital matter, and secondly that the implementation of such regulations was rather problematic.

Trust in the visible

Despite the slow pace with which clothing reforms became effective, the sources clearly demonstrate that both ecclesiastics and laymen attached much importance to the dress of the clergy.⁷² In the archives of the Roman Archive of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (which contain sources from the former Congregation of Rites) we can find many traces of confusion and quarrels that arose over ecclesiastical clothing, in particular the vestments worn in church. Several masters of ceremony and guardians of Genoa’s cathedral, for instance, saw the necessity to consult the Congregation of Rites in Rome with a *dubium* on the type of clothing that they were allowed to wear while preparing the liturgy (a request that, I assume, must have had implications beyond mere practicality).⁷³ The scruples of the servants of the cathedral

⁶⁹ “impediti da detto Signor Vicario e Canonici di poter servirsi dell’Abiti e Mobilli Sacri della Publica Sacrestia di detta Cattedrale spettanti alla Celebratione della Santa Messa [...] Concedendo tutto questo a’ forastieri sacerdoti”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1644 luglio-dicembre, 18-11-1644. Letter from the “Sacerdoti semplici di Ventimiglia” to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

⁷⁰ Two *Ad limina* reports of Archbishop Spinola attest to the dire material situation of rural parishes during the early seventeenth century. ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec., 415A Ianuensis, 17r-21v, 1605, Relatio by archbishop Orazio Spínola and ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 22r-25v, 12-01-1616, Relatio by archbishop Orazio Spínola.

⁷¹ ASDG, *Durazzo città AB*, 88r-89r.

⁷² Cf. Rublack, 82.

⁷³ Archive of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints [ACCS], Positiones decreta et rescripta [Pos. decr. + rescr.] n. 14732, 21-07-1645. Rome answered with a dispensation for those who had to prepare the liturgy, allowing the master of ceremony to “lay off the aforesaid habit [...] when actually exercising his tasks”. “dimittere habitu’ praedictu’ atque eo’ ubi posse superpelliceo seu cotta in actu tantu’ exercitationis sui officij.” ACCS, Decreta 1621, f. 235v, decree of 30-03-1621.

contrast with the freedom that the canons of the Santa Maria delle Vigne, one of the most prominent collegiate churches of Genoa, afforded themselves regarding their religious vestments.⁷⁴ In 1628, the chaplains of this church (i.e. the clerics that performed the more day-to-day pastoral duties) complained that the canons (members of the church's chapter) "without any authority and on a whim" had changed their habit "from black to purple".⁷⁵ Though the chaplains' own garments were "tawny-coloured [...] with a turquoise ornament" they resented the fact that with this change both "in the choir and in the processions, and other public occasions, [...] the chapter appears with habits of different colours".⁷⁶ The problem, according to the chaplains, was not only that such difference in clothing was "very ugly", but also that "by dissimulating, the way could be opened for all to put on the habit that they like most".⁷⁷ Agreeing with the plaintiffs, the cardinals of the Congregation of Rites decided that "the canons should cease to wear the purple habit".⁷⁸ That these letter writers thought it wise to consult Rome on these issues certainly indicates the weight given to proper clothing, especially when used in a sacred place or during the liturgy.

When ecclesio-political issues were involved, people gave even greater weight to proper clerical clothing. In the same year, the *Confraternità di S. Maria dell'orazione e morte*, for instance, wrote to Rome to ask that "in order to integrally observe the Constitutions and for the decorum of their company, wearing the stole should be reintroduced". Apparently, one of the confraternity's rules had been neglected for some time: namely, that the priest who accompanied *confratri* through the streets of

The same type of question recurred several times: see: ACCS, Decreta 1617, f. 165v, 09-12-1617; , Pos. decr. + resc. n. 7350, 26-02-1628; ACCS, Pos. decr. + resc. n. 12328, 14-01-1640. A similar dubium also arrived from Sarzana: ACCS, Decreta 1618, f. 170v, 12-03-1618.

⁷⁴ For insight into the position of the Santa Maria delle Vigne in the ecclesiastical landscape of Genoa, see: Yousey-Hindes, 'Living the Middle Life', 41.

⁷⁵ "senz'alcun auttorità e di lor capirccio hanno commutato l'habito di color nero in color pauonazzo", ACCS, Pos. decr. + resc. n. 7351, f. 59 letter from the chaplains of the Santa Maria delle Vigne to the Congregation of Rites, 26-02-1628.

⁷⁶ "in Choro quanto alle processioni, et l'atre publiche funtioni appare il Collegio, ò sia Cap'lo con habiti di diuersi Colori", *ibid.*

⁷⁷ "dissimulandosi, aprirebbe la strada ad ogn'uno à prendersi quell'habito, che più le piacesse", *ibid.*

⁷⁸ "Canonici deponant habitum uiolaceum", *ibid.*

the city on their way to bury the dead should wear a priestly stole.⁷⁹ Now that the members wanted to take up the old habit again, they feared that the “parish priests of the city of Genoa would resist this and would litigate for a long time”. The reason behind this fear may have been that a parish priest – seeing another priest accompany a funeral within the borders of his parish – would consider this a loss of potential work and thus of income to which he was entitled. By asking Rome to decree that their chaplain could wear the stole “without prejudice to the [...] preeminence of the parishes” they hoped to avoid such struggles.⁸⁰ Again we see that, in particular the *public* display of particular clerical garments was a delicate issue. Not only in the eyes of the Church hierarchy, but also according to the laity, clerical vestments served additional purposes to merely covering the body: clothes conveyed an unmistakable message about the person wearing them.

Bodily appearance

Interestingly, the Church hierarchy attributed much importance not only to priestly clothing but also to the body, starting with the clergy’s hair. The Council of Trent prohibited clerics from wearing beards but obliged them to adopt the tonsure. Bishops also had the duty to reject requests for ordination from those who seemed unsuitable, either mentally or physically.⁸¹ Consequently, Rome received several complaints from candidates whose bishop refused to allow them ordination because of their physical deficiencies.

In 1610, a cleric of the diocese of Albenga asked the papal curia to convince his bishop to ordain him in spite of his “handicap of having only one leg and the

⁷⁹ See, for an introduction to this confraternity: Alessandro Serra, ‘L’arciconfraternità di S. Maria dell’Orazione e Morte nella Roma del Cinquecento’, *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 61, no. 1 (2007): 75–108.

⁸⁰ “per l’intera osseruanza delle sudette Constitutioni et per decoro della compagnia loro, che di nuouo si metta in uso la sudetta delatione di stola” “Parrochi della Città di Genoua se li opponghino e si faccino litigare longamente” “Ius and senza pregiuditio del Ius e preheminenza Parrochiale”. ACCS, Pos. decr. + rescr., no. 7782, f. 228 09-12-1628. Petition from the Confraternità della Morte e Oratione to Monsignor Benigno.

⁸¹ Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 27.

shortness of his body”.⁸² Rome, however, left the decision to the judgment of the bishop himself (which remains unknown). Another candidate was rejected by the Franciscans for a similar reason: with his malformed legs, Francesco Pico gave the impression of not being able “to bear the burdens of religious life”.⁸³ After this rejection, he tried to instead become part of the secular clergy. The bishop of Sarzana, Prospero Spinola, however, expressed the necessity to be cautious in these cases. He wrote to Rome that

the deficiency of one’s body usually indicates a deficiency of the soul and with regard to this subject [i.e. Francesco Pico] one could reasonably doubt, even though the aforesaid deficiency is largely covered by the long dress, whether his [wish to] become a priest could have other aims than [those] resulting from the mere spirit and vocation of God.⁸⁴

The cunning way in which Francesco had tried to obtain admission may have convinced the bishop of his unsuitability. According to the prelate, Francesco had worn “the clerical habit of his own authority contrary to the disposition of the provincial and synodal councils, and he also came to the examination along with many others in order to be admitted to the ordinations [...] believing perhaps that he would not be recognised”.⁸⁵ The same bishop of Sarzana similarly denied admittance to Domenico di Battista Bianchi because he was missing one of his eyes. Explaining his decision to Rome, the bishop wrote about Domenico that

because he keeps the aforementioned eye completely closed, he is so much deformed, that – since those who see him become rather

⁸² “diffetto d’una gamba et della picolezza del corpo” ASV, CVR, RE, vol. 44, 90v, 1610, to the bishop of Albenga.

⁸³ “non le parve habile a sopportare li carrichi della religione”, ASV, CVR, PE, 1641 gennaio-maggio, Letter from the bishop of Savona, 12-04-1641.

⁸⁴ “il diffetto del corpo sole arguire diffetto d’animo e nel presente soggetto si potrebbe dubitare ragionevolmente fuori del detto diffetto il quale in gran parte resta coperto dalla veste longa, se il farsi prette hauesse altri fini che da mero spirit e vocatione di Dio”. Ibid.

⁸⁵ “si vestì di propria autorità dell’habito clericale contra la dispositione de Concilii Provinciali e sinodali, e venne anco all’essame fra molti perr esser ammesso all’ordini e riceverli stimando forsi non dover esser conosciuto, il che non le venne fatto”. Ibid.

nauseated – the indignity at watching him celebrate the Holy Mass would also be great.⁸⁶

The appearance of a priest, consisting of his ecclesiastical garments and his bodily integrity, were part and parcel of his task as minister of the sacred. Contemporaries did not consider priestly dress, or even the body, to be mere form: clothing represented the sacredness and dignity with which a priest was clothed, and his physiognomy must not diminish this sacredness.⁸⁷ In order to leave no doubt about the priestly sacredness and dignity, the priest's dress and bodily functions were to be ceremonious, in conformity to the rules, and clearly recognisable: one's appearance – not merely one's words or deeds – was supposed to win trust in a time in which vision was considered to be the most direct way of mediating truth.

Problems of trust

As the reforms regarding clothing and other matters of clerical decorum gained ground, paradoxically, the potential for situations of distrust increased. First, the clearer the physical separation between the laity and the clergy, the more attractive it was to cross the boundary and thus enjoy the benefits of the clerical state. This decision could easily be made without the accompanying wish to pursue a path of spiritual growth for which the minor orders – the first step within the Church hierarchy – were actually intended. Second, visible markers of clerical identity, ironically, encouraged dissimulation rather than reducing it: impostors were facilitated rather than thwarted by the ever clearer demarcations of the clergy as a group. Third, dissimulation and other illegitimate transgressions of the physical

⁸⁶ “manca affatto la pupila nell’occhio [...], per mancamento della quale tenendo totalmente chiuso il sudett’occhio si rende talmente difforme, che si come non è poccha la nausea che riceue chi lo uede, cosi grande sarebbe il scandalo di uederlo celebrare la Santa messa. Costui oltre l’essere guercicio, e di nascita assai ordinaria di dottrina meno che mediocre, e di costumi a me pocco noti.” ASV, CVR, PE, 1642 marzo-luglio, 18-07-1642. The bishop also added that “in this diocese there is no shortage, but an excessive abundance of priests” (“et ancora non essendoui in questa mia diocese carestia, ma souerchia bondanza de Preti”) Twenty years later, however, a successor of this bishop wrote about the shortage of priests in his diocese. ASV, CVR, PE, 1662 aprile-luglio, 28-04-1662.

⁸⁷ Cf. Vismara, ‘Il sacerdozio’, 232.

boundaries not only became easier but also more apparent to all. Seeing any abuse of the vestments that the laity were taught to trust caused great scandal and distrust.

1) *The clerical habit defiled*

The secular clergy was made up of two distinct groups: those who received the so-called major (or sacred) ordinations – sub-deaconship, deaconship and priesthood – and those who only received tonsure and the minor orders of porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte. Contrary to their medieval predecessors, most early modern theologians did not consider receiving the minor orders a real sacrament, whereas the major ordinations clearly were (it followed that the latter were irreversible).⁸⁸ Tonsure, the ceremony during which the bishop symbolically cut a lock of hair and handed the candidate a surplice, gave access to this hierarchy of orders.

There were certain prerequisites for requesting the tonsure, namely having received confirmation, and, in the words of Paolo Sarpi (in his critical *History of the Council of Trent*), having “learned the principles of faith, [being able] to read and write, and [having] chosen a clerical life to serve God, not to avoid the secular judgment.” No one was to be allowed to wear the habit and tonsure if he did “not serve in some church, by commission of the bishop, or dwell in a seminary, or school or university, with the licence of the bishop.”⁸⁹ The minor orders were considered a moment of passage from secular life to the major orders and as such they were a probationary period for clerical life.⁹⁰ Though the system was clearly set up to restrict the possibilities of entering the minor orders only for personal gain, it seems to have had little effect. A large number of clergy continued to linger in this liminal group between the laity and the priesthood.

Many candidates in the Republic of Genoa requested the tonsure, not to pursue an ecclesiastical career but with the mere aim of profiting from its privileges.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Lehner, Muller, and Roeber, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, 144.

⁸⁹ [My italics] Paolo Sarpi, *The History of the Council of Trent Containing Eight Books [...] Faithfully Translated Into English by Nathanael Brent*, vol. 8, p. 692. See for the institutionalization of the admission requirements: Turchini, ‘La nascita’, 239.

⁹⁰ Yousey-Hindes, ‘Living the Middle Life’, 32.

⁹¹ Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 38.

Why was it so attractive to don the cassock? First of all, because clerics who merely received the tonsure or the minor orders lived, so to speak, on the threshold of the Church hierarchy. They shared in the privileges of ecclesiastical life, not in the least the access to clerical benefices, in exchange for very few duties, which mainly comprised serving or lecturing at mass.⁹² The level of diligence and constancy required for these duties must have depended on the ability and willingness of the local parish priests to impose obedience. In any event, the clerical responsibilities seem to have been largely ignored by a substantial part of the minor clergy. The result of this paradoxical situation was that the number of lower clerics in many places was utterly disproportionate compared to those with a higher ordination (though this started to change halfway through the seventeenth century).⁹³

Though many lower clergy had little religious about them, they were all entitled (and sometimes obliged) to adopt a similar appearance to that of clerics ordained to the major orders: this included the tonsure and, in certain areas, also the black cassock. It was precisely this similarity in appearance that created a new problem: those individuals attracted by the advantages of the minor orders but with the least intention of behaving according to their status, defiled the reputation of ecclesiastics as a group.⁹⁴

Criminal bands misused clerical privileges to operate in defiance of the secular tribunals. In 1627, the senators sent a complaint to Rome in which they urged for action to be taken against this abuse “particularly because in these times various gangs generate these youngsters who try to avoid the secular jurisdiction by [asking] for the first tonsure so as to live dissolutely”.⁹⁵ An example of such a criminal group

⁹² Turchini, ‘La nascita’, 244.

⁹³ Toscani, ‘Il reclutamento’, 593–94.

⁹⁴ Of course, the immoral behaviour of actual priests and bishops had similar or even worse consequences for the trust of people in their clergy. Here, I focus particularly on the minor clerics, not only because they have been studied less but also because they occupied this specific, liminal position that in my opinion shows better the trust-related problems that come about when trying to bring about a new, well-defined, uniform and trustworthy group.

⁹⁵ “massime che in questi tempi da ogni banda escono giouani che con la prima tonsura procurano sottrarsi dal foro secolare per viuere licentiosamente”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1074, no. 209, 18-03-1627.

appears in a letter from “the majority of the people of Sestri” who wrote to the senate that in recent years

around 25 or 30 young clerics of small virtue and even less fearful of God put on the habit [...]. They publicly wear prohibited weapons day and night, while stealing the produce of the countryside; beating and injuring people who resist, both men and women, they are the cause of scandal and fear in that town.⁹⁶

Having witnessed that some of them had randomly and without warning fired gunshots “at a public ball in the presence of all the people”, the villagers sought help from the authorities.⁹⁷

A similar cry for help came from the territory of Chiavari where the abbot of S. Andrea di Borzone was accused of heading such a gang of criminals “having turned the abbey [...] into a shelter for outlaws and murderers. He has people lashed, imprisoned, and mocked and he has all the wares that are being stolen in those valleys brought to the abbey.”⁹⁸ Wandering around the countryside “without habit [...] accompanied by 25 or more armed men”, the abbot was said to “divide [...] all booty from theft in the said territory and to engineer and commission all murders and misdeeds that [were] committed in that place”.⁹⁹ That the ecclesiastical state was so

⁹⁶ “La maggior parte delli homini di Sestri”, “preso l’habito da uenticinque in trenta Chierichi Giouanotti poco uirtuosi e meno timorati di Dio [...] quali tutti giorno e notte pubblicamente portano armi proibite, rubando i frutti nelle Campagne, battendo e ferendo le persone che le fanno resistenza, tanto huomini quanto Donne, con scandalo e spauento di detto logo”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1075, no. 4, 1638. On the use of weapons by clerics in the early modern period, see: Massimo Carlo Giannini, ‘Il clero in armi. Note su chierici armati tra guerra e disciplina in età moderna’, *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 1 (2018): 45–72.

⁹⁷ “in un ballo pubblico alla presenza di tutto il Populo”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1075, no. 4, 1638.

⁹⁸ “havendo fatto dell’abbatia o sia monastero un asilo de ladri banditi et assassini fa legare, carcerare e canzonare gl’huomini e portare in detta abbatia tutti i ladronecci che si fanno per quelle valli.” ASV, CVR, PE, 1659 settembre-dicembre, 05-12-1659.

⁹⁹ “senza habito bater la campagna con 25 e più huomini armati con farsi lecito contro chi che sia quel che più le piace et opprimer tutti indistintamente chi nell’havere chi nell’honore e chi nella vita” [...] “tramare e dividere in essa i latrocini che si fanno in detto territorio et il macchianare et ordinare tutti li assassinamenti e misfatti che si commetano in detto luogho”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1658 luglio-settembre, 23-08-1658. The senate also asked Cardinal Durazzo to do something about this miscreant abbot, which Durazzo promised to do. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1075, no. 37.

clearly abused by people with no ecclesiastical ambitions will definitely not have fostered the laity's trust in those wearing the clerical habit.

The ecclesiastical state was also attractive to those who, after committing a crime, could use an ordination to the minor orders to escape punishment.¹⁰⁰ Francesco Caliccia, for instance, requested and obtained the minor orders several months after he had committed a murder. During his prosecution by the secular authorities, his father presented two certificates to the authorities: one attested Francesco's eligibility for ordination and the second testified to his actual ordination.¹⁰¹ The highest authority in matters of church-state relations, the *Giunta di Giurisdizione* subsequently decided to drop Francesco's case, because only the ecclesiastical tribunal was competent in all matters that involved ecclesiastical persons and their goods.¹⁰² This shifting from one jurisdiction to another was a serious problem. At times a convicted criminal escaped before actually being caught, only to come back in the clerical garb.¹⁰³ In one of the reports that the *Giunta di Giurisdizione* wrote to Durazzo, they mentioned the story of Father Marco Antonio Boggi who,

before he was a cleric [...] was condemned to six years on the galleys because of his crimes and the bad life of murdering [...], [but] he escaped from prison [...] and jumped out of the window together with others, and in recent years he secretly killed the son of the baker [...] called the Bold one. [...] [He] came back dressed as a cleric and [...] goes around armed during the night with his band [of criminals]”.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Toscani, 'Il reclutamento', 586. Example of cases in which clerics only wear the appropriate clothing when they are about to commit a crime: ASV, CVR, RE, vol. 76, f. 63r, 04-06-1632; ASV, CVR, PE, 1632 gennaio-maggio, 08-05-1632; ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1151, no. 132 (1689).

¹⁰¹ ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1076, no. 118 (1640).

¹⁰² Fontana, 'Con sacrilego ardire', 15; Fontana, 'Gente tanto inurbana', 119.

¹⁰³ Taddia, 'Fratelli preti', 46.

¹⁰⁴ "prima di esser cherico per le sue cattive azioni e mala vita che teniva d'assassinare fu [...] condannato in sei anni di galera il quale scapò di prigione [...] e saltò le finestra con altri armato e li anni pasati amasò il figlio del fornaro [...] detto il Canuto secretamente e dall'ora in qua e ritornato uestito da cerico e continua andar [...] di notte in mobba armato d'arme", ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, nr 67.

To “come back dressed as a cleric”, i.e. to have asked and received the tonsure, and wear clerical vestments meant that one had come to fall under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court. Conviction by this court could result in punishments ranging from fines to imprisonment, and from the suspension of one’s benefice to excommunication.¹⁰⁵ It seems, however, that in the diocese of Genoa many such court cases were never concluded. Paolo Fontana has suggested that this situation may have been caused by the fact that the ecclesiastical court considered itself more an “instrument of mediation and conflict resolution than of the punishment of culprits. Rather than punishing crimes, the diocese intended to correct behaviour and to resolve tensions”.¹⁰⁶ One of the reasons that the judicial systems on the Italian peninsula were weak compared to other regions in Europe was the fact that priority was often given to private deals and inter-factional peace-making.¹⁰⁷

At times, it was difficult even to establish whether a culprit belonged to the secular or the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Testimonies would then be heard about one’s past *physical* appearance in order to find out whether one really was a cleric or not. Admittedly, with regard to Giuseppe Olivaro, condemned for thievery, a witness also testified about rumours that “he was courting the daughter of a pharmacist in Camogli and that he wanted to take her as his wife”, by no means a strong indication of any ecclesiastical ambitions.¹⁰⁸ Yet other witnesses mentioned that they saw Giuseppe “clothed as a layman, in other words wearing trousers, a colourful coat and [...] with long hair”.¹⁰⁹ The interrogators in cases of contested jurisdiction thus asked not only about the conduct of the accused - whether he served mass and behaved

¹⁰⁵ Nuovo, ‘La Chiesa genovese’, 27.

¹⁰⁶ Fontana, ‘Gente tanto inurbana’, 138–39.

¹⁰⁷ This way of conflict resolution, according to Stuart Carroll, undermined “faith in the organs of justice and administration”. Carroll, ‘Revenge and Reconciliation in Early Modern Italy’, 141. Cf. also: Sanne Muurling, *Everyday crime, criminal justice and gender in early modern Bologna*, unpublished doctoral thesis (Leiden University, 2019).

¹⁰⁸ “ho sentito dire pubblicamente che faceua l’amore, in una figlia di un speciaro a Camogli, e che la uoleua prendere per moglie”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1076, no. 160 (1650).

¹⁰⁹ “uestito da secular, cioè con calsoni, e casacca di colore e feriollo alla curla con capegliera longa”. Ibid.

well - but also about his outer appearance: whether he had *appeared* to be a cleric and for how many years.

The case of Giovanni Gregorio Asdente provides another example of this dynamic. In 1639, at the request of the senate, the *podestà* of Taggia sent testimonies about this Giovanni, who had been condemned for insulting and beating someone with a stick. The barber of Taggia testified that he had tonsured Giovanni only once, some years earlier when he had received “either the first tonsure, or the first ordinations by the [...] bishop who came here during [his] visitation”. In more recent times, Giovanni had come back for tonsure twice more, but only after committing his crime.¹¹⁰ The barber furthermore added that he had always heard Giovanni being called “Mister” and not “reverend”: therefore, he had “never taken the said Mister Giovanni Gregorio for a priest”.¹¹¹ A merchant who had done business with Giovanni, on the contrary, stated

I do not know if here in town they think of him as a cleric or layman, because I do not know anyone’s thoughts, but I see him as a cleric, because I saw him with the tonsure.¹¹²

Besides the tonsure, clothing, too, was an essential marker of belonging to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The interrogator asked all witnesses when it was that Giovanni had started to wear “the long cassock” and for what purposes.¹¹³ Some said it was a sign of mourning “because his brother and his father had died, and recently [also] his mother”, while another claimed that Giovanni wore the cassock “as a cleric [...] also before his brother died”.¹¹⁴ Although none of the interrogated claimed that they actually *saw* Giovanni serve at church – an essential task of those received to the minor orders – the *Giunta di Giurisdizione* decided that he was to be handed over to

¹¹⁰ “o prima tonsura, o li primi ordini del Reverendissimo Vescouo, che venne qui in visita”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1075, no. 113 (1639).

¹¹¹ “mai tenuto detto Signor Gio’ Gregorio per Prete”. Ibid.

¹¹² “non so come sia tenuto qui al luogo, o per chierico o per secolare, perché non sò il pensiero di nissuno, e io lo tengo per chierico, perche gli ho veduto la chierica”. Ibid.

¹¹³ “la sottana longa”. Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “perche li sono morti suo fratello poi suo padre, e ultimamente sua madre” “come chierico, [...] prima che li morisse un suo fratello”. Ibid.

the ecclesiastical court anyway, and that it was the bishop's task to punish him "severely".¹¹⁵ In the absence of – or in addition to – evidence of one's service at mass or a person's ordination, appearance (both clothing and tonsure) indicated his belonging to either the ecclesiastical or the secular jurisdiction.¹¹⁶

In many instances, Church and state cooperated in order to punish criminals that abused clerical exemption. The senate, for instance, ordered local administrators to readily provide the secular arm at the request of an ecclesiastical court, provided that the sentence was against clergy.¹¹⁷ The secular authorities also made lists "of the scandalous priests and clerics" to be used for further action against criminal clergy.¹¹⁸ Detailed descriptions can be found on where these delinquents lived and what their bad practices entailed.¹¹⁹ The *Giunta di Giurisdizione* had its own informants who gathered information about the criminal past of the Genoese clergy together with their current situation: who had been admonished or tried, who had been banned by the ecclesiastical authorities and who had actually left the Republic.¹²⁰ On the basis of such reports, the *Giunta di Giurisdizione* would ask the vicar or the archbishop to take action, as they often promised to do, against those ecclesiastical delinquents who still freely went around the city and were a threat to the public order.

In 1664, the bishop of Brugnato (one of the dioceses in the Republic) sought to convince the senate that he, too, really aimed to fight the criminal clergy who damaged the secular justice as well as the reputation of the church. The prelate expressed his wish to "use justice first of all against those who want to cover their

¹¹⁵ For other examples of witnesses who testify to their impression of one's status, see: ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1076, no. 142 (1644).

¹¹⁶ See, for examples of efforts to ascertain people's status: ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1093, no. 26 (1630) and ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1126, no. 111 (1671).

¹¹⁷ Assereto, *Le metamorfosi*, 52.

¹¹⁸ "i preti, e chierici scandalosi". The senate decided on the 1st of February 1646 that the secretary should go "a rappresentare all'Illustrissimo Cardinale arcivescouo che essendosi hauute informazioni certe della pessima qualità di detto [...] percio sij contento sua Signoria Illustrissima mandarlo via dal dominio della Repubblica ser'ma essendo forastiero" Two days later the secretary was able to notify that Cardinal Durazzo had promised to cooperate. ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, no. 60, 15-01-1646.

¹¹⁹ ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, no. 50.

¹²⁰ ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, no. 7.

fraud with the cassock”.¹²¹ An example of this attitude was his action against Giacinto Quercia who, according to the bishop, wanted

to escape justice again under the pretext of the bit of cassock that he wore [...]. A long time ago he was admitted for unknown reasons to the first tonsure [...] by Monsignor Castaldi, the bishop here, after whose death he laid off the cassock [...] until the beginning of this year, when, without my licence he started to wear the cassock again. After he showed himself two or three times in church with the surplice aiming to fool the just sentences of the *Signori*, he asked me for exemption, which I refused to give him because I did not have sufficient reasons.¹²²

The bishop’s emphasis on the fact that he did not let himself be fooled by the clothing tactics of Giacinto, once more underlines the power that vestments normally had: it directly conveyed a person’s alleged status and produced an immediate association with the advantages of that status.

The ecclesiastical privileges not only benefited clerics, but also impaired the rights of lay people. In 1663 a group of people from the coastal towns of Laigueglia and Andora complained about a very peculiar violation of their property rights:

The men [...] of Andora are no longer masters of their own farms and possessions, because [...] flocks of sheep [...] damage the land and crops. Some suffer this damage with patience, out of fear, whereas others, who wanted to blame the sheep [...], cannot obtain [justice], because almost all the houses in Andora and Laigueglia where they keep sheep have a priest or a cleric in the house.¹²³

¹²¹ “amministrare la giustitia massime contro quelli, che uogliono con la tonica coprire il loro imbroglio”, ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1112, no. 53 (1664).

¹²² “sotto pretesto d’un poco di tonica vestitasi nuouamente fuggire la giustitia [...]. Questi molt’anni sono, sotto quale fine non si sà, fù ordinato alla prima Tonsura o due ordini minori dal fu Monsignor Gastaldi qui Vescouo doppo la morte del quale si spoglio la tonica in qual stato hà dimorato sino col principio de presente anno, oue senz mia licenza hà riuestita la tonica, e fattosi uedere per due, o tre uolte in chiesa con cotta a fine d’intorbidare le giuste sentenze de’ Signori dimandandomi un inhibitione, che io le ho negata per non hauer ragioni sufficienti, ne le requisiti necessarij e prescritta dal Concilio Tridentino”. Ibid.

¹²³ “Gli huomini [...] di Andora non sono horamai più padroni de’ loro poederi, e possessioni, perche [...] mandre di pecore [...] danno il guasto alle campagne, et a’ frutti, et alcuni per lo timore

Many farmers did not dare to stand up to these ecclesiastics because they were part of the most powerful families. These families apparently made sure they had at least one ecclesiastical family member living in their house whose exemption from secular justice, in their view, would extend even to their property. The complainants therefore asked the senate to help save their lands from destruction by these “clerical” sheep whose owners went unpunished.

A last major clerical privilege was the exemption from taxes.¹²⁴ Towards the end of 1643 a complaint reached Genoa from the mountain village of Ceriana: several men had taken on “the cassock and the first tonsure in order to evade the duty of paying the public taxes and not with the aim of offering themselves in the service of the church”.¹²⁵

The criminal clergy drawn to the cassock for its advantages undoubtedly prejudiced the dignity of the ecclesiastical clothing by their behaviour.¹²⁶ Consequently, even though the reformers had envisioned a specific appearance as a means to demarcate a group of trustworthy individuals, i.e. those belonging to the ecclesiastical state, the opposite was the case. In associating certain clothing and hairstyle with one particular group, this association could easily become corrupted; even more so during the seventeenth century which, in this regard, was a period of transition. The clearer the visible divide between clergy and laity, the easier the trustworthiness attributed to the whole group could be abused and impaired by the behaviour of some.

2) Outward markers encourage dissimulation

Identification papers were an additional means, besides clothing, intended to help laymen to identify ecclesiastics, particularly those who had received the priestly

soffrono con pazienza il danno, et altri, che hanno uoluto accusare le pecore [...] e refettione del danno non possono ottenere, perche quasi tutte le case che gouernano in Andora, e Laigueglia pecore, hanno in casa il Prete, o il chierico”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1112, no. 61 (1663).

¹²⁴ See e.g. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1075, no. 80 (1649).

¹²⁵ “per sottrahersi da pagare i carrichi publici e non con fine del darsi a seruir la chiesa pigliano l'habito [...] e la prima tonsura.” ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1072, no. 40.

¹²⁶ Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 98.

ordination. Both Cardinal Durazzo and his predecessor De Marini underlined in their respective synods that no priest from outside the diocese could celebrate mass or even enter the sacristy or rectory without the episcopal “licence to be shown in writing”.¹²⁷ These policies were intended to make sure that no *finto prete*, fake priest, “with sacrilegious boldness” would be able to fake “celebrating mass [...] [or] administering the sacrament of penitence to the faithful”.¹²⁸ Thus, the faithful could be confident that anyone who presented himself as a priest with a licence, was indeed canonically ordained and the sacraments administered by him were valid.¹²⁹

As access to the ecclesiastical state became more and more regulated, all upward steps within the ecclesiastical hierarchy were to be preceded by appropriate documentation, called *fides*, that testified to one’s baptism, legitimate birth, confirmation, life and habits, confession, service in Church, received ordinations and so on.¹³⁰ Once ordained, priests were to carry the attestation of their ordination with them. But this control mechanism was not without flaws. People could carry fraudulent certificates and thus abuse the trust of the people. After his arrest by the secular court, Giovanni Francesco Doria for example “produced writings, that one should not trust, because they [were] faulty in many parts” and his name could not be found in the registers of those ordained with permission of the archbishop.¹³¹

Others faked their identity at an earlier stage: they obtained the permission to be ordained by providing false certificates of good conduct. The secular authority of Castiglione – a mountain village in the diocese of Genoa – complained that one of the inhabitants, Bastiano Faravella, obtained his ordination unlawfully. Being condemned for his criminal past, Bastiano knew that he had no chance of securing a

¹²⁷ “nostra licentia in scriptis ostendenda” Diocesan synod by Domenico de Marini (1619), in *SDP*: 689; Diocesan synod by Cardinal Durazzo (1643), in: *SDP*, 740.

¹²⁸ “con sacrilego ardire, non essendo sacerdoti [...] celebrare la Messa [...] [o] ministrare il sacramento della penitenza ai fedeli” ASG, AS, 1401, Editto generale del S. Ufficio di Genova, 31 ottobre 1639, cited in: Fontana, ‘Con sacrilego ardire’, 16.

¹²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁰ Turchini, ‘La nascita’, 239–40.

¹³¹ “ha prodotto scritte, à quali non si deve dar fede, per esser difettose in molte parti, oltre che non si troua che sia stato ordinato con dimissoria dell’Arciuescouo di Genoua suo Ordinario”. ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionalium* 1099, no. 60 (1628).

certificate of good conduct in the town where he lived. Instead, he went to Castello, the town of his birth.¹³² There, the authorities were either complicit or they did not know of Bastiano's crimes: they gave him the requested proof of good conduct necessary to proceed to the clerical orders. With his illegitimately obtained ordination Bastiano was able to return to Castiglione while avoiding punishment by the secular authorities, protected as he now was by his clerical dress.

The great importance attributed to licences that testified to one's valid ordination or one's crimeless past, reflects a general early modern trend. Increasingly, travelers were obliged to carry personal identity papers and "stricter control mechanisms and tighter feedback loops into other recording systems" were set in place in order to counteract dissimulation.¹³³ The attestations of clerical ordination also had to be verifiable in the records that the diocese kept of its clergy, but during the seventeenth century this system was far from perfect.¹³⁴ Valentin Groebner has noted a very interesting dynamic that accompanied the early modern trend of stricter identification: the more official identification was regulated, the more imposters saw their chance of faking certain identities. Groebner even concludes that "their careers in dissimulation took place not in spite of, but through the expanding systems of bureaucratic control".¹³⁵

We have seen that the same is true for the progressive regulation of clerical dress. The more ecclesiastical clothing was regulated in order to mark a trustworthy group of Church ministers, the easier it became to fake this separate identity. For instance, for those men who wanted to visit a convent, feigning this identity could be advantageous. In the archives of one government department, I found several accusations against men who wanted access to the parlour of a nunnery: by donning an ecclesiastical garment, they feigned to belong to what was considered the

¹³² ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, no. 45, 30-12-1644. Letter from Giovanni Battista Cauana, Castiglione.

¹³³ Groebner, *Who Are You?*, 218.

¹³⁴ See for an example: ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1113, no. 24, 14-02-1664. Letter from Cosmo Suarez, Albenga.

¹³⁵ Groebner, *Who Are You?*, 219.

trustworthy group of ecclesiastical men who were allowed access more easily.¹³⁶ Once discovered, such instances of dissimulation caused a great scandal. What was designed as a proof of trustworthiness – both clothing and identification papers – when abused, turned out to impair trust.

3) *Crossing borders*

Creating clear borders between clergy and laity – by means of clothing and licences – also enhanced the bewilderment of the laity who witnessed clergy deliberately crossing these borders. Seventeenth-century Genoese people were rather scandalised – if we may believe their complaints – by those ecclesiastics who, as it were, lived on the edge between the ecclesiastical and the secular world, not conforming completely to either of them. It was not unusual that priests who earned their living by engaging in commercial activities or working on the land were criticised for doing so, even though generally it took more serious misbehaviour for someone to write an accusatory letter.¹³⁷ One priest of the town of Pozzo lamented his precarious material situation when he wrote to Rome that “his father [...] gave up almost everything to give him a patrimony”. However, it was not enough to live “with the decorum that suits the cassock, since this father has also other sons and a daughter.”¹³⁸ Besides the parish priest, the tiny town (“fifty fireplaces”) hosted three other priests who all wanted to leave the diocese “to earn their living”, yet were allegedly obliged by the bishop of Sarzana to remain in their posts. The bishop of Sarzana, in turn, declared

¹³⁶ See e.g. ASG Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, August 1638; ASG Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, March-April 1647; ASG Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, August 1647.

¹³⁷ Cf. Celeste McNamara, ‘Conceptualizing the Priest: Lay and Episcopal Expectations of Clerical Reform in Late Seventeenth-Century Padua’, *Archive for Reformation History*, 104 (2013) 297, 303, 315. Some instead wanted to become priests in order to be able to provide themselves with a living, as appears from the case of Giacomo Buonhuomini. “D. Giacomo Buonhuomini da Olivola [...] doppo essersi dedicato a vita ecclesiastica et ordinato al diaconato [...] l’è convenuto [...] condursi a Roma, dove non potendosi sostenere per la sua povertà, se non viene ordinato al sacerdotio, per il quale è già stato esaminato et approvato per idoneo qui in Roma”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1647 gennaio-maggio, 10-05-1647, Sarzana.

¹³⁸ “il padre suo, che ancor vive, si è spogliato di quasi ogni cosa per fargli il patrimonio quale consiste in beni mobili che non rendono a sufficienza per il suo vitto con decoro dell’habito, havendo detto padre due altri figli et una figlia.” ASV, CVR, PE, 1654 maggio-agosto, 19-06-1654, Sarzana. Letter from father Simone Chiarelli, Pozzo.

that “priests leave [the diocese] with great ease, as soon as they reach priesthood, lured by the abundance of Lombardy and by greed for, perhaps, not so honest earnings”.¹³⁹ In his letter to Rome he added that there had never been a shortage of work or income, since he had even increased the patrimony which had always sufficed to priests in the past. Whether or not the income really was sufficient in this particular diocese, people were conscious of the fact that, certainly in small villages with a relatively high number of priests and a limited income from benefices or services, priests often had no other choice than to work like laymen in order to make a living. Examples of priests in the Genoese Republic who performed all kinds of unpriestly jobs are plentiful. The parish priest of Fegino, for instance, combined a business in “animals, cheese, wine, and other such things” with “a very free way of living” that made him little loved by the people of the town.¹⁴⁰ The *parocco* of Cassano was similarly accused of exercising various professions, such as cheese seller, butcher, barman and wine seller.¹⁴¹

However, as Celeste McNamara has recently shown with her study on the Paduan countryside, dressing like the laity caused greater scandal than engaging in worldly labour.¹⁴² In an accusation from the citizens of San Remo, the bishops of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars were told that one of the city’s clergy, a nephew of the parish priest, wore “a habit more akin to that of a layman than of a priest”, just like “other priests and clerics of that town [who were] very dissolute [...] with regard to their habits, tonsure and morals”.¹⁴³ Most problematic in the eyes of contemporaries, however, were the instances in which clerics deliberately dissimulated their identity by dressing up. In Albenga one citizen complained that “a

¹³⁹ “ma non così tosto si giunge al sacerdotio chi i preti allettati dalle grassime della Lombardia e dall’avidità de’ guadagni forse poco onesti assai facilmente l’abbandonano”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1654 settembre-dicembre, 18-09-1654.

¹⁴⁰ “d’animali, formaggi, vini, et alter cose simili”. “un modo di uiuere assai libero”. ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, no. 46, Sestri, 03-03-1644.

¹⁴¹ ASV, CVR, PE, 1636 Gennaio – Maggio, 04-04-1636, Brugnato. Letter from ‘the parishioners of Santo Michele di Cassano to the Congregations of Bishops and Regulars.

¹⁴² McNamara, ‘Conceptualizing the Priest’, 316-17.

¹⁴³ “in habito più da secolare che da prete”, “altri preti e chierici in detto luogo tanto rilassati [...] si nelli abiti, tonsura e costume”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1660, agosto - settembre, 24-09-1660, Albenga. Letter from Lucio and Oratio Vestali (San Remo).

certain reformed brother of the province of Genoa, Camillo di Mentone, [...] went around on a horse dressed like a knight [...] and at other times he dressed like a bishop riding [through] the villages”.¹⁴⁴ The letter writer accused the actual bishop of not acting against this transgression.¹⁴⁵ Some fathers of a convent in Noli were similarly accused of an unacceptable clothing transgression: they had allegedly been “playing ball in shirt, trousers and beret of white cloth, together with lay people and in the presence of a many men and boys of all sorts”.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the public aspect of this event heightened the scandal.

Acting like a lay person while wearing ecclesiastical clothing was considered even worse than transgressing in disguise. The same *frati* of Noli were accused by their bishop of being involved in “scandalous” public balls “with women at their hand while wearing the habit”.¹⁴⁷ Among the complaints that the citizens of Albenga raised against their bishop in a letter to Rome was that “in recent years he appeared at public balls in this city, [and] without mask and without dressing up he danced with an air of indifference”.¹⁴⁸ The mismatching of clothing and behaviour generated great scandal, as did permanently discarding the cassock.¹⁴⁹

Essence and appearance

Clothing, as a clear marker of identity and thus of possible trustworthiness, was to be unequivocal, and yet it could be misused or confused very easily. This gave rise to a strange paradox: those devices that were envisioned to foster trust could become

¹⁴⁴ “un certo fratte camillo di Mentone reformato dalla provincia di Genova andò spassaggiando sopra di [un] cavallo vestito da cavagliero per la città di Albenga e terre vicine et altre volte vestito da vescovo per le ville”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1642 marzo-luglio, Albenga, 07-03-1642.

¹⁴⁵ ASV, CVR, PE, 1642 marzo-luglio, Albenga, 07-03-1642.

¹⁴⁶ “di giuocar a palla in camisia e mutande e berrettino di tela bianca, con secolari et alla presenza di moltitudine d’huomini e ragazzi d’ogni sorte”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1668 gennaio-marzo, Noli, 03-02-1668.

¹⁴⁷ “scandalosi balli che faceano pubblicamente con le donne alla mano e l’habito indosso” Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Comparue gl’anni passati ne pubblici festini de Ballo in questa città, e senza maschera e senza esser transuestito ballò indifferentemente”. ASV, CVR, PE, 1665 gennaio-maggio, Albenga, 30-01-1665.

¹⁴⁹ See, for example: ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1075, no. 105.

sources of great distrust.¹⁵⁰ People could feel tricked when the trust that was instilled by the sight of certain clothing was abused or betrayed.¹⁵¹ This trust paradox not only concerned clerical clothing, it also applied to priestly behaviour in general. Baroque religiosity was indeed characterised by “a pervasive tension [...] between appearance and essence”.¹⁵² An emphasis on external forms, on clothing and manners, was coupled with a preoccupation with interiority.¹⁵³ Just as people could feel tricked by someone’s physical appearance, they felt betrayed when their trust in the local priest turned out to be based on the mere appearance of good behaviour.

It seems that contemporaries themselves tried to understand this trust mechanism better. The relationship between essence and appearance was a central theme in seventeenth-century treatises on what constituted a “good priest”. All authors of these treatises agreed avoidance of public scandal was vital: the reputation of a Church minister – and thus the trust from his community – had to remain unblemished were he not to lose the possibility of serving them.¹⁵⁴ As the priest was providing the vital instruments for obtaining salvation, a clergyman causing scandal

¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, in a situation where the clergy made no effort at all to distinguish themselves physically from the laity, as Gabriella Erdélyi describes for sixteenth-century Hungary, there was less occasion for scandal because the “appearance [of the secular clergy] – with no special priestly garments – fostered the sense of their similarity to the laity” Gabriella Erdélyi, ‘Conflict and Cooperation: The Reform of Religious Orders in Early Sixteenth-Century Hungary’, in *Communities of Devotion. Religious Orders and Society in East Central Europe, 1450-1800*, ed. Maria Craciun and Elaine Fulton (Farnham, England: Routledge, 2011), 146.

¹⁵¹ David Cressy rightly points out that “Contemporary moralists [...] fumed at unnatural and outlandish violations of costume. [...] It was unconscionable that the sign should missignify, the costume deceive. [...] Was it not written in Deuteronomy that transvestism was an abomination unto the Lord?”. David Cressy, ‘Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England’, *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 4 (1996): 442.

¹⁵² Andrew W. Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred: Imposture, Inquisition, And the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 6.

¹⁵³ Fulvio De Giorgi rightly observes that during the Baroque ear “si manifestava l’emergere della contraddizione tra esteriorità e interiorità: il barocco esteriorizzava e perciò induceva una socializzazione teatralizzante (il ‘grande teatro del mondo’), ma la socializzazione cristiana non poteva ridursi a un teatro sacro, a mera finzione scenica, a meravigliosa macchina rappresentativa. La socializzazione cristiana implicava la difesa gelosa di un irriducibile spazio interiore, un teatro dell’anima, non risolvibile senza residui nell’esteriorità e tuttavia neppure totalmente scisso da essa.” Fulvio De Giorgi, ‘La parrucca dei preti. Limiti interiori all’esteriorità barocca e sacralità sacerdotale nell’Ancien Régime’, in *Le carte e gli uomini. Studi in onore di Nicola Raponi* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004), 10.

¹⁵⁴ Cf.: Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 43.

was considered an obstacle for the laity on their road to salvation.¹⁵⁵ According to the moral treatises, immoral behaviour on the part of a priest would damage the relationship of trust between him and his community.

Interestingly, the treatises provide two completely different strategies for maintaining the much-needed trust relationship. Gattiglia has demonstrated this extensively in her dissertation. On the one hand, there were authors who preferred the clergy's appearance of impeccability and encouraged priests to cover up their sin: by doing so one would avoid causing scandal and losing the trust of the laity not only in oneself but also towards the Church as a whole.¹⁵⁶ Cardinal Giovanni Battista De Luca, an influential jurist at the Roman Curia, explained this position well when, in 1676, he wrote that

the religious man [...] has the obligation to be perfectly good [...] externally and internally, and to satisfy God and men equally. However, if because of human fragility he cannot satisfy both one and the other, in that case, following [the principle] of the lesser evil, he has to try to satisfy at least the exterior, to *appear* to be a good and perfect religious man, even though intrinsically he is not. Contrarily, a man will deserve blame and punishment who acts in such a way that, because of *appearance*, he is deemed a bad religious man [...], even though intrinsically he is moved by a good aim.¹⁵⁷

The cardinal added that since the appearance of bad behaviour was what actually caused the scandal, appearing to be good should come first, rather than following the intrinsic good that might look bad. De Luca thus claimed that a loss of trust in

¹⁵⁵ Cf.: Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 1–2.

¹⁵⁶ Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 26–27.

¹⁵⁷ [My italics] "l'uomo religioso [...] hà obligo d'esser perfettamente buono nell'vno, e nell'altro foro, esteriore, & interiore, e di egualmente sodisfare à Dio, et à gli uomini; Tuttauia quando per l'vmana fragilità non si sodisfaccia all'vno, et all'altro, in tal caso per il minor' male deue almeno studiare di sodisfare all'esteriore, di apparir buono, e perfetto Religioso, benchè intrinsecamente non fosse tale, et altrimenti farà degno di biasimo, e del castigo, quando opperrà in modo che nell'apparenza venga stimato vn mal Religioso, et inosserruante di quello, à che per le leggi comuni, ò veramente per le Regole particolari della sua Religione sia tenuto, benchè si mouesse nell'intrinseco per qualche buon fine". Giovanni Battista De Luca, *Il religioso pratico dell'uno e dell'altro sesso*, 11.

the priest would be more harmful for the community as a whole than a priest living sinfully in secret.¹⁵⁸

Others, however, warned that this secrecy was too big a risk. According to the Jesuit Paolo Segneri, the clergy ought to avoid discrepancies between essence and appearance.¹⁵⁹ His approach followed the traditional moral discourse on the value of honesty and transparency in human communication that condemned all forms of deceit.¹⁶⁰ Worse than transgression per se, was to behave immorally *in secret*, hiding one's shortcomings. Segneri pointed to two erroneous attitudes:

The first is of that of a man who is convinced that, in order to set a good example, it is enough not to give a bad [example]. The second [and] more pernicious [attitude] is that of the man who believes that, though he sins, it suffices to sin in the utmost secrecy, *caute, si non caste*.¹⁶¹

Segneri added that it was exactly because of the clergy's duty to set an example that it was dangerous to hide one's immoral behaviour:

First, hiding oneself is too difficult for anyone. One can hide the fire, but not the smoke, and the smoke will then show the fire. Furthermore, it is also difficult to hide for a long time. Who can wear a mask on his face the whole day, like a straw man?¹⁶²

The scandal caused when the façade of good behaviour fell was too harmful: therefore, behaviour and appearance should not be too far removed from one another.

Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Lazarists whom we encountered in the previous chapter, even called this transparency – this attempt to live without masks

¹⁵⁸ Cf. also: Romeo and Mancino, *Clero criminale*.

¹⁵⁹ Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 26.

¹⁶⁰ Houdt et al., *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty*, 30.

¹⁶¹ "Il primo è di chi persuadasi, che dar buono esempio, basti il non darlo cattiuo: e il secondo più pernicioso è di chi si creda, che basti, benchè si pecchi, il peccare occultissimamente cautè, si non castè." Paolo Segneri, *Il Parroco Istruito* (Venice, 1695) 176.

¹⁶² "Primieramente l'occultarsi ad ognuno troppo è difficile. Si può ascondere il fuoco, ma non il fumo, ed il fumo fa poi manifesto il fuoco. Più anche è poi difficile l'occultarsi assai lungamente. Chi è, che possa portare tutto di la maschera in viso, come fa vn fantoccio di paglia?" Segneri, *Il Parroco Istruito*, 177-8.

– “my gospel”. Simplicity, according to De Paul, was the most effective way of evangelising: outer behaviour should correspond to one’s inner convictions in order to convince.¹⁶³ He attached such importance to simplicity that, in De Paul’s eyes, it was one of God’s main characteristics:

God is very simple, or rather, He is simplicity itself, and therefore, where there is simplicity, there one can also find God, and [...] he who walks with simplicity, walks with conviction. On the other hand, those who use cautiousness and duplicity are continuously on their guard so that their weakness is not discovered, and once they are surprised in their disguises, people do not trust them anymore.¹⁶⁴

In a few lines, Vincent de Paul draws the important parallel between the danger of mismatching appearance and secretive behaviour, and the danger of wearing clothes that do not convey one’s true identity: in both cases, their discovery will cause scandal and a loss of trust.

The heart of the matter was indeed to identify the ultimate source of trust. For those authors who preferred secrecy, the source of trust from the faithful was one’s outward behaviour: an apparently good example would make the faithful follow. Simply *appearing* trustworthy provided the necessary trust that could induce the laity to follow and obey their pastor. Others, however, thought that the risk of scandal – of an acute loss of trust – would be much higher and much more harmful if the lay were to discover that they had based their trust only on appearance. They preferred openness over secrecy, even though it would bring some of the clergy’s vices out in the open. A good priest, according to Segneri, should not aim merely to *appear* trustworthy, but should seek to (openly) increase his virtue.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Thomas McKenna, ‘Vincentian Simplicity: A Core Leadership Trait’, *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 26, no. 1 (2005): 70–71.

¹⁶⁴ “Dieu est très simple, ou plutôt il est la simplicité même, et partant, où est la simplicité, là aussi Dieu se rencontre, et [...] celui qui marche simplement marche avec assurance; comme, au contraire, ceux qui usent de cautèles et de duplicités sont dans une appréhension continuelle que leur finesse ne soit découverte, et qu’étant surpris dans leurs déguisements, on ne veuille plus se fier à eux.” *CED*, vol 11, p. 15.

¹⁶⁵ Gattiglia, ‘Gli abusi del clero’, 26.

In both lines of thought, the scandal that either hidden or visible behaviour might cause occupied a central place: it was the sense of scandal that would bring along a catastrophic loss of trust from the faithful in their pastor. Cardinal De Luca even went so far as to argue that immoral conduct that in a specific time and place was acceptable for a priest in the eyes of the laity – behaviour that therefore would cause no scandal – though inherently evil, should be punished more leniently.¹⁶⁶ De Luca's reasoning points at one of the reasons why professionalisation did not automatically lead to more trust in the clergy: as the standard of what was acceptable behaviour for priests in the eyes of the people started to shift, the chances that a priest would cause a scandal according to the new (and more severe) standards – and thus betray the laity's trust – also increased. Reforms that were intended to increase the trust of the laity – whether they concerned their physical appearance or their behaviour – thus in turn increased the occasions for a crisis of trust.

Conclusion

The trust of the laity in their priests was the cornerstone of an effective ministry of the Church. The Council of Trent tried to ground this trust in the teaching that a priest who was validly ordained could administer the sacraments regardless of his behaviour. At the same time, however, the Council fathers insisted on the necessity of increasing the actual trustworthiness of the clergy. Not only the Church hierarchy but also the lay themselves thought that appearance, as a marker of trustworthiness, was an essential step in this process: clothing and bodily appearance were a source of trust in a time in which one's observation was seen as the most reliable way of acquiring knowledge.

Paradoxically, the efforts to foster a distinct clerical appearance in order to elicit trust also created new trust-related problems. As priests were more and more obliged to wear the cassock, the image of the clergy as a separate group became more pronounced (as had been the intention of the Council). As a consequence, those who merely used the clerical garments as a way to obtain the associated privileges, all the

¹⁶⁶ De Luca, *Il religioso pratico*, 14. See also: Cavarzere, *La giustizia del vescovo*, 83.

more easily could defile the clerical habit now that physical distinctions were more apparent. Moreover, such visible markers invited dissimulation. Dissimulation and other forms of unexpected physical transgression of the borderlines between the two spheres were most unsettling to ordinary people and could create a climate of scandal and distrust.

Looking at trust mechanisms gives insight into some of the ambiguities that accompanied the professionalisation of the clergy. The Tridentine reforms were aimed at fostering distinctions between laity and clergy on the level of both appearance and essence. On both levels, these reforms were far from completed in the seventeenth century. As a result, bewildering discrepancies between appearance and essence were clear for all to see, especially in an environment like the Genoese countryside where the new ideals were starting to trickle down while the old habits continued to be paramount.¹⁶⁷ These discrepancies, together with the cases of dissimulation and transgression, continued to unsettle the laity because they endangered a trust that was fundamental for their souls' salvation: the trust in their local priest, who was their mediator of divine grace. Not only did contemporaries adopt practices of trust in order to further the reform, they also considered the evident disadvantages of this approach. Reform that involved trust always carried a risk: higher standards of what constituted a trustworthy priest simultaneously produced improvements among the clergy and greater scandal when Church exponents did not live up to the new ideals.

¹⁶⁷ Whereas Marco Cavazere, who studied the whereabouts of the ecclesiastical tribunals in the eastern part of Liguria, argues that, during the early modern period, priests were not seen as mere representatives of the sacred separated from the world, but completely part of the social microcosm that surrounded them, I maintain that the very fact that the priest was both at the same time generated many incidents of scandal and that this came to the fore more and more because of the partial professionalisation. *Ibid.*, 62.

4. When distrust thrives. The Magistrato delle Monache and the female convents

We have seen how reformers tried to bring about changes in the ecclesiastical landscape by means of trust strategies as well as the obstacles and paradoxes that this approach brought with it. In other areas of religious life, however, the ecclesiastical and secular authorities sought to change unwanted situations by means of distrust. This was the reality of female convent life in Genoa. The religious women who lived inside the city's many cloistered convents had hardly any possibility of constructing trust relationships, especially with the outside world. This chapter focuses on why an approach of distrust dominated this particular area of the Genoese Church and what such an approach looked like in practice.

Seventeenth-century Genoa had many nunneries. Their number had been growing ever since the foundation of the oldest convent of Benedictine nuns, that of Sant'Andrea della Porta, in 1109.¹ During the sixteenth century only a few were added, while the next century saw the foundation of no fewer than ten convents on top of the 21 already existing ones.² During the seventeenth century, the state of these female convents in Genoa was seen as a responsibility of the Church hierarchy but also of secular superiors (called *protettori*) and the state.³ For this reason, it was not in the archbishop's palace but at a meeting of the Genoese senate, on 28 August

¹ Claudio Paolucci, 'Presenza religiosa femminile a Genova tra XII e XVIII secolo: note di storia e di bibliografia', *Studia Ligustica. Collana di studi on line per l'approfondimento delle tematiche interdisciplinari riguardanti la storia, le arti e la bibliografia della Liguria* 1. Ordini religiosi in Liguria (October 2011): 8.

² Ibid., 8. Four of these new establishments belonged to new female religious orders founded in Genoa, the *Turchine* and the *Brignoline*, and their foundation shows the possibility of a more 'trusting' approach towards new female initiatives. See chapter 5.

³ The ecclesiastical elite expected the secular arm to eradicate all 'danger' regarding female convents: the Council fathers had indeed held the state responsible to help bishops to restore enclosure, and thus to avoid any unnecessary communication with the outside world. They had exhorted all "Christian princes to furnish this aid, and enjoins, under pain of excommunication [...] that it be rendered by all civil magistrates." CT 240, Session 25, Chapter V.

1642, that an anonymous accusation regarding a nunnery was read. Brother Bartolomeo Archi, prior at the convent of La Consolazione, had been reportedly visiting “a noble nun of San Leonardo” for several years:

because he has been warned not to become too confidential, he refrains from going there too often or too visibly, but [...] not one day goes by in which he does not solicit her with small notes, and with presents that very much exceed his status and condition.⁴

The accuser made it clear from the outset of the letter that “because other admonitions were made in vain” he or she needed to appeal to the senators “who are the only ones who with their authority and prudence can remedy an inconvenience that has very bad consequences.”⁵ That such a letter, in which the religious were accused of scandalous behaviour, was addressed to the secular authorities fits into a long history of these authorities’ involvement with Genoa’s female convents. As early as the second half of the fifteenth century, attempts had been made to reform the Genoese convents and start new ones that would offer what contemporaries saw as a respectable life to women who chose the “first state” (the other option being marriage). This reform included the enclosure of those convents that over time had abandoned their original rules and whose inhabitants had started to engage in activities beyond the walls of the convent. The policy was advocated primarily by the secular elite against the will of the women themselves.⁶ This elite preferred the cloistered alternative for their daughters and continued to

⁴ “[...] sino due, e tre uolte la settimana, et poiche è stato auisato a non confidar troppo si ua alquanto trattenendo di non andarli cosi spesso ne cosi alla scoperta, uero è però che mantiene talmente uiua la pratica che non passa giorno che con biglietti, e presenti molto eccedenti il grado, e conditione sua non la uadi sollicitando.” ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, Petition to the senate accusing friar Bartolomeo Archi, 28-08-1642.

⁵ “Non giouando altre amonitioni si ricorre per debito di coscienza a VV.SS. Serenissime quali sole possono ouiare con l’authorità, e prudenza loro ad un inconueniente di molta mala conseguenza.” Ibid.

⁶ Paolo Fontana, ‘La vita religiosa “sine regula” nella Repubblica di Genova dall’Antico Regime all’Ottocento. Conservatori, eremiti, terziarie, case di penitenti’, *Chiesa e Storia. Rivista dell’Associazione Italiana dei Professori di Storia della Chiesa* 6–7 (2017): 198. See also: Valeria Polonio, “Un affare di Stato. La riforma per le monache a Genova nel XV secolo”, in G.B. Trolese (ed.), “Monastica et humanistica”. Scritti in onore di Gregorio Penco O.S.B., Cesena 2003 (Italia benedettina XXIII), II, p. 323-352.

send them to these convents throughout the early modern period, even though the cloistered life was evidently not suited for all.⁷

The cooperation between the government and the Church with regard to female convents was expressed in the *Magistrato delle Monache*. Founded in 1551 at the initiative of the secular authorities but with the consent of Pope Julius III, the Magistrato was a permanent institution consisting of the archbishop or his vicar and three or four citizens chosen by the senate (several earlier commissions had existed from the middle of fifteenth century onwards but these were always temporary).⁸ The Magistrato was to occupy itself with virtually everything that regarded the female convents within the walls of Genoa. Its *deputati* were chosen for three years and appointed one or more paid *referendarios* who worked for the Magistrato on a daily basis.⁹ The task of these *referendarios* was to gather information on Genoa's nunneries

⁷ A good example of this imposed reform from active to enclosed life is that of San Tommaso, one of the oldest female convents in Genoa that had housed Benedictine nuns from at least 1134 onwards. In the fifteenth century, both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities attempted to impose strict enclosure, but the nuns had resisted this measure successfully. However, those Genoese convents that did not conform to the prescriptions regarding enclosure as found in their own rule, were not allowed to accept any new novices. When, as a consequence, in 1501, only five of the sisters of San Tommaso remained, this small group merged with the nuns of Santa Maria in Passione, a new convent grown out of a community of unmarried women that had existed for two centuries and that had voluntarily accepted enclosure less than forty years before. Connecting an almost dying but still active community to another convent and thus changing its rules in order to reform what was left of it happened often (at least to three other Genoese convents). Paolo Fontana rightly notes that it was not a natural decline that forced these convents to take this direction but a conscious policy from above. Other nunneries did not lose their independence but nevertheless changed their rule in an attempt to reform. Thus, it happened that only two out of the fourteen convents founded before the mid-fifteenth century continued following the same rule during the wave of reforms around 1500. After this period of transformation, the Genoese female convents grew substantially. Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 197-98; Gavazza and Magnani, *Monasteri femminili*, 137.

⁸ During the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century the government at times had given a special body temporal authority to tackle issues regarding nunneries. In 1529 and in 1538 the Senate had entreated papal authority to intervene in the Genoese female convents, which at both points of time was followed by temporary commissions that dealt with issues regarding these convents, especially with enclosure. Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 197-98. Michele Rosi, 'Le monache nella vita genovese dal secolo XV al XVII', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 27 (1895): 36, see for the papal decree: 195-7.

⁹ We do not know the selection procedure for this office although it seems that every deputy of the Magistrato chose his own *referendario* whom he paid personally. The sources often mention "il referendario di Signor..." followed by a name. That the referendaries were paid is deduced from:

and report to the Magistrato's members. The delegates met on a regular basis, at times joined by the archbishop or his vicar. They discussed all information coming from their own informants or from letters written by the nuns themselves or others, and took decisions accordingly. One of the focal points of its activity was to reduce all possible illicit contact between the convents and the outside world. Secular and ecclesiastical authorities cooperated in the Magistrato even though tensions did not fail to surface.¹⁰ The Magistrato continued to exist in the eighteenth century, but documentation for that period is much scarcer than for the seventeenth century. This fact might indicate either that, by then, less control over female convents was deemed necessary and priorities had changed, or that the activity of the institution was less documented.¹¹

Sources

The city's government involvement in the attempt to change the situation of its nunneries was not in any way particular to Genoa.¹² What is unique is the type of sources Genoese archives offer: the Magistrato produced all kinds of records concerning its dealings with female convents that give insight into its daily business. Even more remarkable is how little attention these sources have received. Except for the nineteenth-century historian Michele Rosi, it seems that no historian so far has ever looked into them thoroughly.¹³ Although Rosi has given a very useful overview of the history of the Magistrato delle Monache in his article of 1895, his work exposes

ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, note asking for overdue payment, [1639]; and ASG, AS, Monialium, 1382, no. 17.

¹⁰ The secular authorities, for instance, notified Cardinal Durazzo if a priest was illicitly visiting a nunnery: since clerics were part of his jurisdiction, the state was not allowed to prosecute and punish them. After being informed, Durazzo usually asked the 'secular arm' to arrest the priest in question. If the visitor was a friar, his own superior would be notified and asked to discipline the transgressor. See for an example of cooperation in which Cardinal Durazzo was also involved: ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 81 and no. 85, 02-08-1664. See the list of admonitions from 1631 until ca. 11-11-1651 in ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, in which several instances of contact with Durazzo and monastic superiors are mentioned. Cf.: Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 198–99.

¹¹ It could, of course, also be that the documentation of this period did not survive. *Ibid.*, 199.

¹² Richard C Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 35; Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 150–52.

¹³ It is notable, for example, that in recent work on early modern Genoese female convents the sources of the Magistrato are not included: Gavazza and Magnani, *Monasteri femminili*.

a very judgmental attitude – typical for nineteenth-century historians writing on the Baroque era – towards what he saw as instrumental and superficial religiosity and its presumed consequences. Consideration for what is not mentioned, e.g. the many nunneries that hardly ever occur in the Magistrato’s records, is lacking in Rosi’s analysis. Questions regarding the reasons behind the disciplinary problems in the convents and the government’s attitudes towards them were not central to his work.¹⁴ Also, the voices of the sisters themselves can hardly be heard. What interests me in studying the sources of the Magistrato is not so much the well-known existence of the substantial problems that were caused, in part, by forced monachisation. Rather I would explore what these particular sources reveal about the solutions that contemporaries, including women, deemed best, and which solutions were actually adopted.

The silences in the Magistrato’s administration are also worthy of consideration. An analysis of a list of all admonitions that were made to men and women who illicitly visited female convents from 28 March 1635 to 11 November 1651 provides a total of 511 entries in eleven years. This means an average of around two or three warnings every month to people who were banned from making any more visits to the convents. People were often warned more than once, which implies that fewer than 511 men and women received an official warning. Still, it is important to remember that many more people were observed in the parlours and vicinity of convents but were not given an official warning, whereas others were admonished while their names were left unrecorded.¹⁵ Apparently, the task of monitoring all these (legitimate and illegitimate) visitors was enough to keep one man busy on a daily basis. Though some women were mentioned explicitly on the list of warnings that I analysed, most of those who received an official warning were men. Considering that only a small proportion of the people who were admonished were

¹⁴ Rosi, for instance, assumes that the measures taken by the Magistrato must have been effective without providing sufficient evidence. Rosi, ‘Le monache’, 44.

¹⁵ A good example can be found in: ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, 04-03-1649: “Il segretario facci l’ammonitione a [...] Cesare Franchi senza notarla, ammonisca e noti l’amonitione per gl’infrascritti Cioè Carlo Cauagnaro Gio’ Battista Riola”.

also punished by banishment or incarceration, one may conclude that the number of punished transgressions in the realm of female convents was rather small.

It is furthermore important to keep in mind that a larger number of Genoese nunneries was *not* mentioned explicitly on the list of people who had been warned than those that did appear on it: for instance, the recently founded convents of the Turchine and the Discalced Carmelites are not represented. It might very well be that the problems of illicit contact concentrated around a precise group of convents – the “dangerous ones”, as one *referendario* called them – with a higher concentration of women who were forced to enter convent life (see figures 2 and 3 at the end of this chapter).¹⁶ These qualifications aside, the sources from the Magistrato’s archives unveil a reality in which distrust was paramount in the relationship between religious women and their surroundings.

Distrust

Recent historians have written much about female monasticism in the early modern period.¹⁷ They have stressed that not only did women have agency within their respective spheres of the family or the convent, but also that the convent walls were not as impermeable as one might suspect. Cloistered women pursued spiritual apostolates and friendships outside the nunnery, and through their outside contacts could change their own situation and sometimes even act upon the outside world. Currently, there is a growing interest in forms of female religious life that have been less visible in the shadow of the institutions of marriage and the convent, but that nonetheless offered decisive alternatives (we will examine some of these in the next

¹⁶ ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report of the *referendario*, 29-02-1644 “sono stato la presente settimana in volta alli monasteri e particolarmente a quelli del borgo di la e più pericolosi e non vi è cosa di momento da ricordare”.

¹⁷ As a corollary of the 1960s culture, historians adopted the ‘separate sphere paradigm’ claiming that the Counter-Reformation was a purely repressive period in which women were locked away. This narrative was soon criticised (in the 1970s) by historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis, who stressed that within certain domains women enjoyed limited forms of liberty, and that there were possibilities of self-actualisation in the enclosed convents. Alison Weber offers a clear historiographical overview in: Alison Parks Weber, ‘Locating Holiness in Early Modern Spain: Convents, Caves, and Houses’, in *Structures and Subjectivities: Attending to Early Modern Women*, ed. Adele F. Seeff and Joan Hartman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 50–52.

chapter). Scholars of early modern female religiosity now suggest that in those Italian cities where the aristocracy dominated ecclesiastical affairs, less was possible in the sphere of religious life outside the convent because it was mostly this elite, rather than the Church reformers, that had a rigid and mistrusting image of the position and nature of women.¹⁸ Yet we should not see an all too rigid opposition between the ecclesiastical and the secular elites: in Genoa, for example, it was at certain times the political elite, and at others the archbishop (himself an exponent of this elite) who supported women's initiatives for religious action outside the convent. These two hierarchies cooperated in the Magistrato, even though not without some internal struggles.

To understand the complexity of attitudes within and outside the Church towards female religiosity and female agency in this field, it is helpful to consider the factor of trust and distrust. What does this mean in concrete terms? When aiming to reform or to solve a problem, such as the disorder in some of the female convents that the Magistrato dealt with, there are two possibilities: either one can rely on the freedom of the other and his or her willingness and ability to do what one sees as desirable (i.e. trust), or one can limit the person's freedom in order to constrain him or her with the same goal (i.e. distrust). Even though women were sometimes granted agency in the religious sphere, other interests often trumped their freedom of choice. In the latter case, change could only come about through strategies of distrust and regulation.

The question that emerges when looking at the Magistrato delle Monache's archives from this trust perspective is why the (ecclesiastical and political) Genoese elite chose an approach of distrust and regulation in order to improve a situation that was generally seen as undesirable. To answer this question, we first of all need to

¹⁸ Querciolo Mazzonis, 'Women's Semi-Religious Life in Rome (15th-17th Century)', in *Early Modern Rome 1341-1667. Proceedings of a Conference Held in Rome May 13-15, 2011* (Ferrara: Edisai, 2011), 6. Also from the description of the Florentine institutions founded by Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo, it is clear that an active religious life was seen as more acceptable for girls from a non-elite background than for elite women. Jennifer Haraguchi, 'Convent Alternatives for Rich and Poor Girls in Seventeenth-Century Florence. The Lay Conservatories of Eleonora Ramirez Di Montalvo (1602-1659)', in *Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern World*, ed. Alison Weber (Burlington: Routledge, 2016), 258.

understand the general attitude towards women and their place in the family strategies of the aristocracy. We will subsequently look at the way in which distrust was manifested by examining how the Magistrato operated. Last, the chapter explores how religious women themselves perceived such a distrustful approach. Thus, we will shed light on the origins and practical consequences of what we might call the practices of distrust that surrounded the world of female convents in Genoa. This can in turn become a starting point for understanding – in the next chapter – why, in some other cases, distrust turned into trust.

Views on the convent

[A]lmost the sum of all perfection and happiness of the houses, cities, republics, reigns and all the states of the world, consists [...] in the good government and virtuous life of women. Because these women (not to mention now the cloistered and professed nuns, who, [...] like unassailable rocks and fortresses, defend the people from divine wrath, pestilences, famine, war [and] sin [...]) being well-educated, govern their houses well, educate their children well, and with ease induce their husbands [and] family members of which societies as a whole consist, towards piety and all virtues.¹⁹

This was written by Pietro Francesco Zini, a canon in Verona, in a 1575 introduction to the *Instituzione d'ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane*, an influential work appertaining to the so-called conduct literature for women that was on the rise in Italy. The author of the *Instituzione* was the bishop of Verona, Agostino Valier, one of the followers of Carlo Borromeo. Valier's work consisted of three short treatises on the three types of vocations deemed acceptable for women outside the convent: the married, the unmarried, and the widowed life. He described the nature of these roles and gave rules and practical examples to arrive at a “praiseworthy state” within these different

¹⁹ Agostino Valier, *Instituzione d'ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane* and *Ricordi di Monsignor Agostino alle monache nella sua visitazione fatta l'anno del santissimo Giubileo 1575*, ed. Francesco Lucioli, *Critical Texts* 43 (Modern Humanities Research Association, 2015), 54.

vocations.²⁰ One can hardly deny the responsibility that women in general had in the eyes of this clergyman, and likewise of many other post-Tridentine reformers, including Bishop Valier who, citing Augustine, called them “the mothers of God’s people”.²¹

At the same time, however, Valier was convinced that women had an inherent weakness, even though “created by God, capable of eternal life and having been conceded the potential of the soul just like men”.²² Their weakness was greater than men’s, and could only be compensated by piety and humility, which he and many contemporaries believed to be greater in women.²³ Obedience also helped in overcoming this natural weakness: “It is a very secure thing for everybody to obey, [but] much more for women, who, because of the imbecility of their nature and because of a certain natural tenderness, are easily deceived.”²⁴ Interestingly, in this passage Valier refers to the obedience of a group of religious women to other women (and not to men) whose life they could use as a trustworthy example for their own

²⁰ Francesco Lucioli, ‘Introduction’, in *Agostino Valier, ‘Istituzione d’ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane’ and ‘Ricordi di Monsignor Agostino alle monache nella sua visitazione fatta l’anno del santissimo Giubileo 1575’*, ed. Francesco Lucioli, 43 (Modern Humanities Research Association, 2015), 1. Citation on p. 4.

²¹ “madri del popolo di Dio”. Valier, *Istituzione*, 111.

²² “le donne sono create da Dio capaci della vita eterna e gli sono concesse le potenzie dell’anima come agli uomini.” Ibid., 57.

²³ “It is true that the weakness of your gender is great,” Valier wrote to women, “[but] Divine Goodness having compassion for your comfort and to confuse many of us, was pleased to give women oftentimes more humility and devotion. That is why it happens that many more husbands and brothers convert [...] through their wives and sisters; even though it seems that it should have been the opposite, having the Lord put man at the head of the woman” “È vero che grande è la debolezza del vostro sesso, della quale avendo compassione la Divina Bontà per vostro conforto e per confusione di molti di noi, li piace donar alle donne molte volte maggior umiltà e più fervente devozione. Onde nasce che molto maggior numero di mariti o di fratelli si convertono e diventano buoni per mezzo delle [A4r] mogli e delle sorelle; se ben pare che dovrebbe esser il contrario, avendo il Signore fatto l’uomo capo della donna.” Ibid.

²⁴ “È molto sicura cosa a tutti l’obedire, molto maggiormente alle donne, le quali, per l’imbecilità della natura e per una certa naturale tenerezza loro, sono facili ad esser ingannate” Valier, *Istituzione*, 67. Women were also seen as instigators of lust: Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*, Reprint edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 17.

and who could advise on many things “appertaining to the spirit and [...] to one’s life”.²⁵

The ideal place to circumvent this inherent weakness in a life of piety and obedience was that of the enclosed convent. Valier described the convents as paradises on earth, if only “the people who live there [were] able to live in peace and charity”.²⁶ According to the Council fathers, gathered for the 25th session of the Council of Trent, this ability to live in peace and charity was closely linked to the freedom of the girls who entered: they decreed that a girl could enter the convent life only if the bishop found her “to be pious and free”. At the same time, those who would constrain a girl “to enter a Convent; *or* prevent her, if she desires to enter” and “those who lend their counsel, aid, or countenance thereunto” were warned: excommunication *ipso facto* would follow.²⁷

The Genoese aristocracy

As firm and clear as this might sound, it made little impression on the many aristocratic families who continued to send their daughters to these nunneries, mostly for reasons of economics and family strategy. A striking example of the convenience of this choice is that provided by Renée Baernstein, who found that Anna, the one daughter in the Milanese Sfondrati family who was chosen to marry, received a dowry that amounted to around twenty times the fee that had to be paid for her sister upon entering the respectable convent of San Paolo.²⁸ For the aristocracy, the convent was thus a prestigious and relatively cheap alternative to settle surplus daughters.

²⁵ “appartenenti allo spirito et [...] alla sua vita”. Valier, *Instituzione*, 67.

²⁶ “Scrive un Santo [Geronimo] che li monasteri (se quelle persone che v’abitano sanno vivere in pace e carità) si possono domandare paradisi.” Ibid., 59.

²⁷ “The holy Synod, having in view the freedom of the profession on the part of virgins who are to be dedicated to God, ordains and decrees, that if a girl [...] desire to take the religious habit, she shall not take that habit, neither shall she, nor any other, at a later period, make her profession, until the bishop [...] has carefully examined [...] whether she has been compelled or enticed thereunto, or knows what she is doing; and if she will be found to be pious and free [...] and if also the convent be a suitable one; it shall be free for her to make her profession.” CT 248-9, Session XXV, Chapter XVII-III.

²⁸ P. Renee Baernstein, *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 11.

Unsurprisingly, around one in twenty-five women in Genoa lived within the convent walls in 1597.²⁹ The ratio of girls from the elite families who entered the Genoese convents was even higher, because for the lower strata of society the dowry needed to enter the nunnery was often too expensive.³⁰ We may therefore assume that not a few of these elite girls who became nuns were indeed “encouraged” either by relatives who were nuns, or by family members outside the convent.

The virtue of obedience to one’s father was perceived as the safest way for women (and men) towards salvation. This virtue, however, could conflict with a girl’s desire, thus creating a fine line between being compelled to enter an enclosed order and deciding to do so out of obedience. In this, boys could face a similar fate as girls. Destined to become a friar by his father, the Genoese youngster Domenico Maragliano once burst into tears during a class: he lamented the beatings with which his father responded to his protests to the religious vocation. Upon this outburst, his teacher, Friar Girolamo Francesco Balestrini, told the class of noviciates: “I’ve never preached Lent in Genoa, but if I ever do, I intend to deliver a sermon against fathers and mothers who force their children to become religious, because there’s a great need for it.”³¹

Throughout the early modern period the aristocracy in Genoa, like elsewhere on the peninsula, continued to decide the faith of their daughters (as well as their sons) and send them to the convent even against their will. Marco Battaglini, the bishop of Nocera Umbra in central Italy, in his instructions to parish priests (1707) summarised the situation as follows

like one selects fishes or picks apples, [parents] do with their children what they want, ruling [...] that one be priest, one nun,

²⁹ 1278 nuns on a population of 62,396 people Giuseppe Felloni, ‘Per la storia della popolazione di Genova nei secoli XVI e XVII’, *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 38, no. 2 (1998): 1178.

³⁰ Andrea Leonardi, ‘Monache cittadine: sedi monastiche e immagine urbana della città’, in *Monasteri femminili a Genova tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, ed. Ezia Gavazza and Lauro Magnani (Genoa: DIRAS, 2011), 71. Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 151.

³¹ Testimony of R. P. Girolamo Francesco Balestrini, OP, 17 July 1710, Cited in: Anne Jacobson Schutte, *By Force and Fear: Taking and Breaking Monastic Vows in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 162–63.

the other one friar, [...], the other daughter will marry [...] so that the biggest possible heap of money will remain [...] for the one son, who, by marrying, has to maintain the memory of your name and the reputation of the family.³²

As a consequence, the policy of the ruling elite towards those nunneries was always a balancing act between severity in order to keep them ‘honourable’, and moderateness, in order to keep convent life comfortable enough for women to accept their fate. Exceptions to the convents’ rules were requested and sometimes granted, as in the case of the noble-born novice, Sister Felice Victoria Fiesca, whom Archbishop Giulio Vincenzo Gentile permitted to keep and spend her own money as she pleased as long as it profited her or her convent of San Leonardo.³³ At the same time, no exceptions were made to rules regarding male visitors, because it was exactly this contact that was closely connected to the honour of a nunnery in the eyes of ecclesiastics and state officials alike.

The Magistrato delle Monache

The respectability of Genoa’s cloistered convents was seen as essential also for the city as such. The existence of a magistrato for the female convents shows that the political elite were convinced that their respectability had an impact on the city’s honour and consequently they were something with which the city authorities should

³² “ne fanno di loro volontà la scelta, come si capano i pesci o si distinguono i pomi, decretando inappellabilmente che uno sia prete, che l’altro sia monaca, che uno sia frate, [...], che quella si mariti... [...] perché rimanga più grosso il mucchio del denaro [...] per l’ altro maschio, che deve, con ammogliarsi, mantenere la memoria del vostro nome e la reputazione della famiglia”. M. Battaglini, *Istruzione a parrochi per ispiegare a’ popoli loro la Parola di Dio in tutte le feste de’ Santi...*, Venezia 1707, pp. 248 and 252, cited in: Toscani, ‘Il reclutamento’, 588.

³³ ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 127.

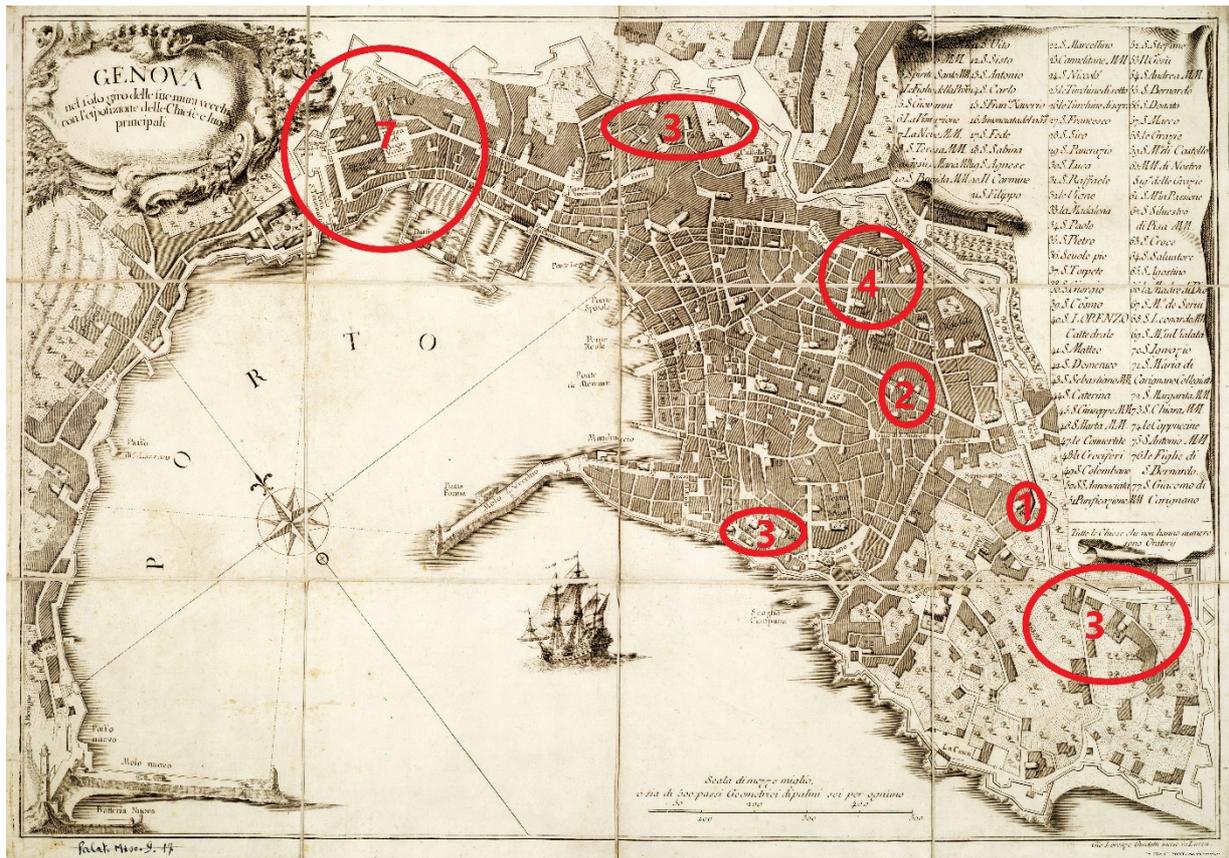


Figure 1. Location of several of the female monasteries in Genoa that, as it were, formed a protective ring around the city.

concern themselves.³⁴ Mostly placed just inside the old city walls, it was as if the nunneries formed a protective ring around the city (see figure 1).³⁵ The sisters of the Genoese Conservatorio di San Giuseppe, for instance, according to their constitutions were to daily say a prayer to the guardian angel of the city to ask for protection.³⁶ Such was the spiritual power of female convents, according to bishop Valier, that the devil tried “to enter these fortresses and conquer this [...] most important defence that the people of God has”, not in the least because they kept “the door of his mercy open which the Lord God threatens to close.”³⁷ With its

³⁴ Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 35.

³⁵ See for a comprehensive study of the positioning of the various convents throughout the centuries in Genoa, see: Leonardi, ‘Monache cittadine: sedi monastiche e immagine urbana della città’.

³⁶ Fontana, ‘La vita religiosa’, 208.

³⁷ “di entrare in queste fortezze e di espugnare questa sola o principal difesa che ha il popolo di Dio” “tengono ancora aperta la porta della Sua misericordia, la quale il Signor Dio minaccia di chiudere” Valier, *Ricordi*, 128.

policies, the Magistrato delle Monache therefore advanced the interests of a minority while safeguarding the city's honour and spiritual well-being.³⁸

The principal task of the Magistrato did not concern the nuns directly. The Magistrato's main occupation was not to educate them, to improve their selection process, or to warn and punish families that sent their children to the convents purely for reasons of family strategy. Instead, the Magistrato's actions were primarily focused on external issues: on monitoring, admonishing and punishing *men* who visited nunneries and thus, sometimes literally, closing the convent walls even more. The aim in most of the Magistrato's policies seems not to have been to change the attitude of misbehaving nuns, leaving them the freedom to improve, but of giving them less opportunity to act. This strategy may have been partially inspired by a mentality that saw women as inferior to men and as possible seducers (after Eve). In fact, there was no Magistrato specifically for men. Besides the different attitude towards women, the strategy might be explained by the fact that there were many more nuns in Genoa than monks (and, among the latter, only some were members of enclosed religious orders).³⁹

The way in which one *referendario* commented on one of his visits reveals much about how the Magistrato delle Monache as an institution looked at the problems they dealt with. On 4 January 1645, at around four o'clock, this *referendario* saw "two young Signori [...] who were in the company of a very young and beautiful monk of Santa Caterina [...] on the piazza inside San Tommaso, walking up and down several times looking at the terraces".⁴⁰ Somewhat later he spotted the same monk together with a friend who "was awaited by the same nun that I have seen coming or going

³⁸ Cf. Helen Hills, 'Nuns and Relics: Spiritual Authority in Post-Tridentine Naples', in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe, Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 32.

³⁹ A report of 1597 for instance mentions a number of 1278 nuns and of only 589 male clergymen on a population of 62.396. Felloni, 'Per la storia della popolazione', 1178.

⁴⁰ "[...] ho visto a hore 23 in circa dui signori giouinetti fermi sotto quello di S'to Tomaso quali eran in compagnia d'vn Monaco di Santa Caterina assai giouine e di bellissimo aspetto [...] sopra la piazza di dentro di Santo Tomaso passaggiando piu volte osseruando le teresse." ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report from a *referendario*, 05-01-1645.

down the corridor at her window”.⁴¹ According to the *referendario*, “the many opportunities” that this nunnery offered for contact with the outside world, caused it to be “very dangerous”.⁴² In this line of thought, the Augustinian nuns of San Tommaso would act upon their pious nature as long as they were not exposed to temptation.⁴³ The Magistrato operated first and foremost to remove the “threat” of male visitors.⁴⁴ The approach of the institution was thus one embedded in distrust, both towards the nuns who were expected to be easily tempted and towards the *monachini*, the men who visited them, who were expected to lead them into transgression.⁴⁵ The choice for reform through strategies of distrust most of all tells us something about priorities: the urban elites, for their own convenience, did not *want* to give up the system of forced professions because it provided a solution to the problem of surplus daughters. That is why, instead, they had recourse to strategies of distrust. In what follows we will see what these strategies looked like in practice by examining the work of the Magistrato.

An approach of distrust

Approaching the old city walls from the west, the eyes of a seventeenth-century traveller would be drawn to the Romanesque bell tower of the convent of San Tommaso, built in the thirteenth century on a rocky promontory called Capo d’arena, then situated outside the city walls (and incorporated only halfway through the fourteenth century). Towering above the Porta San Tommaso that was named after

⁴¹ “[...] che giudico fusse atteso dall’istessa Monaca che ho visto nel venir o sij nell’andare che fecci nel Corridone alla propria finestra”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report from a *referendario*, 05-01-1645.

⁴² “[...] il detto Monastero per le molte commodità che hanno, è molto pericoloso”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report from a *referendario*, 05-01-1645.

⁴³ “[...] molte uolte si fa che non si farebbe, se non hauessero da far con queste sanguisuce.” An anonymous nun who accused a priest of being too familiar with her fellow nuns, wrote that “many times [the sisters] do things that they would not do, if they were not faced with such bloodsuckers” ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Anonymous letter to the senate, 14-11-1636.

⁴⁴ As one nun wrote from Santa Brigida, “to remedy all the inconvenience of the blame and disturbance that people who visit the convent too often can bring [upon it]” (“[...] rimediare a tutti l’inconuenienti di biasmo e disturbo che possano apportar le persone le quali troppo frequentino i monasteri”). ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 194. Letter from Santa Brigida, 30-03-1633.

the nunnery, its bells joyfully sounded on an August day in 1649, because a new inhabitant had taken the veil and had entered the convent walls for good. It was there that on that particular summer morning a *referendario* observed certain behaviour that he thought particularly noteworthy:

[Y]esterday I stayed the whole morning until around 16 o'clock [i.e. around 11 in the morning] at the Convent of San Tommaso where they veiled a nun. I observed the whereabouts of Signor Giorgio Spinola and Signor Francescheto Cattaneo, having them near to me. They were not only looking at one or two nuns who were in the choir above, but [also] talked badly, with licentious and sensual words [...] that scandalised me. They often turned around to laugh with them, [using] gestures too. Immediately after it was finished, whilst many ladies stayed to talk with the bride [i.e. the professed nun] and the nuns in church, both of them went to the parlour, where they remained half an hour, all of which gave rise to no little suspicion. Moreover, [...] when there were few people left, there was a young man, the son of Signor Benedetto Viale, who looked at three or four *figlie*⁴⁶ and nuns who were also upstairs. [...] [H]e laughed at them and gestured with a small scarf. He could be some family member or the lover of those *figlie*, [but] the place was not suitable for such behaviour.⁴⁷

The choir that is mentioned in this report was a typical structure, promoted progressively after the Council of Trent, where the sisters could attend mass while

⁴⁶ These 'daughters' were girls who, contrarily to the professed nuns, stayed temporarily in the convent for their education.

⁴⁷ "Essendomi trattenuto heri tutta la mattina sino à hore 16 in circa al Monastero di Santo Tomaso che velorno vna monaca, osseruai l'andamenti del Signor Giorgio Spinola e Signor Francescheto Cattaneo li quali hauendoli appresso, non solo stauano osseruando una ò due monache che erano nel loro choro di sopra, ma trasparlauano con parole licentiose, e censuali, [...] del che ne rimasi scandalisato, voltandosi spesso ridendo con esse con segnalli ancora, subito definito, mentre che molte signore si trattennero à ragionare con la sposa e monache in chesa, se n'andorno tutti dui al parlatorio, doue si trattennero una mezza hora cosa che insieme mi dettero non poco spetto. Di più vi era assai à buon hora che ui era poche persone un giouinetto figlio del Signor benedetto Viale del quale osseruaua tre, ò quatro tra figlie e monache che erano similmente di sopra e rideua con loro e con una banderetta che haueua in mano li segnaua, ponno forsi essere qualche loro parente, o innamorato di dette figlie, il luoco non era conueniente a far simili dimostrazioni." ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report from a *referendario*, 31-08-1649.

separated by iron screens from other attendants.⁴⁸ In this elevated space, apparently some of the nuns paid less attention to the ceremony than to the two gentlemen whom they hastened to see in the parlour once mass was finished. The parlours were the most important places of contact with the outside world for early modern nuns. There, visitors could talk with the sisters from behind the grille and mostly under supervision of an older nun. Visits to the parlours were usually restricted to close family, and monastic rules often limited these visits to a few times per year. Nobody entered the cloister except – in those cases where the rules permitted this – certain girls who received their education with the nuns (*educande* or *figlie*) or female lay servants who lived within its walls without professing. Enclosure was thus meant to help the sisters to focus on otherworldly affairs, prayer, and complete devotion to God. All nunneries had a confessor who would spiritually assist the sisters and was allowed some access to the convent, especially when death was approaching and a sister needed the last sacraments. However, since female convents were not at all self-sufficient, contact with the outside world was constantly needed and it impaired the impermeability of the walls. Some nuns also communicated with people outside the enclosure via letters and their female servants, or through open doors and windows, even though such communication was forbidden. The *referendario*'s main task was to spy on the visitors to the female convents and relate all the suspicious contacts that he noticed in their parlours and in the other places where the nuns could meet with the world beyond the cloister.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Many monastic churches had no space behind the presbytery where a separated choir could be built. In those churches, including the San Tommaso, the nuns' choir was built opposite the high altar above the entrance and could have different sizes and forms. Giorgio Rossini, 'L'architettura monastica femminile a Genova e in Liguria. Riflessioni per uno studio', in *Monasteri femminili a Genova tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, ed. Ezia Gavazza and Lauro Magnani (Genoa: DIRAS, 2011), 75–76.

⁴⁹ The *referendarios* registered *all* possibly scandalous contact that took place around the female convents, not only contact with nuns. One report mentioned how various noblemen, among whom Filippo and Carlo Maria Doria, were “yack[ing] with little reverence” in the church of the Santa Brigida convent: “when a young girl [...] passes by they will say some words, [...] and then they laugh and things like that.” ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report from the *referendario*, 30-10 until 28-12-1647. Others “court[ed] a certain widow” who on feast days used to go to the Churches of San Francesco e l'Annunciata. A certain Carlo Spinola was spotted in the same church of San Francesco, where he observed and made signs to a married lady, “seating himself at times near a

Spying on female convents

That distrust was the basis of the Magistrato delle Monache is evident from the fact that the paid office of *referendario* was the backbone of the institution. Every day he would pass by the different convents and check on their visitors. On a February day in 1644, for instance, the *referendario* reported on how he had passed by “all the convents and particularly San Tommaso, Santa Brigida, San Bartolomeo, San Nicholosio, Pavia, San Leonardo, and three or four times a day by the Convertite”.⁵⁰ While he wrote down when he did not see “anything of importance”, his main focus of course was on suspect situations. Interestingly, the seven convents that this *referendario* visited on his tour also produced the majority of all the problematic cases mentioned in the administration of the Magistrato.⁵¹ Apparently, there were some convents that attracted more visitors than others (or where the *referendario* noticed more because he checked more frequently: it is virtually impossible to find out exactly why some convents received much more attention than others).

Men behaving suspiciously caught his particular attention, for instance the “young lad who was still wet behind the ears and was watching the *monache convertite* where he passed by several times a day”.⁵² Suspect behaviour was not enough to take immediate disciplinary measures, although the mere act of visiting a convent would be recorded in the Magistrato’s administration (in case the visitor was male). If a man was not minding his own business while in the vicinity of a nunnery, he became a target for further investigation. A first step was that the *referendario* would find out if

column in order to make signs without being seen and at others on a bench near the one where that lady sits”. Like many others, Spinola was not particularly impressed by the warning that he received from the secretary of the Magistrato: it did not stop him from returning to the female convents in the future. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report from the *referendario*, 22-02-1646 “ponendosi esso alle volte à giacere appresso ad una Colonna per segnare e non essere veduto et al volta sopra banca vicina à quella doue giace detta Signora”.

⁵⁰ hauendo più volte andato a tutti li monasteri e particularm’te à Santo Tomaso, Santa Brigida, Santo Bartolomeo, Santo Nicheroso, Pauia, Santo Leonardo, e, tre ò quattro volte il giorno alle Conuertite [...]”. ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report of the *referendario*, 29-02-1644.

⁵¹ At least in the sample that I have examined: almost 90 percent of all official warnings issued in the period from 28-03-1635 to 11-11-1651 that explicitly mention a convent that was prohibited terrain for the warned person feature one of these seven convents. See page 207, figure 3.

⁵² “giouane di pirma barba vagheggiare le monache conuertite doue passaggia più volte il giorno”. ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report of the *referendario*, 29-02-1644.

a visitor actually was a danger to the nuns. When Father Giuseppe loitered at the closed door of Santa Brigida for about two hours before sunset, the *referendario* purposely passed by to check what the priest was doing there. He was alarmed when he heard the father utter “a not so decent word”.⁵³ Similarly, the “smiling face” of a nun “who stood in the open door” of the convent of San Nicolosio was a clear hint that Geronimo Savignone, who lived nearby and was watching her, should be observed more closely; even more so because when he “realised that he had been discovered, the said door was immediately closed and he withdrew to the parlour, where he stayed a while”.⁵⁴ The Magistrato judged that “the other *referendario* should get information” about Geronimo’s intentions. Important criteria for judging whether an illicit relationship was the motive behind a person’s visit to a nunnery were the time and duration of a visit and the frequency with which he passed by. All of this was recorded in long lists that were regularly discussed with the members of the Magistrato, the *deputati*.⁵⁵

It was these *deputati* who decided whether to give an official warning to those who visited the parlours of a convent too frequently, stayed too long, or in any other way behaved suspiciously. After such an admonition, if spotted again at the same convent, a next step could be to impose a fine on the person if he returned to that particular convent. The *deputati* could even decide to put the person in prison, or banish him from the city. It is unclear what criteria were followed in these latter cases. Carlo Cavagnaro, for example, was imprisoned in the summer of 1646 after having been admonished at least once, but the ‘Flemish’ merchant Tomaso Ollena seems to have been incarcerated immediately after he was found at the parlour of San

⁵³ “una parola poco bencomporta”. ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report of the *referendario*, 29-02-1644.

⁵⁴ “una monica [sic] mi parse con faccia ridente che era sopra la porta aperta [...] doppo d’essersi sudetto Geronimo auisto d’essersi scoperto subito fù serrato detta porta si retirò nel parlatorio doue si fermò per qualche tempo [...]”. ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report of the *referendario*, 22-02-1644.

⁵⁵ See e.g. ASG, AS, Monialium, 1382, Report from a *referendario*, 19-12-1633; and ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, an interrogation by the Magistrato delle Monache, 10-12-1652. For the frequency of the visits, see, for instance: ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 12-07-1638. For a report in which many of the same names recur frequently: ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 20-03-1634.

Nicolosio some months earlier (his being a foreigner may have influenced this decision).⁵⁶

In order to track the visitors to the female convents, a *referendario* would find out their names or some description of their features. It could very well happen that, unsure of the identity of a visitor, the *referendario* would describe a *monachino* simply as the “luxuriously dressed gentleman” who sought contact with a nun of the Negrona family at San Tommaso,⁵⁷ or the “young man with red skin” who was talking in the parlour of the Convertite.⁵⁸ He would add more detailed information after further investigation, for instance that the “young man surnamed Gavi [...] is called Giambattista [and is] tall and skinny”.⁵⁹ One *referendario* corrected himself when he noticed that a “young man from Bisagno, recorded more than once under the surname Rossi, [...] seems [instead] to be surnamed Emerigo”.⁶⁰

Some people had valid motives to visit a nunnery. A list was therefore drawn up of all those who had official permission from the archbishop to enter a particular convent: this could be doctors or carpenters, bakers or painters, basically anyone who provided a service needed within the enclosure of a convent.⁶¹ Legitimate

⁵⁶ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, 22-08-1646; and ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, February [1646?]. Some who ended up in prison maintained that they were treated unjustly. This was the case with Nicolò Allegrete, who worked at the San Tommaso gate near the convent of San Tommaso, where he collected certain gabelle (taxes). An anonymous writer who came to his defence argued that “if he were to stay in prison he would certainly lose the responsibility [i.e. over these taxes and thus his income] which would ruin his family, who fear that this has been arranged by his rivals. And knowing that he is innocent of any crime whatever, he asks that they accept [si contentino] to release him on bail.” ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, petition on behalf of Nicolò Allegrete, 09-08-1630: “se stesse prigione al certo le sarebbe leuata la cura con rouina della sua casa, la quale non manca di temere, che da suoi emuli sia tenta e sapendo egli essere innocente di qualsisia delitto, supplica perciò [...] che si contentino farlo rilasciare con sigorta”. The difficulty of the Magistrato’s tasks becomes apparent in these procedures: not only were the monachini themselves not to be trusted, accusers could also have motives that made their accusations untrustworthy.

⁵⁷ ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 20-03-1634: “gentilhuomo vestito di lusso”.

⁵⁸ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, 16-10-1646: “un giouine di perlo rosso”.

⁵⁹ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, December 1646: “un giouane di cognome Gavi, dato in notta se pratica à san Tomaso, che di nome si chiama Gio’ Battista d’alta statura magretto di corpo”.

⁶⁰ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, 04-03-1649: “quel giouine di bisagno dato in notta più d’una volta sotto il Cognome Rossi, e pare [...] sia Cognominato Emerigo”.

⁶¹ ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 31, 16-11-1645.

visitors, which besides these people included family members as well as women who were deemed less threatening, were often not reported by the *referendarios*.⁶²

Given the centrality of a person's background in assessing whether he had valid motives to visit a convent, the *referendarios* employed different techniques to gather all kinds of information about suspect visitors: whether someone was married or not, whether he had "a sister or [...] family member" in the convent, or whether he had friends who had behaved indecently in the past.⁶³ That is why, one day, a *referendario* casually asked a friend of his, a surgeon of the hospital near the convent of the Convertite, "under some pretext" about a young man whom he suspected of having a relationship with one of the sisters. This friend revealed that the person in question, a student of his, was indeed "rather enamoured" of one of the nuns. The surgeon, however, reassured him that he would marry shortly (and supposedly be less dangerous then?).

Chasing the *monachini* in order to identify them was a regular business too. During the winter of 1644, the *referendario* reported about the Convertite convent:

⁶² "And I will not write to VV.SS. Illustrissime also those who go more than once into the said convents and those of whom I learn that they have family members among those nuns I will not write them down". "Et io non gli daggo in notte a VVSS Ill^{me} insino quelli che gli ationo più d'una volta a detti monasteri et quelli che io vaddo a intendando che hanno parenti di dette monache io non gli daggo in notte." ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, report by the *referendario*, 13-06-1630. "Lunedì fui alle conuertite mà non ui uenne eccetto che certe pouere donne". ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 22-05-1634. If all visitors could be marked as 'untrustworthy', the system would not be all that complex. Some visits, however, were legitimate, or at least excusable, such as Paolo's who, after being warned, answered that "only around the vigil of Christmas has he been two or three times in the Church of S. Tommaso, [and] not at the grid, nor to talk with any nun. [...] [H]e did not think that it would be prohibited to go into the said church because he went only to see a friend of his and not any nun" and that "any trace [of misbehaviour] will disappear soon because he will leave Genoa in a few days". ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by the *referendario*, 02-01-1645: "ha risposto che solo dalla viglia di natale in appresso per due o tre volte e stato nella chiesa di S. Tomaso non alle grati ne a parlar ad alcuna monaca e che non stimaua doueua esserle prohibito il poter andar in detta chiesa quando bene vi fosse andato forse per veder un suo ogetto e non gia monaca alcuna [...] che però cessera presto ogni ombra douendo fra pochi giorni partir da Genoa". Others tried to justify themselves when asked about their visit, as did a painter who said that he went there "to teach painting to sister Anna Vittoria Gentile". ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by the *referendario*, 19-08-1648: "dice che va per mostrar dipingere a Suor Anna Vittoria Gentile".

⁶³ "qualche sorella o [...] parente; persona pratica di detto monastero". ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report of the *referendario*, s.d. [probably between February and April 1644].

when I went by that convent I saw from far away a priest talking on the *piazza* with one of the nuns [...] on a balcony. When he saw me, he immediately jumped down from the wall near the *ospedaletto* and I followed him hastily. [...] I couldn't figure out where he went but he will be warned for the future.⁶⁴

Priests may have been particularly suspect because they were trusted more than others and had more possibilities for gaining access to the convent.

Another occasion on which the *referendario* had to use ingenious tactics to find out the identity of a suspicious gentleman was at the mass in San Tommaso in December 1644. The *referendario* reported that,

Once the mass was finished, [the suspect] stayed quite a bit and [then] went out of the gate onto the street. He sent one of his servants to the parlour, and remained until [this servant] came back. I suspected what would later happen. [So] I walked away before him almost to the beginning of the corridor at the foot of the convent, where I stopped to look at the ships of the navy. The said gentleman appeared very soon [...] [and] he too stopped near me. A young nun with beautiful looks soon appeared in the nearest rooms of the convent. He made a sign of greeting to her with his head, though not lifting it entirely, and started smiling. After dwelling some time in that place, he left [...] [though] stopping once in a while for quite some time completely focussed on observing that nun, and this continued as long as he was in sight of the convent. I then skilfully asked someone who greeted him who he was, so that he could not suspect anything. He answered me that it was the son of Signor Benedetto Bassadonne. He was a tall man with a big eagle-like nose, so that all these things gave me no little suspicion.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ “Li 11 detto [mese] passando al detto monastero vidi da lontano un prete che parlava de piassa con una di dette monache [...] al barcone subito che mi vide se ne tirò giu dalla montata dell’hospitaletto lo seguitai fretolosamente ma non mi riuscì incertare il camino che haueua fatto però si starà auertito in l’auenire”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report of the *referendario*, 11-03-[1644].

⁶⁵ “Finito la messa si fermò alquanto ed e uscito fuori della porta della strada mandò uno suo seruitore al parlatorio, e si fermò sino che ritornasse, sospettai di quel che poi successe. Essendomi inuiato inansi di lui quasi all’imprincipio del corridore sotto il detto monastero onde mi fermai osseruando le nauì della marina comparse assai presto d’o gentilhuomo doue si fermò ancor lui

In his attempt to find out the identity of such a *monachino* it is clear that distrust thrived: informants could be acquainted with the visitors and lie about their friends' identity in order to protect them.

For this reason, the *referendarios* relied as much as possible on their own observations. That in doing so they could act as real “spies”, as Sister Cecilia from San Leonardo once called them,⁶⁶ is evident from a report of 16 June 1644 about San Tommaso, in which the *referendario* wrote:

Signor Nicolò Raggio appeared, whom I had already found there another time, [and] who has a pointy face [...]. I followed him diligently as he headed for the passage on the [city] walls and went halfway up the stairs [where] he turned and looked around. In order to deflect suspicion, I thought it safer to take the lower passage, but I halted for quite some time and I saw him standing still [...]. Then I moved to the place where I thought he had to come out, [...] and, in the end, he appeared [...]. I then followed him to the quayside where I recognised him, since all these clues gave me some suspicion.⁶⁷

The result of these investigations was that Nicolò was admonished by the secretary of the Magistrato not to go near San Tommaso again. In this manner, the *referendarios* who lingered around the nunneries, checking their churches, parlours, and windows,

quasi vicino a me e poco tardò a comparere vna monica giouine di bell'aspetto alle piu vicine camere del detto monastero alla quale li fece segno di saluto col Capello ancorche totalmente non lo leuasse e si pose a ridere, e doppo d'essersi fermato per alcuno spatio di tempo in detto luoco se ne ando per detto Corridore, doue de mano a mano si fermava al quanto tutto intento a osseruare detta Monica, e segui sino che fusse in vista di detto monastero. Domandai poi a una persona che lo salutò chi era con destrezza, accio non potesse sospettare di cos'alcuna, mi rispose che era il figlio del Signor Benedetto Bassadonne ma bell'huomore essendo di statura grande con vn naso grosso aquilino, che tutte queste cose mi recorno non poco sospetto.” ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by the *referendario*, 27-12-1644.

⁶⁶ Letter from Sister Cecilia Serra (San Leonardo) to Giacomo Lomellini, 21-09-1633: “se uogliano chiarire la mettano le sue spie”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 146.

⁶⁷ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by the *referendario*, 15-06-1644: “comparse il Signor Nicolo Raggio, già altra volta ritrouatoglielo che ha la vista appontata [...], bellamenti lo segui, e s'incaminò verso il passaggio delle muraglie, e desalito mezzo la scala si voltò e si vide attorno, doue per leuar il sospetto hebbe per accertato passarmene da basso ma mi fermai alquanto e lo uidi fermo sotto il d'o monastero mi tranferi poi nel luoco doue stimaua douesse sortire [...] e finalmente comparse [...], lo seguitai poi sino a banchi doue hebbi cognitione della persona, non hauendo mancato quelli indizi darmi qualche sopetto”.

together with the authorities of the Magistrato, formed a network that observed, identified and punished all the male (and sometime female) individuals who could endanger the cloistered nuns of seventeenth-century Genoa.

Tempters and temptations

In the Genoese quarter of Portoria near the Porta dell'Acquasola, a seventeenth-century traveller would find the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena.⁶⁸ Generally called the convent of Le Convertite, a place that was originally meant for “converted” girls (e.g. former prostitutes), it housed many women that upon entering had probably experienced a not entirely thorough conversion.⁶⁹ It was in this nunnery that Sister Angela Caterina made her profession, whose relationship with the nearby butcher Giambattista Ciechero was such that it attracted the attention of the authorities in 1639. A report about Giambattista read that “when he was admonished to abstain from going there, people say [that] he went to talk with her from the garden of the oratory of San Stefano” and had found “a window that [was] very convenient for watching and for [...] talking”.⁷⁰ Yet, according to rumours, Sister Angela was

⁶⁸ The convent was founded in 1523 at the initiative of Ettore Vernazza. Together with several other rich Genoese men, this notary was also the founder of the nearby *Ospedaletto*, a place where the chronically ill or incurable people would be sheltered. Generally known as Le Convertite, the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena had its origins in an institution founded in 1516. The place was intended for young girls who wanted to abandon an ‘immoral life’ without being bound to a specific rule or form of enclosure. Vernazza, however, had turned it into a ‘real’ convent subject to the Augustinian rule. In one source of 1545 almost all the names of the sisters are foreign which might indicate that it continued to be a gathering place of women with a troubled past. Carpaneto da Langasco, *Pammatoe*, 77–78. Fontana, ‘La vita religiosa’, 242. Gavazza and Magnani, *Monasteri femminili*, 121. Cf. also: Mark A. Lewis, ‘Recovering the Apostolic Way of Life: The New Clerks Regular of the Sixteenth Century’, in Comerford and Pabel, *Early Modern Catholicism*, 82.

⁶⁹ For a similar development in Lombardy, see: Francesca Terraccia, ‘Gruppi di donne tra casa e monastero nella Lombardia d’Antico Regime’, *Chiesa e Storia. Rivista dell’Associazione Italiana dei Professori di Storia della Chiesa* 6–7 (2017): 299–300. Cf. also Fontana, ‘La vita religiosa’, 247.

⁷⁰ ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, ‘Relazione del referendario’, 15-12-1639: “quando è stato amonito, che s’astenessi d’andarui (come si dice) andaua à parlargli dall’orto dell’oratorio di San Stefano” “una finestra, che non manca d’esser commoda per vedere, e poter parlare.” In an attempt to continue his conversations with Angela, Giambattista even went a step further: it seems that he had familiarity with the city guards – the report continues – so that [...] both during the day and during the night no guards have been seen around there, and it would be good if the guards be ordered to take turns for that place, at least during the night. (“Vi parlaua anche di notte, come si sentì una sera, che d’iui à pochi giorni fù carcerato, e per poter star più sicuro pare hauessi familiarità con sbirri, che perciò per quante diligenze si son fatte, e procurate di fare tanto di giorno, come di

not the only one among the Convertite who tried to maintain such close contacts with the outside world; many nuns “throw their names and messages by way of small letters from the terraces to this effect”.⁷¹ The report finished with the suggestion that this butcher should be punished or at least fined were he ever to return to the convent or to continue sending presents and letters to his friend inside. It is clear however that the problem would not have been solved with this measure alone. If the nuns at Le Convertite really threw notes with their names from the windows, it was in order to reach out to a world that should have been far from their thoughts. Instead, this was hardly the case for at least three of them who, just a few years later, fled the enclosed convent in an attempt to seek another life.

Contact at a distance could be as harmful as face-to-face meetings. For this reason, the eyes of the Magistrato also turned to suspect correspondences. Some nuns exchanged letters with people, at times even their lovers, outside the convent walls, others went so far as to exchange a wide variety of gifts. To this end they used servants like Giambattista Gavi about whom the rumors went that “under the pretext of serving [the convent of Santa Brigida] he brings messages back and forth”.⁷² Often, these intermediates were targets for the Magistrato since they were possible sources of valuable information about otherwise hidden relationships.⁷³ An anonymous letter writer advised the members of the Magistrato in April 1648, that if they wanted to know more about the presumed contacts between a nun from the Lomellina family and the superior of the Coronata convent, father Viganego, they

notte in d'e parti, non si son mai veduti ministri di sorte alc'a, e sarebbe forsi à proposito, che fossi comandato alli barricelli, che douessero fare vicenda per detto luoco, almeno di notte [...]”) ASG, AS, Monialium, 1382, ‘Relazione del referendario’, 15-12-1639.

⁷¹ “gettando le monache à questo affetto giù dalle terrazze per mezzo di scritti gli loro nomi, et auisi [...]”). ASG, AS, Monialium, 1382, ‘Relazione del referendario’, 15-12-1639.

⁷² “che sotto questo nome di seruire [il monastero di S. Brigida] porti, e riporti ambasciate, etiandio per mezzo de biglietti”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, December 1646.

⁷³ See for instance, ASG, AS Monialium 1384, Petition to the senate accusing Friar Bartelomeo Archi, 28-08-1642: “Se uogliono maggiormente charire [sic] il fatto si puo far pigliare all'improuiso con li biglietti, o presenti in mano il portatore quale per l'ordinario suole traghettare uerso l'houra del mezzogiorno, e questo adesso è un certo giouine chiamato Giovanni Battista figlio di Marieta quale serue le monache di Santa Maria delle gratie d'anni 19 in circa alquanto nero, di faccia tonda con capellatura rissa, e nera, quale non è molto ritorno di una naue, et essendo astretto senza altro douerà dire, e palesar il tutto.”

should “call Gerolamo Capriato, son of Giovanni the servant of the said fathers, who is the one who carries the messages and gifts back and forth”. The anonymous writer added that “if the said things will not be remedied then slowly the said blessed nun will lose her devotion”.⁷⁴ Interestingly, the fear expressed here is that the contact with this Father Viganego would tempt the nun to evil, not the other way around.

At other times, gifts were exchanged directly in the parlours of the convents or through the grille in the church. On a February day in 1638, Giacinto Spinola and Gerolamo Doria were inside the church of Santa Brigida signaling to the nuns who were in the choir upstairs and “in as far as one could understand from the gestures, they wanted [the nuns] to send them some gifts [...], as happened”.⁷⁵ These presents could vary from some chicken that nuns sent to their loved one, to a more spectacular surprise that one priest apparently prepared for one of the sisters in Santa Brigida:

Father Francesco di Monglia who lives in the Carroggio dell’Oro, [...] this carnival had the musician Tagliavacca perform a *mattinata* for one of those nuns at midnight, [...] [and] I learned afterwards that this nun has sent a note to thank this priest.⁷⁶

Music was popular among some groups of Genoese nuns, even though or maybe precisely because its public use was to be strictly limited to feast days in the exterior churches of the Genoese convents.⁷⁷ On a February day in 1644, the *referendario* reported someone who “seemed to be a priest” and who watched the nuns making

⁷⁴ “faccino chiamar Gierolamo Capriata figlio di Gioanni manente di detti Padri che è quel che porta auanti, e indietro li biglietti e regali” “se à dette cose non uien prouisto à poco à poco si perderà la diuotione di questa benedetta madre.” ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, anonymous letter accusing Father Viganego, 28-04-1648.

⁷⁵ “per quanto da segni si potesse penetrare voleano che le mandassero qualche regalo al curlo, come poi seguì”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 08-03-1638.

⁷⁶ “ue ne sono due uno de quali si chiama P. Francesco di Monglia, che habita nel Carroggio del’oro, il quale questo carneuale fece fare una mattinata ad una di dette monache per il musico Tagliauacche ch’era mezza notte, [...], si è poi inteso che detta monaca per mezzo di biglietto hà mandato à ringratiar detto Prete”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 08-03-1638.

⁷⁷ ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 95, archiepiscopal decree of 07-01-1667. Cf. Colleen Baade, ‘Music and Misgiving: Attitudes Towards Nuns’ Music in Early Modern Spain’, in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe, Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700 (Aldershot etc.: Ashgate, 2008), 81–95.

music at the open door of the San Nicoloso convent.⁷⁸ And during the summer of 1636, songs were reportedly heard all day long at the grates of Santa Brigida, and even at night musicians came “to sing in the street under the balconies of our convent”.⁷⁹ The upset nun who wrote this accusation claimed that “the songs they sing at the grates are no better than those that they sing outside. It is the worst that they know”.⁸⁰ Of course she again suggested the Magistrato to investigate the intermediaries if they did not trust her, because “they can hear the truth about everything from the musicians”.⁸¹ At San Leonardo, a convent filled with offspring of the most prestigious Genoese families (especially the Fieschi family), the nuns were courted with even more grandeur: “there were 27 musicians [...] and their maestro was Giovanni Stefano Scotto, but I could not get to know who had ordered [the concert]”.⁸² An event like this, that reminded the nuns directly of the blessings of the worldly life of the Genoese aristocracy, was, for obvious reasons, a temptation that the Magistrato tried to counter; as were the other contacts with a way of life that the nuns should have turned away from.

Internal disagreements

Disagreements *within* the female convents also repeatedly ended up being discussed at the Magistrato’s meetings. Convents were directed by an abbess, also called prioress in some orders (in others, prioress was the title of the second-in-command). The abbess or prioress was chosen by her own peers in the nunnery, often following a rather democratic procedure.⁸³ The basis of governance of a convent was therefore

⁷⁸ ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report of the *referendario*, 29-02-1644. “et à quel di Santo Nicheroso la loro porta era aperta che sonauano alcune monache [...] in vista di chi passaua con uno mi parse prete che era à canto alla stessa porta”.

⁷⁹ “alle notte uengono à candare in strada sotto le terrazze del nostro monastero”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, anonymous letter about Santa Brigida, received 28-06-1636.

⁸⁰ “le canzoni che cantano alle grati non sono meglio di quelle che cantano di fuori. E’ [il] peggio che sanno”. Ibid.

⁸¹ “dalli musici potranno intendere la verità di tutto”. Ibid.

⁸² “Ne fù fatta un’altra à San Leonardo dou’erano venti sette musici che ogn’un di loro hebbe un scuto d’argento et il loro m’ro fù Giovanni Steffano Scotto non si è però potuto sapere, chi l’habbi fatta fare”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Report by the *referendario*, 20-04-1638.

⁸³ The procedure of voting differed according to the various monastic rules. Becoming an abbess was the way by which nuns rose above a collective identity and acquired decisional power. See for

the trust of the majority nuns in one of their peers. However, there were often internal conflicts relating to this prestigious office. The position was usually reserved for nuns who had passed the age of forty: for a set period, the abbess would have authority over the other nuns.⁸⁴ Yet an abbess was not all-powerful. Depending on their genesis, the all-female institutions were also submitted to a range of secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Moreover, the abbess could be influenced or even subdued by the faction of nuns who had fostered her election, by her own family or by the family of other nuns.

How closely related the political elite were to the inhabitants of the female convents and thus involved with the decision-making within some of the most prestigious nunneries emerges from a letter that was written by an anonymous author and discussed in the senate on 22 January 1636:

To satisfy my conscience I think that I am obliged to let *Vostre Signorie Serenissime* know that in the convent of Sant'Andrea there is almost a revolution going on and this [happens] because of the election of the mother [superior] that is about to be held, since the mothers [i.e. the nuns] are divided; one half in one faction, and the other in another. Yet this would give little trouble were it to end here, but the ruin is that Signor Nicolò Salvago incites one of the two parts in order to please the faction where he has one of his sisters, who, together with the Balbi [nuns], wants to choose a mother superior so that they can do – in their own way and, so to say, freely – things that give much scandal to the convent as the Illustrissimo Signor Alessandro Spinola and some other senators are very well aware.⁸⁵

the specifics on the elections of abbesses: Kate Lowe, 'Elections of Abbesses and Notions of Identity in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy, with Special Reference to Venice', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2001): 389–429. Kate Lowe also writes about the meaning of portraits for the individual identity of the sisters: interestingly, also in the convent of S. Brigida in Genoa the sisters had themselves portrayed, and apparently this drew the attention of the Magistrato delle Monache, as it was mentioned in a list of warnings.

⁸⁴ A papal decision of 1583 limited the period that an abbess could hold office to three years.

⁸⁵ The letter even adds "And in order that the nun who they prefer succeeds, [...] Salvago [...] has done things that *Vostre Signorie Serenissime* should in no way tolerate [...]. Moreover, the *Signori Serenissimi* should make sure that the secular ladies Balbi and Salvago [...] leave the said convent because soon such scandals will happen that plead revenge to God". ASG, AS, Monialium 1382,

Nicolò Salvago, future governor of Corsica and member of a prestigious Genoese family, had supposedly been trying to help his sister and the nuns of the Balbi family in advancing their cause to have a nun elected to lead the nunnery who would allow them to do as they pleased.⁸⁶ Whether this was the case or not, it is interesting that the writer appealed specifically to Senator Alessandro Spinola, the future doge (1654-1656) as well as other senators for a solution to these internal struggles: probably, they too had members of their respective *casate* in Sant'Andrea, a convent that housed the daughters of practically all the important Genoese families (including five daughters of the Spinola clan⁸⁷), and thus had a personal stake in this convent's

Anonymous letter to the senate about the discord in the Convent of Sant'Andrea regarding the election of the abbess, 22-01-1636: “Per sodisfare alla coscienza mi paio debitore di dar parte à VV.SS. Serenissime come nel monastero di Santo Andrea ui è quasi una riuoluzione e questo per l'elezione della madre che hanno da fare essendo le madri ripartite la metta in una facione, e l'altra in un'altra. Ma questo poco darebbe fastidio se si fermase qui ma la rouina è che il Signor Nicolo Saluago fomenta una delle parti e questo per dar gusto alla fazione doue tine [sic] una sua sorella la qualle con le Balbi uogliono fare una madre per potere à loro modo e per dire liberamente fare delle cose che dijno molto scandallo al monastero come resta a pieno informato l'Illustrissimo signor Alessandro Spinola, e qualche altro senatore e perche riesca la madre che uogliono il detto saluago ha braccato malamente il padre abbate, et altri padri e per dirla fato di quelle cose ch in modo alcuno VVSS non deuono tolerare, e se ordineranno che ne sij pigliato informatione troueranno delle cose che necessariamente bisognera che le prouedino di piu Signori Serenissimi faccino che le Balbi, e Saluaghe secolari piglino partito e che uadino fuori di detto monastero perche in breue si uedera di quelli scandalli che domanderanno vendeta [sic] à Dio.”

⁸⁶ For information about the Salvago family, see: G. C. Doria, “Salvago e Salvago Raggi”, in *Enciclopedia storico-nobiliare italiana*, a cura di V. Spreti, vol. 6 (Milano, Editore Enciclopedia Storico-Nobiliare Italiana, 1932; anastatica: Bologna, A. Forni, 1981), pp. 67-70. Consulted at: <http://uraniaigustica.altervista.org/salvago/secondarie/doria.htm>, on: 09-05-2019.

⁸⁷ Though I have not sorted out from which family branches they came.

internal affairs.⁸⁸ In this sense, the world of the Genoese *palazzzi* was hardly separate from the life inside the enclosed convents.⁸⁹

The convent of San Nicolosio offers another example of sisters who appealed to the Magistrato when they saw no other way of countering the power of one nun or one faction within the nunnery that, according to them, threatened the spiritual and material well-being of the rest.⁹⁰ They protested in 1660 against the plans of *suor* Maria Caterina Lomellina who wanted to enlarge her own rooms in such a way as to block all the light from their windows, according to the protesters.⁹¹ Six years later, the “entirety of we other sisters” of San Nicolosio again wrote to the Magistrato to complain about some plans, this time of their mother superior, to unite a part of an adjacent villa that the nuns used for recreation to her own rooms. The other nuns wanted the Magistrato to “order that the said part of the villa [...] remain at [their] common use as has been the case until now”.⁹² It was only in these cases of internal struggles that those nuns who felt powerless resorted to the Magistrato. Five years

⁸⁸ ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 141. A similar dynamic features in an anonymous accusation of 1635 which reported how the visits of Bernardo Sineclin Garces to the convent of San Tommaso caused great scandal “particularly to the closest family of the nuns who are often forced (when they go there) to leave [...] because the screens are occupied”. The accuser justified his or her delation by associating the honour of the convent with “the conservation of the *Serenissima Repubblica* and the public good”, but clearly family honour was also involved. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Anonymous petition to the Senate, against Bernardo Sineclin Garces, 12-01-1635: “Io desidero come suo humile seruo la conseruation di questa Ser^{ma} Republica et il publico bene e perciò li ne do Auiso”. “Che caggiona un scandalo straordinario e particolarmente nelli parenti più propinqui delle Monache, li quali ben spesso son forzati (quando vanno collà) à ritornarsene in dietro per non hauer tanto loco dà poter’ parlar alle loro parenti, per esser le gradi occupate.” See for another example: ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Anonymous accusation against Father Elia Giovo and Father Teresio Cassano, 06-08-1638.

⁸⁹ In fact, in his letter of 1581 to the Genoese, the apostolic visitor Monsignor Bossi encouraged the Genoese nobility to transform the convents according to the Borromean instructions with the same fervour as they used for their own *palazzzi*. Rossini, ‘L’architettura’, 75–76.

⁹⁰ Cf. Claire Walker, ‘Securing Souls or Telling Tales? The Politics of Cloistered Life in an English Convent’, in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe, Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700 (Aldershot etc.: Ashgate, 2008), 227.

⁹¹ ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 66, letter from ‘the nuns of San Nicholoso’ to the Magistrato delle Monache, 16-04-1660.

⁹² “università di noi altre monache” “ordinare che non si possa detta parte di villa unirsi a dette stanze ma restare a beneficio commune come si è praticato siue adesso” ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 92, letter from ‘the nuns of San Nicholoso’ to the Magistrato delle Monache, 19-05-1666.

later, nuns from the same convent came with a very different complaint that was discussed at the Magistrato's meeting in the archiepiscopal palace: a laywoman who lived in San Nicolosio in order to serve the choir nuns, had invited two family members to join her. Her family apparently was "on the verge of killing people", if the nuns continued in their refusal to accept these two other laywomen, because one was an "ill woman of more than eighty years old, and the other [was] in poor health". The nuns therefore asked for a decree that would prohibit them to "receive family members and co-villagers of the laywomen who are within the enclosure".⁹³ The archbishop and Magistrato agreed to implement this rule for the subsequent ten years.

It was common practice for such a decree imposed on a nunnery from outside to serve to settle internal issues. In 1676, the vicar general intervened in a conflict within the Santa Brigida convent that had taken a peculiar turn: because of a "disagreement [...] over the organ of their church and the pipes of that same organ", some nuns had literally stolen several organ pipes.⁹⁴ The vicar ordered that, on pain of excommunication, all those who took one or more pipes, had to put them back in a room whose keys would remain with the abbess, "until the motive is known and until the *ordinarius* has given licence to the contrary".⁹⁵ Unfortunately we do not know if this measure helped temper the emotions. The decree does show, however, that instances in which the nuns called for arbitration from authorities outside their own community were a way to increase their own agency within the convent.

This happened at Le Convertite too, where Sister Felice Maddalena managed to take over control in such way that the mother superior "keeps her mouth shut and her eyes closed". Her adversaries complained that:

she has been the ruin of many things and many people [...]. Some months ago, she was imprisoned on the orders of the Magistrato

⁹³ "in procinto di fare dell'huomicidij" "essendoui una inferma d'ottanta e piu anni, et alter poco habili di sanità" "riceuere le parenti e paesane delle conuerse le quali sono dentro la clausura". ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, Letter from Cardinal Ginetti (on behalf of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars) to Cardinal Durazzo, 08-11-1652.

⁹⁴ "differenza [...] per l'organo della loro chiesa e delle canne dell'istesso organo". ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 116, decree by vicar Carolo Noceto of 01-09-1676.

⁹⁵ "sino alla raggion conosciuta e sinche dall'ordinario sia concessa licenza in contrario". Ibid.

and no longer has permission to go to the parlour and to vote, since, because of her, two youngsters wanted to kill each other. She has been able to do a lot notwithstanding the above, she has been going to the grille and has talked there without the permission of the mother superior, and she makes sure that within the whole convent nobody dares to speak up because [...] she mistreats all of them. She said that she wants to have Marietta who serves [at the convent] killed, because she does not do her will. And she wants to have her murdered in any way and talks about these things the whole day so that we, poor sisters, do not dare to speak up anymore.⁹⁶

Again, we do not know the reactions to this letter, but we might presume that whatever action was taken, it did not profoundly change the mind of Felice Maddalena: the fact that she was among the three nuns who tried to escape from the convent in 1643 hints at another aspect of the *Magistrato*: its focus on distrust – on avoiding scandal and temptation, on punishments against tempters or even against the nuns themselves – could never do more than postpone a new occurrence of those scandals that it aimed to counter.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ “è stata la rouina di tante cose e di tante persone uole ancora essere la rouina di qualcheduno. Mesi sono è stata carcerata e priuata che non si possa auanzare alle grati e da dare uoto di ordine del magistrato, che per caosa sua si uolsero amazzare due giouani, ella ha saputo tanto fare non ostante quanto sopra, è andata alle gratie e trattato senza licenza della madre passata e fa stare tutto il Monastero che niuno ardisce parlare perche [...] maltrata tutte. Hà detto di uoler far ammazzare Marietta quella chi serue perche non fa la sua uolontà, e la uole fare in ogni modo ammazzare, e tutto il giorno si laua la bocca di questo che noi altre pouere Monache [...] non ardiamo piu parlare”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 63, letter from the nuns of Le Convertite, s.d. [before 1643]. The nuns also wrote that, the day before, this *femme fatale* had called for Nicola Palodi, her lover who a few months before had been incarcerated for having pointed a pistol at one of his competitors. He was soon released “out of friendship”, and even when he was caught again, he found a way either to excuse himself for going to the nunnery even though he was banned from it, or to bribe the *bargello* (bailiff) “who, for money, told what the said Nicola Palodi wanted” instead of relating Palodi’s secret visits. (“che per denari ha detto quello che ha uoluto il detto Nicola Parodi”).

⁹⁷ ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, Inquiry around the flight of three sisters from Le Convertite, 26-02-1643.

Practices of distrust

Distrust was omnipresent in this system of anonymous accusations, suspect justifications, secret visits, internal struggles and spying *referendarios*. Checking on the veracity of the many anonymous accusations was a complicated affair that, according to an anonymous writer, allegedly from the convent of Santa Brigida, should be handled in secret as much as possible. In 1633, she revealed how Giovanni Giacomo Penza, the scribe of one of the superiors of the convent, visited the nuns of Santa Brigida remarkably often. Convinced that the Magistrato would not treat people differently “whomever they serve”, she urged them to check this information secretly because at times, according to her, when the Magistrato “want[s] to punish [...], or admonish as is appropriate, [the person in question] is warned by some youngster and prepares for an excuse, or disappears”.⁹⁸ In reaction to this letter the Magistrato merely ordered that the information should be verified and that checks should be made on whether Penza really frequented the convent. Some months later, this same nun wrote again saying that nothing had improved. She added another accusation: Penza would have “revealed everything that our very illustrious magistrate⁹⁹ [...] secretly talks about, so that all is known before it is discussed”. He did this, according to the letter writer, “in order to help the young [sister] with whom he talks”.¹⁰⁰ Distrust thrived in such a situation: the anonymous reports were mistrusted by the Magistrato, the accuser distrusted the efficiency of the Magistrato to punish wrongdoers, and at the same time she suspected that one of her fellow nuns knew important information regarding internal convent affairs, because her lover, the secretary of one of the superiors of the nunnery, leaked it to her. Whether or not the Magistrato trusted the report of a nun who was possibly jealous because of the advantageous position of one of her peers, they nonetheless gave Penza a warning not to go to Santa Brigida again.

⁹⁸ “uolendo loro Signori molto illustrissimi alcuna uolta castigare, ò ammonire secondo merita qualcheduno, ne uiene esso col mezzo di qualche giouine ad esser auisato e si prepara alla scusa, o li aparsa”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 194. Letter from Santa Brigida, 30-03-1633.

⁹⁹ I presume these are the *protettori* of the convent, not the Magistrato delle Monache.

¹⁰⁰ “riuelaua tutto quello che alle uolte si tratta di secreto dal molto illustro Magistrato nostro, si che il tutto si sa prima che sij trattato, e ciò per far seruitio alla giouane con cui tratta”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 126, anonymous letter from Santa Brigida, 11-06-1633.

As several examples have shown us thus far, anonymous letters were an important source of information for the Magistrato delle Monache. Yet as revealing as they might be, the possible untrustworthiness of the information was also apparent to the members of the Magistrato. They always tried to identify the author of a letter, as happened with the one received on 14 March 1636, and allegedly written by the abbess of Santa Marta. When asked about this issue by the secretary, she told him “she had not written any letter”.¹⁰¹ Even if the letter writer had probably committed identity fraud, the case was not immediately dismissed: the abbess was informed of the accusation that some brothers of Santa Caterina allegedly visited her convent “so that she pay attention that nothing happens that might provide an occasion for scandal”.¹⁰²

Even if letters came directly from the abbesses of the Genoese convents, this did not automatically imply that they were trusted. In December 1650, the abbess of San Nicolosio, Sister Angela Felice, defended one of the servants of the convent, a girl named Pellegrina who had been imprisoned and banned from the nunnery two years earlier even though, according to the abbess, she had never done “anything prejudicial to our house”.¹⁰³ The Magistrato, distrusting the abbess’ request to release Pellegrina from this ban and allow her to serve the convent, asked a certain Domenico dei Franchi (maybe one of its *protettori*?) what he thought about the request. His opinion on the matter, namely that it was better to “keep that woman far from the convent”, was deemed more trustworthy than that of the abbess of San Nicolosio.¹⁰⁴

A close look at the proceedings of the Magistrato suggests that trust was given typically to those closest to its own members, in the first place to the *referendarios*. Interestingly, those nuns who took up their pen to write to the Magistrato were often well aware of this dynamic. Let us take, for instance, an anonymous letter that arrived

¹⁰¹ “non hauer scritta lettera alcuna”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, Notes on the letter supposedly from Santa Marta, received on 06-03-1636.

¹⁰² “acciò auuertisca che non segue cosa che possa dar occasione di scandalo”. Ibid.

¹⁰³ “in minimo mancameto alla nostra Casa”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Letter from Angela Felice Terrile abbess of San Nicolosio [to the Magistrato delle Monache], 02-12-1650.

¹⁰⁴ “tener lontana detta donna dal monastero”. Ibid.

during the same month of December 1650 from the convent of Sant'Andrea. The letter writer asked that the Magistrato free the Sant'Andrea of “rumours caused by the all too frequent visits of two priests, who continue to come every day and unfailingly [also] every night, under the pretext of bringing children to [see] their family members, as you can learn yourself without giving faith to my words”.¹⁰⁵ As a body that worked within a climate of distrust, this was exactly what the *deputati* of the Magistrato did: they ordered that “one of the *referendarios*” verify the story so that they could take adequate measures.

The results of a strategy of distrust

“I was edified”, a *referendario* noted after attending a procession for the feast of Saint Thomas in February 1644, “by the nuns [of San Tomaso] because one no longer sees them at their windows”.¹⁰⁶ There is almost a sense of surprise in the *referendario*'s words. The same feeling transpires in a report written some months later. The threat of being caught apparently made some impression on one of the visitors of Le Convertite because the *referendario* wrote:

I have seen him several times [...] looking at the windows of the *monache convertite* where I passed by two or three times a day. Now I do not see him anymore so maybe he has been warned.¹⁰⁷

The fact that such positive results of the activities of the Magistrato delle Monache are very rare in the archives of their institution should be attributed partially to the nature of these archives, which was to record problems and not successes. We therefore know of many more instances in which the Magistrato's policy did not succeed, as for example in the case of Domenighina Garibalda. This woman had

¹⁰⁵ “mormoratione, cagionato dalla troppo frequenza di due preti, quali sotto pretest di condurre figlioli à sue parenti, continuano giornalmente a uenire, et infallibilmente ogni sera come senza dar fede a mie parole se ne possono far sauii”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, anonymous letter from a sister of Sant'Andrea, december 1650.

¹⁰⁶ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report of the *referendario*, s.d. [probably between February and April 1644].

¹⁰⁷ “Il barberotto dell'hospitaletto che li giorni passati ho visto più volte sopra li canti osseruando le finestre delle Monache conuertite doue passo do tre volte il giorno adesso non più gli è lo vedo che sarà forsi stato auertito”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report from a *referendario*, 31-08-1649.

been sentenced to prison for secretly carrying messages from and to the convent of the Convertite. Apparently little impressed by these measures, she resumed her illegal activities after her release from prison so that in 1645 the Magistrato again proposed to the senate to put her behind bars.¹⁰⁸ A similar reaction to the Magistrato's policies can be seen one year later, in February 1646. While the *referendario* was making his round, he heard Stefano Salvago, who was on a piazza that looked out on a convent, brag about the fact that he was banned from that same convent. His boasting implies that he was not in the least afraid of the authorities.¹⁰⁹

Similar disregard for the authorities was visible among the *monachini* who had important friends who could safeguard them from punishment. That is, at least, what the nuns of Santa Brigida assumed to be the case in 1644: they secretly reported (asking the recipients not to reveal “that the news comes from here, [since] only hate will follow”¹¹⁰) on how some high ecclesiastic presumably continued to visit their nunnery even though they had complained about him to Cardinal Durazzo: the reason for the cardinal's inaction was, according to the nuns, the fact that this priest was “friends with the vicar”.¹¹¹ The cardinal was indeed responsible for the behaviour of the (secular) priests in his diocese and was commonly informed by the magistracy if one of his clergy transgressed. Durazzo also promised to handle Father Conrado, the chaplain of San Leonardo who, according to the *referendario*, talked excessively with the nuns.¹¹² That five years later, in 1648, the same father Conrado continued to be mentioned in the *referendario's* reports might indicate that the cardinal's measures made little impression on this priest.¹¹³ There seem to have been various priests who,

¹⁰⁸ ASG, AS, Monialium, 1383, report by the *referendario*, 23-08-1645.

¹⁰⁹ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by the *referendario*, February [1646?].

¹¹⁰ “non dica che l'auiso uengi di qui, ciò non segue disgusto”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, anonymous letter presumably from nuns of Santa Brigida, 23-02-1644.

¹¹¹ “amico del vichario” Ibid.

¹¹² ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by the *referendario*, 17-08-1643. An earlier report mentions that the Magistrato had already given him a warning: ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, report by the *referendario*, 01-10-1638.

¹¹³ See the reports of February and March 1648 in ASG, AS, Monialium 1383. See also: ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, 22-08-1646.

like this Conrado, cared little about orders from above. One among them was Bartolomeo Muzzo who, according to an anonymous report,

disregarding those who can punish him, freely stays for such a long time in that place [i.e. San Tommaso] that he dares to say, or rather, he boasts about the fact that he is not afraid of his superiors because he gets along well with them.¹¹⁴

Punishing tempters therefore did not always have the desired outcome. Instead, some of the most troublesome men and women were reluctant to change their behaviour even under the pressure of the authorities' measures.

To avoid temptation, the Magistrato also came with more rigorous methods, namely to make physical changes to the convents and their environment. In 1646 the convent of Santa Chiara was popular among many “young noblemen” because, as the *referendario* reported, “the walls are low [and] the parlour is in a secluded place”. With this information, the secretary went to Archbishop Durazzo who promised to pay a visit to the convent and committed to resolve the issue.¹¹⁵ The *referendario* proposed something similar for San Tommaso, when a new passage was made along the seaside on the city walls with a good view of the convent. Even more rigorous changes were proposed by the Magistrato itself: the *deputati* asked the archbishop whether the windows of the convent of San Tommaso could be walled up altogether “so that they [the nuns] cannot look at the sea, where they can see things when young men go to swim there”. Shutting off the windows (a strategy of distrust) was deemed a more secure policy than hoping for the nuns not to use them illicitly.

It was distrust toward (suspect) convents that defined the proceedings of both the state and the Church, cooperating in the Magistrato. Their strategy was one of distrusting all interaction between the enclosure and the outside world, and of monitoring all unavoidable contact. The set of rules that archbishop Giambattista

¹¹⁴ “sprezando cui il può castigare, se ne sta tanto in esso luogo [San Tommaso] liberamente, che ardisce dire, anzi si vanta che non hà paura de suoi superiori essendo con essi loro d’acordo”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 187, anonymous letter accusing Bartolomeo Muzzo, received on 31-08-1634.

¹¹⁵ “le muraglia sono basse, il parlatorio resta in luogo nascosto”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, Report by the *referendario*, December 1646.

Spinola imposed upon the convent of Le Convertite in 1673 testifies to this strategy: the rules included that “at the sounding of the Ave Maria the parlors, wheel and door of the *clausura* all be closed and none of them can be reopened until the next day except in case of great necessity”.¹¹⁶ The directions also involved prohibitions of talking with outsiders through the windows, entering the nunnery without permission from the archbishop, and talking at the gate of the convent. That such instructions were still needed more than one century after the Council of Trent and the foundation of the Magistrato delle Monache, hints at the weakness of this strategy.

Agency and trust

Before drawing simplistic conclusions, it is worthwhile exploring how contemporaries, including the nuns, viewed the strategies of distrust that were used, and their effects. In this way, we can further understand, as Renée Baernstein proposed, how to “steer a middle way” in considering the position of nuns in early modern Italy “between an overpowering structuralism and the romantic lure of free agency”.¹¹⁷

A report by one *referendario* of January 1645 points out what he, as an executor of the Magistrato’s policies, saw as the root of what went wrong in some female convents:

I have been to many convents in the last days and I was told, because I carefully informed myself, [that] the people [...] in their parlours were family of the nuns. It might be a more secure thing if they did not visit, and if they did not let them [the nuns] know about all the weddings [...] that take place in the city, because they

¹¹⁶ “al tocco dell’Aue Maria si serrino li Parlatorij, le Rote, e la Porta della Clausura, omminamente, e che nissuno di essi si riapra sino all’altro giorno se non in caso di somma necessità”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 111, rules for the convent of *Le Convertite*, 08-08-1673.

¹¹⁷ Baernstein, *A Convent Tale*, 20.

cannot but bring prejudice to their souls, especially to those who were not called by God, but brought there for secular reasons.¹¹⁸

Interestingly, this ‘man on the ground’, who was involved daily with problems surrounding the female convents, understood very well that the root of the issue was not first of all the mere possibility of contact with the outside world, but the fact that the women who entered often had not done so because of a calling, but for “secular reasons”. According to this *referendario*, what he saw as an inherent weakness of women (namely that they would be prone to gossiping), increased because some nuns had not chosen to enter out of their own free will. The approach in this case, however – and in this, I think, it is exemplary – was not to tackle the problem at its perceived roots (professed nuns, of course, were not allowed to return ‘to the world’), but to deal with those who led these untrustworthy women into temptation.

The same view – that it was the lack of freedom to choose which life to live that caused most trouble - can be found among the highest echelons of the Church, in a letter of the secretary of the Papal Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (that, among other issues, dealt with female convents). He wrote on one occasion in 1654 to the archbishop of Milan that approving a convent that principally served aristocratic parents who wanted to provide a comfortable life for their daughters would only give much trouble:

Experience proves that in those convents that are obliged to give the habit to a certain kind of people, where the decisions are in the hands of lay, [the sisters] are not able to live according to the observant rules. Those are prisons for women rather than convents for nuns.

He furthermore warned the archbishop that “a convent based on a less strict rule which [came] with family ties and factions of many nuns that come from the same

¹¹⁸ “Sono poi stato li giorni passati più volte à molti Monasteri e le persone che erano alli loro parlatorij mi fu riferito che bellamente mi informai erano parenti delle monache, saria forse più accertato non le frequentassero, e non li facessero sapere tutti li spatij [?] sponsalitij si prendono e seguono nella Città che non li ponno apportare solo pregiuditio all’anime loro, emassime à quelle non sono state chiamate da Idio, ma portouele per raggion di stato”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, report by a *referendario*, 31-08-1649.

family, and in which – in order not to pay a dowry [for marriage] girls will be forced by their relative to enter against their own will” would only cause problems exactly because of this lack of freedom.¹¹⁹

The conviction that only freedom – and therefore the possibility of trust – would allow the sisters to live up to an ideal was also widespread among the cloistered nuns themselves. In 1576, the famous female reformer of the Carmelite order, Teresa d’Ávila, tellingly wrote to her closest collaborator, Jeronimo Gracian: “You will realise now how troublesome the regulations are... This is what my nuns are afraid of, that tiresome superiors will lay heavy and excessive burdens on them. That will lead us nowhere. It is strange that they think they have not made a visit properly if they do not add new regulations.”¹²⁰ In this letter Teresa took a clear stance against the policies of ecclesiastical authorities that tried to exert their power (and possibly change the situation inside a nunnery) by creating ever more rules. That same year Teresa wrote the document “On Making the Visitation” in which she again remarked:

[The visitor] should not make any decrees unless the matter is serious and, as I say, he has *inquired fully of the prioress herself and the other nuns* about the correction he wants to make, and about *why and how* it should be done. For the nuns could become so weighed

¹¹⁹ “prouandosi per esperienza, che i monasterij, che sono astretti à dar l’habito à certo genere di persone, et à nominatione de’ laici, non possono uiuere in osseruanza regolare, e sono più tosto serragli di donne, che conuenti di Religiose.” “un monastero di largo instituto, con le parentele, e fattioni di tante monache di una stessa casa, e che per non pagar’ dote saranno astrette dà loro Parenti ad entrarui contro loro uoglia.” Letter from Girolamo Farnese to Alfonso Litta, Rome 28-02-1654. Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese (ASDM), Archivio Spirituale (AS), sezione XII Ordini religiosi e congregazioni. Casa di S. Maria dei Sette Dolori (monastero Carcano) Vol. 92/1, 1650-4, *Pro RR. Monialibus Ven Monasterii beatae Virginia Septem Dolorum Mediolani*, p. 65. Also cited in Fontana, *Memoria e Santità*, 122, footnote 174. Another member of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Cardinal Giovanni Battista De Luca wrote in 1675 that “one needs a considerable degree of leniency, since we must feel pity for these women imprisoned for life and deprived of all the satisfactions which lay women of comparable rank enjoy.” Giovanni Battista De Luca, *Il vescovo pratico*. Cited in: Black, *Church, Religion and Society*, 153–54.

¹²⁰ Cited in: Alison Weber, ‘Spiritual Administration: Gender and Discernment in the Carmelite Reform’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 1 (2000): 133.

down with decrees that, unable to observe them, they will also give up what is more important in the rule.¹²¹

What Teresa proposed here was an approach of trust rather than distrust from the outside authorities towards the consecrated women in her convents. Rules, if needed, were to be made following the agency and advice of the prioress and the nuns themselves, and should be restricted to a necessary minimum in order to leave space for these women to follow instead what was the core of the rules that Teresa herself had written.¹²² The difference in approach was not between rules and the absence of rules, but between trust and distrust.

Returning to Genoa, we see a similar attitude among the nuns of San Nicolosio in 1633. They rebelled against the father commissioner who came to announce that “all those nuns who have windows at the side of the villa [...] have to add iron bars” to these windows, because one of them, Sister Arcangela, had used hers for an “aim that God knows and we can also imagine”.¹²³ The other nuns argued

that they do not want to be treated all in the same way because it is reasonable that this remedy is applied only where it is needed, and that the others be left in their [good] reputation.¹²⁴

The nuns protested against this measure because it would make all of them appear untrustworthy, whereas, they argued, only one among them had deserved such an approach. Rules from the outside were equated with distrust and a flawed reputation. The sisters therefore resisted those measures that damaged their honour.

Interestingly, in order to protect a convent’s reputation and the people’s trust, other nuns would ask for rulings from the Magistrato in order to resolve issues within

¹²¹ My italics. Cit. in *ibid.*

¹²² Thomas Aquinas had already written that “if a superior makes a heap of precepts and lays them upon his subjects, so that they are unable to fulfil them, they are excused from sin. Wherefore superiors should refrain from making a multitude of precepts”. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 105, art 1, ad. 3.

¹²³ “tutte quelle monache che hanno finestre dalla parte della villa [...] le faccio le ferate”. “il suo fine Dio lo sa e noi ancor lo possiamo pensare”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1382, no. 138, letter from Angela Maria Vascalla, *vicaria* of San Nicolosio, to Antonio Sambuceto, 10-10-1633.

¹²⁴ “che non uogliono essere trattate tutte ad una maniera perche è ragione che sia solo reparato doue è il bisogno, e che sia lasciato l’altre nella sua reputatione”. *Ibid.*

their convent. In those cases, it was their lack of authority and trust within the convent that drove some to appeal to the Magistrato¹²⁵ For this reason, an anonymous sister turned to one of the secular superiors of her convent and was determined even to write to the senate if this superior were not to take action in order to “ban the scandals that are more than evidently there, and are even more noted by the eyes of secular people”.¹²⁶ According to this anonymous letter writer, only measures from above could remedy the problem of a visitor causing a scandal.

In the same year that three nuns escaped from the convent of the Convertite, the prioress of this nunnery, the *vicaria*, and “all the old nuns who have been mother [superior]”¹²⁷ and therefore enjoyed some authority, wrote to the Magistrato:

[We desire] a reform with respect to the customs of our convent and [...] we have been trying this and that way to pursue our intent, [but] we cannot accomplish it. Therefore, [...] we ask *Le Signorie Vostre* to intercede for us before his eminence so that finally we can come to the reform of the customs that we deeply desire and we are most ready to carry out what [our] superiors will command us.¹²⁸

The nuns of Le Convertite did not immediately approach the Magistrato delle Monache in order to obtain the reform that they desired (we do not know what it entailed). Only after their own possibilities of agency seemed insufficient (“we have been trying this and that way to pursue our intent, [but] we cannot accomplish it”), and after not succeeding in getting the desired response from the archbishop, they turned towards the Magistrato in order that its members might intervene on their behalf with the archbishop.

¹²⁵ ASG, AS, Monialium 1383, anonymous letter [presumably from a sister] to Domenico de' Franchi, 06-02-1648.

¹²⁶ “uietar li scandali che piu che chiari ui sono, e tanto più che dalli occhi di secolari uengono annotati”. Ibid.

¹²⁷ “tutte quelle monache uecchie chi sono state madre”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 20, Letter from Agata Isola (prioress) Bianca Maria Rosana (vicar) e.a. of the *Convertite* to the Magistrato delle Monache, 18-10-1643.

¹²⁸ “Emenda in quanto alli costume del nostro monastero e con tutto cio che andiamo cercando questa e quella strada per conseguire il nostro intento non lo potemo ariuare per cio [...] prighiamo le signorie uostre uoler fare con sua eminensa officio perche finalmente ueniamo a l'emenda de costume tanto da noi desiderata e ci offeriamo pronte a eseguire quanto da superiori si sara comandato riseruandosi non uoler uiuere in comune”. Ibid.

These two different attitudes towards more rules from outside imply that to understand how the nuns themselves looked at interference by means of regulation, one needs to consider the factor of trust. When rules or policies were an expression of limited trust, they were eschewed. Contrarily, when they fostered the trustworthy reputation of a convent (or countered a bad reputation) the nuns themselves, too, would see any kind of intervention from outside as desirable and necessary.

Trustworthy alternatives?

The respectability of the Genoese convent was a value that all parties in the seventeenth century advocated: the nuns themselves, who wanted their reputation to be spotless to their obvious advantage (including the economic benefit that new inhabitants would bring), the political and social elite whose daughters formed a majority among their inhabitants, and the ecclesiastical elite, especially those men who tried to implement Tridentine reform. All were more or less conscious of the fact that institutional distrust, in the form of rules and social control, was inefficient. That might be a reason why some completely new initiatives came up, started either by that same socio-political elite, or by Church exponents, or even by elite women themselves. Founding a new convent implied the possibility of founding a trustworthy convent.

The Genoese Giambattista di Nicolo Senarega († 1609) did exactly this. With an eye on the afterlife, this rich nobleman included in his testament the foundation of a new nunnery intended for the Discalced Carmelite nuns (the reformed order started by Teresa d'Ávila in the previous century and which had arrived in Genoa in 1590). He did not content himself with donating a large sum of money for this purpose; he also wanted to precisely outline what this convent should look like and what rules it should follow. If the Discalced Carmelite nuns would like to enter the convent, their Superior General should make this known within six months after Senarega's death. Otherwise, it was to "be given to the Capuchin nuns, or another convent of nuns who follow the reformed rule of St. Francis, live together, and do not have anything of their own. He added to his testament that "they should follow

the rule that is now followed by [...] the Turchine, in matters of property”.¹²⁹ Senarega interestingly referred to the Turchine, a new religious order that had been founded in Genoa shortly before, in 1604, as an example for the convent he intended to establish: apparently, this new group, which we will encounter in the next chapter, together with the newly arrived Discalced Carmelite nuns, were seen as more trustworthy than any of the older Genoese nunneries. Eventually, Franciscan nuns entered the convent that was built with this nobleman’s money (in 1632).

Senarega furthermore ruled that “in receiving those nuns, one [...] has to be attentive to their devotion” to their “passion of spirit”, their “willingness to serve God”, and their desire to enter the nunnery “rather than to extrinsic characteristics, such as nobility [and] wealth”. When there were more candidates the woman “should be preferred who moves with more warmth of spirit, and if in this they are the same, she whose family is less affluent”.¹³⁰ Apparently, Senarega was aware of the fact that a respectable nunnery would hardly come about if it remained an institution where one left one’s surplus daughters, and would instead be much more likely if it harboured girls who had passed a strict selection by *protettori* who used the free conviction of those who entered as the prime criterion.

At times, however, the priority was not to found a convent for nuns who freely chose a life of prayer, but to find a comfortable place for one’s daughters. In Milan, a large sum of money became available when Gian Pietro Carcano, and not much later also his son, passed away.¹³¹ Carcano’s testament read that part of the usufruct

¹²⁹ “si dia alle monache capucine, ouero à un altro monasterio di monache, che osseruino la regola di S. Francesco reformata che uiuano in commune, e non habbino cosa alcuna in particolare [...] e che osseruino circa la proprietà la regola, la quale hora osseruano [...] le Turchine”. ASG, AS, Monialium 1384, no. 55, entitled: documents concerning the Della Neve convent. The excerpt from his testament must have been written after the birth of the Turchine, 05-08-1604 and before 06-10-1609, when Senarega died.

¹³⁰ “in riceuer dette monache si habbia [...] riguardo alla deuotione quelle, che dourà esser riceuuta, e che con ardor di spirito e animo di seruire à Dio domandi, e desideri l’ingresso più presto che alle qualità estrinsece cioè di nobiltà, e ricchezza, e proprequi, e concorrendo più figlie sia preferita quella, che si muouerà con più caldezza di spirito, et in parita di questa qualità quella, li cui parenti hauerann omeno facoltà”. Ibid.

¹³¹ ASDM, AS, sezione XII ordini religiosi, Santa Maria dei Sette Dolori, Vol. 92/1 *Fatto nella Causa delle RR. MM. del Ven. Monastero di S. Maria de’Sette Dolori, dette delle Celesti, di Milano con Li Nobili Signori Elettori Carcani* (1756), f. 1r-2r.

of his capital was to be invested in the building of a new convent in which girls of the Carcano family were allowed to enter without dowry. As soon as the usufruct came into effect, Archbishop Monti thought of inviting the Turchine from the diocese of his friend, Cardinal Durazzo, to start this new nunnery. In Monti's eyes, their "odour of sanctity" and trustworthiness would bring honour to the city. The Carcano family opposed the archbishop's decision because a convent that followed the strict rules of the Turchine would be unattractive to many Carcano girls, and hence, according to the Carcano family, it would not serve its goal as outlined in the testament.¹³² The Turchine, in turn, defended their own interests. They refused to adjust their way of life – and thus their reputation of trustworthiness and sanctity –, and in this they were supported by Cardinal Durazzo.¹³³ Interestingly, both the family and the nuns wanted to ensure the trustworthiness of the future Milanese institution, but by opposite means. The Carcano family members saw in the "too rigid *clausura*" of the Turchine the risk that the convent would become "too dangerous with respect to sins, because of its extreme rigour".¹³⁴ The Turchine instead wanted to secure compliance to this very strict rule precisely in order to avoid this same 'danger'.

Despite opposition from the Carcano family, Durazzo and Monti would have proceeded with their plan of introducing the Turchine in the Milanese convent had

¹³² "It is clear that if the testator had had the intention that the order should be of rigorous observance, or of extreme rigour such as that of the Annunciata in Genoa, [...] then he would have expressed that clearly in his testament as a very essential and extraordinary thing. Yet since he did not make any mention of it, he tacitly made known that he wanted an ordinary institution [...], observant but moderate, and not one of extremes" "Chiara cosa è che se il Testatore hauesse hauuto intentione che l'ordine [...] fosse di rigorosa osseruanza, ò di estremo rigore come quello della Nuntiata di Genoua, [...] l'hauerebbe precissamente espresso nel testamento come cosa essentialissima, e straordinaria, ma non hauendone fatto alcuna menzione, hà dato tacitamente a cognoscere che uoleua si elegesse un'istituto ordinario, di osseruanza si ma moderata e non che desse nell'estremo" Undated letter from the Carcano testators, entitled: *C'a Regula', et ordine' etc dedicta per D.D. Carcanos*. ASDM, AS, sezione XII Ordini religiosi e congregazioni. Casa di S. Maria dei Sette Dolori (monastero Carcano) Vol. 92/2 *Carte varie circa la fondazione del Monsatero, abbozzj di Regolamenti, osservazioni varie*.

¹³³ ASDM, AS, sezione XII, Vol. 92/1, 84, no. 7.

¹³⁴ "troppo rigida clausura" "per l'estremo rigor troppo pericoloso di peccato" Undated letter from the Carcano testators, entitled: *C'a Regula', et ordine' etc dedicta per D.D. Carcanos*. ASDM, AS, sezione XI, Vol. 92/2 *Carte varie circa la fondazione del Monsatero, abbozzj di Regolamenti, osservazioni varie*.

it not been for the sudden death of Archbishop Monti.¹³⁵ The new archbishop, Alfonso Litta, appointed in 1652, was apparently more inclined to yield to the Carcano family and to mitigate the rule of the future nunnery, but he encountered the Genoese Turchine on his way: “We have always been eager and ready for the foundation and introduction of our institution in Milan – they wrote – but we are equally determined not to violate our constitutions [...] in any way.”¹³⁶ The Superior General of the Society of Jesus, at that time the Genoese Giovanni Paolo Oliva, became involved in the matter. He promoted the Turchine and tried to convince Litta to allow them into his diocese.¹³⁷ In reply, Litta explained that all his councillors had urged him to protect the independence of the Milanese archdiocese against interference from outside: “It will never happen that I, who am most observant of the Ambrosian prerogatives, will now want to reduce myself to a state of servitude, in receiving norms, rules, prescriptions, [...] because I acknowledge only one [superior], who is the venerated supreme pontiff.”¹³⁸

Rome did indeed weigh in. Two letters from the Congregation for the Bishops and Regulars display a striking realism in the effort to convince Litta of the fact that eventually nobody was helped by founding a nunnery that merely pleased the Carcano benefactors. Starting a convent with Turchine would be convenient “for those virgins of the Carcano family who will have a vocation to serve God [...], and it will not accept those who [...] will be constrained to become nuns”.¹³⁹ Again,

¹³⁵ ASDM, AS, sezione XII, Vol. 92/1 *Fatto nella Causa*, f. 3v.

¹³⁶ “noi siamo sempre state altrettanto desiderose, e pronte per la fondatione, et introduzione del nostro Istituto in Milano, quanto siamo risolutissime di non uoler in parte alcuna uiolare le nostre constitutioni”. Letter from the Genoese Turchine, 1654, ASDM, AS, sezione XII, Vol. 92/1, no. 64. See also, *ibid.* no. 79 and 80.

¹³⁷ ASDM, AS, sezione XII, Vol. 92/1, no. 52. Letter from Litta to Giovanni Paolo Oliva, 17-01-1654. Cited in: Fontana *Memoria e Santità*, 87.

¹³⁸ “non sarà mai uero, che io osseruantissimo delle prerogatiue Ambrosiane, [...] hora uoglia ridurmi in modo di suffragimento, nel riceuere norma, regole, dettami, [...] il che porta in conseguenza di douerne render conto à chi non è mio superiore, uno solo riconoscendone io, ch’è il uenerato Sommo Pontefice”. *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ “à quelle zitelle Carcari, che hauranno uocatione di seruire à Dio [...], così non ammetterà quelle, che [...] saranno astrette di farsi monache”. Letter from Girolamo Farnese to Alfonso Litta, Rome, 28-02-1654. ASDM, AS, sezione XII Vol. 92/1, p. 65. Also cited in Fontana, *Memoria e Santità*, 122, footnote 174.

freedom of choice was linked explicitly to a good and honourable convent life. Rome also promised the archbishop that if he ceded to this plan his honour would be restored: “[the secretary] will have the Sacred Congregation write you many very honourable letters, and to Cardinal Durazzo very resentful [...] letters, [...] and he will please you in everything provided that you accept the Turchine.”¹⁴⁰ The Roman curia thus tried to resolve the issue without aggravating the animosity between the two archdioceses. This diplomatic approach apparently sufficed to convince Litta to proceed with introducing the Turchine in the new convent.

Conclusion

There were two ways of approaching the problem of disorder in the female convents. Those in power could either trust – that is, expect that the religious women under their care were able and willing to do what was seen as desirable – or they could distrust, and try to regulate and thus focus on limiting the possibility that damage was done. For there to be trust, however, the trusted person must be free to do what is expected; a condition that was evidently lacking for many Genoese nuns who had been constrained to enter the convent in the first place.

The main reason behind this distrust was the unwillingness (mostly due to reasons of family strategy) to grant these women the freedom that would allow a trust approach. Interestingly, both the distrusting Magistrato delle Monache and the distrusted sisters were well aware of the ultimate futility of this approach. The former accepted such a strategy as the only means to mitigate the effects of a system that the elite was not ready to change, whereas the latter tried to explore the possibilities of regulating their own lives despite the limitations imposed on them. It was only when the nuns felt incapable of bringing about the change they desired for their convent that they asked outsiders to intervene with rulings and punishments. Thus, when it

¹⁴⁰ “farà scriuere dalla Sacra Congregazione à lei lettere molto honoreuoli, et al Cardinale Durazzo lettere molto risentite, e precettive [...], et in ogni cosa darà gusto à V.S. Illustrissima purchè si contenti delle Turchine”. ASDM, AS, sezione XII Vol. 92, no. 97. Letter on behalf of the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Also cited in Fontana, *Memoria e Santità*, 88.

suiting them, both the authorities and the nuns relied on strategies of distrust – rules, punishments, spying – in order to bring about change or reform.

At the heart of the matter were the priorities of those who decided on the future of a convent. Either the freedom of the girls who entered was prioritised, as in Senarega's initiative, or family strategy was regarded as more important. In Carcano's case, it was because of pressure from a reform-minded bishop like Durazzo, together with insistence from Rome and from the Jesuits, that Carcano's inheritance was eventually used to finance the founding of a Turchine convent. In the next chapter we will see how, also in the case of religious initiatives started by women, the willingness to grant religious women the freedom to act on their ideals was the most important condition for trust.

Figure 2. Admonitions from 28-03-1635 until 11-11-1651

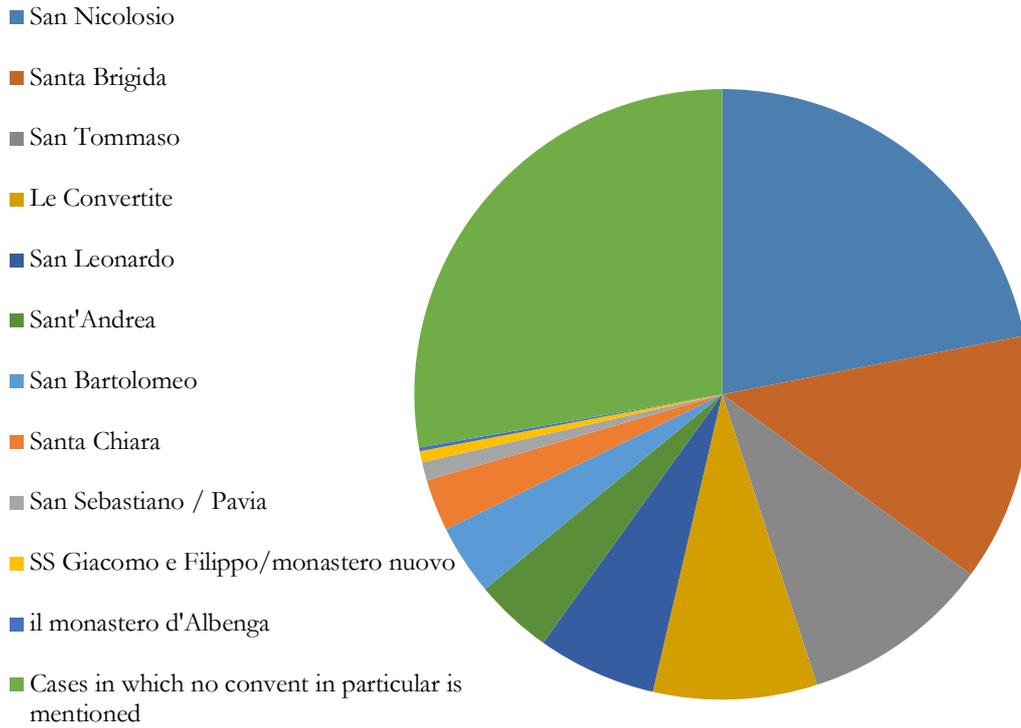
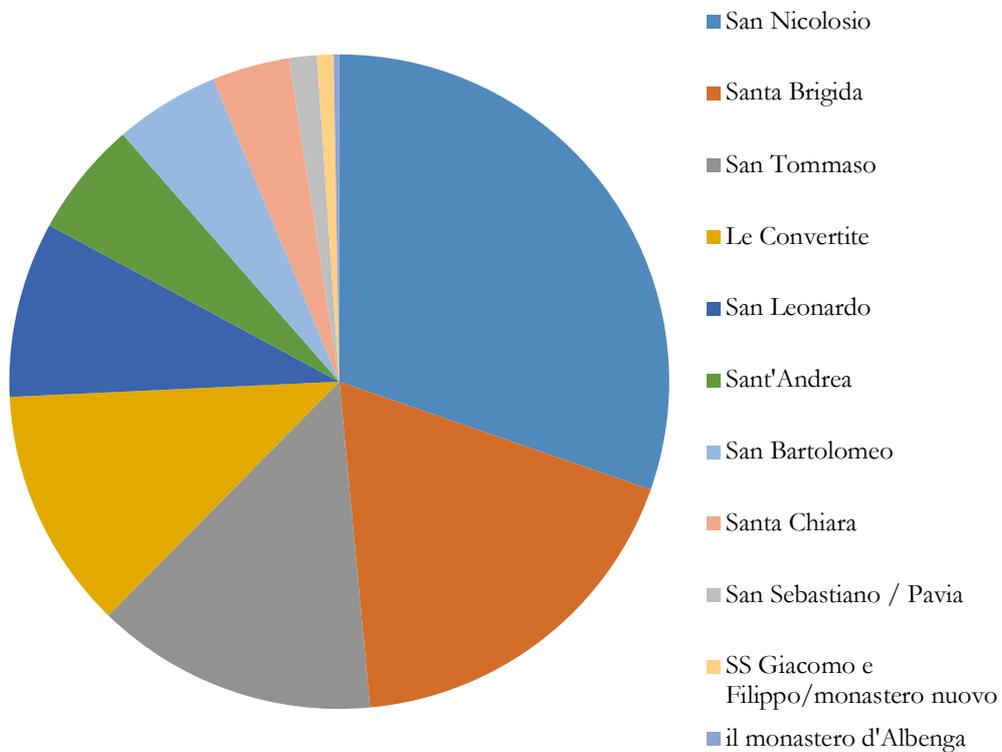


Figure 3. Admonitions from 28-03-1635 until 11-11-1651 that included restraining orders regarding a specific convent



5. To overcome distrust. Three religious initiatives by Genoese women

We have seen that many Church leaders, the nuns living in different Genoese convents, and even some of the secular authorities were aware of the fact that distrusting female religious and male visitors was not a very effective basis for changing the state of a convent. Therefore, rather than hoping for the reform of an existing convent, people sometimes tried to start a new one that would be worthy of their donations or even of their life. The example of Giambattista di Nicolo Senarega gave some insight into this dynamic. Not only men from the socio-political or ecclesiastical elite, but also women could start a new, trustworthy convent. The possibilities for women to take initiative in the religious realm are at the centre of this chapter.

Starting a new form of religious life called for considerable trust from those who could support the project or even dedicate their life to it. The persons who took the initiative, in our case religiously inclined women, were to be free to act upon their ideas: in order to give them the support they needed, people had to be convinced that they were able to carry out their plans and would be permitted to do so. We have seen, however, that women of the Genoese elite were typically granted very little freedom. Fixed views existed of what women, including women from the aristocracy, were allowed to do. At the same time, we know from the situation in Lombardy, for instance, that it was exactly these elite women who frequently took the initiative to start a new form of religious life, even outside the categories of marriage and the cloistered convent.¹ Apparently, there were instances where these women were given enough freedom to do so. This chapter looks at such cases of relative freedom to further explore the relation between freedom and trust.

¹ Querciolo Mazzonis, 'The Council of Trent and Women's Active Congregations in Italy', in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 193–94.

It used to be a dominant paradigm in historiography that the only prospect for women in the Catholic parts of early modern Europe was either to marry or to enter a convent of cloistered nuns, and indeed this was frequently the case.² Historians held that the Council of Trent had successfully forced religious women devoted to active service to retreat behind the convent walls. Recent research, however, shows that local experiences of female religious life differed significantly from the normative ideals that one can find in ecclesiastical decrees. A substantial number of religious women continued to live outside the institutions of the convent and marriage, just as they had done in the centuries before, pursuing what Gabriella Zarri has called the “third status”. This included not only those who belonged to the third order of one of the religious orders (tertiaries), but also beguines, *beatas*, *bizzoche*, *pinzochere*, and others.³ The Tridentine Church shaped the lives of these third status women, but they also shaped the Church in their turn.⁴ In studies of female religiosity outside the convent, historians now make room for the negotiation and collaboration that was a part of the female religious experience.⁵ Querciolo Mazzonis, for instance, has studied the role of Church leaders in promoting or even initiating different forms of active religious life for women, incorporating these new groups in their own

² See for a good overview of the state of the art on this subject: Alison Weber, ‘Introduction’, in *Devout Laywomen*, 1–28.

³ Gabriella Zarri, ‘The Third Status’, in *Time, Space, and Women’s Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, vol. 57, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 181–99. Weber, ‘Introduction’, 1–2, 16. For an overview of religious initiatives for women outside the convent see: Alessia Liroso, ‘Case sante e semireligiose in Italia tra XVI e XVIII secolo’, *Chiesa e Storia. Rivista dell’Associazione Italiana dei Professori di Storia della Chiesa* 6–7 (2017 2017): 57–75; Mazzonis, ‘The Council’, 191.

⁴ Querciolo Mazzonis, ‘The Company of St. Ursula in Counter-Reformation Italy’, in Weber, *Devout Laywomen*, 59. Cf. also: Susan E. Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century France: The Early History of the Daughters of Charity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 141–42.

⁵ Interestingly, the same possibilities of reciprocity and exchange also existed *within* certain convents, particularly those belonging to reformed or new female orders. Historians have started to see the convent walls as permeable membranes and the convent as part of a wider spiritual economy: Alison Parks, ‘Locating Holiness’, 52. In fact, early modern women might have had more opportunities for personal development in the religious sphere than anywhere else. Cf. Marina Romanello, ‘La donna tra Cinque e Seicento: un ruolo in evoluzione tra Chiesa e società. Alla radice degli istituti femminili di vita apostolica’, in Paolucci, *Congregazioni laicali femminili*, 18.

reform project.⁶ The same goes for women who aspired to a life behind convent walls: Alison Weber has rightly characterised the dynamic between women with particular religious aspirations and the Church as the “interplay between institutional imperatives and individual agency”. Rather than being the “prototypical subject of church-state discipline”, some women negotiated their position in the religious sphere and thus created room for self-determination and accommodation of new forms of religious life.⁷

The early history of the Ursulines exemplifies how women in the age of the Catholic Reformation could shape and negotiate their own religiosity. In 1535, Angela Merici started a company of religious women, the Ursulines, who freely committed to an apostolic life without professing any religious vows. Though historians long thought that, after Trent, the Ursulines were subject to progressive claustration, Mazzonis has shown that most groups continued to live in the way that they themselves chose, preferring either a contemplative or an active life.⁸ When they met opposition to their preferences, it was often the secular elite and not the ecclesiastical authorities who opposed semi-religious alternatives for women: several post-Tridentine bishops actually saw the advantages of the apostolic *forma vitae* for the reform of their dioceses and society at large.⁹ Among those supportive bishops, many had participated in the Council. With the same vigour with which they acted upon the Council’s decrees and in the spirit of *Circa Pastoralibus* (Pius V’s bull that obliged tertiaries and other devout lay women to profess and accept enclosure¹⁰) they

⁶ Mazzonis, ‘The Council’, 191–92. For a good overview of forms of religious life outside the convent and who supported these groups see the table in: *ibid.*, 196–7.

⁷ Weber, ‘Introduction’, 16. Elsewhere she calls this new take on women’s possibilities: the “attenuated disciplinary model” (p. 3). Different contributions in the same book show examples of this dynamic: Mazzonis, ‘The Company of St. Ursula’, 59; Maria Laura Giordano, ‘Historicizing the Beatas. The Figures behind Reformation and Counter-Reformation Conflicts’, in Weber, *Devout Laywomen*, 91.

⁸ Mazzonis, ‘The Company’, 50.

⁹ Mazzonis, ‘Women’s Semi-Religious Life’, 6. Also it is clear from the description of the Florentine institutions founded by Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo that an active religious life was seen as more acceptable for girls from a non-elite background than for elite women. Haraguchi, ‘Convent Alternatives’, 258.

¹⁰ This obligation did not apply to those semi-religious women who lived at home, or to small informal communities. Lirosi, ‘Case sante’, 57; Mazzonis, ‘The Council’, 198.

supported the Ursulines and similar new groups of women who lived a semi-religious life because they considered them allies for reform.¹¹ In fact, the position of the Church hierarchy on active life for female religious was not monolithic, but subject to internal debate.¹²

The French Daughters of Charity are another famous example of a new initiative for women who aspired to an active religious life and successfully managed to avoid clausura. This congregation was founded in the 1620s by Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac, both, in Susan Dinan's words, "moral exemplars of Catholic orthodoxy". According to Dinan, these two founders "conspired deliberately to deceive a host of local and Roman church authorities in order to establish an active, public, and religious role for women". They succeeded in their goal "by aggressively managing their self-representation in order to avoid being formally labeled as a religious order, and thus preserved their independence".¹³ Dinan's explanation for the success of the Daughters of Charity in escaping enclosure, in my opinion, presumes the hierarchy to be more naïve than it was. It does not take into account the diverse opinions on the subject of active religious women among high ecclesiastics.¹⁴ Moreover, De Paul and De Marillac were hardly original in carefully avoiding certain designations in order to avoid forced enclosure. Many similar groups of organised lay women shunned particular labels with the same purpose. They often did so with the help of their local bishops, who themselves were at times the initiators of such projects of semi-religious life and frequently wrote the rules they followed.¹⁵ We might, therefore, better understand the success of the Daughters of Charity and other similar groups if we consider how their founders were able to stretch the

¹¹ Mazzonis, 'The Company', 52. In theory, groups of active sisters ceased to exist, but practice was different. New female initiatives, both inside and outside the convent walls, survived or flourished when they fitted in with the interests of the local ecclesiastical authorities. See also: Liroi, 'Case sante', 58–59.

¹² Mazzonis, 'Women's Semi-Religious Life', 7; Mazzonis, 'The Company', 53.

¹³ Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief*, 3. Cf. also: Susan E. Dinan, 'Overcoming Gender Limitations: The Daughters of Charity and Early Modern Catholicism', in Comerford and Pabel, *Early Modern Catholicism*, 103.

¹⁴ Mazzonis, 'The Council', 191, 198.

¹⁵ Liroi, 'Case sante', 72.

possibilities of the acceptable by *eliciting trust* in something new, rather than framing this as a deception. The societal convenience of the work they offered, which, as Dinan describes, “became indispensable to the French state”, and their ability to uphold a certain moral standard outside the convent, were aspects that inspired this trust.¹⁶

Many Church authorities saw the implementation of a stricter *clausura* on the one hand, and fostering the active life of, for example, the Ursulines on the other, as two separate and compatible matters.¹⁷ Moreover, as of 1616, female congregations with an active apostolate were again officially tolerated by Rome (and many had never ceased to exist). The obligations of enclosure and solemn vows were abolished. Yet the difficulties that contemplative and active groups had to face and to overcome by eliciting trust and support from different parties clearly differed. New initiatives that fell within the established category of the secluded convent were, as we will see, as much subject to distrust as those that did not. They had to find people who put their trust in the project, just as cloistered sisters had to: not by deceiving, but by showing that the new initiative was capable of honourably contributing to whatever common interest existed between possible patrons and the new group.

This chapter will show that a trust perspective can bring the analysis of women’s possibilities in the religious realm a step further. The process of negotiation that historians have recently underlined as vital for the success of new initiatives is better understood by making explicit the different steps in the process with which trust was won for something otherwise distrusted. In chronological order, the chapter will present the emergence of the Turchine (1604), a very successful new contemplative order that aspired to strict enclosure; the Medee, a small-scale active congregation of female religious who were involved in the teaching of girls (they

¹⁶ Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief*, 3–4.

¹⁷ The Council of Trent and the bull *Circa Pastoralibus* had created two fixed vocational categories for women - that of marriage or *clausura* – but the leaders of the post-Tridentine Church did not necessarily constrain all devout women into these categories: instead many reforming bishops and new religious orders created possibilities for them outside the convent. Contemporaries did not even always perceive a sharp dichotomy between active and contemplative life. Cf. Querciolo Mazzonis, ‘Donne devote nell’Italia post-tridentina: il caso delle compagnie di sant’Orsola’, *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 68, no. 2 (2014): 383.

started in 1594, but were officially recognised in 1625); and the Brignoline, a group of mainly lower-class religious women who found their main occupation in caring for the urban poor and sick (1632). I chose these three cases because all three of them are unique initiatives that were founded by Genoese women. Forms of female religious life initiated around the same time by men or in association with an already existing order, like the Discalced Carmelites, are not considered here because they say less about how women were able to elicit trust for their religious choices.¹⁸ My analysis would have been greatly helped by the study of an unsuccessful attempt to start a new female group, but I did not encounter such a case in the sources (and maybe not surprisingly so, since even successful female institutions have left little early documentation). Since all three of the initiatives mentioned had to be built up from scratch, they shed light on the negotiation process that was needed for such initiatives to succeed.

The spirituality behind both the Turchine and the Medee developed during the last two decennia of the sixteenth century, in pace with the increasing importance in the city of the Jesuits who frequently were among the promoters of new forms of female religious life. Since Genoa was one of the few cities in Northern Italy which the Ursulines had not reached by the late sixteenth century, it may have been more open to the Medee, who had a similar focus on the education of women. The end of the sixteenth century was also the time when Genoa welcomed another important new religious order: the Discalced Carmelites (both the male and female branches), who were the great competitors of the Turchine. Just as it did for the Discalced Carmelites, the city formed a springboard for this new contemplative order towards a major expansion throughout Europe (but mostly in France). Genoa was also a city with a substantial financial elite who usually donated part of their profits to charity:

¹⁸ See for an overview of the religious initiatives outside the convent: Fontana, 'La vita religiosa'. I did not examine the *Conservatorio Interiano*, though this was initiated in the same period, namely in 1609: this initiative was taken by Paolo Batta Interiano. Male initiatives were also at the basis of the *Conservatorio dei Santi Bernadino e Alessio*, erected by the guild of haberdashery sellers and beltmakers in 1623. Among new foundations of cloistered life in seventeenth-century Genoa, that of the Turchine is the only one initiated by a woman that was not associated with an existing order. *Ibid.*, 215–17.

without the financial support from this elite, the *Brignoline* would not have been able to succeed. The foundation of the Brignoline was furthermore facilitated by the major political and economic crises that struck Genoa in the 1620s: the fact that all solidarity was welcome during these years created a favourable climate for semi-religious women who wanted to live a life of active charity.¹⁹

Following our definition of trust, the chapter will deal systematically with five questions regarding each of these religious institutions: first, who were the women who became the *object* of trust, that is, the founders of these female religious groups? As we will see, the widowhood and elevated social position of each female founder played an important role in the success of their initiatives. Secondly, was their vision for religious life considered suitable for women or did it instead require much trust because it went beyond societal standards? Thirdly, what allowed these women the *freedom* to act upon their vision? By looking at the context we can find out whether their initiatives answered a special need that helped to broaden the range of the acceptable. Thus, we can establish if what I will call the trust threshold was particularly high for a particular initiative. By trust threshold I mean the variable point in the relationship between the founders and those around them at which distrust could transform into trust. Fourthly, who were the people who put their trust in the founder and supported the new initiative? Were these ecclesiastical or secular parties?²⁰ Related to this fourth question, I will analyse what elicited the trust of people who gave their support to a new initiative. What were the instances that won them over? At the end of the chapter, the case of four women who tried to imitate the Medee in Savona further explains the relationship between freedom and trust.

The main sources that help to answer our questions are the seventeenth-century biographies of two of the female founders of these congregations.²¹ Though

¹⁹ See page 52.

²⁰ Historiography already tells us that support often came from lay, noble female benefactors and that new initiatives were frequently controlled by deputies from the nobility and individual churchmen. The question remains why these actors were necessary and why they sometimes cooperated and gave their trust. Cf. Terraccia, 'Case sante', 317.

²¹ Medea, the founder of the *Medee*, has no biography dedicated to her, but appears in the biographies of the founder of the *Turbine*.

obviously hagiographical in nature, these biographies do allow us to distinguish factors that helped elicit trust from different parties: they bring to light what worked and what did not *in the context* of the mentality of that time.²² Because the contemporary biographers wanted to show how exceptional the success of these women was, they also extensively describe the distrust that each of the founders had to overcome. Still, we have to be aware of the rhetoric that permeates these biographies. Just like the *vitae* of prospective saints that Anne Jacobson Schutte has studied, they all contain several standard elements: “precocious piety, first exhibited in earliest childhood; the subsequent life course; struggles with opponents, ill-disposed family members and others; final illness, death, funeral, and burial; manifold virtues and marvelous accomplishments in life; graces conferred from on high; postmortem prodigies”.²³ Rather than focusing on these standard elements, my analysis will concentrate on the practical difficulties that the three women faced and the concrete strategies that they adopted to circumvent these obstacles. It is not the motives of the three founders that are central to this chapter (since those are difficult to discern in hagiographical accounts), but the strategies they used to win trust for their respective initiatives. For this purpose, I supplement the biographical sources with the rules of the respective institutions, the documents of their official recognition and sources of administrative nature.

Recently, Paolo Fontana has done much research into female religiosity in Genoa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He provides a very useful overview of all the forms of religious life for women outside the convent walls: there were ten such forms of life initiated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fontana has also gathered archival material from all over Europe that documents the early development of the Turchine and their remarkably quick diffusion.²⁴ During

²² Often writers of these biographies attentively enumerated their sources to convince readers of the credibility of their writings, as did those of the ones I have used. Anne Jacobson Schutte, “‘Ecco La Santa!’ Printed Italian Biographies of Devout Laywomen, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries’, in *Devout Laywomen*, 117.

²³ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁴ Fontana, ‘La vita religiosa’; Paolo Fontana, *Memoria e santità: agiografia e storia nell’ordine delle annunziate celesti tra Genova e l’Europa in antico regime* (Rome: Carocci, 2008).

the early 1990s, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the presence of the Medee in Genoa, several historians studied the early years of the Medee, providing useful overviews and interpretations of the few documents with which we are left to better understand their early development.²⁵ The last case study in this chapter concerns the founder of the Brignoline, Virginia Centurione Bracelli. Bracelli has been subject to a relatively recent canonisation process (she was beatified in 1985 and canonised in 2003), the proceedings of which contain many of the primary sources that relate to her life and the congregation that she founded, whilst providing a first interpretation.²⁶ Building on the historiography, this chapter will go a step further and explore these three cases side by side: a comparative analysis allows us to use these Genoese cases to shed light on the ways in which certain female initiatives, within and outside the convent walls, succeeded in building trust where others failed.

The Turchine

It was in the year sixty-two of the last century, that in Genoa, metropolis of Liguria, a very bright light appeared [...] that sought to bury itself under the dark shadows of holy humility, and hide itself from the eyes of men, closed up between the walls of a most secluded convent; [being] nonetheless very bright to the world, she spread her rays almost all over Europe and with the splendours of an heroic holiness she brought esteem to the house from which she was born, the fatherland in which she lived, the religious order to which she gave birth.²⁷

²⁵ Ilaria Forno, 'Note sul primo insediamento genovese delle Medee', in Paolocci, *Congregazioni laicali femminili*, 211–18; Ivana Zacchello, 'Medea: alle fonti di un'esperienza', in Paolocci, *Congregazioni laicali femminili*, 163–202; Ivana Zacchello, 'Bernardino Zanoni e le fondazioni delle Medee e delle Annunziate a Genova', in Paolocci, *I Gesuiti*, 45–55; Mario Colpo, 'P. Bernardino Zanoni, maestro di perfezione per un nuovo gruppo di claustrali', in Paolocci, *Congregazioni laicali femminili*, 203–9.

²⁶ *Januen. beatificationis et canonizationis Servae Dei Verginae Centurione Bracelli, viduae fundatricis Instituti Sororum Dominae Nostrae a Refugio in Monte Calvario vulgo 'Brignoline' († 1651): positio super introductione causae et super virtutibus ex officio exarata*, 1971.

²⁷ Coreua l'anno del secolo passato sessantesimo secondo, quando in Genoua, Città Metropoli della Liguria, spuntò vna chiarissima luce, [...] che cercasse di seppellirsi sotto le oscure tenebre della santa vmltà, e si nascondesse a gli occhi degli huomini, chiusa fra le mura d'vn ritiratissimo Monistero; nulladimeno luminosissima al Mondo diffuse i suoi raggi, quasi per tutta Europa, e con

These words of effusive praise were written in 1681, a point in time when the Turchine had already experienced remarkable success and the order had spread throughout Europe. One biographer, Giovanni Salvaterra, used them to introduce the reader to Vittoria Maria De Fornari Strata (1562-1617), the founder of the Order of the Most Holy Annunciation (also called the Turchine, after the turquoise colour of their habit).²⁸ Strata consciously chose to establish a new order of contemplative life: she had experienced active life and had taught “Christian doctrine [...] for many years [...] although this task was very much against her nature and her inclination towards a secluded life”.²⁹ In contrast to the order’s later success, Strata’s initial ideas to start a new cloistered convent encountered substantial resistance and, as we will see, required a high level of trust from different parties.³⁰

gli splendori d’vn’eroica santità illustrò la Casa, onde nacque, la Patria, in cui visse, la Religione, cui diè l’essere.” Giovanni Salvaterra, *La fondazione dell’Ordine della Santissima Annunziata, detto delle Celesti, volgarmente delle Turchine. Parte Prima: della storia dell’ordine stesso* (Genoa: Stamperia Antonio Giorgio Franchelli, 1681), 1.

²⁸ What we know about Vittoria’s life stems from an intricate series of biographies of which I will only use some that were written in the first decades of the order. Vittoria herself wrote an autobiography at the request of her confessor, the Jesuit Bernardino Zanoni. For a comprehensive analysis of the autobiography and the different biographies, their interconnectedness, the (auto) censorship exhibited and other issues related to hagiography see: Paolo Fontana, ‘Introduzione alla Memoria autobiografica della beata Maria Vittoria’, in *Due volte madre. Beata Maria Vittoria de Fornari Strata, fondatrice dell’Ordine della SS.ma Annunziata*, ed. Angela Lupi, 2nd revised and expanded edition (Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo, 2000), 193–206; and Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 11–34. One of Vittoria’s fellow sisters, Maria Gertruda Centurione, wrote the first (unpublished) vita commissioned by Archbishop Domenico Marini, probably in view of a later attempt to have Vittoria canonised. Based on her story, Vittoria’s autobiography, and material from a first diocesan process that prepared for canonisation, the Jesuit Ferdinando Melzi composed a new biography that was printed in Italian and French. Maria Gertruda subsequently wrote a new and more extensive biography which she partially based on Melzi’s work. Another Jesuit, Fabio Ambrogio Spinola wrote another biography a few years later, as did his later confrère Giovanni Salvaterra, whose words we cited at the beginning of the section. Though all intended with their writing to promote her canonisation, she was beatified only in 1828 and canonisation never followed.

²⁹ “la dottrina cristiana [...] per molti anni [...] benché tal esercizio fosse per altro molto ripugnante alla natura e inclinazione sua che era di star ritirata” From the biography written by sister Gertrude Centurioni that can be found in *Sacra Rituum Congregatio beatificationis et canonizationis... Mariae Victoriae de Furnariis Strata*, f. 472-73. Cited in: Zacchello, ‘Medea’, 168–69.

³⁰ Cf. Weber, ‘Introduction’, 8. Weber exemplifies how, “although post-Tridentine legislation increased pressure for enclosure, at the local level there were significant counterpressures, even when women actively sought claustration.”

Trusting Vittoria Strata

Let us first look at the social background of the initiator of this project, Vittoria Strata. Born in 1562, she was the daughter of two members of the Genoese aristocracy, Gerolamo De Fornari and Barbara Veneroso. As the seventh of nine children, her parents arranged a favourable match with Angelo Strata when she was seventeen years old.³¹ Interestingly, as Paolo Fontana notes, her being married prior to founding a new order troubled some of her later hagiographers. In line with the early modern ideas on the characteristics of female holiness that Schutte outlines, in particular “early commitment to virginity and marriage to God”, they emphasised that from her earliest youth Vittoria aspired to a life devoted to God and she married against her will, out of pure filial obedience.³² One biographer wrote how the news of having to marry “at first made her very unhappy because of the inclination that she had for religious life”.³³ A Jesuit author even described how “she could not but feel repugnance towards [this marriage], both because of her inclination to the religious state [...] and because of the unlikely success of so tight a bond, which, if it unites the bodies but does not likewise unite the hearts with a reciprocal love, brings with it a very difficult life and a copious amount of constant bitterness”.³⁴ The Jesuit added, however, that, fortunately, a “tender love” arose among the two.³⁵ Interestingly, in the autobiography that Vittoria wrote at the request of her confessor, she did not mention any concern on hearing her parents’ decision, to the contrary: “when I was seventeen years old my father gave me in marriage to this gentleman

³¹ “degno per altro di sì buona consorte”: Salvaterra, *La fondazione*, 2.

³² See for his analysis of the different hagiographical interpretations of Vittoria’s earlier state of marriage: Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 23–27. Citation from Schutte, “Ecco La Santa!”, 113.

³³ “luy fut au commencement fort fâcheuse à cause de l’inclination qu’elle auoit pour la Religion”: Ferdinando Melzi, *La vie admirable de la B. Mere Marie Victiore, fondatrice des religieuses de l’Annonciade de Gennes; et de la Seur Marie Magdelaine, sa premiere Compagne. Composé en Italien par le R. P. Ferdinand Meltio, de la Compagnie de Jesus, et traduit par un pere de la même Compagnie* (Lyon: Claude Larjot, 1631), 11.

³⁴ “non potè da principio non sentirne disgusto, sì per l’inclinatione allo stato Religioso, [...]; come per la dubiosa riuscita che porta seco vn legame sì stretto, il quale se mentre annoda i corpi non vnisce parimente i cuori con amore scambieuoale, porta seco vn viuere stentatissimo, & vna copiosa messe di continue amarezze.” Fabio Ambrosio Spinola, *Vita della Venerabile Serva di Dio Madre Maria Vittoria, fondatrice dell’Ordine dell’Annontziata* (Genoa: Giovanni Domenico Peri, 1649), 13.

³⁵ “tenero amore Spinola”, *Ibid.*, 14.

mentioned above, much to my delight and contentment, because he was [...] a most extraordinary man and [...] the love that I felt for him was greater than one can describe”.³⁶

By the time that she was expecting her ninth child (only five of her children survived) Vittoria’s husband died. Widowed in her mid-twenties (in 1587 or 1588³⁷), she entered into a kind of existential crisis of which she wrote: “never can one find again a woman as mad about a man as I was, because no follies exist that I did not do, and when my husband had passed away, it seemed to me that all that was good to me had died. I say this with great confusion and shame, but certainly I regret it much more than anyone can ever imagine”.³⁸ Her shame at the time of writing might have concerned particularly one of her “follies”: namely her desire to follow her husband to death while about to give birth to her son, wherefore “instead of taking care of myself, I was treating myself in the worst of ways”.³⁹ It was during this crisis that Vittoria started to harbour the wish to start a new convent. The situation to which life had brought her – being a wealthy, aristocratic widow, with much of her life ahead of her – left her in the freest position that early modern Genoese society could offer elite women: it was exactly these women who were allowed some agency beyond their own household.⁴⁰

³⁶ “quando fui di dieci sette anni mio padre me dette per moglie a questo Signor detto sopra con molto mio gusto, e contento, perché non era huomo ordinario ma molto straordinarissimo e quanto per me non mi desiderava moglie di qualsivoglia principalissimo Signore o Monarca del mondo et era tanto l’amore che le portava che non si può dir di più.” Vittoria Maria Strata, ‘Memoria Autobiografica’, edited by Paolo Fontana, in Lupi, *Due Volte Madre*, 207–8.

³⁷ Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 12.

³⁸ “mai più si trovi donna tanto impazzita di huomo, come sono stata io, a segno tale che non fu pazzia, chi io non facessi, e morto mio marito mi pareva morto tutto il mio bene, con grandissima mia confusione e vergogna dico questo, ma mi dispiace assai molto più che ogn’uno si possa mai immaginar certo”. Strata, ‘Memoria Autobiografica’, 208–9. The different biographies also refer to this period of crisis, for instance: Melzi, *La vie*, 32–33.

³⁹ “in cambio d’avermi cura mi dava alla peggio.” Strata, ‘Memoria Autobiografica’, 209.

⁴⁰ Though often, like elsewhere, the women of the Genoese elite themselves constituted some kind of economic asset for their families, in some favourable cases they were able to get involved in economic activity and were considered equal to their male peers. Savelli, ‘Genova nell’età di Van Dyck’, 20–21. Some contemporary writers suggest that Genoa was a city in which women operated with relative freedom. The apostolic visitor Bossi wrote to the government in 1582 that “sarebbe molto espediente [...] moderare la troppo large libertà delle donne.” Cited in: *Ibid.*, 19. Others indicated that in Genoa women were wandering around freely, often alone. See also: Arie

An initiative that required trust

From her new social position, Strata began considering a vocation as founder of a new order of cloistered women. In principle, founding a new cloistered convent was a legitimate possibility for women, but that did not remove the need to convince people that precisely you were the right person to do so. The two most important incentives for and legitimisations of her initiative – according to both Strata and her biographers – were divine inspiration and the instructions of her Jesuit confessor Bernardino Zanoni. According to Vittoria, one day, praying in front of an image of Mary, “more full of passion than of devotion, [...] I told her that it seemed to me that God greatly wronged me by not taking me together with my husband”.⁴¹ She then commended her children to the Virgin as her servants, to which, she wrote, it seemed as if Mary responded: “do not doubt anything because I will not only take these children, but also you yourself”.⁴² Although, according to the hagiography, the Virgin *appeared* to Vittoria, interestingly, she herself wrote that she only *heard* a voice confirming her vocation: “it seemed to me that the Most Holy Virgin said that in time she would have conceded the favour”.⁴³

The second factor – which could, as it were, reassure possible patrons that Strata was the right person to act upon her wish – was the support of Zanoni. This Jesuit, confessor of many aristocratic ladies in Genoa, was brought to Vittoria’s attention by two acquaintances of her mother in the latter’s attempt to mitigate her daughter’s crisis:

in their prudence these two women [...] sent me to confession with the most reverend Jesuit Father Bernardino, and with divine help and the help of this father I began to recognise my error, [...]

Theodorus van Deursen, *Mensen van klein vermogen: het kopergeld van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1991), 104–5.

⁴¹ “più piena di passione che di devozione, et ivi lamentandomi gli diceva che mi pareva che Dio mi avesse fatto torto grandissimo a non pigliarmi con mio marito”. Strata, ‘Memoria Autobiografica’, 210.

⁴² “non dubitare di cosa alcuna perché non solo mi piglio questi figlioli, ma te stessa, io ci haverò sempre pensiero di tutta questa casa”. Ibid.

⁴³ “mi parve che la Santissima Vergine dicesse che con il tempo sarebbe fatta la gratia” Ibid., 212. For an example of hagiography that describes how Mary *appeared* to Vittoria see, for instance: Salvaterra, *La fondazione*, 5.

I made a general confession, and I applied myself to mental prayer, during which, by the grace of the Lord I had some inspiration and [...] learned of the great duty that I had.⁴⁴

That her initiative, according to her biographers and Strata herself, was sanctioned both by divine authority and the support of this Jesuit, already highlights the fact that her ideas fell within acceptable categories: the trust that she elicited was substantiated in the conviction that women in general, and Strata in particular, were indeed well able to live this type of cloistered life. Her bond with the Society, which often promoted new initiatives of female religiosity, gave the necessary legitimacy to the core of her endeavours (though interestingly, not to some more “radical” aspects of her religiosity).⁴⁵ Why was it then, that only in 1604, more than a decade into her widowhood, she was able to put her plans into action?

Lowering the trust threshold

Both Strata’s social position as a widow appertaining to the Genoese nobility, and what she envisioned, namely a convent of strict clausura, had the potential to elicit trust. In 1602, when in her late thirties, she had obtained a position of personal freedom: all her children but one had entered different religious orders (her last son, Angelo, who was still a teenager, professed in the Order of the Minimi in 1603). However, it can be said that the threshold for trust and support was particularly high for the type of project that Strata had in mind. First, founding a convent of contemplative life required one to act publicly and in complete transparency so as to

⁴⁴ “Queste due donne [...] con la sua prudenza mi tirorno a confessarmi dal molto reverendo padre Bernardino gesuita, et io col divino aiuto e di questo padre cominciai a consocere il mio errore, [...] feci una confessione generale e mi detti all’oratione mentale, dove per gratia del Signore hebbi qualche lume, e [...] conobbi il grandissimo obbligo che havevo”. Strata, ‘Memoria Autobiografica’, 211.

⁴⁵ In fact, the Jesuit hagiographers of Vittoria were very proud of the Jesuit contribution to her initiative. Melzi, for instance, writes in his “epistre de l’auteur”: “[...] il n’et [sic] nul dans cette Ville qui ne sache, que dès [sic] qu’elle commença de s’addonner du tout à la deuotion, elle a touiours été fille de nôtre Compagnie, dont les addresses & les instructions n’ont pas serui de peu, tant pour la faire marcher seurement, & à grand pas dans le sentier de la perfection, que pour fonder ce nouuel Ordre, & Religion, pour luy coucher ses Regles & Constitutions, & pour luy laisser tant d’autres aides spirituelles”. Melzi, *La vie*.

avoid any suspicion of indecency. Starting to simply live together in a cloister with a few zealous women could be seen as dishonourable. Before Strata could realise her religious ideals, she therefore had to arrange a suitable place for the secluded convent as well as formal recognition that expressed trust in the commitment of her companions and herself to *clausura* and other rules they wanted to follow. Moreover, Strata had to attract suitable companions in a city already crowded with female convents, including the popular Discalced Carmelites.⁴⁶ A third difficulty was to establish a solid financial basis for her convent. Rome refused Strata the licence to live from alms, and the Jesuits who supported her ideas presumed that the city government, too, would object to a new convent: “seeing their city already full of other pious places that lean exclusively on the charity of the municipality, they would not want to charge themselves with this new and unnecessary burden”.⁴⁷ Finally, Archbishop Orazio Spinola, as well, did not immediately support Strata’s project when she petitioned him in 1602. He thought she might use her money in a more effective way.⁴⁸

That these circumstances and the particular necessities of an enclosed community indeed raised the threshold for trust is suggested by Salvaterra’s description of public opinion about the initiative:

The world [...] that disapproved of this new establishment – considering it a construction without foundation – at that time spoke evil of it [...]: that it was madness to approve it, and even more so to invest one’s wealth in dowries for girls in this place where a few ladies who were inexperienced in the religious life

⁴⁶ Giulio Sommariva, ‘Monasteri carmelitani femminili a Genova’, in Gioradno and Paolucci, *Nicolò Doria*, 397.

⁴⁷ “vedendo la lor Città già carica in eccesso di tant’altri Luoghi Pij, appoggiati sulla sola carità del Comune, non harebbono voluto porsi questo nuouo, e non necessario peso”. Salvaterra, *La fondazione*, 76.

⁴⁸ The archbishop later (we do not know when exactly) changed his mind and, according to Salvaterra, allowed her “to start right away with the preparation [...], on the condition, however, that she would not proceed with anything of importance without letting him know”: the trust that the archbishop offered was clearly conditional. (“di cominciar fin d’allora a disporne i mezzi opportuni, con patto però che non scendesse ad effettuar cosa alcuna di momento senza sua saputa”). *Ibid.*, 42.

[...], went to shut themselves in, with their own whim as their only Rule.⁴⁹

Salvaterra may have exaggerated the public resistance to further exalt Vittoria's eventual success, but much trust was indeed needed for people to be willing to risk time and money on a new initiative that was to distinguish itself by something that it had yet to prove: namely, the initiators' dedication to strict enclosure and their envisioned spiritual uniqueness. Also, joining such a new convent called for considerable trust. According to Salvaterra, the Genoese skeptically asked themselves: "Where can one find such ill-advised girls, who would buy themselves into this new [convent] with a substantial dowry, and ignore the many other flourishing convents in Genoa that are venerable for their long existence, have approved habits, [and] are consecrated by saints."⁵⁰

One way for Strata to gain trust was to cooperate with other women who were inclined to a religious life. In this way, at least she would have companions who could join her in her new convent. In 1594, several ladies from the Genoese elite had formed a group (later called the Medee), who lived together as an informal religious community under the guidance of Strata's confessor, Bernardino Zanoni. Strata approached these women with the idea of involving them in her initiative, but met with resistance:

Vittoria began to think that it might be good to join them [...] and with that aim she went to pay them a visit, communicating her plan to them, and telling them [...] that she did so in order to see if God would condescend to make it easier for her to start a

⁴⁹ "Il Mondo [...] disapprouando questa nuoua fondatione, come fabbrica senza fondamento, allora diceuane tutto il male [...]: Esser pazzia, approuare, molto meno applicare i suoi haueri in Dote alle Figlie in questo luogo, in cui poche Donne inesperte di Religione, malagiate di Casa, colla sola Regola del lor capriccio, andauano a chiudersi" Ibid., 184-5. Salvaterra refers as follows to the public opinion regarding the idea of a new convent: "In tanto diuolgatasi per la Città la fama di ciò, che macchinauano le cinque Fondatrici, come di cosa già prossima ad eseguirsi, discorrendosene da ognuno a suo talento, e con più ardire da chi meno n'era informato, i più o tassandole, o mettendole in burla, ne diceuano ciò, che di peggio lo veniua alla bocca." Ibid., 74.

⁵⁰ "E doue sarebbono poi Figlie sì sconsigliate, che lasciati tant'altri Monisteri fioritissimi in Genoua, venerabili per l'antichità, approuati di costumi, imbalsimati da Sante, andassero a comprarsi a costo d'una buona dote in questo Nuouo [...]" Salvaterra, *La fondazione*, 74-5.

convent in which she would live together with them in *regulare disciplina*. But those virgins [...] did not want to accept the proposal, being content to stay alone as they were, [...] having already embraced their own way of living that was very different from the practice in this convent.⁵¹

For these religious ladies, to accept a proposal of religious life that was radically different from the active life that they had chosen for themselves was out of the question. Strata had to seek the support she needed elsewhere.

Who gave trust?

In the end, the most decisive factor was the trust of an extremely affluent Genoese couple, Vincentina and Stefano Centurione, who both desired to enter religious life. The couple chose to support Strata's initiative only when they saw that other roads towards their goal were blocked: they too would rather have trusted themselves to a religious order that already existed and had proven its merits, but they were unable to do so. Vincentina preferred the Discalced Carmelites, the religious order that had been reformed by Teresa d'Ávila some decades earlier and whose female branch had reached Genoa in 1590. Yet the order's reputation of reliability and piety had a downside: it was so popular and prestigious that its female convent in Genoa was completely full. With two small children to care for who were not allowed to join her in the Carmelite convent, Vincentina had to find another solution. It was Bernardino Zanoni who, as her confessor, pushed her in the direction of Vittoria.⁵² Strata herself

⁵¹ “Cominciò a pensar Vittoria se sarebbe forsi stato bene unirsi con quelle e vivere con esse [...] e andò per tal fine a trovarle comunicandogli il suo pensiero, e dicendogli [...] che faceva questo per vedere se fra tanto si compiaceva Dio di dargli maggior commodità di fare un monastero in cui potesse unitamente vivere con loro in regolare disciplina. Ma quelle Vergini [...] non vollero accettare il partito contentandosi di stare così sole come stavano, [...] per esser già assunte quelle Vergini al loro modo di vivere differente assai da quello che s'haveva da praticare in questo monasterio non così facilmente si sarebbero indotte a quella osservanza di comunità che bisognava [...]” Ferdinando Melzi, *vita di M. Vittoria De Fornari Strata*, in *Sacra Rituum Congregatio Januensis Beatificationis et Canonizationis venerabilis Servae Dei Mariae Victoriae de Furnarij, fundatricis monialium coelestium* (Genoa, Archivio Monache Annunziate, I, ff. 29- 30) Cited in: Zacchello, ‘Medea’, 189.

⁵² Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 13.

recounts in her autobiography how, in 1603, when she managed to find a suitable house

having made this purchase, it seemed to me that I had settled everything, but I lacked someone to help me. And by divine disposition it happened that the reverend Discalced nuns no longer wanted to receive Signora Vincentina Centurione, who had come from Naples to Genoa with two daughters to become a Discalced sister. When I heard [this], I immediately went to pay her a visit, telling her that it had been God's will that she came to Genoa in order to help me to realise this work (pretending not to know that she came to Genoa for another purpose).⁵³

When both Vincentina and Stefano agreed to her proposal, Vittoria did not waste time: "I got things going and, since lady Vincentina was much in a hurry, I rented a house [...] and had it arranged for *clausura* where we lived for four years, until our convent was ready, and we entered that [first] house on the third of June, 1604 [...]. We received the nun's habit on the fifth of August, 1604. Five of us took the habit."⁵⁴ The permission to found this new convent was obtained by Vincentina's husband, Stefano, who, on his way from Naples to Genoa, had been able to convince Pope Clement VIII to give his temporary consent that was confirmed by Pope Paul V in 1613. Once in Genoa, this same Stefano also supervised the building of a new convent that the sisters occupied in 1608. By then, his wife Vincentina had already passed away, but Stefano, who had himself become a priest in 1605, continued to serve the nuns. Being refused by the Discalced Carmelites, he joined the Barnabites in 1611. Without the financial and social capital of this couple, Vittoria's chances of initiating a cloistered convent would have been very different.

⁵³ "Fatta questa compra parvemi di havere spedito il tutto, ma mancava chi mi aiutasse, e per divina disposizione seguì che le reverende monache scalze non volevano più ricevere la Signora Vincentina Centurione, che era venuta da Napoli a Genova con due figlie per farsi monaca scalza, subito che io hebbi inteso l'andai a visitare dicendogli che era stata volontà di Dio che fosse venuta a Genova per aiutarmi a compiere quest'opera (dissimulando di sapere che fosse venuta a Genova per altro effetto)." Strata, 'Memoria Autobiografica', 215.

⁵⁴ "tirai avanti il negozio, havendo la Signora Vincentina molta freta pigliai una casa a pigione [...] e facessi accomodare a modo di clausura dove abitassimo per 4 anni, sinché il nostro monastero fusse fatto, e s'entrò nella detta casa alli III di giugno dell'anno 1604 [...]. Si pigliò l'abito da monaca a 5 di agosto del 1604 a vestirsi erano 5": Ibid., 216. Cf. also: Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 12–15.

Experiences that elicited trust

The hallmark of strict enclosure was that the nuns entered the *clausura* for good, and contact with the outside world was limited to the absolutely necessary. Therefore, all practical issues were to be settled beforehand. The founder of such convent needed to attract people, money and goods, without there being much possibility to prove, for instance, the convent's particularly strong commitment to *clausura* and thus elicit trust. At the same time, this reputation was paramount to draw people and resources. In Vittoria Strata's case, this paradox constituted one of the chief obstacles towards the realisation of her convent.

Strata's main supporters, Vincentina and Stefano, feared that it was impossible to start a new religious order for cloistered sisters from scratch. In the first instance, they therefore insisted that their new convent should be associated with the Discalced Carmelite order so as to secure the continuity of the new foundation. Strata wrote in her autobiography:

The torments that I endured when we were still in secular habit from all sides, especially from lady Vincentina and her husband were many. [They also came from] all the [Discalced] brothers who live in Sant'Anna, in particular from Father Ferdinando. Their intention was always that the Discalced sisters would come to establish [our convent] and we would become Discalced [Carmelites]. Not a day went by in which they did not lecture me three or four times.⁵⁵

Vittoria's own position as a rich widow, however, helped her: "I had the good fortune that the house was mine, so that, after they had thoroughly annoyed me, I told them that I wanted to stay here, even without any [other] nuns, and anyone who did not want to stay was free to leave."⁵⁶ Vittoria probably knew that free choice was essential

⁵⁵ "Li travagli che passai mentre che fossimo in abito secolare da tutti, massime dalla Signora Vincentina e suo marito sono molti, et ancora da tutti li frati che in sant'Anna si trovavano, in particolare da padre Ferdinando e questi tutti furono acciocché le monache scalze venissero loro a fondarlo e noi si facessimo scalze. Non passava mai giorno che non mi facessero [...] 3 o 4 sermoni": Strata, 'Memoria Autobiografica', 216-7.

⁵⁶ "la ventura era che la casa era mia, perciò quando mi avevano ben molestata, dicevo di voler star qui, ancorché senza monaca alcuna, e chi non voleva stare era in libertà". Ibid., 217.

in order to build trust not only with supporters from outside, but also between the sisters themselves.

The issue surfaced again when, shortly after receiving the habit (on 5 August 1604), Vincentina passed away. Considering that Vittoria was also in a bad health, Stefano now feared that their huge investments would come to nothing and “the affair would go up in smoke”, if he did not associate the newly erected convent with an existing and flourishing order.⁵⁷ Again, he insisted to Vittoria that the new convent merge with the Discalced Carmelites. Supporting this idea, the other nuns wrote in June 1605 to Stefano: “Your Lordship should reach an agreement with the Mother [Vittoria] and Sister Maria Francesca [the only one who was on Vittoria’s side], because, apart from them, we all want to become Discalced.”⁵⁸ This resistance exposes the sense of risk that women who were to give their life to a new initiative felt in the absence of a track record that inspired them with trust and confidence: not surprisingly, Vittoria’s first companions preferred the security and prestige associated with the popular Carmelite nuns.

Even so, a short time later Stefano and three of the sisters changed their minds: together with Vittoria, the three made their profession in the new order on 7 September 1605 while Stefano became chaplain of the convent. According to Strata, they had changed their minds upon seeing that she physically suffered from their doubts. It is also possible that they ceased their resistance assuming that, being in a bad health, Strata was about to pass away and then things could change. Another possibility is that the support from the archbishop whose confidence Vittoria had slowly earned gave them sufficient trust to stick to their founder’s plan: he promised that he would continue to support the convent even if it were to encounter difficulties, and he would find new nuns in the event that the founders died.⁵⁹ In any case, when their newly built convent was ready and the nuns made their solemn entrance on 28 June 1608 their number had risen to 28 sisters. While her convent continued to grow steadily, Vittoria renounced all responsibilities in 1615 and passed

⁵⁷ In Vittoria’s own words: “il negozio andarebbe in fumo”. Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Vostra Signoria accordi la Madre e Suor Maria Francesca, che del resto tutte vogliamo essere scalze.” Ibid., 219.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 218.

away two years later. Considering that the Turchine followed strict contemplative rules (written by Bernardino Zanon), the enormous success they experienced in the first decades of their existence was remarkable. When, in 1668, the first convent of the Turchine was founded in Rome, 42 other places – mostly in France – had already preceded it.⁶⁰ Vittoria Strata had succeeded in starting an initiative that elicited trust: the Turchine evidently managed to attract enough financial support and inspired many women to spend their lives in this order. Among them were direct relatives of Cardinal Durazzo: the wife of one of Cardinal Durazzo’s cousins, Maria Maddalena Brignole Sale, and her own daughter Maria Geronima (sister of Ippolito Durazzo whom we encountered in chapter 2) both joined the Turchine.⁶¹

The Medee

Authorities often viewed with suspicion the relative freedom that the “third way” offered women. Yet people were also aware of the fact that, as the Spanish theologian Diego Pérez de Valdivia wrote: “They cannot all become nuns [...] nor can all marry well, even if they wanted to; nor do all of them have a calling or talent to be nuns or wives.”⁶² This realisation sometimes allowed distrust to turn into trust. An anonymous supporter of the Ursulines wrote:

And to tell the truth, should not every father of a family nobly born, with few resources or many daughters (being unable to marry them all or even make them nuns), welcome the fact that there is a praiseworthy third status, in which those who feel themselves disposed to it can quietly stay in their own homes serving God in virginity [...]?⁶³

⁶⁰ All the early foundations of the *Turchine* are extensively discussed in: Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 34–104.

⁶¹ Alfonso, ‘Aspetti’, 468.

⁶² “Y no pueden ser todas monjas [...], ni todas, aunque quisieren, se pueden bien casar; ni tampoco todas tienen llamamiento o talent para monjas o para casadas.” Pérez de Valdivia, *Aviso de gente recogida*, Álvaro Huerga ed. (Madrid: FUE 1977) 156. Cited in and translated by: Weber, ‘Introduction’, 6.

⁶³ Zarri, ‘The Third Status’, 189.

Moreover, religious authorities – particularly the Jesuits – as well as secular authorities at times greatly appreciated what semi-religious women contributed to society: they were important educators and caretakers of the sick, and their devotion to virginity gave them an elevated spiritual status. However, before being able to effectively shape a particular *via media* and finding ways of legitimising it, a certain distrust had to be overcome: the different steps are clearly visible in the genesis of the *Medee*, the second group taken into consideration in this chapter.⁶⁴

Trusting Medea Patellani

The *Medee*, officially called the Sisters of Saint John the Baptist and of Saint Catharine of Siena, were a congregation founded by Medea Ghiglini Patellani in 1594. Born in 1559, she was the daughter of Domenico Ghiglini, who died when Medea was only 14 years old. At the age of seventeen she married a Genoese nobleman, Giulio Patellani. Ten years later, in 1586, her husband passed away and left her widow at a young age, just as had happened to Vittoria Maria Strata. An important difference, however, was that Medea had remained childless, which resulted in great personal freedom: together with her widowhood and fatherlessness, the fact that she had no children allowed her to invest her time and money as she pleased. Though probably less well-off than Strata, and certainly poorer than Virginia Bracelli (whom we will meet in the last part of this chapter), Medea's financial situation enabled her to pursue the ideals that she set herself.

Her starting position was also determined by her bond with the Jesuits. It is unclear when Medea became a confessant of Bernardino Zanoni, the Jesuit who, as we saw earlier, would also become the spiritual leader of Strata, but we do know that by 1587, seven years after Bernardino had arrived in Genoa, he had great trust in her and gave her the responsibility to instruct other women in spiritual matters.⁶⁵ Medea became the leader of a group of devout ladies to which Strata also belonged: “There

⁶⁴ Legitimacy for their way of life could be found in the communities of the first Christians or the life of Mary. Alison Weber, ‘Jesuit Apologias for Laywomen’s Spirituality’, in idem, *Devout Laywomen*, 339–40.

⁶⁵ See for an overview of Medea’s life: Zacchello, ‘Medea’, 163–64.

were some women, confessants of Father Bernardino, who attended more purposely to spiritual life, and used to warn each other of all the flaws they had inside and that were noticeable in exterior conversation.”⁶⁶ Under the auspices of Zanoni, this group of well-off Genoese ladies would slowly move from the well-accepted activities of penitence and prayer, towards a way of life that was less automatically seen as suitable for women, particularly elite women.

An initiative that required trust

What were the activities for which Medea and her companions, in time, had to win trust? According to a manuscript that dates from the early existence of the group, but after their formal recognition by the senate in 1625, Medea and her friends began to live together in 1594, pursuing the ideal of holding “everything in common among them” and of “teaching girls and offering board to others while intending to be diligent in their work”. That the Medee saw theirs as a new religious institution results from the fact that they tried to safeguard its continuity: “Their intention and aim was that this company would not extinguish but continue, which means that, in case of death, others would join in place of those who had passed away.”⁶⁷

Within a few years after they first started living together, the *via media* of the Medee was not only set in their minds as “very different” from life in a cloistered convent, but was also seen by others as a distinct reality, as a clear ‘third status’, that could, for instance, be included in a will.⁶⁸ A good example is a testament of Strata

⁶⁶ “Erano alcune Donne penitenti del P. Bernardino, le quali attendevano più di proposito alla vita spirituale, e solevano avvisarsi di tutto ciò che nell’esteriore conversazione osservato hauesse ciascheduna di difetto nell’altra”. Spinola, *Vita*, 36. Various stories have made it to the hagiographies on Strata about the ways in which Medea would have put her to the test. Cf. *Ibid.*, 166–67.

⁶⁷ “inspirate da Dio” “ogni cosa fosse comune fra esse” “attendendo ogn’una a stare assidua alli lavori, et insegnare a figliuole e prenderne altre a scoto” “L’intenzione e mente loro era che non si dovesse estinguere detta compagnia ma si conservasse, quindi in caso di morte di qualcheduna aggregarsi altre in luogo delle defunte”. *Virginum S. Jo. Baptistae et S. Cath. ae Senen’ Dedicataru’ Collegium sub protectione serenissimi Senatus Reip Genuensis* in Archivio Romano delle Suore Medee, cited in *Ibid.*, 169–70.

⁶⁸ One seventeenth-century account of how Vittoria Strata tried to convince Medea’s group to join her in her convent (just after the turn of the century), emphasises, how from an early stage, these ladies were “very resolved to continue the way of life they had begun”. “Andata [...] a ritoruarle, comunicò loro candidamente il suo desiderio di habitare nella stessa casa, e scoperse il disegno,

herself (dating from August 1602) that stated that under the governance of Medea Patellani a “congregation of spiritual daughters” had been founded that she wanted to see “grow at least until the number of twelve” and to which she intended to leave “twelve thousand *lire* [...] so that with that income, their [own] labour, and the alms of pious Christians they may be able to live together [and] attend to devotion and prayer for me and their other benefactors”.⁶⁹ Interestingly, in this will, Strata described a congregation that was in all things similar to what transpires from the later rules of the Medee, testifying to the fact that, without any formal recognition (which came only in 1625), Medea’s group had already started living the religious life that she had envisioned. First, only girls who were of legitimate birth and good standing could be accepted, on the condition that they had already lived a “spiritual life and frequented the sacraments for at least two years”. Women who did not live up to the standards of the congregation had to be sent away “for the peace of the others”. Another requirement was that they would continue to live together, hear mass daily and pray for one hour twice a day. Finally, the Medee were to take communion every eight days and to confess at the Jesuits. To this effect, they were to find a house near the Gesù; the main church of the Jesuits in Genoa.⁷⁰

The trust that Strata showed here in the initiative of Medea and her friends was explicitly linked to certain rules that were to be followed for their work to qualify

che haueua di stabilire insieme con loro vn nuouo Monastero; ma [...] le trouò molto aliene da simile pensiero, et assai risolute di continuare nell’intrapreso tenore di vita. [...] essendo quelle Vergini già assuefatte alla loro maniera di viuere, non poco differente da quella, che si haueua da introdurre nel Monastero, non sarebbe stato cosi ageuole piegarle all’osseruanza di comunità, che bisognaua”. Spinola, *Vita*, 61.

⁶⁹ “congregatione di figlie spirituale” “crescere almeno fino al numero di dodici oltre la servente lire dodici millia moneta di Genova [...] accio che con tale entrata le loro fatiche et elemosine de i pii cristiani possano vivere insieme, attendere alla diuotione e pregare per me et altri loro benefattori.” Testament of Maria vittoria Strata, ASG, Notai antichi 4310: notaio Grimaldo Peirano, filza n. 19, 3 August 1602. Cited in: Zacchello, ‘Medea’, 186–87.

⁷⁰ “volendo che le figlie che si accetteranno in detta Congregatione siano di legitimo matrimonio dotate, di buoni costumi e che abbino fatta vita spirituale e frequentati i sacramenti almeno per doi anni, se ve ne riuscisse alcuna discola e che turbasse la casa con suoi mali costumi, questa tale non emendandoli aiutata co’l consiglio del suo confessore si debba mandar via per quiete delle altre. [...] tutte habbino da avere in comune come fanno hora frequentare i santi Sacramenti almeno ogn’otto giorni e per ordinario confessarsi dai reverendi padri della compagnia del Gesù et a questo effetto doveranno prender casa vicina alla loro Giesu et udire ogni giorno messa e fare doe ore d’oratione il giorno”. Ibid.

as a viable and trustworthy initiative that would merit the money: “because if they fail this custom and rule, I do not want them to receive the income”.⁷¹ Moreover, the testament stated that, if they were not to live up to these conditions *or* in the event that the archbishop found that the “congregation did not fare well”, the legacy would have to be invested until an income was reached “with which a convent of thirty-three nuns could be maintained who [would] have to be called the nuns of the Annunciation”.⁷² As has already been mentioned, just two years later Strata would indeed initiate a convent of cloistered nuns called the Order of the Most Holy Annunciation, and in a later testament this convent replaced the congregation of the Medee. Reflecting a widespread opinion, Strata considered that the cloistered convent offered a spiritually more elevated life for women.

Lowering the trust threshold

Since their *via media* was not automatically accepted as suitable for women, how could Medea’s initiative still gain the trust it needed to survive? One important way of doing this was to show that it met a certain need in society. The Jesuit Giulio Negrone (1553-1625), born just a few years before Medea in the same city, tried to convince the senate that a congregation of semi-religious women would merit government support. His (undated) description of such a congregation is very similar to the actual make-up of the Medee:

The task is that a place be built where, under the governance of some noble Matron of high morality and honour, [...] girls are being educated who pay for their stay and who will be instructed in the Christian way, in [...] good manners, and all the possible virtues, so that they later, when appropriate, they can be married

⁷¹ “perchè quando mancassero da tale usanza e regola non voglio che godino l’entrata di dette lire dodicimillia”. Ibid.

⁷² “quando questa congregazione non caminasse bene a giudizio dell’illustrissimo reverendissimo Arcivescovo di Genova” “con la quale si possa mantenere un monastero di monache di numero trentatre [...] le quali [...] si dovranno chiamare le monache dell’Annonciata”. Ibid.

by their fathers or family members, or become nuns, depending on their devotion.⁷³

Conscious of the fact that people typically based their trust on experience, Negrone wrote that people knew from experience that these institutions were very beneficial for the city: “The institution that is proposed [...] has already been established in Milan, Naples and other cities many years ago. From [it] [...] great temporal and spiritual fruits are to be hoped for in this city, as experience has shown in those [cities] where a similar institution has already been embraced and favoured.”⁷⁴

Another way that Negrone tried to create room for groups like the Medee in his petition was by giving a voice to the girls who were to be educated by these devout laywomen: “daughters will much more readily go to this place than to the convents; because they will have the company of many others; because they, at times, will be able to go home which they cannot do in the convents; and furthermore, [because] they can be sure that they will not be forced to stay [...] their whole life; and finally because of the many other facilities and enjoyments that are introduced in similar places”.⁷⁵ Studying together, Negrone further argued, led to friendships that could contribute “to the union and peace of the city”, and at the same time, a similar institution could make things easier for men who wanted to choose “virtuous and modest wives”.⁷⁶

⁷³ “L’opera è che si fa un luoco, dove sotto il governo d’alcuna matrona nobile, di spirito e d’honor, si allevino figliole vergini, quali paghino il suo scotto, et ivi sieno instrutte nella via chirstiana, nelli costumi e buone creanze, et tutte le virtù possibili, acciò possino di poi esser maritate al suo tempo dalli loro padri o parenti, o vero farsi monache secondo la loro devotione” Giulio Negrone, *Regole*, in: Berio, miscellanea D. 2. i. - 2 8, f. 24, cited in: Michele Rosi, ‘Appendice. I. Le monache’, in *Il Barro di Paolo Foglietta. Commedia del secolo XVI pubblicata con note ed illustrazioni*, ed. Michele Rosi, Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, XXV (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1892), 501–3.

⁷⁴ “Si propone alle Signorie Vostre la institutione d’un’opera, quale già molti anni sono è stata instituita in Milano, Napoli et altre città, nella cui institutione e conservatione si spera nottabilissimo frutto temporale et spirituale in questa città, come l’esperienza ha mostrato in queste, dove già questa simile opera è stata abbracciata e favorita.” Ibid.

⁷⁵ “le figlie andarano molto più volentieri in questo luoco, che nelli monasterii, per la compagnia de tante, perchè potranno andare alle volte alle case loro, e poi tornarvi, il che non possono far nelli monasterii, et di più saranno sicure che non saranno furzate a star li tutta la vita loro, et finalmente per le molte commodità et trattenimenti che in simil luochi si introducono.” Ibid.

⁷⁶ per la unione et pace della città”, “moglie virtuose e modeste”. Ibid.

Finally, Negrone argued, the practical threshold to get a similar initiative started was relatively low:

To start off everything is very easy, because one merely has to find fifteen to twenty gentlemen who will put their daughters in this place, and when one finds these, ask the senate to install a *magistrato*, like that for the nuns, consisting of serious and virtuous people who will have to protect and govern the place. [...] From the pensions of these girls [...] the rent of a comfortable and suitable place can be paid, as well as the people who are needed to serve them.⁷⁷

Negrone here rightly assumed that trust in an institution like that of the Medee could be more easily won if the senate would vouch for its reliability and would institute deputies to control the semi-religious women. Sufficient trust in the Medee, a third way similar to the one proposed by Negrone, could be won because it was an initiative that only needed a small trust capital to get started (unlike the Turchine) and because their work met a need that was felt in society.

Who gave trust?

A brief examination of who put their trust in the *Medee* confirms what we know from historiography about the supporters of devout laywomen. First, the Jesuits often played an important role in the success of these semi-religious groups for women. Bernardino Zanoni was a protagonist in the success of the Medee. Zanoni was not only confessor of many Genoese nobles, but also a preacher devoted to education: he taught the catechism and composed devotional songs to foster lay piety. It is impossible to tell if starting a new institution devoted to the education of girls was Zanoni's idea. We do know however that, as confessor of Medea and her friends, "he never wanted to collaborate in their pinning themselves down to any particular

⁷⁷ "Il puoner poi tutto in essecutione è facilissimo, perchè basta trovare da quindici, o venti gentilhuomini, quali ponghino in esso luoco le loro figliole, e trovato questi, domandar al Senato che vogli costituire un Magistrato, come quello delle moanche, di persone gravi et virtuose, li quali habbino a protegger et governar detto luoco, et dalli scotti di queste figlie si potrà pagare anco il fitto d'un luoco atto a ciò et comodo, et alsi quelle persone che per servizio loro sono necessarie". Ibid.

initiative, not even the holiest one, [but] only fostered their spirit with his Evangelical counsel [...], [and] thus kept them undecided”.⁷⁸ According to Salvaterra, Zanoni kept them “undecided” because he had the foundation of a cloistered convent (the Turchine) in mind. However, it is not unlikely that Zanoni instead supported Medea’s ideal of the ‘third way’, and kept them “undecided” in order to start a new semi-religious institution. That this trust was not automatic and in fact made Zanoni vulnerable to criticism, is suggested by later orders of his Superior General:

[Zanoni] thought about another convent, and for this [purpose] he had congregated many girls in one place and there were pious men who offered to help Bernardino in that work. It did not please the superiors of the Society that he would only attend to it himself: they ordered him to refrain from it; and he complied with their wish because he was [...] devoted to obedience. From that time, never has he set foot again in that place, unless with the permission of his superior if there was a great need.⁷⁹

Although not explicitly mentioned, it is likely that the place that became forbidden ground for Zanoni actually was the house of the *Medee*. The connection with the Jesuits nonetheless remained strong. In 1616 Medea’s group was still called *confraternitatis nomini Jesu* in an official document.⁸⁰ Their name would eventually change, but the Jesuit influence would continue to be clearly visible in the official rules, written by Medea in 1622: they dictated among other things that the Medee

⁷⁸ “non volle mai cooperare, che s’applicassero ad alcuno partito, ancorchè santissimo, sol promovendo il loro spirito coi suoi consigli Evangelici, [...] tenendole così sospese”. Salvaterra, *La fondazione*, 9.

⁷⁹ “Meditabatur aliud monasterium, atque ob id in unum locum multas puellas coegerat: nec deerant pii viri, qui iuvare Bernardinum in eo opere pollicebantur. Non placuit Superioribus Societatis, ut id ipse curaret: iusserunt abstinere; atque ipse quia versus obedientiae filius desiderium suum cohibuit, et in eum locum numquam ex eo tempore pedem intulit, nisi permissu praepositi sui si quando necessitas magna fuit.” ARSI, Med. 93 f. 37 Cited in Zacchello, ‘Bernardino Zanoni e le fondazioni delle Medee e delle Annunziate a Genova’, 53–54 footnote 46. Zacchello rightly notes that these words do not explicitly mention the Medee but it is very likely that they refer to Zanoni’s connections with them.

⁸⁰ ASG, Notai Antichi 4280, Atti del notaio G. De Federici, 15 October 1616: “Confraternitatis nominis Iesu”.

were to confess at the Jesuits every Sunday and feast day, “and they [were] to be very obedient to them in everything”.⁸¹

Possibly in order to distance himself from the group or to help perpetuate their congregation, Zanoni invited three of his male confessants to support Medea and her friends: Gerolamo Del Bene, Giovanni Battista Sisto and Giorgio Frugoni. The first two functioned as protectors whereas Giorgio provided the Medee “with grain, wine, oil, wood and other things, paying the rent of their house as well, since, in those first years, they did not have the means to maintain themselves because, as the saying goes, the first step is the hardest”.⁸²

The Medee did not aspire to recognition from the archbishop. Interference from Church authority could bring problems of jurisdiction and thus constitute a threat to the self-determination of the congregation. Medea explicitly wrote in her rules: “The said congregation should not be subordinate to the *ordinarius*, because we want it to be guided by reformed people so that [its members] be confirmed in their fervour, and spirit, and grow every day in holiness and perfection.”⁸³ Her words might even indicate that she did not trust the present or any future *ordinarius* to be “reformed” enough. The Medee did eventually petition the senate for recognition, but only three decades after the institution’s foundation. This delay suggests that Medea herself did not feel the need for such recognition or that the advantages would not outweigh the risks of more control from above. In fact, only when Lucrezia Ravano succeeded Medea as superior did they turn to the senate and received formal recognition in 1625. As was customary, the senators appointed three men as protectors of the institution who were to be present on all official occasions such as professions, the chapters that were held every two years and the acceptance of new

⁸¹ “et a essi saranno obedientissime in ogni cosa”. ASG Notai Antichi 4280 Atti del notaio G. De Federici (1622). For the role of the Jesuits in the spirituality of the Medee and other such groups: Mazzonis, ‘The Council’, 204–13.

⁸² “a sue proprie spese [...] di grano, vino, oleo, legne et altre cose pagandoli anco la pigione della casa non avendo esse in quei primi anni il modo di mantenersi per essere come si suol dire tutti li principi debili” *Virginum S. Jo. Baptistae et S. Cath. ae Senen’ Dedicataru’ Collegium sub protectione serenissimi Senatus Reip Genuensis* f. 8v, Archivio Romano delle Suore Medee, cited in: Zacchello, ‘Bernardino Zanoni e le fondazioni delle Medee e delle Annunziate a Genova’, 52.

⁸³ “Detta congregazione non sia soggetta all’ordinario, perche vogliamo sia guidata da persone riformate accio si confermino in feruore, e spirito, et alla giornata cresca di santita e perfettione”. ASG Notai Antichi 4280, Atti del notaio G. De Federici (1622).

members. As we shall see in the third case study, this male authority was a prerequisite for lasting support and trust.

Experiences that elicited trust

We have seen that there was a particular trust-related difficulty that presented itself for contemplative initiatives such as Vittoria Strata's Turchine: it was impossible for them to win the trust of possible supporters by demonstrating their way of living before they even started. Things were different for an apostolic congregation like that of Medea. As the words of the Jesuit Negrone already suggested: with a minimum of trust capital from some benefactors and family, the Medee could live from their work, namely teaching girls. The rules that Medea drew up for her institution and attached to her testament of 1622 show what she herself, after 28 years, saw as practices that she wanted to see perpetuated. First, her followers were to "live everything in common", and thus "become perfect servants of the Lord, striving to live an exemplary life and to edify everyone".⁸⁴ Of course, the motive for this was the salvation of their own souls, but it also was a way to win other people's trust in their work and intentions. Furthermore, Medea saw the education of girls and the teaching of the catechism as a means to spread the faith. Other aspects of their life were very similar to that of cloistered nuns: the Medee started the day with prayer and mass and ended with two hours of prayer. They fasted every Friday, and did penitence before one another once a month. In her rules, Medea emphasised the close bond with the Jesuits, with whom the Medee were to confess regularly. Also, every protector who was appointed for the public dealings of the institution was expected not only to be "of a very mature age, a very qualified person, an experienced man and someone of good reputation and fame", but also to attend "the oratories of the fathers of the Gesù, and someone who often confesses and goes to communion".⁸⁵

⁸⁴ "viuere in commune in ogni cosa", "diuentar perfette serue del S're procurando esser di vitta essemplare con dar bon ediffi'ne a tutti". Ibid.

⁸⁵ "di etta assai mattura persona molto qualificata e sij huomo esperto e persona di buona voce e fame", "li oratorij delli PP. del Giesu, e chi si confessi e comunichi spesso". Ibid.

A last value that, if we consider Medea's rules, was central to her idea of a reliable institution was that of free choice: all women who joined should freely desire to do so and not be constrained by their parents or others. At the same time, the Medee could freely decide to send away a girl who did not live up to their standards:

it is necessary that, if any of those who joined causes scandal and is about to bring a bad reputation to the congregation [and if] being warned, she does not improve [her behaviour], then, by that very fact, [she will be] excluded from the said congregation without having the right to claim anything. The others will first vote on her and if four-fifths of the votes agree, she will be expelled.⁸⁶

That the institution thus managed to avoid a "bad reputation", is clear from the fact that the Medee continued to receive government support throughout the early modern period. Official recognition from the diocese came only in 1920. From 1942 onwards, the congregation fell under pontifical law.⁸⁷

The Brignoline

The two women whose initiatives we have analysed so far, Vittoria and Medea, had been part of the same group of religiously inclined ladies directed by Bernardino Zanoni. Their paths diverged significantly when both consciously chose to be female pioneers in two completely different religious initiatives. The third founder of a new female religious initiative on which this chapter focuses, Virginia Centurione Bracelli (1587-1651), was also related to Vittoria, but in a different way: Virginia was a niece of Stefano Centurione, the foremost patron of the Turchine, whose own wife had been among Vittoria's first companions. The Turchine seem to have occupied an important place in Virginia's life. One of Virginia's daughters would become a Turchina, as would several of her granddaughters. Moreover, Virginia's first public

⁸⁶ "occorendo che Iddio nol voglia che alcuna delle aggregate fosse di scandalo e fusse per apportare mall'odore a detta compagnia se ausata non s'emendera con ipso fato esclusa senza poter pretendere cosa alcuna di detta congregazione mettendola prima a balle e se delli quattro quinti de voti concorreranno sia esclusa". Ibid.

⁸⁷ Zacchello, 'Medea', 179.

charitable initiative was her support of the “Institute for poor rural churches” in the countryside and the Ligurian mountains founded in 1607. Interestingly, the only manual labour that was permitted among the Turchine was making altar cloths “for the poor churches of the mountains”, i.e. to contribute to this initiative.⁸⁸

Trusting Virginia Bracelli

Not only were these three elite ladies all somehow related, their economic and societal position was also very similar. Virginia was born in 1587 into one of the most prominent noble families of Genoa: she was the child of Giorgio Centurione – an active politician, who served as doge of the Republic from 1621-22 – and of Lelia, a daughter of the important Spinola family. Like Medea and Vittoria, Virginia married at a young age in 1603 and, just like them, she too was widowed after a few years, being only 20 years old (in 1607). Her husband, Gaspare Bracelli, had been a very affluent nobleman. Her status as the widow of this rich aristocrat, together with her background as a daughter of a well-to-do and influential family, provided her with relative freedom. She cherished this freedom by refusing her father’s insistence that she remarry. When, in 1614, her father left to become governor of Corsica for several years, Virginia was in a position to dispose of her financial resources. By 1621, when both of her daughters were settled (Virginia was now 34 years old), this freedom became even more substantial. Her father had arranged a marriage for Virginia’s first daughter, Lelia, when she was 13 years old. Lelia and her husband, Benedetto Baciadonne, began living with Virginia, but after a few years Baciadonne “said that he did not want to stay with beguines, and wanted to have fun while he was young and rich”.⁸⁹ That is, at least, what the son of Virginia’s *second* daughter wrote about

⁸⁸ “il laurare di tela per le pouere chiese della Montagna”. *C’a Regula’, et ordine’ etc dedicta per D.D. Carcanos*. ASDM, AS, sezione XII ordini religiosi e congregazioni. Casa di S. Maria dei Sette Dolori (monastero Carcano) Vol. 92/1. 1650-1654, *Atti della controversia tra il Monastero, i Patroni elettori della famiglia Carcano e l’arcivescovo circa il diritto di elezione delle monacande, in seguito ad una riduzione del numero delle monache*.

⁸⁹ “diceva che non voleva stare con beghine, e voleva pigliarsi spasso mentre era giovine e ricco, e passare ai giuochi, ne’ quali si rovinò”. Scipione Alberto Squarciafico, *Embrione della Vita di Virginia* (1681), 121. Original manuscript copied between 1807-1813 by Domenico Piaggio, Ms.B Genoa, Archivio Suore di Nostra Signora del Rifugio. (hereafter: *Embrione*, pagenumber) Large parts of this Ms.B can be found in: *Januen. beatificationis et canonizationis Servae Dei Verginiae Centurione Bracelli*,

his uncle. This second daughter, Isabella, married Giuseppe Squarciafico at the age of 16. They were to have no fewer than 21 children, of whom 13 became religious (eight of them joined the Turchine as would their mother, Isabella, eventually).

Here was a well-to-do widow with a relatively high degree of personal freedom, a very decided character and a charismatic personality. If we may believe one of her biographers, she did not shy away from preaching in one of Genoa's rougher neighbourhoods, San Salvatore, apparently attracting both children and adults to her catechism sessions.⁹⁰ Virginia advocated several popular religious devotions: in 1627, she urged Archbishop De Marini to stimulate the Eucharistic devotion of the *Quarantore* (40 hours), during the carnival season.⁹¹ She also reinitiated the *Compagnia degli orbi*, also called the *cappe rosse* after the red capes they wore during religious processions. The aim of this *compagnia* was to go around "with their violins, two by two, to all the different parts of the city, especially on Saturdays, to sing the litanies, after having lit some candles near the image of Mary, so that [...] on vigils and feast days of Mary, the whole city echoed with praise of her".⁹² Virginia's inclination towards religious activism, her contacts among the social and political elites of the city, her wealth and relative freedom all put her in a position that was advantageous for a woman who ultimately wanted to elicit trust for something radically new.

*viduae fundatricis Instituti Sororum Dominae Nostrae a Refugio in Monte Calvario vulgo 'Brignoline' († 1651), 273–377 (hereafter: Positio, pagenumber). When citing the *Embrione*, I refer to the text included in the *Positio*. Scipione, the author of the *Embrione* was the sixth child (of 21) of Isabella, daughter of Virginia. He wrote his manuscript around 1682. *Positio*, 275.*

⁹⁰ From the summary of one of the catechesis lessons it is clear that Bracelli indeed had an ample knowledge of the Bible, which was not strange for an aristocratic lady of that time. *Positio*, 210-2. The lesson is cited in the Squarciafico, *Embrione*, n. 111-7 and the author ends by indicating (possibly with some exaggeration) that "Con questi simili esempi faceva ben capire da tutti quello che diceva, in modo che non solo alle dottrine che insegnava concorrevano i figlioli alettati da premi, ma uomini attempati, e Religiosi di prima classe, ed aveva essa modi tanto soavi in instruirli, che per ricreazione tutti bastava che si spargeva la voce che doveva far lei la dottrina, che concorrevano tante persone, che si rendeva la Chiesa per ampia che fusse, incapace."

⁹¹ Squarciafico, *Embrione*, n. 128-129, in *Positio*, 316-7.

⁹² "alli sabati particolarmente andavan due a due in tutte le parti della città con i loro violini ad intonare, accesa qualche lampada all'immagine di Maria, le litanie [...] a segno che, in detti giorni, alle vigilie ed alle feste della Madonna si sentiva la città tutta risuonare le sue lodi", Squarciafico, *Embrione*, n. 149, in *Positio*, 320.

A last factor that favoured trust was the institutional role that Bracelli occupied, assuming a leading position in Genoa's existing charitable institutions. In these positions she managed to elicit trust which would later help her in her own project. In 1631, Virginia was chosen by the *Magistrato della Misericordia* as one of the *Otto Signore della Misericordia*. The *Magistrato della Misericordia* under which they fell, dealt with handling large legacies to the Church or to charitable institutions and was run by several Genoese noblemen and presided over by the archbishop or his vicar.⁹³ This *Magistrato della Misericordia*, in turn, was part of the *Ufficio dei Poveri*, a kind of ministry of public assistance that regulated all forms of charity toward the needy.⁹⁴ Each of the Eight Ladies was assigned one neighbourhood and expected to oversee the effectiveness of poor relief. Virginia was appointed to the San Salvatore neighbourhood, of which she wrote in November 1631: “[...] only the most miserable people live there, and [...] many fathers and mothers sleep together with their older children, others do not have a bedsheet, nor a blanket, nor a nightshirt or other things with which to shelter themselves. Therefore, I consider myself obliged to provide a remedy”.⁹⁵ That she invested her activism in an eminent institution that had been operational for many years enabled Bracelli to foster her own reputation and elicit trust.

An initiative that required trust

There was also a downside to Virginia's position in society. The aristocratic urban elites were the first to look down upon women who were active outside the walls of either their home or their convent. Unsurprisingly, Bracelli's activities on the streets encountered resistance, not in the least from her own family. This dynamic is already

⁹³ See also: ASV, Congr. Concilio, Relat. Dioec. 415A Ianuensis, 22r-25v, 12-01-1616, Relatio by archbishop Orazio Spínola who details his relationship with this institution.

⁹⁴ De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 34–35.

⁹⁵ “dove non abita solo le persone più miserabili, et avendo io visitate moltissime case, nelle quali resta afflizione grandissima l'entrarvi non ritrovandoli alloggiamento solo che da bestie, molti padri e madri dormono insieme con i loro figlioli già grandi, altri non hanno saccone, ne coperta, ne camicia, e robba da potersi riparare, però stante quello mi tengo debitrice di procurarli rimedio”. *Invitation from Bracelli to the inhabitants of Genoa, asking to support her in her office as Lady of Mercy*, 10-11-1631, from Squarciafico, *Embrione*, nn. 166-7, cited in: *Positio*, 90-1.

clear in one of her first initiatives from around 1626⁹⁶: the foundation of the Ladies of Mercy (Signore della Misericordia), an organisation that invited aristocratic women to serve the poor via the existing poor-relief institutions. The Ladies of Mercy were supposed to assist the Otto Signore della Misericordia (of which, as mentioned, Bracelli would become a member some years later). From Virginia's invitation to join the new group we learn about Virginia's ideals:

This work [...] is the most worthy and holy that has ever existed. A work that embraces [...] all other both corporal and spiritual works of mercy: that in Genoa no person remains who is not actually known in his true state. We exhort all women to embrace it and give alms to the poor mendicants via the Office of the Poor and the Ladies of Mercy, who (if the alms go to them) will make sure that everybody will get what they need in an orderly manner [...] and the occasion for many lies and frauds will be taken away from these poor [...]. And better education for girls will be provided for, letting them stay indoors under the supervision of these Ladies who want to do charity.⁹⁷

Virginia's charitable project clearly was particularly vast in its claims and approach.

That, because of her position and status, she was in a position to elicit support and trust for such a project is evident from one of the rules that she wrote for her organisation (presumably in 1626):

⁹⁶ Bracelli introduced her Ladies of Mercy saying that the reason to start the initiative was to thank God in particular for "having liberated our republic of many toils, in which she found herself last year": by this Bracelli probably meant the war with Savoy in 1625. "Si tratta in Genova di fare un'opera di Misericordia per ringraziare in parte sua Divina Maestà di tanti benefizi che ne ha fatti, in particolare d'aver liberato la nostra republica da tanti travagli, ne quali era posta l'anno passato". Squarciafico, *Embrione* n. 85; cited in: *Positio*, 80.

⁹⁷ "quest'opera [...] è la più degna, e santa che sia mai stata. Opera che abbraccia e racchiude ogni altra opera di Misericordia tanto corporale come spirituale, offerendosi molte Signore principali d'essere subordinate alle Signore otto della Misericordia acciò, che in Genova non vi resti persona che non si a veramente conosciuto lo stato suo; si esorta tutte a volerla abbracciare, e fare le elemosine a poveri mendicanti, per mezzo dell'Ufficio de poveri e delle Signore della Misericordia, le quali (se le elemosine anderanno in loro) faranno che tutti, con ordine averanno il loro bisogno una volta tanto, e si leverà l'occasione di tante bugie e frodi in quelli poveri [...], e si procurerà miglior educazione alle fanciulle, con farle stare in casa, con la sopra intendenza di queste Signore che vogliono far la carità". Squarciafico, *Embrione* n. 85; cited in: *Positio*, 80.

this Work should be publicised in the pulpits, since it is right and reasonable to highly praise it. All preachers should incite everyone to generously give alms to this blessed work that will be an eternal bulwark against our enemies, a living, true and unique cure in order to preserve our freedom and Republic.⁹⁸

Bracelli did not hesitate to also ask the senate “for a large donation for this project, given that [...] it will be an enormous relief for the whole citizenry, an incredible benefit for the souls of these poor people, [...] and a most firm pillar of their liberty”.⁹⁹ We do not know if she actually obtained financial support for this project from the senate, but it does show that she was in the position to ask for it.

While attracting many elite women to follow her lead, Bracelli took up the role of spiritual leader of these ladies as well as a mentor in practical issues. She advised her followers to visit the needy as if they were visiting the new-born Jesus, and to convince them of the convenience of their assistance. Bracelli also gave very practical advice on how to approach the urban poor: in pairs of two the ladies were to go to one assigned neighbourhood, investigate the situation of every family, provide for the most urgent needs, find jobs for the unemployed, send small children to school, and teach girls manual work.¹⁰⁰ The social services they offered were closely bound to religious aspirations of converting people to a pious lifestyle.

After the initial success of the Ladies of Mercy, their numbers dropped rapidly. Economic decline reduced the private resources that its members could invest. More importantly, however, the work of these women was seen as socially unacceptable and met with too much resistance. One member of the government’s department of poor relief expressly opposed Bracelli’s organisation, and many family members of

⁹⁸ “nei pulpiti, si faccia publicar detta Opera, come è giusto e ragionevole, in estremo lodarla, con esortar ogni predicatore, tutti, a soccorrere con larga mano, d’elemosina, questa benedetta opera, qual sarà eterno propugnacolo contro i nostri nemici, rimedio vivo, vero ed unico per conservare questa libertà e Repubblica” *Costituzioni per la Congregazione delle “Signore della Misericordia protettrici e sovvenitrici dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, Squarciafico, *Embrione*, nn. 90-102, cited in *Positio*, 85-90: 89.

⁹⁹ “Serenissimo Senato, per la confermazione di detti capitoli, e successivamente, [...] d’una larga lemosina per detta opera, poscia che, [...], sarà un grandissimo sgravamento a tutta la cittadinanza, giovamento indicibile alle anime di queste povere persone, e stabilimento, e colonna fermissima di questa libertà”, *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ *Costituzioni* reported in: Squarciafico, *Embrione* nn. 90-102, cited in *Positio*, 85-90.

these elite ladies apparently followed suit. Interestingly, Susan Dinan describes the exact same dynamic for the Ladies of Charity who were founded in France during the same years and who much resembled Bracelli's Ladies of Mercy in their tasks and make-up: "real issues of security and social pressure often made it awkward, if not impossible, for a Lady to have regular contact with the poor in an intimate setting" and thus to continue her work.¹⁰¹ De Marillac's solution to this problem resembles the solution that Bracelli would eventually adopt: ladies from the social elites were only asked to *manage* the operations of De Marillac's congregation as members of the board of directors and principal fundraisers. At the same time, De Marillac encouraged women of lower social ranks to join her Daughters of Charity so that they could do the practical work among the poor. This approach would eventually also bring success to Bracelli's attempts: the Brignoline – her main initiative that *did* successfully continue, also after Bracelli's death – consisted of poor girls whom she sheltered and provided with an education, and who, in turn, dedicated themselves to poor relief and the care of the sick.

Lowering the trust threshold

Yet, before we come to this successful initiative, we have to consider what factors helped to broaden the freedom of movement of Bracelli, a freedom that was not obvious in a society where elite ladies' activities on the street were viewed with suspicion. One important factor was the economic situation of Genoa in the 1620s that I already touched upon in the first chapter. The city experienced a crisis in 1622 because of faltering trade and the financial depression of Spain. Production staggered while poverty and unemployment were on the rise so that the city teemed with poor people. During the winter of 1624-25 Virginia obtained permission from her mother-in-law to house around fourteen poor girls in the latter's house. In Genoa, taking in girls in need or in undesirable situations or offering them other help was a typical means of providing charity among aristocratic ladies of the time.¹⁰² The war with Savoy in 1625 only worsened the situation: fleeing from the hostile armies, many

¹⁰¹ Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief*, 40.

¹⁰² Fontana, *Memoria e santità*, 112, footnote 1.

people from the Riviera di Ponente arrived in Genoa and were forced to live on the streets, begging for food and shelter. Like many other rich families, Virginia gave shelter to several people in need, in particular women. When the armies left, most of them returned to their homes but some stayed for various reasons. Bracelli looked after them using the money that she had raised during the state of emergency. After the death of her mother-in-law that same year, Bracelli's strategy was to use both her increased liberty and the state of affairs created by the recent crisis to build on this charitable initiative. Going around in the poorest neighbourhoods she gathered girls in need and sheltered them in the *palazzo* on the via Lomellini. A second wave of refugees arrived during the plague epidemic and famine of 1629-30, when people from as far as Lombardy sought refuge in Genoa. By then, Bracelli permanently housed around forty women and began looking for a place to receive even more. We should remember that, as Nicholas Terpstra writes, "apart from episodes of famine and plague, what bedeviled and preoccupied cities most of all were the intractable realities of women's life cycle poverty". Many charitable institutions were directed especially at women and "[i]t was the help given to women that most often broke new ground".¹⁰³ The focus of Bracelli's new religious institution on women in the most problematic situations therefore answered to a need that was widely felt in early modern society.

A second important experience with which Bracelli was able to foster a reputation of reliability was her appointment to reform the Lazzaretto, in September 1632.¹⁰⁴ The Lazzaretto was part of the system of government assistance to the poor. Intended by its founder, Ettore Vernazza, to shelter people afflicted by the plague epidemic, by the 1630s – about one century after its foundation – it housed around 600 poor people.¹⁰⁵ The practical problem that the government faced was "the risk

¹⁰³ Nicholas Terpstra, *Cultures of Charity: Women, Politics, and the Reform of Poor Relief in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013), 2–3.

¹⁰⁴ "affinché Ella possa (così volendo) impiegarsi in servizio d'essi, ordinando, disponendo consigliando ed incamminando tuttociò che stimerà ben fatto e necessario per il buon governo". Decree with which the *Magistrato dei Poveri* assigns the care of the Lazzaretto to Bracelli, 01-09-1632. Copy from 28-7-1806 in AR. extragiud. Z. cart IV, cited in: *Positio*, 101.

¹⁰⁵ *Capitoli del Lazzaretto*, 29-11-1636, p. 3, 15. Cited in: *Positio*, 95. See also: De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 35, 39.

of infection in the city because of the lack of care that could be given to such a large crowd”.¹⁰⁶ In 1628, four years before her appointment, Bracelli had already voiced her ideas on the changes that she envisioned for this particular institution. First, she insisted that all basic needs should be met before one could proceed to general reform.¹⁰⁷ Only with patience, winning the trust of the residents by meeting their elementary needs and offering spiritual assistance in order to “calm the whole place down”¹⁰⁸, could effective changes be made. Bracelli even wrote: “this reform will happen, but in the process we should not want to do anything other than to please everyone”.¹⁰⁹ That Virginia managed to implement her ideas is reflected by the new decrees of the institution, published in 1633 and 1635, which echo the priorities suggested by Bracelli and resemble the rules of her own *Opera* (more on this below).¹¹⁰ Virginia’s successful contribution generated trust: the 1635 chapters of the Lazzaretto mention that, from then on, the board of the Lazzaretto should always welcome one of the Eight Ladies of Mercy, that is to say, a lady with Bracelli’s position, and that the other members should value her suggestions “as stemming from pure zeal to do good” because they could not “but be very prudent and good”.¹¹¹

Who gave trust?

Whose trust did Virginia Bracelli manage to win for her main project, the foundation of a semi-religious institution for girls? In the first instance, support mainly came

¹⁰⁶ “il rischio [...] d’infettione della Città per la poca cura che in tanta folla di poveri si è potuta avere”, *Capitoli del Lazzaretto*, 29-11-1636, p. 15. Cited in: *Positio*, 95.

¹⁰⁷ “To questa notte ho avuto molto travaglio per quelle persone che sono nella riforma con mancamento di tante cose, [...] vorrei [...] differire tanto a ponerli in riforma, che se le possa dare li suoi bisogni, intanto lasciarli fare a suo modo [...] Io desidero già che le cose vanno in questo modo, andar pigando con suavità” Letter from Virginia Bracelli to a father on the conditions of the Lazzaretto, 02-02-1628, in Squarciafico, *Embrione*, n. 180, cited in *Positio*, 98-9.

¹⁰⁸ “quietare tutto il luogo”, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ “questa riforma si farà, ma intanto non vorrei che facessimo altro che piacere a tutti”, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Her priorities being: first meeting the essential needs and offering a house to those who would otherwise return to begging, hosting all vagabond children and teaching them a trade, and offering all residents some manual labour in order to avoid idleness.

¹¹¹ “come prodotti da puro zelo di giovare, non potranno essere che molto prudenti e buoni”, *Capitoli del Lazzaretto*, 29-11-1636, p.12. Cited in: *Positio*, 96.

from her family. Being the daughter of a Genoese doge, she obviously benefitted from her family's network and position in society. When her own house became too small for the number of girls that she wanted to host, Giovanni Francesco and Giovanna Lomellini, family members of Bracelli's deceased mother-in-law, advised and helped her to rent the empty place called the convent "of Calvary Mountain", or "of the Visitation".¹¹² Within a year the forty women that she transferred to this new place on 14 April 1631 became 170.¹¹³ The business of her son-in-law, Giuseppe Squarciafico, would become the most important source of income for the initiative that she started in this house and which she called *Opera di Santa Maria del Rifugio in Monte Calvario*. It was later commonly known as the Brignoline after Emanuele Brignole who became the most important patron and benefactor of the institution (Brignole was a wealthy nobleman and close collaborator of Cardinal Durazzo¹¹⁴). It was customary for rich families to donate part of their profit to a religious institution, but the repercussions of the financial crisis affected Squarciafico's company and thus made themselves felt in Bracelli's *Opera*. Still, it was this initial support from close family that helped her to start off her initiative. In time, the *Opera* would also receive trust in the form of donations and legates from people more remotely related to Bracelli.¹¹⁵

After a year and a half in which Bracelli managed to keep her *Opera del Rifugio* working, in September 1632 she first approached the senate for official support. She obtained a first mark of trust when the senate promised to temporarily subsidise the house of Monte Calvario with "half a mouthful of bread" a day for every inhabitant.¹¹⁶ The only condition for women to be allowed to stay in this first *Opera*

¹¹² Magaglio, 'L'assistenza', 333.

¹¹³ ASG, *Atti di G.B. Bancherio*, an. 1624, cited in: *Positio*, 106.

¹¹⁴ He was also a cousin of the senator turned Jesuit, Anton Giulio Brignole Sale, one of the most famous figures of seventeenth-century Genoa.

¹¹⁵ People who include Bracelli's project in their will are, amongst others, the stepmother of Bracelli (the third wife of her father) Ersilia Cattaneo de Marini, and Domenico de' Marini (related to Ersilia?), one cousin of Cardinal Stefano Durazzo becomes patron, Giacomo Filippo Durazzo, whilst a sister-in-law of the cardinal, Giovanna Cervetto, includes Bracelli's work in her will as does Virginia Giustiniani (wife of Giovanni Battista Durazzo) and others. See: *Positio*, 116-121.

¹¹⁶ "mezza bocca di pane".

was that they would live in obedience, do manual labour and pray.¹¹⁷ Before December 1633, Bracelli had managed to open a second house for the more religiously inclined women of her *Opera*.¹¹⁸ When, in autumn 1635, she planned to buy a third house, Bracelli needed official recognition from the senate for her organisation.¹¹⁹ In her request, Virginia emphasised its secular character:

For some time now, thanks to the exceptional providence of God, a good number of women of all backgrounds, miserable conditions and deprived of all human help, have been brought to the house, or houses, called *Santa Maria del Rifugio* [...]. They live in these houses [...] under the governance and care of a lay person with rigorous discipline and seclusion, without, however, any obligation to make vows, wear a habit, or [attend] ecclesiastical ceremonies. They provide for their own living, clothing and other necessary expenses with the work of their own hands and some help from pious people, and at the same time they are being educated in the service of the Lord, and being kept free from any scandal.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ “the institution receives [...] every poor woman, young or old [...], wretches of every sort, as long as they accept obedience in this place” “si riceve senza dilazione ogni povera, giovine, et anco vecchie, figlie, grandi e piccole, derelitte d’ogni qualità, purché si vogliano contentare di entrare nell’ub’idienza di detto luogo” Letter from Virginia Bracelli to the wife of Giovan Francesco Spinola, 10-12-1633, from Squarciafico, *Embrione*, appendice n. 2, cited in *Positio*, 111-2.

¹¹⁸ In a letter of 10-12-1633 Bracelli mentions this second house: Letter from Virginia Bracelli to the wife of Giovan Francesco Spinola, 10-12-1633, from Squarciafico, *Embrione*, Appendix n. 2, cited in *Positio*, 111-2: 112.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Positio*, 114.

¹²⁰ “Da qualche tempo in qua per singular provvidenza di Dio resta ridotto in casa, o case nominate Santa Maria del Rifugio, un buon numero di femine d’ogni qualità, e conditione miserabili, e prive d’ogni humano sussidio [...]. Vivono in d’e case [...] sotto il governo e cura di persona laica con rigorosa disciplina e retiratezza, senza però obbligo alcuno ne di voti, ne d’habiti, ne di cerimonie ecclesiastiche, e col lavoro delle proprie mani, e qualche aguto di persone pie, si vanno mantenendo di vitto e vestito et altre spese necessarie, et in un istesso tempo s’instruiscono nel servitio di Dio, e si preservano libera da ogni scandalo” Letter from Virginia Bracelli to the senate, 29-11-1635, ASG, Atti del Senato, Sala B., cited in: *Positio*, 115.

On 13 December 1635, the different houses of Bracelli indeed received recognition as one charitable institute under the name of *Opera di Santa Maria del Rifugio*, which was defined as “a public work of benefit for the Republic”.¹²¹

Experiences that elicited trust

In her 1635 letter to the senate, Bracelli mentioned that her *Opera* was “*known by experience* [to be] of great benefit” and had therefore received enough money to buy a house.¹²² Once again, it was positive experiences that fostered trust. The same was true for that part of her *Opera* that was more strictly religious. The second community that Bracelli started in 1633 was housed in a property owned by her son-in-law, Benedetto Baciadonne, in Bisagno. The ninety women that moved in there were the ones who felt more inclined to religious life:

there, they will govern themselves and pay their rent, they only need clothes [...] and they live in perfect communion, in the way of nuns; only those who think about serving the Lord for their whole life in that congregation go to this house; occupied as they are with earning their living with their own hands and continuously praising God, I deem them the most glad and happy creatures that I can think of in this life.¹²³

Though Bracelli called this second house a convent and all women were required to wear the same habit, they were lay sisters rather than nuns: the women were not obliged to make vows and could leave whenever they wanted, on the condition that they had found an appropriate alternative. Interestingly, these lower-class women did not find the elites opposed to their inclinations of semi-religious life, quite the contrary: whereas it had been impossible for Bracelli to gather elite women to do

¹²¹ The rescript (dated 13-12-1635) on the back of Virginia’s request testifies to the Senate’s recognition of Virginia’s institutions “tamquam opus publicum seu pro Reipublicae utilitate”. Cited in: Positio, 15-16.

¹²² “conosciuta per esperienza di tanto profitto”. Letter from Virginia Bracelli to the senate, 29-11-1635, ASG, Atti del Senato, Sala B., cited in: Positio, 115.

¹²³ “[li] si governano e pagano la sua pigione, solo tengono bisogno del vestire, il quale è di arbasio, e vivono tutte in perfetta Comunità, a modo di Religiose; andando in detta Casa solo quelle, che pensano servir nostro Signore, tutto il tempo di sua vita, in detta Congregazione, occupate a guadagnarsi il vitto con le proprie mani, e lodar continuamente il Signore, le stimo le più contente, e felici creature che io mi sappi immaginare in questa vita.” Ibid.

religiously inspired work among the poor because of opposition from their family and others, for poor women that would otherwise flock the streets of Genoa an honourable religious path was more than welcome. For them, the trust threshold was apparently much lower.

That this experience of semi-religious life was attractive to many girls is evident from the fact that by 1658 the same convent housed 172 “daughters”, while a third house with the same rules had been founded before 1635. The first house meanwhile continued to receive many poor girls with no particular religious inclination. The lay sisters in the second and third houses started an active apostolate outside their convents: from 1644 onwards these “women dressed like nuns” began working in Pammatone, the main hospital in Genoa, and later in the Lazzaretto (1649).¹²⁴ One author reported that during the years of the plague epidemic (1656-7) more than 50 *figlie* died while caring for the sick in the Lazzaretto.¹²⁵ Despite the decrees of Trent and other instructions that limited possibilities to live the third status, Bracelli’s religious institution for active women was able to become successful because it answered some of the city’s needs: housing and educating the daughters of poor families and staffing the urban hospitals.¹²⁶

Deception or trust?

Whereas Strata’s enclosed convent, once started, was socially accepted by everyone, and Medea’s small-scale, semi-religious initiative can hardly have attracted all that much attention, things were different for Virginia Bracelli: her *figlie*, though following certain monastic habits, lived an active apostolate working in the public health care institutions of Genoa. Also, their numbers were completely different: by

¹²⁴ “quel numero di Donne vestite da Monache, che sono nel Monastero del Monte Calvario, per l’instradamento del lavorero, che si desidera introdurre in detto Lazzaretto, che le parranno necessarie, et ad esse assignarle quella razione e trattamento che le parrà.” Decreto del “Prestantissimo Ufficio dei Poveri” che autorizza a mettere alla direzione del laboratorio femminile del Lazzaretto le religiose del Montecalvario, 22-11-1650, from the Capitoli del Lazzaretto, cited in: *Positio*, 103.

¹²⁵ Mentioned in: Antero Maria di San Bonaventura, *Li lazzaretti della città e Riviera di Genova del 1657*, Genoa 1658, pp. 62, 209, 219, 41, 251, 334, cited in; *Positio*, 103.

¹²⁶ Cf. Terraccia, ‘Case sante’, 317.

1645 already four hundred needy women were being assisted in Bracelli's institution.¹²⁷ Perhaps inevitably, it attracted much more attention and opposition than the other two initiatives. The question arises of how Bracelli made sure that this particular way of semi-religious life continued as she intended it.

First, she had to accept male protectors for her institution. All religious and charitable institutions of the city were required to have a *protectoria*, whose members were appointed by the government.¹²⁸ Derived from the urban nobility, these protectors were usually also among the most generous donors. They were the legal representatives of a charitable institution in financial and administrative matters. In 1641, the government assigned three patrons to the *Opera del Rifugio* at the request of Bracelli. These three had already been unofficial protectors for several years.¹²⁹ Probably because of this personal link, Bracelli decided to leave all power to these protectors: they became the spiritual and administrative superiors of the institution.¹³⁰ After Bracelli's death in 1651, the protectors gained complete control over the *Opera* and elected the new mother superior and her vicar (while the sisters' vote was only consultative).¹³¹ Virginia's readiness to leave her *Opera* in the hands of protectors appointed by the government may be one of the reasons that her semi-religious form of life for women could endure and grow, enjoying the trust of the laity.

The second way in which Bracelli ensured the continuation of her organisation, without ever labeling her *Opera* as an official religious institution, was by winning the trust of ecclesiastics. Though she had always been active in personally

¹²⁷ Decreto del Senato che autorizza i notai a raccomandare ai testatori l'Opera del Rifugio in Monte Calvario, 09-02-1645, ASG, Manuale Decreti Senato, 894, f. 25, cited in: *Positio*, 190.

¹²⁸ See for an example of this process: Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 210. See for a good explanation of the "protectoria": De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 44, footnote 26.

¹²⁹ Cf. *Positio*, 136-140.

¹³⁰ "3'o Rinuncio quanto possiedo in servizio di Dio, e per me non piglierò altro che quello che mi sarà ordinato dai Superiori." Bracelli's propositions as reported in Squarciafico, *Embrione*, no. 122, cited in: *Positio*, 75.

¹³¹ *Regole et Constitutioni che devono osservarsi nelle case di Nostra Signora del Refugio nel Calvario*, written somewhere between 1644 and 1650, cited in: *Positio*, 181-3: 183. It is unclear who wrote these rules, most probably written somewhere between 1644 and 1650 when Bracelli was still alive, or at most a little later. Cf. *Positio*, 179. That this was not unusual is clear from an example in: Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 212.

educating and spiritually assisting the women who lived in her houses, she also involved several priests as chaplains to foster piety among them. The oldest rules of the institution focused on the religious life that Bracelli's women should lead: from fasting, to daily prayers, weekly confession and communion.¹³² At the same time, she decided never to let her sisters profess vows so as to avoid the enclosure that was expected of professed nuns (just as the Daughters of Charity did). This choice enabled them to continue their work in public institutions. Virginia did however urge her *figlie* to work in the hospitals *as if they were constrained by a vow* and to see their way of semi-religious life as no less than that of contemplative sisters. The rules of Bracelli's institution furthermore read: "it greatly pleases His Divine Majesty to see them at work in his service, bound only with chains of love, and they should furthermore know that, as far as the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are concerned, these should not be observed less among them than in the most observant religious orders".¹³³

Bracelli's collaboration with Emanuele Brignole, who in 1650 became a fourth protector of the *Opera del Rifugio*, furthermore contributed to safeguarding the continuation of her institution. This wealthy friend of Cardinal Durazzo also supervised the building of the new seminary and took the lead in the construction of the *Albergo dei Poveri*; a huge edifice destined to house the urban poor, while providing

¹³² Cf. *Regole et Constitutioni*, in: *Positio*, 181-3: 181. An interesting rule is number 13 which indicates that both the sisters that devoted themselves to religious life, and the women who did not make this commitment were to be treated equally: "La Madre ogni Domenica finita la ricreazione dopo il pranzo et l'inverno la sera sonata l'Ave Maria farà il Capitolo, al quale interveranno tutte le monache, et in esso... Primieramente domanderà à chi le parrà meglio del Stato genereale della Casa per intendere se s'introduce qualche abuso da levar via, et se occorre qualche cosa tanto circa il governo spirituale, quanto circa il temporale, che sia bene introdurre, et darne parte, à Signori Protettori, come anco domanderà se gli occorre niente intorno alle persone di Casa si monache, come secolari [...]. . Haveranno in comune li habitì, veli, biancarie, et altre cose quali saranno conforme alla santà povertà franciscana povere, et vili".

¹³³ "Facciano conto, e stima grande del loro istituto, come venuto dal Cielo, né pensino di esser meno accette à Dio perché non vivano in obbligo, ò di clausura, o di voti piacendo assai à Sua Divina Maesta di vederle impiegate in suo servitio, legate solo con catene d'amore, et con tutto ciò sappiano, che quanto a i voti di povertà, castità ed obediènza non meno doveranno esser in osservanza appresso di loro che nelle Religioni più osservanti". *Regole et Constitutioni*, in: *Positio*, 181-3: 181.

them with work, health care and education.¹³⁴ In 1664, Brignole called the sisters of Bracelli to work in this *Albergo*. Operating under the authority of the *Albergo*'s supervisors, they slowly started to be identified exclusively with Brignole's initiative, and were commonly called Brignoline.¹³⁵ The regulations that Brignole wrote in 1656 (together with the other patrons) highlight again the secular character of the institution. He insisted, for instance, that "they should not call themselves nuns but handmaidens of Our Lady of the Refuge on Calvary" and that their habit should be that of tertiaries.¹³⁶

Because of this strong emphasis on their secular character, the *Suore del Rifugio* remained independent of ecclesiastical authority and devoid of canonical recognition until the end of the nineteenth century. However, they did enjoy support from the Genoese archbishop, Cardinal Durazzo, and other high ecclesiastics who were involved in its development.¹³⁷ One biographer even wrote that the cardinal and Virginia treated each other confidentially, "and she was greatly esteemed by the prelate [...] who admired her as a holy person, knowing that she had developed all the virtues, especially that of obedience towards one's superiors".¹³⁸ It was not by deceiving these Church leaders, but by gaining the trust and support that was elicited by the social and spiritual benefits of this group, together with a careful self-definition of the institution, that enabled Bracelli's Brignoline to become a successful alternative

¹³⁴ Among the main (financial) supporters of the *Albergo* were Cardinal Durazzo himself, but also Emanuele's cousin Anton Giulio Brignole Sale, Girolamo Durazzo, Giuseppe Maria Durazzo, Giacomo Filippo Durazzo, Gio Francesco Granello and Father Luigi. De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 55–56, 61.

¹³⁵ Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 218.

¹³⁶ "non debbano chiamarsi Monache ma Serve di Nostra Signora del Rifuggio nel Calvario" *Decree of the patrons on the juridical nature of the Opera* 06-08-1656. Copy in: Genova, AR, fogliazzo degli anni 1644-1676, n. 46. *Positio*, 185.

¹³⁷ The informal influence and support of Cardinal Durazzo appears from a line in a decree of the protectors of 6 August 1656: "volendo finalmente [...] anche per incontrare le menti dell'Eminentissimo Nostro Arcivescovo, che quelle che con vera devozione, e staccamento dal mondo si saranno con l'esperienza di molti anni passati con edificazione in detta Opera, date totalmente a Dio, non habbino mai che pensare che debba essere di loro nel rimanente della lor vita, né dare orecchio à simili tentationi." Ibid.

¹³⁸ "fra deto Eminentissimo e la signora Virginia vi era confidenza; ed essa era appresso detto prelato in concetto grandissimo, e stimatissimo, ammirandola esso come persona santa, conoscendola stabilita in tutte le virtù, particolarmente nell'ubbidienza a' superiori". Squarciafico, *Embrione*, p. 233, cited in: Musso, *Il Cardinale*, 194.

to the Genoese secluded convents. If we may believe the Augustinian friar Antero Maria da San Bonaventura Micone, in 1661 the different *conservatori* of Bracelli combined, housed around a thousand women.¹³⁹

Savona's Medee and the importance of freedom

Above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force; because God has given free will to everyone, and wants to force no one, but only proposes, invites and counsels.¹⁴⁰

Angela Merici, founder of the Ursulines, gave this advice to her followers in the 1530s. She envisioned that the women who joined her would freely acknowledge and accept to follow her rules. Mazzonis' statistical linguistic analysis of these rules demonstrates that the verb "to want" (*volere*) appears 62 times as opposed to three times in which she used the verb "dovere", meaning must. Angela's language of free choice, of "voluntarily making to God the sacrifice of her own heart", resonates with the words used by a group of four women who lived a century later in Savona, 50 kilometres west of Genoa.¹⁴¹ Following the example of the Medee, in 1666 these four women aspired to "devote themselves to teaching daughters, have others board with them and teach the Christian doctrine on feast days, imitating in everything the [...] Medee and other similar daughters [...] in other cities".¹⁴² The continuity and spread of the semi-religious form of life of the Medee – according to the women involved – hinged on freedom: only in freedom, could theirs become a trustworthy, honourable institution.

¹³⁹ Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 200.

¹⁴⁰ Prologue of the *Regula della Compagnia de Santa Orsola*, cited in: Querciolo Mazzonis, *Spirituality, Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy: Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 173.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁴² "impiegarsi nell'ammaestrare le figlie, tenerne altre in educatione ed insegnare alle feste la dottrina Christiana, in tutto imitando dette Maestre Medee ed altre Figlie simili già dette delle altre Città". Letter from the Medee-like religious women to the Genoese senate, Savona, 23 February 1666. All the subsequent citations are from: ASG, AS, *Iurisdictionium* 1118, mazzo 28, no. 50. The folder (no. 50) contains this letter from February, one written by the same women to the Senate in May, and an appendix to one of these two letters.

In a letter of 23 February 1666 to the *Serenissima Repubblica*, the prospective Medee of Savona complained that their local bishop strongly opposed their initiative and thus gave rise to “many rumours in the city”.¹⁴³ Unlike the Medee in Genoa, the women in Savona apparently did not manage to avoid ecclesial interference and the disapproval of the bishop was causing reputational damage. The bishop had immediately ordered the disbanding of the group under the pretext that “with private authority only” they wanted to start a new religious order, one that even resembled “that one that Urban VIII prohibited with his bull”, i.e. the congregation of Mary Ward. In an attempt to defend themselves, the women argued that, since they differed from seculars in nothing other than their “modest and scorned habit,” it was most unjust that Savona’s bishop saw them as part of his jurisdiction.¹⁴⁴

To emphasise their independence and seek government protection against the “nuisance that the most illustrious monsignor [was] causing them with his orders”,¹⁴⁵ the four women in Savona sought secular recognition for their institution. In their petition they asked the senators:

to ensure that they are again left free and are not unjustly disturbed in their holy intentions, [and that they will] protect them and their house in the future, recognising them as subjects, [...] so that these most devout daughters will thus always be defended against anything that might happen to them at the hands of those who they do not recognise as masters, and [...] live in secular habit [...], both for the convenience of their souls [...], and for the benefit of the city.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ “molte dicerie nella Città”. Letter to the Genoese senate, Savona, 23 February 1666.

¹⁴⁴ “con sola auctorità priuata” “quella da Urbano VIII con sua Bolla prohibita” “habito dimesso e disprezzato.” Appendix B (archived next to the letters of the religious women of Savona to the Senate).

¹⁴⁵ “molestie, che con suoi ordini li cagiona Monsignor Ill’mo”. Letter to the Genoese senate, Savona, 23 February 1666.

¹⁴⁶ “uogliano non solo [...] fare sijno di nuouo poste in libertà, e non sturbate indebitamente dà loro santi propositi, ma anche uogliano degnarsi di prendere di esse e d’a Casa loro ogni protezione per l’auuenire riconoscendole fra loro sudite e Figlie diuotissime restino sempre difese con questo da ogni incontro uenir li possa, da chi non riconoscono per Padrone, ed in habito secolare uiuere [...], tanto per utile dell’anime loro [...], come per beneficio d’a Città”. Ibid.

Insisting on the convenience of their institution for the city, namely that young girls would be taken care of, the women argued that their goal was “to live all together, as sisters, without being subject to rules, except the Rule of all piety and devotion”. They underlined the equality among them and their rejection of titles such as “abbess or prioress”. One of the reasons why Mary Ward’s congregation had been suppressed was because its hierarchical structure resembled that of a religious order. In order to avoid a similar fate, the group in Savona explicitly wrote that their members would “only pay the respect that is due to the oldest ones, to whose will they shall strive to answer like daughters towards their mothers, since there is no cohesive body [...] without a head”.¹⁴⁷ The group from Savona also rejected all other attributes that could create a resemblance with a real convent such as a chapter, a church, enclosure, vows, and the habit of nuns (similar to the tactics of the Daughters of Charity). They tried to convince the senate of the reliability and honourability of their institution by claiming that “many of the most distinguished Ladies and the most honourable Princesses” chose to become part of similar groups of devout laywomen, “preferring these houses over secluded convents”.¹⁴⁸ Also the concluding words of their petition to the senate were meant to elicit trust: “by working with sincerity of heart, and desiring to do nothing more in the future than what they have said and shown to desire up till now, they will always gladly know that everyone is certain of their aspirations”.¹⁴⁹ This promised stability was to overcome the distrust that poorly defined semi-religious groups usually encountered.

Besides emphasising their material independence (they aimed to live on non-compulsory dowries and the revenues of teaching), in their petition the women also underlined the radical spiritual freedom and independence from authority that they

¹⁴⁷ “uiuere tutte insieme, come sorelle, senza’altra sogettione di Regole, solo sogette alla Regola d’ogni pietà e diuotione [...], non haueranno altra distintione di Abbadezza o Priorezza (come per disprezzo si dice) ma solo porteranno quel rispetto che si deue alle più uecchie à uoleri della quale procureranno di andarsi accomodando come figlie uerso la madre non potendosi dar caso, che si troui un corpo d’unione ben regolato senza capo” Appendix B.

¹⁴⁸ “molte e molte Signore principalissime, e Principezze di gran Conto antepoendo queste case à monasteri rinchiusi” Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ “operando con la sincerità nel cuore, non più uolendo fare nell’auuenire di quel ch’hanno detto, o mostrato di uoler far hora, gusteranno sempre ch’ogn’uno resti certo della loro uolontà” Ibid.

envisioned: “they will confess with whomever they please [...] and whoever will hear their confession will have no say whatsoever in matters of governance”. Still, the four women showed a particular preference for the Jesuits although they strongly repudiated the accusation of being *Giesuitesse*, “because if they are not, one should not call them by this name”: “they want to continue [...] to confess with [the Jesuits] and frequent their Church, but they can always confess with others if they want, following their preference [and] using their freedom”.¹⁵⁰ The importance of freedom is also clear in the lines about leaving the company: “And if they do not like living together, all of them will be free to go [...] claiming back their dowry and also to marry, if they want.”¹⁵¹

Again, as in the sphere of cloistered convents, one’s take on freedom determined what one saw as trustworthy religious alternatives for women. In the eyes of the women who aspired to become the new Medee of Savona, it was their freedom that helped them to be reliable:

since they go out [on the streets], they are forced to show that they are more exemplary by reason of their robust inner holiness that obliges them to show that their spirit is more contained [...], and it distracts them from pursuing those major liberties that secluded nuns very soon seize, tempted as they are because they find themselves forever enclosed within four walls.¹⁵²

For many others, such as Savona’s bishop, however, it was this freedom that initially made the women suspicious or even untrustworthy in their eyes.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ “perche se non lo sono, ne si puon dire tali” “si confesseranno da chi loro piacerà [...] e chi le confesserà non hauerà sopra di esse soprintendenza alcuna di gouerno, onde siano quelle tenute di pendere da lui, come da loro superioree se bene queste, come già Penitenti de Padri Giesuiti uogliono anche unite seguitare à confessarsi dall’istessi e frequentar la loro Chiesa, potranno però sempre confessarsi da altri, uolendo, secondo li piacerà, godendo della loro libertà.” Ibid.

¹⁵¹ “E quando non li piaccia uiuer insieme tutte saranno in libertà di potersene andare [...] rippigliata la sua dote, et anche maritarsi, se uorranno”. Ibid.

¹⁵² “Perché con questo uscire restano costrette di dimostrarsi più esemplari con il fondamento d’una soda santità interna, che l’obbliga di dimostrarsi più ritirate in se stesse e nella propria persona più guardinghe e le distrae dal ricercare quelle maggiori libertà che ben presto si procacciano le claustrali, tentate di ritrovarsi per sempre dentro quattro mura rinchiuse”. Ibid.

¹⁵³ Gemma Borgonovo writes of “a clear lack of trust in women” that was challenged “by the new religious [...] in a coragous way” (“una palese mancanza di fiducia nella donna per cui le nuove

Precisely because of their emphasis on freedom, the initiative of the four women in Savona almost failed to acquire sufficient trust. Their case was finally resolved in correspondence between the bishop, the Genoese senate and the local Jesuits: the latter apparently managed to convince the bishop of the trustworthiness of the initiative. With the bishop's *placet*, the group started to operate under the name of *Suore della Purificazione di Maria Santissima*, the feast day on which they had first gathered before their dismantlement (2 February). They were joined by another sister, Angela Maria Sordi, who would become the leader of the group under the auspices of the Jesuits and who wrote a first set of rules in 1683. The sisters did not profess solemn vows, they could leave whenever they wanted, and outwardly distinguished themselves only by the simple black dress they wore. An interesting parallel with the Medee was their attempt to stay low key: "They will admit to their company [...] whomever they like most and deem best, [...] up until the number that they want; the fewer the better".¹⁵⁴ Staying low key implied that the circle of people who supported them could also remain small and therefore less trust was needed.

For two of the four girls, Maria Anna and Paola Caterina Ascereto, the group's specific claim to freedom became a major obstacle: when the company was first dismantled, they were taken back to their parental home with the promise that one day they could return to join the others. Later, however, the father of these two girls changed his mind, apparently not regarding this new initiative as an acceptable form of life for his daughters. Pressures from the Savona city government only intensified his resistance and, allegedly, even his mistreatment of his own daughters. They were not allowed to join their other three companions once the bishop's approval arrived.¹⁵⁵ Freedom of choice, a condition for trust and thus for people to act in a conscious, convinced and trustworthy way, as Angela Merici clearly understood a

religiose la contestavano in modo coraggioso") Gemma Borgonovo, 'Istituto Suore della Purificazione di Maria SS. (Savona)', in Paolucci, *Congregazioni laicali femminili*, 127. Borgonovo also cited a document ("informazione data a monsignore, allegato a) that is currently missing from the folder.

¹⁵⁴ "In loro compagnia ammetteranno quelle per uiuere insieme che più loro piaceranno, e stimeranno migliori, e sino à quel numero che li parrà, che quanto meno sarà, sarà meglio" Appendix B. ASG, AS, Iurisdictionalium 1118, mazzo 28, no. 50.

¹⁵⁵ Fontana, 'La vita religiosa', 263–64.

century before, was also what could be a bridge too far for the elites in seventeenth-century Italy: distrust and control of one's daughters was an easier option.

Conclusion

In early modern Genoa, there were several women who wanted to start their own form of religious life, either because the *forma vitae* they desired was not present where they lived, as was the case for the women in Savona, or because, though present, in time it had been transformed into something that did not correspond to their ideals. Whatever their reason, in order to be granted enough agency to start something new, a high level of trust from the people who could help them was indispensable: female founders needed an unusual level of personal freedom, and an uncommon degree of room for manoeuvre. Analysing the genesis of three new forms of religious life for women has shed light on a range of possible strategies that helped to build trust.

First, a good societal position was helpful: all three founders were wealthy, upper-class, young widows. Their wealth gave them some space for personal initiative, their social background provided them with a good network, their widowhood offered them freedom of movement, and their youth gave them some time to develop their vocation and act on it. Another striking similarity between the three founders was the individual agency of all three of them in choosing and fashioning the *forma vitae* they wanted to pursue. Male confessors or patrons did not decide for them: though having the same spiritual leader, Medea and Strata both consciously chose radically different ways of religious life. Bracelli, for her part, also showed much determination in steering her own project the way she wanted. Of course, the individual agency of these women had to be complemented with support and trust from different sides. Yet neither the secular nor religious authorities decided whose protection was sought: it was the founders' own choice, born out of practical convenience, that steered the decision.¹⁵⁶

Regardless of whether it fitted the established categories, it was the public aspect of an initiative that determined the level of trust that was necessary for it to

¹⁵⁶ Contrary to what Paolo Fontana assumes: Ibid., 199.

become successful. More trust was needed when the project was more public and/or on a larger scale. Strata's project of founding a new contemplative convent required a high level of trust: besides the competition, the main obstacle was the impossibility of winning the trust of possible supporters before setting off officially and publicly. Therefore, the two most important patrons of Strata's project initially preferred the convent to become associated with the Discalced Carmelites so as to avoid risks. Bracelli's group faced a similar trust problem because they too had to operate very publicly, given that Bracelli's intention was to attract as many girls as possible. Medea's women, on the contrary, kept a low profile and thus needed a lower level of trust. Only after years of proving their reliability and their work's usefulness did they go to the senate for public recognition.

The strategies that facilitated the required trust were very different for active and contemplative initiatives: the former could emphasise their usefulness for society, whereas the latter could merely try to prove that their wish to start a new convent was legitimate and willed by God. For the contemplative Turchine, it was therefore a logical step to ask the archbishop for his trust, whereas for the active Medee and Brignoline it was essential to avoid issues of jurisdiction and turn to the senate for the recognition of their institution. Moreover, the bigger the project, the more trust from different sides was needed. For the Medee, the trust of a few families and of the Jesuits sufficed. Bracelli's project, by contrast, was of such a large scale that it required support and trust from family, the urban élite, the government, and some clergy who could help her in her venture. One fact working in her favour was that the women she sought to attract were poor women from the lower classes: contrary to aristocratic women, the social demands were much lower when it came to the religious life of non-élite women.

Another important element that surfaces when studying these initiatives from a trust perspective is the phase of the project during which trust was most difficult to obtain. For the contemplative Turchine, the biggest trust issues occurred at the beginning, but once the convent was established, they grew steadily and became successful in other cities as well. Forms of active religious life for women needed a lower level of trust at the start and thus experienced fewer trust issues in the early phases of their foundations, but they had more difficulties in guaranteeing continuity.

The tactic used by the Brignoline, who had great urban visibility and at the same time wanted to continue their third status religious life, was to consciously avoid certain labels and to forge a bond with the lay authorities by accepting male patronage while safeguarding their semi-religious status.

The case of the girls who aspired to become the Medee of Savona has also shown the interconnectedness of freedom and trust: whether or not people prioritised the individual freedom of women was decisive for the level of trust that was given to them. People like the bishop of Savona seem to have distrusted their initiative. Others were convinced that trust would actually allow these devout girls the freedom that would enable and encourage them to live up to the trust that was placed in them. Freedom was essential to trust: lowering what I have called the trust threshold and creating some freedom of action was paramount for a new religious initiative for women to flourish, regardless of whether or not it fell within the established categories.

6. Whom to trust? The establishment of the Lazarists in Genoa

In 1659, Cardinal Stefano Durazzo asked the Congregation of the Mission to hold spiritual exercises in two *maisons des filles* in Genoa.¹ Their Superior General, Vincent De Paul, instructed the Lazarists to clearly tell the archbishop their view on his request regarding the retreats for women. The task of preaching to girls was not in line with the Congregation's *règle et pratique*, since the Lazarists devoted themselves mainly to the instruction of male clergy. De Paul added in his letter that "if, after this [clarification], he desires that you go down that road, then you have to do it".² In a comment that was later erased, he even wrote: "because we have to follow his command [of the Cardinal] instead of our decisions".³

While De Paul clearly sought to avoid losing Durazzo's confidence, at the same time, the Superior General preferred to follow the Lazarists' usual methods of working. It was a dilemma that arose frequently when establishing the Congregation of the Mission, or any congregation, in a new area. The Superior General felt that it was through the Lazarists' authentic mission and way of life that they should win the trust of those who could offer the needed support. Still, the confidence of certain people, in this case the city's archbishop, was so important that some concessions might have to be made that altered this original mission. With every foundation, new religious orders also had to find local people they themselves could rely on. This chapter explores how such trust relationships were established and the ways in which those involved considered the best strategies to do so. It focuses particularly on experience and time as pivotal factors through which trust could become almost unconditional. By the time that the aforementioned request was made, in 1659, the

¹ An extended version of this chapter was published in: Thérèse Peeters, 'Whom to Trust? The Establishment of the Vincentians in Genoa, 1645–1660' 35 *Vincentian Heritage* 1 (2019) [ejournal].

² "si, après cela, elle désire que vous passiez par-dessus cela, il le faudra faire", Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2856, 30-06-1659.

³ "car nous devons plutôt suivre son commandement que notre résolution", *ibid.*

Lazarists' trust in their Genoese archbishop had become such that they followed his orders even though some went against their normal practices.

The Lazarists were conscious that trust from different sides was needed for a new establishment to become successful. The bishop of a given area should approve of their presence, trusting that it would benefit his policies; rich lay people and local clergy had to provide financial help and political support, trusting that it would be used wisely; and the diocesan priests should be cooperative, trusting the missionaries to preach in their rural parishes.⁴ The Lazarists thus had to find people to rely on. De Paul himself placed great importance on a strong financial base before he would let his missionaries establish themselves in a new area.⁵ Trust *in* this new congregation thus had to be complemented by trust *from* its members in the parties that could guarantee a lasting foundation. Conversely, when it became clear over time that a bishop was not honouring his commitments toward a Lazarist establishment, De Paul would recall his missionaries.⁶ In the previous chapter we saw that trust was necessary for a successful new initiative. In what follows, we will see that those involved in the settlement of an existing congregation in a new city were well aware of this necessity and carefully steered the relationships with those whose help they required. They consciously chose in what way they could best elicit trust, so as not to lose their particular religious identity.⁷

More than 150 letters between Vincent De Paul and his missionaries in Genoa have been preserved documenting the first years of the Lazarist establishment in Genoa (1645-1660); they reveal this awareness of the importance of trust for a new

⁴ Longo, 'L'impegno missionario', 196–97, 206.

⁵ John Rybolt, 'Saint Vincent de Paul and Money', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 26, no. 1 (2005): 90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷ Whereas this chapter focuses on the Lazarists' own thoughts on how they were to approach the foundation of a new house in the initial period of the Congregation (when its founder was still alive and could set the standards), Séan Smith has researched how the Lazarists tried to stay loyal to the ideals of their founder *after* his death. He has focused in particular on the ways in which fealty to the French king threatened the loyalty to the Congregation's original mission: the Lazarists often had to give in to the commands of the Crown in order not to lose the king's favour. The related dilemma's that Smith describes somewhat reflect those that characterized the relation between Genoese Jesuits and their patrons (see chapter two). Cf.: Séan A. Smith, *Fealty and Fidelity the Lazarists of Bourbon France, 1660-1736* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

foundation.⁸ A large portion of the extant correspondence was written by De Paul himself who, as the leader of the rapidly expanding organisation, had to govern and support his followers. In his letters he advised them and instilled in them a sense of collegiality and discipline, a spirit of initiative and confidence, as Alison Forrestral argues. To this, I would add that he also stressed the urgency of looking for trustworthy support and gave advice on how to win trust.⁹

The Lazarists and their mission

The Congregation of the Mission was one among the many (new) male orders and congregations that came to Genoa in the post-Tridentine period.¹⁰ Distrust toward the arrival of new orders was not unusual, nor was it limited to female orders. Despite their essential role in the Counter-Reformation effort, people in the crowded cities of Catholic Europe were not eager to accommodate too many new religious initiatives and provide them with space and income. Marie Juliette Marinus specifies that in around 1600 in Antwerp, the *invasion conventuelle* was met with suspicion by both common people and rival congregations: the higher the number of religious institutions in the city, the smaller the share in resources and space for each single initiative. Support came from individual nobles or notables who often had some specific interest in a certain order (family ties or otherwise), whereas the secular and ecclesiastical elite were divided. In order to enter the city, a congregation had to meet certain requirements: the bishop and the city's authorities had to give their consent. They could also stipulate restrictions on multiple issues: for example, the amount of alms that could be asked from the people, the services that they should offer, and the distance they should keep with regard to already existing ecclesiastical structures, primarily the parishes.¹¹ The Antwerp case shows that new religious orders needed to be willing to adapt, and to show that they were offering something new and indispensable to a city.

⁸ Pierre Coste, *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, 14 vols (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1900). Cited hereafter as *CED*.

⁹ Alison Forrestral, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 27, no. 2 (2008): 7.

¹⁰ See chapter one.

¹¹ Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen*, 73.

In Genoa it was no different. The new religious orders were an indispensable instrument for the reform that the archbishops desired. These orders and congregations provided education and care, including spiritual care. They invited devotional and charitable groups to convene in their churches, founded confraternities, and published catechisms as well as educational books. Successive Genoese archbishops had to consider this, and yet they did not control these orders, because they did not fall completely under the archbishop's jurisdiction.¹² Since an archbishop could not count on the complete obedience of the religious orders – even new reforming ones – trust in and from these orders was essential to a successful reform policy.¹³

The Congregation of the Mission prospered in the Genoese diocese thanks to Cardinal Durazzo's support.¹⁴ The *École française* to which the Lazarists belonged was directed towards the goals of education and inner change and apparently this appealed to the Genoese archbishop.¹⁵ Their educational orientation responded to one of the most urgent problems in the Genoese Church: the poor instruction of its clerics, especially the secular clergy (both in the city and in the countryside).¹⁶ In chapter two we considered Durazzo's strategies to reform the seminary and the secular clergy at large. Part of the cardinal's effort was indeed to call upon the Lazarists. From 1649 onwards, they held monthly retreats, spiritual exercises and conferences for seminarians and ordained priests in their *Casa della Missione* in order to increase the educational level of the clergy.¹⁷ In the same chapter, we saw that the Lazarists' primary aim, that of carrying out missions among the rural poor, also

¹² Longo Timossi, 'I Teatini', 47.

¹³ The established religious orders were among the first to obstruct the increased concentration of power, as they were used to being exempt from episcopal authority and to obeying primarily the hierarchy of their own order. The new religious orders and other reforming initiatives were not different in this respect: all wanted to remain autonomous and to prevent the episcopal authority in Genoa from growing too strong. Zardin, 'Prerogative', 266–301.

¹⁴ Who favoured the French spiritual revival of the first half of the seventeenth century. Longo, 'Alcuni aspetti', 120. For a portrait of Cardinal Durazzo: Alfonso, 'Aspetti'.

¹⁵ Châtellier, *La religion des pauvres*, 71–72.

¹⁶ Nuovo, 'La Chiesa genovese', 26–28. See chapter two.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

responded to a great need that was not yet sufficiently covered.¹⁸ When inviting the Lazarists, Cardinal Durazzo was probably looking for a relatively independent group that would readily obey his orders in these two areas.

The tactics and pragmatism that the Lazarists used to gain trust from different sides, particularly from the highest prelate in the area, were founded upon De Paul's acute understanding of human psychology and a pragmatic outlook on what was feasible as his congregation expanded.¹⁹ Alison Forrestal has recently offered an insightful overview of De Paul's strategies of furthering his Congregation in the French context.²⁰ Probably due to a lack of local sources (the archive of the house was lost during the revolutionary period) the Genoese establishment has not received much scholarly attention. Costanza Longo offered an important contribution, but her focus was primarily on the Lazarists' missionary efforts rather than on their strategies in establishing a new house in Genoa.²¹ This chapter instead considers the first fifteen years of the Congregation in Genoa, in order to analyze the different stages of trust needed for a successful foundation.

¹⁸ See, Alison Forrestal, 'Irish Entrants to the Congregation of the Mission, 1625-60: Prosopography and Sources', *Archivium Hibernicum* 62 (2009): 37. Cf. also: Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, 98. And: Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 64.

¹⁹ Cf. Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 7-8; For an example of De Paul's pragmatism regarding new foundations, see: Jose Roman, 'The Foundations of Saint Vincent de Paul', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 9, no. 2 (1988): 140-41.

²⁰ Forrestal, *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform*.

²¹ Costanza Longo, 'Carità ed evoluzione sociale: le missioni vincenziane nei territori della Repubblica di Genova', in *Culture parallele. Esperienze interdisciplinari di Ricerca, Università degli Studi di Genova* (Genoa: Brigati, 2002), 85-136; Longo, 'L'impegno missionario'; Stella, *La Congregazione*; Luigi Mezzadri, *Fra giansenisti e antigiansenisti: Vincent Depaul e la Congregazione della missione (1624-1737)*, Pubblicazioni del Centro di studi del pensiero filosofico del Cinquecento e del Seicento in relazione ai problemi della scienza, 10 (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1977); Luigi Mezzadri and Román José María, *The Vincentians, a General History of the Congregation of the Mission. 1. From the Foundation to the End of the Seventeenth Century, 1625-1697*, ed. Dunne Joseph, trans. Robert Cummings (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2009); Luigi Mezzadri, 'Le Missioni Popolari in Corsica', *Vincentiana* 28, no. 1 (1984): 63-77.

How to win trust?

Preliminary trust

The Congregation of the Mission first came to Italy to be near the heart of the Church. Being close to the Roman court made it easier to negotiate papal recognition of the Congregation, and support for its missionary work.²² Vincent De Paul even considered transferring the motherhouse there, but he gave up the idea because it met with opposition from the French court and the Gallican episcopacy, which opposed Rome's centralisation efforts. Nevertheless, the Lazarist way of working – their simple and effective missions among the rural poor in the papal states, and the retreats that were attended by both high and low clergy – became popular among the cardinals of the Roman curia, several of whom called upon them to preach in their own dioceses.²³

This also happened in the Genoese Republic, where the second house of the Lazarists was founded on the peninsula. At the invitation of Cardinal Durazzo, in August 1645, De Paul began to consider sending his brothers to the Republic.²⁴ According to Durazzo's letter, upon hearing that Bernard Codoing, a member of the Congregation, was passing through his diocese on his way from Rome back to Paris, he asked him to work for him. Apparently, Durazzo's high expectations were met. Durazzo informed De Paul that he had consented to Codoing's departure for Paris only because De Paul had sent other priests "to continue what he [Codoing] had started so positively".²⁵ Here we see the beginnings of a relationship built on trust. Because of an initial positive experience, the Genoese cardinal had the expectation that the Lazarists were able and willing to serve his reform efforts.

²² Mezzadri and María, *The Vincentians*, 243.

²³ Abelly, *The Life*, book 1, 258. Luigi Mezzadri, 'Le missioni popolari di Montecitorio (1642-1700)', in *Le missioni popolari della Congregazione della missione nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, ed. Luigi Mezzadri, vol. 1 (Rome: CLV, 1999), 417.

²⁴ According to Vincent de Paul's early biographer Abelly, this was because he heard about the work of the Lazarists in Savoye and Rome. Abelly, *The Life*, book 1, 233.

²⁵ "pour continuer ce qu'il a si heureusement commencé". Letter from Stefano Durazzo to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 769, August 1645.

The cardinal's positive expectations set the pace for the foundation of a new house. This was not unusual: bishops were often the principal "founders", or financial sponsors, of new Lazarist establishments.²⁶ The point of departure was Durazzo's intuition that the Lazarists' presence would benefit his diocese. This expectation of usefulness might be further explained by the favourable fact that, because the Lazarists were new to Italy, no records of failures or disobedience could discredit their reliability. At the same time, they had not yet been able to build a strong and widespread reputation that would favour their entrance into the city. Cardinal Durazzo thus provided the necessary preliminary trust to set up a house in this new area. Since the Lazarists were not yet entwined in the complicated structures of benefactors and loyalties to social and political elite, they were more readily available to him than some of the older, well-established orders.

De Paul understood that Durazzo's confidence was a crucial step forward in the settlement process. Indeed, the geographic spread of the Congregation of the Mission in its early development mainly followed the pastoral and financial interests of De Paul's most important friends, whether clerics or lay people, and De Paul certainly came to count Durazzo among them.²⁷ The superior repeatedly emphasised that his Congregation should not go anywhere without an explicit invitation. "Not hurrying ahead of providence" was one of De Paul's core principles.²⁸ Being invited meant that someone trusted the missionaries' skills to serve a given environment, and more importantly, that the *bienfaiteur* was prepared to endow the foundation financially. Moreover, it was De Paul's firm spiritual conviction that ideas from other people should be followed more readily because they were given by God: an invitation to settle in a new city, in his eyes, could be such a sign from above.²⁹ De Paul felt so strongly about the importance of this invitation 'from outside', that when

²⁶ Roman, 'The Foundations', 147–48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 138. See also: Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 62. In Turin an ecclesiastic asked the Congregation if they could ask for permission to open a house, but De Paul only wanted to go somewhere following an expressed request, and thus did not do anything.

²⁹ "Si Mgr l'évêque de Bergame continue à nous demander des prêtres pour son diocèse, il faudra tâcher de lui en donner, puisqu'il a la pensée de les y fonder." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, nr 2411, 12-10-1657.

the bishop of Bergamo asked for missionaries, he wrote that if the prelate continued his request, the importance of the invitation would be thus demonstrated and consequently the Lazarists should try to go.³⁰

Essential as he found initiatives ‘from outside’, De Paul did not want to relinquish control over the foundation of a new house. A second maxim regarding the expansion of the Congregation was that only financially stable foundations should be accepted.³¹ De Paul wanted to be sure that the foundation contract, a necessary step for establishing a new house, suited the Congregation’s financial needs, as well as its habits and priorities.³² He hesitated at the contract for the Genoese foundation drawn up on the orders of Durazzo. In August 1646 De Paul noted there were “conditions that might alter the order of the company and could change its direction in that place”.³³

More than a year later these issues were settled to De Paul’s liking and he signed a contract in which Durazzo, together with two of his collaborators, Baliano Raggio and Giovanni Cristoforo Monsia³⁴, committed himself to offer a large amount of money for the establishment of a house. This financial support enabled the Lazarists to work according to their rule, with no need to ask for, nor accept, any kind of recompense for their preaching. In exchange for the financial support, De Paul had to promise to comply with the cardinal’s wishes in providing missionaries to undertake missions in the city and the surroundings of Genoa and to offer spiritual exercises for the Genoese clergy in their house at Durazzo’s request. Furthermore, the contract obliged the Superior General to always staff it with at least four priests that met with the cardinal’s liking.³⁵ The requirements of the contract were all in line with the objectives of the congregation. It allowed De Paul to approve an agreement

³⁰ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2411, 12-10-1657.

³¹ Roman, ‘The Foundations’, 139–40.

³² *Ibid.*, 153.

³³ “Il y a dans ce projet des conditions qui pourraient altérer l'ordre de la compagnie et peut-être le renverser en ce lieu-là.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Etienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 829, 2-8-1646.

³⁴ Giovanni Cristoforo Monsia would also supervise the building of the *Albergo dei Poveri*. De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 88–89.

³⁵ Luigi Alfonso, ‘La fondazione della “Casa della Missione” di Fassolo in Genova’, *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, nuova serie* 12, no. 1 (1972): 132.

that would not threaten their *règle et pratique*. With the financial help of the cardinal and two of his main collaborators, the Lazarists thus settled in the *Casa della Missione* in Fassolo, where they continue to live even to the present day.³⁶

Safeguarding the authentic mission

Although necessary, the foundational contract was not sufficient for determining the success of a new house. The preliminary trust of the *bienfaiteurs* needed to be consolidated over the years. If trust is an expectation based on experience, it implies that for trust to grow, one should cultivate the initial practices that created it. This is what Vincent de Paul asked his missionaries to do in Genoa: to favour their own habits, rules and priorities over blind obedience to their prelate.

Upon their arrival, some years before the actual foundation, the missionaries had immediately started to travel the mountainous Ligurian countryside in order to preach in the villages. Responding to Durazzo's many requests, they apparently risked succumbing to fatigue under the huge workload. "I [...] have good hopes," De Paul wrote during those first months, "that your work will be tempered a bit, especially if Monsieur Blatiron [the superior in Genoa] describes to Monseigneur the Cardinal Archbishop the danger to which you are exposed by the continuous occupation to which he obliges you."³⁷ According to De Paul, the heavy burden of work was not only detrimental to their health, it also made them "contravene the usual practice of the company".³⁸ Indeed, he watched over both the well-being of his *confrères* and their faithfulness to their rules and practices. His appreciation for the cardinal's zeal did not imply unquestioned obedience. To the contrary, the cardinal was to be convinced of the Lazarists' own way of working: "I ask mister Blatiron to have him [Durazzo] understand this well, once and for all, because I hope that he

³⁶ Ibid., 134. Cf. Roman, "The Foundations", 149.

³⁷ "que vos travaux se modéreront un peu, surtout si Monsieur Blatiron représente à Monseigneur le cardinal-archevêque le danger où il vous expose par la continuelle occupation à laquelle il vous oblige". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 859, 14-09-1646.

³⁸ "contrevenir à la pratique ordinaire de la compagnie", Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 859, 14-09-1646.

will take it into account”.³⁹ The prelate indeed changed his mind and gave the priests some respite between each mission.⁴⁰

The same defence of their own *pratique* occurred in the negotiations with the Marquis of Pianezza, who asked for the establishment of a house in Turin some years after the congregation had settled in Genoa. There were rumours that ‘His Highness’ envisioned a house of six missionaries who would offer their services to the city but not to the surrounding countryside. De Paul therefore ordered Blatiron, the superior of the Lazarists in Genoa, to travel to Turin and ask the surgeon of the marquis, Pietro Touvenot, a friend of the congregation, to pay the marquis a visit. Pietro was to “make him understand with all respect [...] the goal of our Institute, and that we cannot accept foundations but on the condition that we can do missions in the countryside [...]”.⁴¹ Changing the aims of the missionaries would not only be detrimental to De Paul’s own objectives, he added, but it would even go “against God’s plan for us”.⁴² This God-given mission was guarded vigilantly, not merely because divine plans ought to be followed, but also in order to preserve the authenticity of the congregation; to prevent its real charisma from being watered down and losing its original fervour, which apparently had appealed to most of the political and ecclesiastical elite of the Savoyard State.⁴³

Besides clarifying these customs to possible *bienfaiteurs*, another way to safeguard authenticity and to preserve the aims of the congregation, was to place internal obedience above all else. In 1647, De Paul recommended to the superior in Genoa to tell Cardinal Durazzo

that Messeigneurs the prelates are our masters in our exterior occupations and that we are obliged to follow them like the

³⁹ “Je prie ledit sieur Blatiron de lui bien faire entendre cela pour une bonne fois; car j’espère qu’il y aura égard”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 859, 14-09-1646.

⁴⁰ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 892, 23-11-1646.

⁴¹ “aller trouver et de lui faire entendre avec tout le respect [...] la fin de notre Institut, et comme nous ne pouvons pas prendre des fondations qu’à condition de faire des missions à la campagne [...]”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1822, 31-12-1654. Cf. Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 63.

⁴² “contre le dessein de Dieu sur nous”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1822, 31-12-1654.

⁴³ Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 63–64.

servants of the Gospel were obedient to their master; [...] and if we fail, they have the right to punish us [...]; but the spiritual and domestic direction belongs to the Superior General.⁴⁴

In De Paul's eyes, Cardinal Durazzo had apparently interfered too much in the internal affairs of the congregation. Although he did not doubt Durazzo's zeal and reform-mindedness, the success of the congregation was not to be sought in strict obedience to the cardinal, but in internal cohesion. They should not think, De Paul wrote about the Lazarists in Genoa, "that they are working at this saintly exercise just to please Monsieur the Cardinal."⁴⁵ Disagreeing with Durazzo about who was eligible to enter the congregation, it was the founder's firmest conviction that the results of sticking to their own *pratique* of allowing only those "who have given themselves to Our Lord in these efforts, and not clergy from the land, who have other pretensions",⁴⁶ would in the end also win over Durazzo. At least in theory, internal obedience thus came before the need to please external superiors.⁴⁷

Yet the obedience within the congregation was not a mere act of will: it was to flow from mutual trust between superiors and subordinates. We will encounter the same dynamic in the next chapter when zooming in on the experience of individual Jesuits in relation to their superiors. De Paul saw this mutual trust as essential in order that all members might be mentored and corrected properly.⁴⁸ Indeed, he recommended to the Genoese superior to use *douceur et support* in order to win over the heart of one of his disobedient *confrères*: "If you win his [heart], you will

⁴⁴ "que Mes. seigneurs les prélats sont nos maîtres pour tous nos emplois extérieurs et que nous sommes obligés de leur obéir, comme les serviteurs de l'Évangile obéissaient à leur maître; [...] et si nous manquons, ils ont droit de nous punir [...]; mais pour la direction spirituelle et domestique, elle est au supérieur général". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 912, 04-01-1647.

⁴⁵ "qu'ils s'emploient à ce saint exercice pour complaire purement à Mgr. le cardinal." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 919, 28-02-1647.

⁴⁶ "qui se soient données à Notre-Seigneur en ces emplois, et non pas des ecclésiastiques du pays, qui ont d'autres prétentions." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 919, 28-02-1647.

⁴⁷ Such obedience was imperative because the structure of the Congregation of the Mission was strictly hierarchical. Alison Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul: The Principles and Practice of Government, 1625-60', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 29, no. 2 (2009): 52.

⁴⁸ Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 15.

have all satisfaction from him.”⁴⁹ He furthermore encouraged individual Lazarists to trust and obey their superiors, referring to this attitude as something that pleased God:

Our Lord approves of the trust you have in your Superior as the representative of His Divine Person; He will inspire him to say whatever is most appropriate for you.⁵⁰

Obtaining trust thus was a means to obtain obedience and without mutual trust the missions were destined to fail. Indeed, when a trust relationship seemed impossible because of insurmountable disagreement, De Paul ordered that the people involved be separated. This was the case in 1659 with Jacques Pesnelle and Jérôme Lejuge; the latter had to leave the house in Rome and come to Genoa.⁵¹

Preserving the characteristic features of the congregation by prioritising internal obedience over adhering to instructions from outside was not an end in itself. It was, among other things, a means to elicit and cultivate trust from these same people, in the early phase of a new foundation. This is not contradictory if one considers the Lazarists’ own confidence in what had incited their initial success, namely their usual way of life, work and mission, that they saw as willed by God. De Paul guarded over the missionary *élan* of his congregation because he saw it as divinely ordained, but also because it ‘worked’; it was successful in winning trust.

Demarcating trust

In order to maintain and increase any given trust in the Lazarist missionaries, the carefully guarded, trustworthy and consistent *règle et pratique* was to be associated wholly with the congregation itself. Successes were to be ascribed exclusively to its own merits. From the 1650s onward, word of the congregations’ successful work in Rome, Genoa and Turin spread throughout the peninsula. Several cardinals, prelates

⁴⁹ “Si vous gagnez le sien, vous aurez de lui toute satisfaction”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1070, 30-10-1648.

⁵⁰ Vincent de Paul to a Priest of the mission, 20 February 1650, Coste, Coste, *Correspondence, conferences, documents* (English translation) 3: 601 as cited in: Forrestal, ‘Principles’, 67.

⁵¹ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2857, 30-06-1659.

and wealthy laypeople asked for their help as the Lazarists' *bonne odeur* diffused.⁵² By the end of the seventeenth century, the Lazarists had founded houses in Naples, Perugia, Reggio Emilia, Pavia, Marcerata, Bastia and Ferrara. Their work attracted the attention of influential people, and invitations to offer the same services elsewhere followed suit.

As the Lazarists established a good name in Genoa and on the whole peninsula, it was imperative that this reputation be distinctive, and also distinguishable from other initiatives. In chapter two we saw that Cardinal Durazzo founded an elite group of Genoese clergy dedicated to preaching missions in the city similar to those preached by the Lazarists in the countryside. When, in an early phase, this group started to call themselves *i missionarii*, Étienne Blatiron personally lobbied the cardinal to have the name changed in order “to avert confusion of the same names and preclude the inconveniences that come with many people carrying the same name” (they were eventually called the *Congregazione delle Missioni Urbani di San Carlo Borromeo*).⁵³ The problem was not that the Lazarists had no trust in this new group: De Paul simply wished to protect the reputation of his own community from the actions of outsiders, over whom he had no say.⁵⁴

At the same time, those who did belong to the *petite compagnie* and were responsible for its good name were expected not only to obey their superiors but also to completely conform to the rule of the congregation. Commenting on one of the Genoese *confrères* who suggested the idea of following a retreat held by the Discalced Carmelites, De Paul wrote to Blatiron:

⁵² “Nos maisons d'Italie n'ont encore été en si bonne odeur qu'elles sont”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Barreau, *CED*, no. 1746, 19-06-1654. See also: Mezzadri and María, *The Vincentians*, 252.

⁵³ “pour empêcher la confusion des mêmes noms et prévenir les inconvénients qui arrivent de la multiplicité de ceux qui les portent”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1058, 15-08-1648.

⁵⁴ The Lazarists probably even collaborated with the urban missionaries. From a letter of Étienne Blatiron, it seems that the Lazarists preached the spiritual exercises to this group: “Nous attendons à ce soir six ou sept prêtres qui doivent venir commencer les exercices; ils ont dessein d'entreprendre une mission dans la ville, comme nous faisons aux champs. Je prie votre charité de recommander l'affaire à Dieu.” Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1618 (without date).

you did very well to dissuade him from it; and I pray you not to give in, not only in this matter, but in all the things that are not according to our habits, to prevent that anything be done beyond [our habits]. If anyone presses you too hard, as he does, ask him to be patient and tell him that you will write to the general of the company, and do so; and then, while waiting for the answer, time passes by and often the temptation disappears.⁵⁵

De Paul also promised to write to those brothers who tended towards following their own ideas, asking them to “abandon their singularities and adjust themselves to the common practices”.⁵⁶ If they continued their disobedience, they would not be allowed to return to the house: “because for the one that we will lose in order to maintain order, for the honour of God, his providence will give us two others”.⁵⁷ Those who desired to join the congregation were asked to conform completely to its rule and practices, and to demonstrate obedience. For De Paul, this obedience was entirely possible if one trusted in divine providence.⁵⁸

Trust in God’s plan, a principle known as *indifferentia*, was something which the founder always called upon his followers to cultivate and which he thought would nurture internal conformity.⁵⁹ This indifference would enable a Lazarist to obey whatever commands came from his superior (as representative of God’s will), and to accept success and failure as part of a divine plan.⁶⁰ The next chapter will elaborate on the close connection between on the one hand trust in God and the indifference that was to flow from it, and on the other hand, obedience to one’s superior that was

⁵⁵ “vous avez très bien fait de l'en divertir ; et je vous prie de tenir bon, non seulement en cela, mais en toutes les choses qui ne sont pas de nos usages, pour empêcher que rien se fasse au delà. Si quelqu'un vous presse trop, comme fait ledit sieur..., priez-le d'avoir patience et lui dites que [...], vous en écrirez au général de la compagnie, et le ferez en effet; et ainsi, en attendant la réponse, le temps s'écoule et souvent la tentation s'évanouit”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁵⁶ “Là-dessus j'écrirai à ces personnes pour les prier de se désister de leurs singularités et de s'ajuster aux pratiques communes” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁵⁷ “car pour un que nous perdrons pour maintenir l'ordre, à l'honneur de Dieu, sa providence nous en donnera deux”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁵⁸ Cf. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2729, 22-11-1658.

⁵⁹ See for example: Letter from Edme Jolly to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 2706, 05-11-1658.

⁶⁰ Forrestal, ‘Principles’, 51.

to be based on interpersonal trust as well as indifference. In a conference on obedience, De Paul told his followers:

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us obedience by word and example. He wished to be submissive to the Most Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, and other people in positions of authority, whether good or disagreeable. For this reason, we should be completely obedient to every one of our Superiors, seeing the Lord in them and them in the Lord.⁶¹

Consequently, tendencies to walk different paths were met with strictness.⁶² Attentive to human psychology, De Paul believed that change only caused disorder. According to the superior, while people tended to think that changing the circumstances made them happier, it never did. Changes of vocation, in his view, only caused regret.⁶³ The superior's reaction to the desire of an unordained brother in Genoa to rise to the priesthood, causing agitation among other *confrères*, was consistent with this belief.⁶⁴ Some Lazarist brothers did become priests within the congregation, but this passage was to originate from indifference and not from dissatisfaction with one's original vocation of being a brother. When one of the *frères* indeed left the congregation in Genoa in order to become a priest, De Paul remarked that he was very sorry to lose this "poor brother", especially because

God gives grace in one condition that He refuses in another. A brother who will have the spirit of God dwelling in his spirit, will undoubtedly lose it, when he leaves [this condition]. God is not

⁶¹ Conference no. 222, 19-12-1659, Coste, *Correspondence, conferences, documents* [English translation], 12, p. 345.

⁶² "où Dieu l'ha mis", Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1403, 08-09-1651. See also: Thomas Davitt, 'Humanness in a Saint', *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 6, no. 1 (1985): 46-47.

⁶³ Letter from Vincent de Paul to a brother of the house in Genoa, *CED*, no. 1537, 16-08-1652. Forrestal, 'Principles', 52.

⁶⁴ Blatiron had already complained that there were several uncooperative brothers in Genoa that tended to dress in the priestly black instead of the grey habits they should be wearing. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1403, 08-09-1651.

changeful; He wants everybody to stay in the state where he was put.⁶⁵

In De Paul's view, trust in divine providence came before obedience. Indifference originated from a trust that God made his will known through all circumstances, including the orders of superiors, and this was what formed obedience in his missionaries.

Apart from being convinced that this was how God wanted people to live their vocation, De Paul also thought that internal cohesion and order were so important that it was better for disobedient people to leave the Congregation altogether, rather than damage its reputation. A certain strictness in dealing with self-willed brothers would furthermore "give fear to the others so that they will not let themselves be carried away by such liberties".⁶⁶ The task of educating those *confrères* that "tend[ed] towards independence" was in the hands of the local superior and the visitor, who should act like fathers; with authority, but also with a willingness to convince them to change their minds.⁶⁷ Persuasion was preferable to giving orders, but the latter was at times indispensable.⁶⁸

Moreover, to avoid seeing the congregation's name damaged, De Paul would recall misbehaving brothers to Paris, as happened with Jacques Beure. This brother was meant to go to Genoa in 1658, but he was ordered to return to Paris on the advice of the superior in Turin, because, as De Paul wrote: "it takes only one missionary with a freedom similar to his to ruin the company's reputation".⁶⁹ If

⁶⁵ "Dieu donne grâce en une condition qu'il refuse dans une autre. Un frère qui aura l'esprit de Dieu demeurant dans la sienne, le perdra sans doute, s'il en sort. Dieu n'est pas changeant; il veut que chacun se tienne en l'état où il l'a mis". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1445, 19-01-1652.

⁶⁶ "et cette rigueur donnera de la crainte aux autres pour ne se laisser emporter à telles libertés". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1273, 14-10-1650.

⁶⁷ "tend[ons] à l'indépendance". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2649, 30-08-1658. Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13. For a good example of Vincent de Paul trying to convince one of the *confrères* in Genoa to stick to his vocation, see: Letter from Vincent de Paul to one of the brothers in Genoa, *CED*, no. 1537, 16-08-1652.

⁶⁹ See letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2577, 03-05-1658; letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2616, 05-07-1658; and letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2629, 19-07-1658. "Il ne faut à un missionnaire qu'une liberté semblable à la sienne pour

particular actions threatened the good reputation of the Lazarists, damage was to be contained as much as possible. When a missionary in Genoa had pretended to be a doctor [of theology?] without actually being one, De Paul decided that he should be replaced, and, more importantly, that the superior in Genoa should pay Cardinal Durazzo a visit to explain to him that this priest would not remain in the Congregation of the Mission. The message was to be that deceit and lying were not in line with the Lazarists' way of life, but had been the individual choice of someone leaving the ship. Building and protecting a good reputation was not the final aim, which for De Paul was the glory of God, but it definitely was a means by which to foster the success of the Congregation.⁷⁰ The underlying realism was that the reputation built by a whole congregation could be ruined by individual members who did not act according to its rule. The trust won with great effort could vanish in a split second.

Just as people who refused to conform were expected to leave the congregation, so too were outsiders not allowed to stay within the community, unless they committed themselves and joined the Congregation. The danger that the line between outsiders and insiders would become blurred became an issue in Genoa when a member of the important Spinola family expressed his wish to live with the Lazarists without joining them (possibly because of advanced age). Paris ordered that he should be told *doucement* what the options were: either to join the congregation, or to remain outside and receive all possible "service and consolation", without living among the brothers.⁷¹ The superior's careful protection of the borders between the Congregation and its *pratique* on the one hand, and the outside world on the other, was driven by an awareness of the fragility of their hard-won reputation. Clearly demarcating the borders between the *petite compagnie* and demanding strict internal obedience and conformity to the rules was a way of building a good reputation, eliciting confidence and consolidating trust.

ruiner la compagnie de réputation et empêcher le fruit qu'elle peut faire de delà." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 2637, 09-08-1658.

⁷⁰ Forrestal, 'Principles', 51.

⁷¹ The rule was simply "not to receive anyone in our houses to stay there freely" ("ne recevoir personne en nos maisons pour y demeurer libre"). Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2681, 15-10-1658.

Avoiding distrust, managing expectations

Trust increases when expectations are continually met. Besides clearly demarcating the borders of the group, in order to uphold trust, expectation should never reach beyond what somebody is able and willing to do. The Lazarists seem to have understood this well. Their general line of conduct was to always keep a low profile: humility was not only a core Christian virtue that De Paul held dear, but also a pragmatic strategy to avoid misunderstandings and to earn goodwill; in other words, to stimulate trust.⁷² Indeed, De Paul insisted that the promises they made, such as in the foundation contracts of new establishments, should always be adhered to.⁷³

A curious situation in which the Congregation ran the risk of not meeting its promises showcases De Paul's desire to keep a low profile. In 1658, the Superior General proved irritated when Jacques Pesnelle, superior of the Genoese house, promised Cardinal Durazzo that the cardinal's nephew while on his diplomatic mission to the court of France, could stay at Saint-Lazare, the motherhouse in Paris. The rules of the Congregation did not allow lay people to reside in their houses. More importantly, De Paul stressed, they were unable to receive this important guest at Saint-Lazare because all suitable rooms were occupied. "It is for this reason," De Paul replied to Pesnelle, "that it is appropriate that you make our goodwill and our impotence known to His Eminence as soon as possible, gently and deftly, so that this change of tune does not come as a surprise."⁷⁴ Wishing to keep Durazzo's trust, of which this request was certainly a sign, a diplomatic approach would need to cover the fact that the Lazarists actually were neither able nor all that willing to fulfill this promise. The solution was to tell Durazzo that his nephew could come provided that he brought only one servant and that he would be given a small room. Pesnelle was to make clear that it would be an honour for the congregation to receive the diplomat

⁷² Forrestal, 'Vincent de Paul as a Mentor', 10.

⁷³ Roman, 'The Foundations', 143.

⁷⁴ "C'est pourquoi, Monsieur il est à propos que vous fassiez connaître au plus tôt notre bonne volonté et notre impuissance à Son Éminence, et cela doucement et adroitement, en sorte que ce changement de parole ne le surprenne pas." Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2720, 15-11-1658.

and a great occasion to show the respect and obedience they owed to Durazzo, adding that the Cardinal was “above any rule”.⁷⁵

The wish to maintain discretion is demonstrated again in the preparations for the foundation of a new house in Turin in 1655. In order to impress the Turin elite, Jean Martin, a member of the Genoese house who was to become the superior in Turin, had asked Durazzo for a recommendation. This troubled De Paul greatly because he wanted his missionaries to “dwell low and unknown, and not to give importance to appearance and esteem”.⁷⁶ He added:

a [good] reputation can harm them, not only by giving them reason for vanity, but also because if it values the fruits of their works at six, people will expect twelve, and, seeing that the effects do not correspond with the expectation, they lose their good opinion, and God allows this to happen especially when one looks for such a reputation; because anyone who exalts himself will be humbled.⁷⁷

“Humility is the gate through which to enter this [...] new foundation,” De Paul warned, offering the practical advice that the first two missionaries in Turin should start with small missions instead of big pretentious ones.⁷⁸

Another expectation that the Lazarists tried to avoid was that of having to open their books. “It is something that should be avoided above all else, as a very unwelcome subordination,” De Paul wrote when he heard of Durazzo’s request that

⁷⁵ “Enfin, Monsieur, témoignez à Son Éminence qu'elle est au-dessus de toute règle”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2720, 15-11-1658.

⁷⁶ “demeurer bas et inconnus, et non pas à paraître et à se faire estimer”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1972, 10-12-1655.

⁷⁷ “La réputation leur peut nuire, non seulement en leur donnant sujet de s'évanouir, mais en ce que, si elle met les fruits de leurs emplois à six degrés, on s'attendra qu'ils seront à douze, et, voyant que les effets ne correspondent pas à l'attente, on en perd la bonne opinion, et Dieu permet que cela arrive surtout quand on cherche cette réputation; car qui s'exalte sera humilié.” Ibid.

⁷⁸ “l'humilité est la porte par laquelle il doit entrer dans les exercices de cette nouvelle fondation, et non par celle de la réputation recherchée, qui est souvent nuisible, surtout quand le succès des emplois ne correspond pas à l'estime que le premier bruit en a fait concevoir.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1972, 10-12-1655.

See also: Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1977, 17-12-1655: “C'est dans la même vue que je l'ai prié de faire quelque petite mission, lui seul avec M. Ennery, pour le détourner d'en faire une qui éclate”.

missionaries render their accounts to him.⁷⁹ It was customary for religious orders to provide benefactors, whether it be the city authorities, the church authorities or others, with insight into their expenses in exchange for material support.⁸⁰ However, De Paul felt that financial assistance should be given with trust and acceptance of the missionaries' word, without concrete promises from the Lazarists. The founder's primary reason was that tracking all expenses, especially when travelling, was too troublesome. He feared missionaries would have to invent part of their accounts, "as some congregations do", and thereby run the risk of lying.⁸¹ Even though Durazzo and others had generously paid for the construction of a residence for the brothers, De Paul thought it unwise and unnecessary to give them concrete promises in return. As in Paris, where Archbishop Jean-François De Gondi eventually gave the house of Saint-Lazare to the Lazarists without demanding any accountability in return, so too in Genoa the benefactors were expected to give freely, otherwise the Lazarists were not to accept their help.⁸² In this, De Paul consciously broke with the habit of *les anciens religieux*, as he himself wrote.⁸³ By keeping expectations low, mistrust could be avoided. Demanding that all help be given freely without the prospect of control ensured this. Whatever successes would spring from the given trust would only enhance the good reputation of the Congregation, and no temporary setbacks would weaken it decisively.

When eager to preserve received trust, one should also show from time to time the willingness to act in accordance with expectations. Vincent De Paul therefore repeatedly asked his followers to thank the benefactors of the congregation on his behalf and emphasise his obedience to them.⁸⁴ Taking the lead himself, he wrote an almost sycophantic letter to a key benefactor of the congregation in Genoa, Cristoforo Monsia:

⁷⁹ C'est [...] ce qu'il faut éviter sur toutes les choses du monde, comme un sujétion très fâcheuse". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1254, 02-09-1650.

⁸⁰ Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen*, 73.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Letter from Vincent de Paul to Patrice Valois, *CED*, no. 1528, 25-07-1652.

⁸³ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1515, 05-07-1652.

⁸⁴ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1738, 08-05-1654.

The extreme kindness and goodness of heart of Your Lordship to the members of our congregation who are in Genoa makes it my duty to show you my gratitude [...] but as your charity exceeds all thanksgiving, I earnestly beg the great God to make up for my weakness.⁸⁵

Monsia eventually bequeathed his rich estate to the Lazarists, including the family chapel, leaving his family none too pleased.⁸⁶

The Lazarists used a similar approach with Emanuele Brignole, the rich nobleman whom we encountered in the previous chapter.⁸⁷ He annually donated a large sum of money to the Lazarists in Genoa, contributed to their house in Rome, and asked them to preach in his marquisate. This favour was met with gratitude and prayer, but no concrete offers of preaching.⁸⁸ Since the Lazarists had to prioritise Durazzo's orders, no promises were to be made without the archbishop's permission. This behaviour is in line with strategy to keep expectations low in order not to lose trust.

When possible, however, the Lazarists tried to accommodate the wishes of possible benefactors. This is clear, for example, in their approach to education in Genoa. On being asked whether the Genoese Lazarists should teach theology using the traditional, scholastic approach, De Paul advised them to investigate whether “that way of teaching is well seen over there, whether the Jesuits and other religious and seculars use it, and if many students attend”. It was important that this initiative would attract enough students.⁸⁹ Similarly, students' holidays were to be compared

⁸⁵ “Quum abundantiori quadam benevolentia et bonitate in congregationis nostrae alumnus Genuae manentes Dominationis Vestrae pectus exuberet, meum etiam vicissim illi gratiarum actiones debet infinitas [...] at quoniam vestra caritas est supra omne In gratiarum actionem, Deum optimum maximum enixe precor ut imbecillitatem meam suppleat.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Cristoforo Monsia, *CED*, no. 1416, 20-10-1651.

⁸⁶ Alfonso, ‘La fondazione’, 150.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 136; De Marini, *Emanuele Brignole e l'Albergo dei poveri di Genova*, 58–59.

⁸⁸ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2989, 26-09-1657. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, no. 2837, 09-05-1659.

⁸⁹ “savoir en quelle estime est de delà cette façon d'enseigner, si elle est parmi les Jésuites et d'autres maisons religieuses et séculières, et si beaucoup d'écoliers y vont”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2901, 11-07-1659. De Paul later advised that the Lazarists to abandon the plan, since he had heard that the Genoese Jesuits did not teach the scholastic methods, which

with the other schools in Genoa. De Paul himself had previous bad experiences in allowing students too much spare time, and he wrote that pupils misbehaved during the holidays. The situation in Genoa, however, could be different. According to De Paul, the Lazarists' superior should adjust their programme based on how the Jesuits, Theatines and Oratorians dealt with the matter.⁹⁰ The Lazarist way of approaching these issues shows that while certain principles and practices were non-negotiable, others could be changed in order to meet local needs and make use of resources.⁹¹

The establishment of the Lazarists in Genoa required support from many sides to be successful.⁹² In showing gratitude for help given, presenting themselves as obedient to all reasonable requests, and avoiding unfulfillable promises, the Lazarists tried to gain trust from people whose support they required. Whenever possible, the Lazarists accommodated the wishes of the benefactors with the goal of winning over as much support as possible.

Whom to trust?

So far, we have examined the Lazarists' approach toward eliciting and maintaining trust without forfeiting their original mission. However, to fully grasp the importance of trust in the establishment of a new house, it is necessary to understand its role in relation to obedience, a core value in Lazarist spirituality and considered by De Paul as the way to happiness.⁹³ The Lazarists' relationship with Cardinal Durazzo clearly demonstrates how trust interplayed with obedience. From the first contacts between

made it unlikely that many students would be attracted by it. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2942, 15-08-1659.

⁹⁰ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2963, 05-09-1659.

⁹¹ Forrestal, 'Principles', 63.

⁹² In an earlier phase of the Lazarist presence in Genoa, several wealthy Genoese had already shown their trust in this new community. The missionaries cherished their favours and tried to accommodate the wishes of their most important benefactors: at the request of the *Messieurs de Gènes*, Blatiron was sent back to Genoa after a period of absence. Similarly, in Turin De Paul tried to make sure that the new house would be sufficiently staffed, both to help the superior, Jean Martin, and please Martin's benefactors. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1380, 14-07-1651; letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1985, 31-12-1655. Nuovo, *La Predicazione*, 63–66.

⁹³ Conference by Vincent de Paul, 2-12-1657, *CED* vol. 10, p. 389.

the Congregation and this prelate, obedience to the archbishop was a virtue that was professed continuously and persuasively. Indeed, according to the congregation's rule, the Lazarists should "humbly and consistently obey the most reverend Bishops of the dioceses where the congregation has houses".⁹⁴ However, this rule was not practised without reserve. Besides the necessity to *win* trust, there was a need to find out whom to trust, and thus whom to obey. It took time for the Vincentians to grow in confidence that Cardinal Durazzo's policy and orders were in their favour. This gradual development eventually also diminished their reservations when it came to complete obedience. By examining the relationship between trust and obedience, we start to understand better what obedience, a value that was central to early modern Catholicism, meant in concrete terms in the life of seventeenth-century religious people (a theme that will be deepened in the next chapter). Simplistic evaluations of the unwillingness to reform from above can be refined if we consider that obedience from the lower echelons of the Church always necessitated trust, and trust never came about mechanically.

What made the Lazarists trust their archbishop?

A prime reason for the Lazarists' trust in the archbishop was first of all his concrete material support. The many tasks that he gave the congregation were not without recompense. Drawing on his own network, Durazzo found people willing to help the Congregation financially, setting an example himself by donating large sums, first for the establishment in Genoa, and later for a house in Rome (which he arranged in 1659, and towards which he contributed generously).⁹⁵ Durazzo even managed to convince "some of his cardinal friends" to do the same for the Roman foundation.⁹⁶ Unsurprisingly, he was at the centre of the Lazarists' gratitude: "Prostrated in spirit at the sacred feet of His Eminency, De Paul wrote in 1651, I most humbly ask your

⁹⁴ Conference no. 222, 19-12-1659, Coste [ENG], Coste, *Correspondence, conferences, documents* (English translation), 12, p. 346.

⁹⁵ *Annali della Missione. S. Vincenzo de' Paoli. Raccolta Trimestrale* (Piacenza: Collegio Alberoni, 1925), 8.

⁹⁶ "quelques cardinaux de ses amis". Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, no. 2806, 04-04-1659. Mezzadri and María, *The Vincentians*, 246.

forgiveness for renewing so belatedly this token of my perfect gratitude for the great benefits that you bestow on the missionaries”.⁹⁷ De Paul also repeatedly prompted his followers to show the same gratitude. Especially towards the end of his life, he reminded them to act according to the will of God in “renewing often our most humble thanks” to their prelate.⁹⁸

That Durazzo, in his turn, revealed much affection for and affinity with the Lazarists’ spirituality, also gave them confidence. Étienne Blatiron’s admiration for the archbishop greatly increased when Durazzo attended the spiritual exercises of the missionaries, adapting to their usages and wishing to be treated like the others, despite his status and older age.⁹⁹ This behaviour elicited trust. Expressing his gratitude, De Paul wrote to Durazzo: “No other prelate has made known to us the supreme charity of God better than you.”¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Durazzo honoured the Lazarists with frequent visits to their house in Rome. De Paul even mused that they were “the object of all his kindness” and that Durazzo “seem[ed] to have no other commitment”.¹⁰¹

The Lazarists’ confidence must have also been enhanced by the fact that Durazzo continued to support them even though their arrival in the city met with some opposition from the Genoese senate. The senators communicated to the cardinal that

if he wishes to introduce [...] the Congregation of the Missionary Priests then the senate maintains that this should be done by

⁹⁷ “Animo provolutus ad sacros pede Eminentiae Suae humillime ab ea veniam peto quod, tanto post tempore, perfectae gratitudinis meae summorum in missionaries suos beneficiorum, quibus eos jugiter cumulat, testimonia renovo”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Stefano Durazzo, *CED*, no. 1402, 09-1651.

⁹⁸ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2649, 30-08-1658. See e.g. also: Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2900, 11-07-1659. “Assurez bien Son Éminence et de nos prières pour sa conservation, tant importante à l’Eglise, et de notre parfaite reconnaissance pour ses grands et innombrables bienfaits.”

⁹⁹ Letter from Étienne Blatiron to Vincent de Paul, *CED*, no. 1150, 11-1649.

¹⁰⁰ Jamais prélat ne nous a mieux fait connaître la suprême charité de Dieu que la vôtre”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Stefano Durazzo, *CED*, no. 2975, 12-09-1659.

¹⁰¹ “nous sommes l’objet de toutes ses bontés”, Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 2960, 05-09-1659. “qui semble n’avoir d’autre application”, Letter from Vincent de Paul to Edme Jolly, *CED*, no. 3006 17-10-1659.

means of religious [who are] citizens or subjects [of the Republic], [and] that he, therefore, should dismiss the Frenchmen or of whatever other nation they might be who are in Genoa in order to found the said congregation.¹⁰²

Durazzo dismissed this order claiming that it might have originated “from some kind of persecution of regular priests” and that following the order would have as a consequence that “the great good that they have started would be hindered by diabolical suggestions”.¹⁰³ Durazzo’s words point at his conviction that the senate’s opposition might be rooted in an aversion against the arrival of new religious congregations and not primarily in their political resistance against French influence, as their own letter suggested. Whatever may have caused the senate’s resistance, Durazzo’s support in spite of it must have convinced the Lazarists that he indeed found their work to be a “great good”.

Near the end of his life, De Paul’s esteem for Durazzo grew to such an extent that he identified obedience to Durazzo with obedience to God:

We have to receive the opinion of Monseigneur Cardinal Durazzo as orders from heaven, and do everything he commands without hesitation. The benevolence with which he honours the congregation is a great blessing [...], through which God often allows us to feel the effects of his adorable goodness.¹⁰⁴

Alluding to trust in God and trust in His servant Durazzo as one and the same thing, De Paul also wrote that all would turn out well if his missionaries only followed what

¹⁰² “se desidera entrudure (com’ha fatto rapresentare) la Congregatione de’ Preti missionarij il serenissimo senato ha per accertato che si facci col mezo di Religiosi Cittadini, ò sudditi, che perciò si contenti licenziare li francesi, o d’altra natione che siano li quali si trouano a Genua per instituire detta congregatione” ASG, AS, Jurisdictionalium 1075, no. 57.

¹⁰³ “Ha egli [i.e. Cardinal Durazzo] deto, che seconderà sempre li gusti e desiderij del Serenissimo Senato, dubita però di qualche persecutione de’ Regolari, e stima, che il bene grande, che si è cominciato a far in questa pratica venghi attrauersato da suggestioni diaboliche, conuende lui che si tratta di persone d’ogni bontà di uita, hà poi concluso che seruirà le SS serenissime.”, 24-07-1645. ASG, AS, Jurisdictionalium 1075, no. 57.

¹⁰⁴ “Nous devons recevoir les avis de Monseigneur le cardinal Durazzo comme des ordres du ciel, et faire, sans hésiter, tout ce qu’il commande. La bienveillance dont il honore la compagnie est une grande bénédiction pour elle, par laquelle Dieu nous fait souvent ressentir les effets de son adorable bonté”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2878, 20-06-1659.

was repeated by “his saintly Monseigneur the Cardinal”; namely that one only has to strive for the glory of God.¹⁰⁵ The saintliness of the cardinal became a recurring theme in the correspondence between Genoa and Paris.¹⁰⁶ Blatiron even delighted his Superior General with a portrait of the Genoese prelate, in the hope that the image of this saintly helper would comfort him.¹⁰⁷

Trust turned into obedience

This reverence for Cardinal Durazzo and trust in his orders contrasts with De Paul’s cautious attitude at the beginning of the Lazarist establishment in Genoa. As discussed previously, the Superior General had been suspicious that any meddling by the cardinal might alter the Lazarists’ *règle et pratique*. It took several year’s worth of accumulated experience before he began to instruct his followers to obey Durazzo in a broad variety of matters. For example, the cardinal’s change of topic when Blatiron hinted at sending some missionaries from Genoa to staff the new house in Turin in 1656 was enough for De Paul to conclude that this initiative would not please him and therefore the plan should be dismissed.¹⁰⁸

This obedient attitude is even more apparent in De Paul’s reaction that same year to the decision that the superior in Genoa took at the suggestion of the cardinal, namely to appoint a procurator to deal with the Lazarists’ worldly affairs in Genoa: “I appreciate it all the more,” he wrote, because the decision was taken “on the advice of the oracle, Monseigneur the Cardinal, whose lights and sentiments are from God and always tend towards him.”¹⁰⁹ On other occasions, certain initiatives seemed

¹⁰⁵ “son saint Mgr le cardinal”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2805, 04-04-1659.

¹⁰⁶ In recounting Durazzo’s assistance lobbying the Roman court for approval of indulgences and the congregation’s vows, De Paul wrote that he was touched and that he prayed to “Our Lord that he may keep and sanctify more and more this great and saintly prelate!”. (“je prie bien Notre-Seigneur qu’il conserve et sanctifie de plus en plus ce grand et saint prélat”) Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1787, 23-10-1654. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1947 (without date).

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 1787, 23-10-1654.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jean Martin, *CED*, no. 1999, 28-01-1656.

¹⁰⁹ “je l’approuve d’autant plus que c’est par l’avis de l’oracle, Monseigneur le cardinal, de qui les lumières et les sentiments sont de Dieu et tendent toujours à lui.” Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 2155, 13-10-1656. The procurator was probably Baliano Raggio a close

agreeable to De Paul simply because they were backed by the cardinal.¹¹⁰ When, again in 1656, the Lazarists were offered a house by a “venerable priest”, De Paul desired to know Durazzo’s thoughts because, in his view, Durazzo would advise “according to the light of the same spirit and Christian maxims according to which we must behave”.¹¹¹ His conviction had grown in time that the aims, policies, and interests of the cardinal were aligned with those of the congregation.

This convergence of interests also explains why what had started as formal obedience became genuine, complete trust. Even in deciding whether to assist those Genoese stricken in the plague epidemic of 1657-58, which would be accepting an almost certain death, the Lazarists relied fully on the judgment of the cardinal. He decided to keep them out of danger to assist him should he fall ill himself.¹¹² Nevertheless, eventually seven of the nine Lazarist priests died, including the Superior Blatiron.¹¹³

Trust was developed over the years because the Lazarists saw that Durazzo’s interests were similar to theirs, as demonstrated in his material support and spiritual affinity. In time, it gave substance to an otherwise somewhat hollow declaration of obedience. Complete obedience and gratitude were indeed the fruit of this growing trust.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

When a religious order arrived in a new region, it normally faced a dilemma. It could either attempt to obtain the trust of the local people by pleasing certain groups or patrons, answering their needs irrespective of the order’s original mission, or stick to

friend of Durazzo and the same noble ecclesiastic that had helped to fund the Lazarist establishment in Genoa. Cf. Alfonso, ‘La fondazione’, 135.

¹¹⁰ E.g. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, *CED*, no. 2763, 27-12-1658.

¹¹¹ “selon les lumières de ce meme esprit et les maximes chrétiennes par lesquelles nous nous devons conduire”. Letter from Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, *CED*, no. 2098, 14-07-1656.

¹¹² See e.g. the letters 2111, 2121, 2130, 2188, 2467 in *CED*.

¹¹³ Stella, *La Congregazione*, 33.

¹¹⁴ It is not surprising that Durazzo was finally honoured with the erection of his bust in the Lazarist buildings in Fassolo. The inscription on the bust reads: “Stephano Cardinali Duratio Archiepiscopo vigilantissimo quod Domum hanc aedificaverit Romanam auxerit Bastiensem promoverit totam Congregationem perpetua charitate delixerit anno 1657”. Musso, *Il Cardinale*, 160.

its own ethos and attempt to gain trust by strictly adhering to the order's authentic directives. A middle path was often preferred. When the Lazarists came to Genoa, they needed to offer something new in order to gain enough support. The missionaries were able to achieve this by sticking to De Paul's original mission: the education of the secular clergy and missions to the countryside. Indeed, these were the activities that Cardinal Durazzo had envisioned for the Lazarists in his diocese. Such initial trust was essential for an order that did not have a bad record in the area, but also could not fall back on a long, trustworthy history. Durazzo's invitation was therefore readily accepted, but on the conditions that financial stability would be guaranteed, and that missionaries would be allowed to maintain their common practices.

This preliminary trust, however, was only the beginning. By choosing to adhere to the rule of internal obedience above all else, the Lazarists' authentic mission could be preserved. Thus, an attachment to their own *pratique* was preferred above pleasing benefactors as a means to win trust. Such confidence in their own mission is understandable considering that it was this original ethos that had earned the congregation initial trust from people whose support they needed. Once this trust was obtained, the Lazarists protected their good reputation by ensuring they were distinguishable from others, that internal and external boundaries were clear, and that conformity was observed by all members of the congregation. Conformity was to be the fruit of obedience, which, according to De Paul, was born from an attitude of indifference. Indifference, in turn, originated from complete trust in God. Lazarists who did not conform were sent back to Paris or even dismissed from the company if they were obstinately disobedient. Finally, reputational damage was limited by avoiding unrealistic expectations from their work.

Yet the Lazarists themselves also needed to find out whom they could trust. This is made clear from their relationship with Cardinal Durazzo. From the beginning, the Lazarists in Genoa showed obedience to the archbishop. However, this outward obedience only became total in time, not because the rule of the congregation demanded it, but because of a growing trust in the cardinal. It was only after seeing that Durazzo's interests truly corresponded with theirs that genuine trust could arise. For a new congregation to flourish, trust *in* this group from multiple

levels of society was as important as trust *from* the congregation itself in those who should support it.

7. Between trust and obedience. Jesuit *indipetae* from Genoa and Corsica

So far, we have seen that trust played a pivotal role in the strategies of reformers even though it came with clear downsides, and distrust surfaced when those involved were not conceded a minimum of freedom.¹ The previous chapter shed light on the fact that religious groups consciously developed trust relationships that could help them in a new environment. In this final chapter, I set out to explore the meaning of trust in the life of individuals who were part of a religious congregation and its relation to obedience and other important religious values of that time. For this, we return to the Society of Jesus. Two characteristics of the Society make it a good case study for our inquiry. First, the Society was very advanced in using different forms of information management. Secondly, it valued a high level of individual discernment and introspection from its members. Both aspects come together in the correspondence of Genoese Jesuits with their Superior General in Rome and especially in the so-called *indipetae*.

The *indipetae* were letters in which individual Jesuits asked to be selected for one of the many missions of the Society around the world and expressed their hopes of a positive response. They were part of a centrally coordinated administration of vocations, even though the recruitment of missionaries could partially go through other channels.² The letters were at the same time bureaucratic documents full of

¹ A slightly different version of this chapter will be published as an article (entitled: ‘Trust in the *Indipetae* from Seventeenth-Century Genoa and Corsica’) in a forthcoming publication edited by Girolamo Imbruglia.

² Aliocha Maldavsky, ‘Rome et les provinces Hispaniques dans l’administration des vocations. L’expédition pour le Pérou de 1604’, in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions Religieuses Modernes*, 45–70. Pierre Antoine Fabre, ‘La décision de partir comme accomplissement des Exercices: Une lecture des *Indipetae*’, in *Ite inflammate omnia: selected historical papers from conferences held at Loyola and Rome in 2006*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Rome: Istitutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2010), 50–51.

specific rhetoric, and thoroughly spiritual and personal texts.³ The rhetorical strategies that the Jesuits used in their *indipetae* do not completely obscure the spirituality, desires, difficulties, and expectations of those who, for wide-ranging reasons, wanted to go to the missions.⁴ As Giovanni Pizzorusso reminds us, the *indipetae* can be characterised as “texts at the margins of autobiography” because, although embedded in a specific spiritual and bureaucratic discourse, they testify to “the personal vocational trajectories of the Jesuit missionaries and the story of such an experience of introspection”.⁵ These rare records of introspection make the *indipetae* particularly interesting for further exploring what trust meant for the people we study, in this case the members of an important religious congregation. That is why this chapter focuses on the Jesuits and their missionary desires, even though their particular spirituality and the practices it inspired do not always directly apply to the seventeenth-century clergy as a whole. My hopes are that uncovering what trust meant for the lives of individual Jesuits in Genoa will also help us to identify the path forward for further research into the trust experiences of early modern clergy.

Writing from the Jesuit college in Genoa in 1616 to his Superior General in Rome, Pietro Antonio Gente thus described a dynamic that is central to all *indipetae*:

³ Giovanni Pizzorusso, ‘Autobiografia e vocazione in una lettera indipeta inedita del gesuita Pierre-Joseph-Marie Chaumonot, missionario in Canada (1637)’, in *Per Adriano Prosperi. L’Europa divisa e i nuovi mondi, vol. II*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 192. The candidates carefully chose their words and used specific rhetoric. The Jesuits were taught to think carefully about the style they used in their letters, depending on the recipient and goal of the message. Grant Boswell, ‘Letter Writing among the Jesuits: Antonio Possevino’s Advice in the “Bibliotheca Selecta” (1593)’, *Huntington Library Quarterly, Studies in the Cultural History of Letter Writing* 66-3/4 (2003): 252–53.

⁴ “Quello che possiamo leggere però ci racconta cose interessanti: certo oggi siamo consapevoli di non poter esagerare il valore privato e narrativo delle *indipetae*. Chi racconta di sé, lo fa mirando al preciso obiettivo di convincere il destinatario della propria attitudine alla missione. Detto questo, non possiamo neppure sottovalutare l’interesse della fonte per ricostruire desideri e speranze dei candidati, che anche se filtrati dall’obiettivo rimangono indiscutibilmente espressioni di sé, della propria vita concreta e del proprio sentire.” Claudio Ferlan, ‘Candidati alle Indie. Le lettere indipete nella Compagnia di Gesù’ (Padre Kino e i suoi tempi. Una riflessione storica, Trent, 2011), 9. Paulo Roberto de Andrada Pacheco and Marina Massimi, ‘A experiência de “obediência” nas *Indipetae*’, *Memorandum* 17 (2009): 22–44.

⁵ Pizzorusso, ‘Autobiografia e vocazione’, 197.

I come again with this [letter] to supplicate V.P.⁶ [...] to allow me [...] to leave from these parts of Italy and go to the new world of the Indies: I cannot give another reason than that I feel called by Jesus [...]. When I consider the end to which I have been created and for which I have been called to a religious life, I know that I am very much obliged [to go], and that V.P. is also partially obliged to grant me what I ask for, because without V.P. I cannot do anything.⁷

In the *indipetae*, a pressing desire that was perceived as an indication of God's plan merged with the awareness of total dependence on the permission from the Superior General, whom every Jesuit was expected to obey as God's representative. This dynamic resulted in circa 14,000 such letters that have survived in the Jesuit archives in Rome, documenting the hopes and desires of many Jesuits and their attempts to convince the Superior General of their suitability for work in one of the many missions.

There are three themes permeating the *indipetae* that can help us better understand how contemporaries experienced trust: desire, obedience, and indifference. The letter writers often showed great trust in their own desire for the mission, a desire that was believed to be given by God. The Jesuits, however, did not automatically see this desire as proof of a missionary vocation: only in time and after careful self-examination – following the precise method taught in the spiritual exercises – would a Jesuit start to trust his desire. Such scrutinised desire that indicated a divinely given vocation was essential for the missionary endeavour that characterised the Society of Jesus: towards the end of the sixteenth century, local superiors in Brazil claimed that the Jesuits who did not want to learn the language or

⁶ V.P. is an abbreviation of *Vostra Paternità*. The Jesuits used to address their Superior General in this way. In the citations, I will leave the acronym "V.P." as in the original.

⁷ "Vengo di nuovo con questa à supplicar V.P. à voler mi conceder la mia già tanta bramata petitione di partirmi da queste parti d'Italia et andarmene nel nuouo mondo dell'Indie: ne so io apportar altra ragione, se non che mi sento chiamar da Gesù, e considerando il mio fine sì per il quale sono stato creato, e chiamato alla religione mi conosco obligatissimo e V.P. ancor in parte obligata à concedermi quel che domando, poiche senza lei io posso far niente." Pietro Antonio Gente, 18-03-1616, ARSI, FG, 735, no. 411.

habits of the people among whom they worked, did not have a vocation.⁸ Sending people without a strong desire to work in the missions was counterproductive. In Portugal, the superiors composed catalogues in which they specified not only the candidates' health, place of birth, number of years within the Society, and the years the candidates had been studying or teaching, but also information about their spiritual state; especially their calling and 'zeal for the mission'. Superiors thus hoped to make sure that only those with a real vocation would be sent.⁹ This fact already shows that the free will of the missionaries was deemed to be of primary importance in their selection for the missions. Ignatius of Loyola himself was convinced that having a calling, rather than the needs of the Society, should be the only thing that counted.¹⁰ The vow of obedience was not to be misused by sending missionaries against their will, even though according to the *Constitutions* of the order, this vow implied that one "ought to allow himself to be carried and directed by Divine Providence through the agency of the superior as if he were a lifeless body which allows itself to be carried to any place".¹¹ On the other hand, desire alone was not sufficient for a Jesuit with a missionary vocation. He was bound to obey the orders of his superiors and could not decide of his own accord to leave for the mission.

Historians are beginning to understand that obedience, a second major theme in the *indipetae* and a value that permeated every fibre of the Society, was less monolithic than one might think.¹² The life of the thirteenth Superior General of the Society, Tirzo González (1687-1705), for example, shows that obedience was a fluid category. There were different people whom González was supposed to obey in

⁸ Charlotte De Castelnau-L'Estoile, 'Élection et vocation: le choix des missionnaires dans la province jésuite du Portugal à la fin du XVIIe siècle', in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions religieuses modernes*, 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 27–29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 248–49. See also: Amélie Vantard, 'Les vocations pour les missions ad gentes (France, 1650-1750)' (Université du Maine, 2010), 303–4.

¹² Cf. Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan, eds., *Avventure dell'obbedienza nella Compagnia di Gesù: teorie e prassi fra XVI e XIX secolo*, *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento. Quaderni* 86 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012); Silvia Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581-1615)* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

different phases of his life: the Superior General, local superiors, the Pope, and last but not least, his own conscience, in which God manifested His will and which made it possible to “disobey for the sake of obedience”.¹³ González trusted his own conscience as a criterion for the truth when there were contrasting possibilities of obedience.¹⁴

In fact, all Jesuits were taught to respect other people’s consciences and what God wanted to communicate through the movements of one’s inner being, something which Thomas Aquinas had already taught three centuries before.¹⁵ It was exactly this emphasis on one’s own scrutiny that gave room for possible friction between two types of obedience: obedience to the inner guidance of truth, which was to be respected by the superiors (or other authorities) because it was given by God, and obedience to the superiors themselves.¹⁶ In her work about Jesuit obedience, Silvia Mostaccio identifies two tendencies in the Counter-Reformation period: while it was the time in which “obedience became synonymous with ‘orthodoxy’”, we see the simultaneous emergence “of ‘conscience’ as a new authority”.¹⁷ This produced, according to Mostaccio, a climate of “on the one hand, growing faith in the capacity of discernment possessed by the individual and, on the other, the requirement for a society of subjects, obedient to their political and religious masters”.¹⁸ Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan have defined the dynamic

¹³ Colombo, ‘In virtù dell’obbedienza’, 99.

¹⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas gave two reasons that exempted people from obedience. First, “the command of a higher power”. Since the highest power is God, this allows for one’s use of conscience and thus creates the possibility of a hierarchy of ‘obediences’. Secondly, “in matters touching the internal movement of the will man is not bound to obey his fellow man, but God alone.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 104, art 5, resp. Disobedience, moreover, is justified when a superior commands something that is contrary to God or the rule one professes. With respect to religious people, Aquinas specifies that “they are bound to obey in those matters only which may belong to the regular mode of life, and this obedience suffices for salvation. If they be willing to obey even in other matters, this will belong to the superabundance of perfection; this is, however, provided such things be not contrary to God or to the rule they profess, for obedience in this case would be unlawful.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 104, art 5, ad. 3.

¹⁶ Laura Vilela e Souza and Marina Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare nelle Litterae Indipetae: le condizioni psicologiche per l’azione nella narrativa di giovani gesuiti del sedicesimo secolo’, *Memorandum* 3 (2002): 57.

¹⁷ Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits*, 47.

¹⁸ Ibid., 166.

that results from these (seemingly contrasting) developments as “negotiated obedience”.¹⁹

Historians have noted a contradiction between the obedience and freedom of conscience within a religious order that had made blind obedience the central element of its *way of proceeding*, and a fundamental condition for belonging to the order. Mostaccio, for example, writes that “the renunciation of the will by the individual [in obedience] could not happen unless it operated under certain controlled conditions,” without however defining these conditions.²⁰ In my view, it is here that trust comes in: examining the role of trust in the *indipetae* will shed light on this seemingly contradictory attitude towards obedience. Since these letters offer a view on how ordinary Jesuits adopted the Society’s teachings in practice, they will also help us to better understand why trust was so crucial for obedience.

Thomas Aquinas already argued that obedience was reasonable when demonstrated toward superiors who followed the will of God (the first authority to obey) more than oneself.²¹ Claudio Acquaviva (1553-1615), the fifth Superior General of the order, was also aware that effective obedience could only be accomplished when obedience to the inner criterion, one’s conscience and thus one’s will, did not contrast with obedience to one’s superiors. In a 1581 letter directed to all superiors about the “happy progress” of the Society of Jesus, he exhorted:

The most effective means for guiding them must be to win over the will; hence it must not satisfy a superior of the Society that a subject obeys him and goes on doing this or that in any old manner, but he must have an eye to his doing it perfectly, which is greatly helped when subjects truly know that they are loved by their superiors.²²

¹⁹ Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan, ‘Storie di obbedienza negoziata’, in *Avventure dell’obbedienza nella Compagnia di Gesù. Teorie e prassi fra XVI e XIX*, ed. Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 16.

²⁰ Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits*, 17.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 104, art 2. ad 2.

²² Claudio Acquaviva, “A’ superiori della Compagnia del felice progresso”, in: *Lettere de’ prepositi generali. A’ Padri, e Fratelli della Compagnia di GIESV*. Rome, 1606, 97.

The words of Acquaviva point to a crucial issue that might help to understand how obedience and conscience could go together: obedience does not remain a reluctant act, because a person has to obey, when he is willing to do what is asked of him, convinced that the order is for his benefit and is requested out of love.

The willingness to obey is therefore based on trust, i.e. the expectation that the superior whom one should obey has similar interests as oneself and is able to judge what is best. In fact, in the eyes of one Cistercian philosopher, Pierre de Saint-Joseph (1594-1662), superiors sinned gravely if they did not work for the spiritual and temporal well-being of their subordinates.²³ We have seen this same dynamic in the Lazarists' relationship with Cardinal Durazzo: their obedience grew because they experienced that he cared for their well-being and shared their interests. In this chapter we will consider how this same experience played out on a personal level, where it becomes clear that the criterion for trusting, and thus for judging whether the superior should be obeyed 'blindly', were one's own experiences as well as one's conscience.²⁴

Our understanding of the third essential element of the *indipetae*, the *indifferentia* that all letter writers claimed to be their fundamental attitude, is also helped by studying trust. Indifference was not the absence of desires, but trusting more in God's plan, voiced by the Superior General, than in one's own thoughts and wishes.²⁵ Without understanding the complexity of *indifferentia* it might seem that indifference was often only proclaimed and not felt, since Jesuits frequently mentioned it in the *indipetae* together with pronounced preferences.²⁶ However, if after careful self-examination a Jesuit trusted that his desire came from God, this God-given desire would not contrast with indifference (i.e. trust in God), as is suggested in this letter of Alessandro Sappa:

²³ Pierre de Saint-Joseph, *Summula casuum conscientiae, continens brevem et accuratam explicationem Praeceptorum Decalogi* (Leiden, 1666), 175.

²⁴ Alfieri and Ferlan, 'Storie di obbedienza negoziata', 8, 16–17.

²⁵ Vilela e Souza and Massimi, 'Il desiderio dell'oltremare', 66. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 79–80.

²⁶ Alfieri and Ferlan, 'Storie di obbedienza negoziata', 11.

I would not have the courage to insist again [...] (because it seems that after having stated what I desired to the superior, I ought to let myself be ruled and governed by him) but because I do not think that I go against indifference [with my letter], and I feel that the vehemence of the desire also urges me to do this [...] I ask V.P. to pardon me.²⁷

Just as obedience is more complex than we might think, so too *indifferentia* is not a monolithic category. Its complexity arises from the fact that indifference, too, depended on trust, and trust – in God, in one’s own desire, in the future – was only built over time, influenced by experience. The more one trusted, the more one was truly indifferent to the outcome of writing an *indipeta* and thus free to take up the pen and ask for the mission, but at the same time free to be obedient if one’s request were not heard.²⁸

The great communal and personal urgency for the missionary endeavour, both in Europe and in the newly discovered remote parts of the world, has been one of the characteristics of early modern Catholicism. In order to explore how the Jesuits who felt this urgency experienced trust, I have studied the many letters sent by Jesuits who were either natives or residents of Genoa and Corsica. Since Genoa was a major port city, many Jesuits leaving for the mission passed through the city and instilled their missionary enthusiasm in the novices residing there.²⁹ Corsica, the island that fell under Genoese dominion, was the place where the Jesuit idea of “Our Indies” was born: the Jesuits working there experienced their labours as a foretaste of the faraway missions that they aspired to.³⁰ I have examined letters from 1590, the year of the first *indipeta* from Genoa, to the end of the Genoese Superior General Giovanni Paolo Oliva’s generalate (1681). Diverse as this corpus may be, several

²⁷ “Non haurei già io l’ardire con questa di nuouo instare V.P. (parendo che dopo hauer proposto quello che desidero al Superiore dourei da lui lasciarmi reggere, e gouernare) ma non pensando io di contrauenire a questa indifferenza, [...] e sentendo che anco a cio fare mi sprona la uehemenza del desiderio [...] pregho VP hauermi per scusato.” Alessandro Sappa, 30-06-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 191.

²⁸ Vilela e Souza and Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare’, 64–66; Mariana Leal de Barros and Marina Massimi, ‘Releituras da indiferença: um estudo baseado em cartas de jesuitas dos sécalos XVI e XVII’, *Paidéia* 15, no. 31 (2005): 201.

²⁹ See e.g. Francesco Girone, Genoa, 31-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 329.

³⁰ Prospero, *Tribunali della coscienza*, 555.

recurrent features and arguments concerning the discernment of a missionary vocation allow us, in the first part of this chapter, to further explore the three key vocational elements mentioned above - desire, obedience and indifference - and see how they relate to trust. These elements were central to the *indipetae* and to Ignatian spirituality as a whole, but also to early modern Catholicism in general. Secondly, we will look at the way in which the letter writers tried to convince their Superior General of their suitability and win his trust. Thus, it becomes clear what contemporaries thought would foster people's trust in them. Finally, the chapter sheds light on the fact that initiative 'from above', namely to staff a certain mission, relied on obedience, and this obedience, in turn, was only feasible in the context of a trust relationship.

Trust 'from below'

Even though historians now understand how major the phenomenon of the *indipetae* was, we should at the same time not forget that writing such a letter was not an obvious step. To be sure it was one that could possibly have life-changing implications: once the desire to leave for the "Indies" was expressed, a Jesuit from one of the coastal towns of Liguria, for example, might be sent to the interior of Paraguay never to see his homeland again.³¹ The choice of writing therefore must have required at least some basic form of trust on different levels: in the first place, trust in the religious order to which one gave one's life and professed one's obedience, secondly, trust in one's own desire for the missions as a calling from God, and lastly, trust that working in the mission would bring benefits, which made it worthwhile to take this step towards the unknown.

1) Trusting the Society of Jesus

From the time that I came to know the Society, which must be [...] around ten years ago, I have always had the ardent desire to join, having the firm hope of being sent to the Indies one day; and never was it possible to become attached to other religious orders

³¹ Cf. De Castelnau-L'Estoile, 'Élection et vocation', 42.

merely because I did not have any hope of fulfilling this desire [with these orders].

In this letter written in January 1616, Cosmo Bacchetta, a novice from the Jesuit college in Genoa, expressed a thought shared by many *indipetae* writers, namely that among all religious orders it was the Society of Jesus where one had most chance of following a missionary vocation.³² One year after entering the Society, Bartolomeo Bergonzo likewise recalled that he had chosen the Jesuits from many other religious orders because this choice implied the possibility of becoming a missionary.³³ We can think of other reasons that drove people to join the Society: for instance, the promise of receiving an education and having an ecclesiastical career, or the prestige of the order that could foster family pride. Yet a substantial part of those Jesuits who asked to be sent to the missions had indeed entered the Society because they consciously entrusted their future—which they sometimes hoped would be adventurous—to this religious order.³⁴ They put their trust in the Society *because* they desired to go to the mission.

We see that for youngsters who wanted to join the Society of Jesus trust really involved an expectation based on direct or indirect experience: young boys expected that joining the Society would bring a life of adventure and sacrifice in faraway lands because of the stories of missionaries who had already gone there. Francesco Girone's letter illustrates this point, as he wrote from Genoa:

V.P. should [...] know that one year before I entered the Society, when I heard some fathers tell about the great good and the martyrdoms that they had gone through in the Indies, such a desire filled me to follow them, that one day when I was hearing mass, I made a vow, I do not know how and certainly too hastily, that

³² “Da che io hebbi conoscenza della Compagnia che saranno à ponto da dieci anni, hebbi sempre ardente desiderio di entrar in essa, con ferma speranza d’essere un giorno mandato all’Indie, ne fu mai possibile c’io mi affettionassi ad altre religioni per entrarmi solo perché non vedevo speranza d’adempire questo desiderio”. *Indipeta* from Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa 06-01-1616, FG 735, no. 287.

³³ *Indipeta* from Bartolomeo Bergonzo, 09-12-1611, Genoa, FG 734, no. 380.

³⁴ See also: Maldavsky, ‘Mobilités religieuses - Société urbaine et désir de mission’, 18; Ferlan, ‘Candidati alle Indie. Le littere indipete nella Compagnia di Gesù’, 2–4.

when I entered the Society I would try with all my strength to go to the missions in the Indies.³⁵

The confidence required to join the Jesuits was elicited by the stories aspirant members heard in their youth about the experiences of others who had already joined the Society.³⁶ However, trust in the Society's capacity and willingness to help with accomplishing what one desired was not enough to confidently take up the pen and ask to be accepted for the mission. Indeed, once they entered the Society, the Jesuits had to learn when to trust their own desire.

2) *Trusting one's desire, trusting God*

Discernment was one of the cornerstones of Ignatian spirituality. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, which all Jesuits followed before entering the Society and continued to attend frequently, should help the individual to discern God's will and thus come to the right choices.³⁷ In terms of discernment, plain desire was not necessarily seen as positive, because even the devil could inspire human desires for his own purposes.³⁸ To make sure that one was following God's will, affections and desires had to be ordered and put into their right place, by careful discernment: this could be achieved, for instance, through prayer and meditation, doing the Spiritual Exercises and consulting one's superior.³⁹ But writing an *indipeta* and thinking

³⁵ "V.P. dunque hà da sapere ch'un'anno auanti ch'entrassi nella Compagnia dal sentir alcuni nostri Padri à raccontare il gran bene, ed' i martirij che riceueuano nell'Indie, mi uenne un tal desiderio di seguirarli, che un giorno udendo messa feci uoto, non sò come, certo troppo frettoloso, che s'entrauo nella Compagnia procurassi à tutto potere di chieder la missione all'Indie." Francesco Girone, 25-02-1679, ARSI, FG 748, no. 255.

³⁶ For another example, see Ludovico Pozzo's letter from Genoa, 22-06-1611, ARSI, FG 734, 367. See also: Camilla Russell, 'Imagining the "Indies": Italian Jesuit petitions for the overseas missions at the turn of the seventeenth century', in Donattini, Marcocci, and Pastore, *L'Europa divisa*, 182–83; Maldavsky, 'Mobilités religieuses', 13.

³⁷ Cf. Fabre, 'La décision de partir comme accomplissement des Exercices: Une lecture des *Indipetae*'. Leal de Barros and Massimi, 'Releituras da indiferença: um estudo baseado em cartas de jesuitas dos sécalos XVI e XVII', 199.

³⁸ Giovanni Boscareno explicitly states that he considered this option in his letter from Genoa, 03-02-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 115.

³⁹ Vilela e Souza and Massimi, 'Il desiderio dell'oltremare', 58–61.

through its possible consequences could also be a method of discernment, because it was seen as means by which a letter writer tried to understand God's will.⁴⁰

Many of the letters therefore reveal the process of discernment by which a Jesuit came to trust his desire. The first thing that stands out when reading the Genoese *indipetae* is the conviction that the desire to go to the Indies came from God and was thus positive. Moreover, it originated *in experience*, especially the experience of a continuation or increase of this desire over time: "the long time that I have already felt this desire within me *does not leave me any doubt* that the vocation comes from God," Tommaso Bona wrote in 1629.⁴¹ Likewise, Giovanni Boscareno, a Jesuit who was sent to the Corsican town of Ajaccio, recounted his experience of "our Indies":

in an India that was not real, but foreshadowed [...] the occasions I had to labour and mortify myself in the service of God and our Society not only did not diminish the desire that God gave me from the beginning of my novitiate, but greatly increased it.⁴²

A brother working in Genoa similarly emphasised that he had already written four years before (giving the exact date of 11 June 1630) and stated that his desire to go to the missions had not disappeared, which proved that it was real.⁴³ Giovanni Giacomo Pasquali, who wrote as many as thirty-one letters, claimed that his doubts were dispelled exactly because he saw his desire grow in time.⁴⁴ For some, an increase in desire brought particular urgency, as in the case of Cosmo Bacchetta, who preferred not to wait the three months that he needed to finish his novitiate. For others, it brought endurance, as in the case of the Genoese Filippo Grimaldo, who

⁴⁰ Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 68.

⁴¹ "la uocatione uenire dal S're Iddio *non mi lascia dubitare* il longo tempo che gia mi sento acceso di questo desiderio" [my italics]. Tommaso Bona, 10-06-1629, Genoa, FG 738, no. 354.

⁴² Come a punto in un'India non uera, ma adombrata, e l'occasioni, che qui ho hauuto d'affaticarmi e mortificarmi per seruitio di Dio, e della nostra Compagnia non solamente m'hanno sminuito il desiderio, che il Signore mi diede sin dal principio del mio Nouitiato, ma molto me l'hanno accresciuto. Giovanni Boscareno 17-05-1619, Ajaccio, ARSI, FG, 736, no. 25.

⁴³ Carlo Margheriti, Genoa, 12-05-1634. ARSI, ITAL 172, no. 57.

⁴⁴ See e.g. Giovanni Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa, 26-06-1612, 734, no. 382.

claimed to have harboured the wish to go to the missions for twenty-five years.⁴⁵ The latter's persistence was rewarded when, some years later, he was finally sent to Goa.⁴⁶ The frequency with which *indipetae* writers referred to the longevity of their desire leaves no doubt that they themselves saw it as strong positive evidence of its trustworthiness.

The test of time was not the only confirmation of a true desire given by God. The experience of certain emotions (*affetti*), in particular that of consolation, could also enhance trust. According to Ignatius, consolation was the phenomenon “when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord”, or indeed “every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.”⁴⁷ In 1614, Antonio Gallo wrote that he experienced an inexpressible consolation (*consolazione indicibile*) when he thought about the mission: this strengthened him in his conviction that his was a true calling from God.⁴⁸ Similarly, Carlo Ottavio Renzo identified the origin of his desire as the “happy encounter with two [missionaries] who are going to Brazil [which] has touched my heart more than anything else”.⁴⁹ The emotion experienced through this encounter strengthened Carlo's conviction that his desire was indeed a good one.⁵⁰ Yet it was not only positive feelings that could affirm the authenticity of a desire: even though his hopes collapsed because

⁴⁵ Cosmo Bacchetta, 26-02-1616, Genoa, ARSI, FG 735, no. 377 and Filippo Grimaldo, Fermo, 13-06-1633, ARSI, FG 747, 164. For other examples see: Geronimo Colletta, Genoa, 25-05-1608, FG 741, no. 282, and Agostino Gherardi Genoa, 09-12-1638, FG 746, no. 460.

⁴⁶ Filippo Grimaldo, Goa, 24-01-1667, FG 747, no. 229/1.

⁴⁷ Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, § 316, Ganss ed., 202.

⁴⁸ Antonio Gallo, 14-11-1614, Genoa, ARSI, FG 734, no. 469. See also: De Castelneau-L'Estoile, ‘Élection et vocation’, 30; Paulo Roberto de Andrada Pacheco and Marina Massimi, ‘The Experience of “Consolation” in the Litterae Indipetae’, *Psicologia em Estudo* 15, no. 2 (2010): 343–52. See also: Raimondo Turtas, ‘Gesuiti sardi in terra di missione tra Seicento e Settecento’, *Bollettino di Studi Sardi*, no. 2 (November 2009): 69–70.

⁴⁹ Carlo Ottavio Renzo, 21-04-1622, Genoa, ARSI, FG 736, no. 354. “[il] felice incontro di due che vanno al Brasile m'è talmente ferito il cuore che niente più.”

⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Bartolomeo Caloriti recounts what “great pleasure and joy” [*gran gusto e allegrezza*] he experienced upon entering the novitiate of the Jesuits: this emotion was seen as a confirmation of the fact that one had chosen the right path. Bartolomeo Caloriti, 04-06-1628, Genoa, ARSI, FG 738, no. 222.

they were not answered, Giovanni Francesco Perego still continued to see them as the manifestation of a true desire, because “with all this, it seems to me that I live restlessly”. It was the restlessness that made Perego express his hopes again.⁵¹ Furthermore, the feeling of hope caused by a positive answer to an *indipeta*, for example that one’s name was “written on the list of those who desire to go to the Indies”, also confirmed the truth of their desire for some.⁵²

Besides special emotions or the longevity of one’s desire, inner experiences were essential for discernment, as well as dreams and visions.⁵³ Seeing that the longing endured after having thought it over very well and having meditated upon all the difficulties of the mission, greatly enhanced the *indipetae* writers’ trust:

Last lent, Tomaso Bona wrote, I recommended the matter more fervently to God, offering many communions to this purpose: and finding myself firm [in my desire] after all this, I decided to inform you.⁵⁴

It is interesting to note the attentiveness with which this Jesuit examined his inner experience.⁵⁵ According to Ignatian spirituality, the movements of the soul were signs that showed God’s will.⁵⁶ That after prayer Tomaso Bona “found himself” still desiring to go to the Indies gave him confidence to write to his Superior General. Bartolomeo Pensa testified about a similar experience, recounting how “doing the [spiritual] exercises before the vows and during the triduum of the renewal [of the vows], and many other times at different occasions, I felt stimulated to write again”.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Giovanni Francesco Perego, 23-03-1647, Genoa, ARSI, FG 745, no. 50.

⁵² Giovanni Boscareno, Corsica, 01-11-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 195. However, hope is not enough for the soul, Alessandro Sappa added in his letter recounting the confidence that the Padre Assistente gave him. Alessandro Sappa, 30-06-1617, Genoa, 735, no. 191.

⁵³ Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 92.

⁵⁴ “la quaresima prossima passata raccomandai a Dio più caldamente il negotio offerendo a ciò molte communioni: e doppo tutto questo ritrouandomi fermo ho deliberato darne parte a sua Paternità” Tomaso Bona, 10-06-1629, Genoa 7, 354. See e.g. also: Marius Clemens Baratta, 21-01-1615, Genoa, ARSI, ITAL 173, 14; Vincenzo Solombrino, Genoa 25-11-1608, FG 734, no. 228; and Giovanni Boscareno, Genoa 03-02-1617, ARSI, FG 735, 115.

⁵⁵ Emanuele Colombo and Marina Massimi affirm that such attentive descriptions of the inner experience that led to the decision to ask for the mission became more prominent in the nineteenth century. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 137–38.

⁵⁶ Vilela e Souza and Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare’, 38.

⁵⁷ Bartolomeo Pensa, Corsica, 08-09-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 183.

Many candidates wrote that even considering all the possible dangers involved in the missions did not discourage them. Instead, it confirmed them in their desire: “In order to be certain that this [desire of mine] is not a sudden spirit or fervour,” Carlo Moneta assured his Superior General,

V.P. should know that [...] I communicated it to my master of novices, who advised me to let it mature well during the whole novitiate, whereupon with his guidance I applied myself to various prayers and communions in order to do what he advised me. After having frequently considered what could oppose me – that is, the continuous dangers and sufferings of the long voyage and the fact that one has death always in front of one’s eyes – this did not seem enough to stop me from conforming to the Lord who is calling me to those lands.⁵⁸

Trust in one’s desire grew not only from spiritual experiences, but also from various practical circumstances that were seen as a positive sign from God. As Giuseppe Boniperto wrote from Genoa in 1639:

God is offering me in the meanwhile the comfortable opportunity of [having] the father procurator nearby, with whom I can learn the language easily and get ready for the hardships [...]. I would not want to pose any impediments to that happiness that God has started to put in front of my eyes.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “acchioche V.P’tà si possi assicurare non essere questo spirito ò feruore repentino, deue sapere come hà già un anno, et mezzo, che doppo hauermi il Sig’ re data questa Vocatione, la comunicai con il Padre mio Maestro de Nouizi qual mi consiglio a maturarla bene tutto il tempo del nouitiato, onde con il di lui indrizzo mi missi di proposito con uarie orationi, et communioni à far ciò, che egli mi consigliaua et doppo auer considerato molte uolte ciò che mi si potesse opporre, cioè li continoui [sic] pericoli et patimenti della longa nauigatione, et l’hauer sempre la morte dinanzi alli occhi, ciò non m’è parso bastante à trattenermi di non corrispondere al Signore che mi chiama in quei paesi.” Carlo Moneta, Genoa 10-09-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 282. See e.g. also: Giovanni Francesco Casella, Milan 29-01-1635, ARSI, FG 740, no. 287 and 30-12-1636, ARSI, FG 740, no. 420.

⁵⁹ “Offerendomi Dio intanto la commoda occasione del P’re Procuratore uicino, col quale puotrò con auantaggio imparar la lingua, e dispormi alle fatiche; [...] non ponga io impedimento a quella felicità che mi cominciò à porre auanti gl’occhi Dio” Giuseppe Boniperto, Genoa 13-05-1639, ARSI FG 742, no. 48.

It was the experience of such a convenient situation that convinced Giuseppe that his desire came from God. In answer to Giuseppe's question, the Superior General wrote that he would ask the provincial superior if there was still a place for him, but he added: "if you do not attain the fulfilment of your desire now, see to it that you keep it ever more alive in case another occasion arises".⁶⁰

The experience of a long and growing desire that was well thought through and confirmed by special emotions as well as favourable circumstances brought many *indipetae* writers to believe that their desire was good and given by God. Some of them even described it as a precious present.⁶¹ This experience could lead to confident expectations, such as those expressed by Cosmo Bacchetta: "I'm almost sure that I will obtain my intention, so great is the desire [...] that God gives me".⁶² Gio Battista Lucerna went a step further:

You should not hesitate to send me, and if some doubts might intervene, you should not keep them in mind because I hold it for certain that these will be either based on poor information or falsehood, or on the conflict that the enemy of the human race uses against all good things.

For some, this conviction was so clear that they saw it as a matter of conscience to communicate their desire to the Superior General.⁶³

Many of the *indipetae* writers equated their own confidence in their desire with trust in God, who gave them these experiences that made their desire trustworthy. It

⁶⁰ "se adesso non conseguirete l'adempimento del uostro desideiro, procurate di tenerlo sempre più uiuo per qualche altra occasione". Answer to Giuseppe Boniperto, Rome 28-05-1639, ARSI, MED 27, 369v.

⁶¹ See, for a letter that mentions that the desire was good: Gio' Battista Astria, Genoa, 03-01-1616, ARSI, FG 735, no. 284; and Gio' Maria Leria, Ajaccio, 12-03-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 23/1. For a letter that mentioned that this desire was a gift, see: Antonio Gallo, Genoa, 06-12-1613, ARSI, FG 734, no. 404 and Giovanni Boscareno, Genoa, 03-02-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 115.

⁶² Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa, 06-01-1616, FG 735, no. 287.

⁶³ Gio' Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa 18-02-1611, ARSI, FG 734, no. 354. "scaricandomene la coscienza". See, for another example, ITAL 173, no. 71. Others did not rely that much on their own desire for the good, as on the occasion that the mission would offer to abstain from other worldlier desires: not so much the accomplishment of their desire but that of the salvation of their soul, in their words, depended on whether they would be elected or not. See e.g. Ottavio Quatterca, Genoa, 29-09-1617, ARSI, FG 740, no. 124; Luigi Sesino, 09-06-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 259; Gregorio Porta, Milano, 08-12-1615, ARSI, ITAL 173, no. 38.

is interesting to note that trust in God (and thus in the desire that the writers came to see as given by God) mirrored the dynamic of normal trust. We have defined the latter as the experience-based expectation that somebody is able and willing to do what one asks of him. In the case of the Jesuit *indipetae* writers, trust in God was the experience-based belief that God intended and was able to realise one's desire for the mission. Not only did the petitioners carefully observe the early experiences on which this expectation (and therefore their trust in a missionary future) could be based, but they also noted and explained how, in their experience, God had already shown himself able and willing to act in their favour. Giovanni Francesco Casella expressed this dynamic when he wrote to his Superior General:

Because, upon entering the order I have *experienced* the wondrous effects of grace and divine providence, I am *certain* that I will experience these evermore every day.⁶⁴

Three years later, he used the same argument:

I'm in good health, and I have already *experienced* that whoever places himself in the hands of the Lord is favoured in his efforts, and that which to men seems, as it were, impossible, God makes easy for those who desire to work for his love.⁶⁵

In the eyes of the Jesuit aspirants to the mission, it logically followed from these earlier experiences that they should trust God and the desire he had inspired in them:

I recognise [the calling from God] and I cannot pretend to be blind, or I would have to pretend that God is *foolish* [...]. I will definitely never regret having confided in God.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ “sicome nel ingresso in religione *ho prouato* l'effetti merauigliosi della gratia, e prouidenza Diuina cosi sono *certo* di douerla sperimentare ogni giorno maggiormente.” [my italics] Giovanni Francesco Casella, Milan 29-01-1635, ARSI, FG 740, no. 287.

⁶⁵ “Sto con buona santità, e gia ho *prouato*, che chi si ponen elle mani del Signore Iddio viene fauorito nelle sue fatiche, e quel che all'huomini pare, per dir cosi, impossibile, Iddio rende facile, a chi desidera per amor suo impiegarsi. [my italics] Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa, 12-11-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 253.

⁶⁶ “Lo cognosco ne posso fingermi cieco, se non uolessi fingermi un Dio *insensato* [...] Certo non mi pentirò mai d'hauer confidato in Dio.” [my italics] Nicola Maria Pallavicino, Genoa, 05-07-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 328.

Many others argued in the same way, namely that God could not act illogically by giving a true desire without answering it. They used words comparable to those of Ignatio Bertolati, who wrote: “I trust [*confido*] that He who freely gave this desire to me, will also not fail to give me the strength.”⁶⁷

Indeed the word *confido* was used very frequently, in combination with an expression of the expectation that God would make up for the candidate’s lack of abilities: “I do not doubt that God out of infinite goodness can do greater things,” Giovanni Montali wrote, and Giovanni Donato stressed that he trusted “divine kindness” just as much as he distrusted his own “tepidity”.⁶⁸ Much emphasis was put on one’s own unworthiness and the confidence that God could use the “weakest instruments” and “the most abject and useless things in the world”, so that it was “up to him to revive this dead instrument for his glory”.⁶⁹

3) *From discernment to trust*

That the *indipetae* writers expressed great confidence in divine grace is possibly not surprising, nor that they saw their Superior General as the unquestionable voice of this divine grace. Interestingly, however, their letters clearly reflect the Jesuit habit of looking at a diverse range of experiences to increase confidence and discern God’s plans. The path of discernment that led from a fragile desire to a mature confidence in one’s calling is expressed effectively in a letter from Stanislao Palio. He first recounted how he began this path:

The good desire and the many inspirations that the Divine Goodness gave me during the time of the novitiate and after, namely to go to the mission in Japan or China, have always kept

⁶⁷ “Chi questo desiderio liberalmente mi hà dato, confido anchora che non mancherà di somministrarmi le forze.” Ignatio Bertolati, Genoa, 01-1625, ARSI, FG 737, no. 238.

⁶⁸ “Non diffido d’una bontà infinita può fare maggiori cose il Signore, se vuole, come vuole.” Giovanni Gregorio Montali, Basti, 26-06-1622, ARSI, FG 737, no. 375; and; “confidando altrettanto nella Divina Bontà, quanto diffido per la mia tepidezza.” Giovanni Abbondio Donato, Genoa, 18-03-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 309. See also: Giovanni Francesco Perego, Ajaccio, 23-03-1629, ARSI, FG 738, no. 336.

⁶⁹ “delle cose più abiette et inutile del mondo”, Carlo Lemugio, Genoa, 07-09-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 228; “gl’instrumenti piu fiacchi”, Agostino Gherardi, Genoa, 09-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 282, and “à lui toccherà rattivare questo morto strumento per la sua gloria.” Gio’ Abondio Donato, Genoa, 19-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 328.

awake in me such passion for those souls that it seemed to me that in my prayers I was forced to pray especially for them [the Chinese and the Japanese], and for those who put themselves at their service [...].

Then, however, his own plans and ideas interfered with what he later understood to have been a true desire all along:

I would have written you earlier on, were it not that I was held back by the thought that I could serve the Lord [...] better in these lands [i.e. in Monferrato, Italy, where he lived],[...] and I had the plan that [...] through me, [the Jesuits] could come [to that city]: but now that war has continued for four years it has made me lose all hope [...].

Since his own thoughts and his earlier desire did not match, a verification of these was needed in order to understand whether it was either the old desire or the new plans that were to be trusted. Verification, in the eyes of Stanislao, was possible by looking at what the God-given circumstances suggested to one's inner being:

because of your letter for the mission I'm more enthusiastic, and because of the current, and very convenient occasion of the Father Procurator of Japan, [...] I am more moved inwardly than ever before; that is why I decided to tell you the circumstances of my vocation, which are these.

Interestingly, Stanislao then started to list those past and present experiences that made the verification of his desire possible:

First of all, after having thought a lot in my prayers, and having examined [my vocation] in the Lord, I find [this vocation] similar in every respect to the vocation that I had of joining the Company. Even more, [I hope that] it pleases the Lord that it is also similar both in the consequences as in the rest [...].

He was confirmed in trusting his desire not only by past experience, but also by the fact that *in the present* his desire for the mission made him live a better life and made him happier:

[this vocation for the missions] encourages me towards perfection, and makes me inwardly consoled, and [...] this [i.e., all these signs]

makes me almost certain that you will give your consent so that I can follow my vocation [...].

The discernment and therefore the inner confidence were only complete when submitted not merely to one's personal experiences but also to prayer and the judgment of one's superior:

Finally, it seems that the Lord calls me also outwardly, because the father rector, together with large part of the college, exhort me to do this, and they see it as a certain thing that I will go...⁷⁰

Stanislao's letter illustrates how the *indipetae* writers tried to determine which possible path or decision merited their trust by carefully scrutinising their (spiritual, emotional and concrete) experiences.

4) *Trust in the unknown: "that happy hour in which I would be heard"*⁷¹

How did the aspiring missionaries come to trust that joining the Society's remote missions would bring them what they hoped for? Partially, because they came to know what life in these missions implied. Indeed, it was predominantly when the procurator of a certain mission would pass through Genoa that the local Jesuits would take up their pens and ask to be sent to that same mission in the company of

⁷⁰ "Il buono desiderio e molte inspirationi che nel tempo del Nouitiato, e fuori di quello la diuina Bontà m'ha dato della missione del Giappone, o Cina, hanno sempre tenuto desto in me tale zelo di quell'anime che mè sempre parso nelle mie orationi d'esser stato forzato a pregare particolarmente per loro, e per quelli che in lor seruitio s'impiegaro et io prima d'adesso hauerei scritto di cio a VP se il pensiero ch'hauera di poter maggiormente seruire al Signore [...] in questi paesi non m'hauesse ritenuto et [...] hauero in animo di fare che [...] per mezzo mio ui entrassero: ma ecco che questa guerra continua di quatr'anni affatto mi toglie ogni speranza [...]. [T]rouandomi [...] per la lettera di V.P. a quella missione maggiormente animato e per la presente, e buona occasione del P. Procuratore del Giappone [...] più che mai interiormente mosso ho deliberato di esporre a V.P. le circostanze della mia uocatione, e sono queste. Io primieramente doppo d'hauerui molto pensato nell'oratione, ebene esaminato a nel Sigorre la trouo in tutto simile alla mia uocatione della Compagnia. Anzi piaccia al Sigore che cosi simile sij nell'effetto come nel resto [...]. [Questa vocazione] m'accende incredibilmente alla perfettione, e mi lascia interiormente consolato, et [...] mi rende quasi sicuro della licenza di poterla effettuare da V.P. [...]. Finalmente pare che il signore ancor esteriormente mi chiami, perche il P. Rettore con la maggior parte del Collegio à questo m'essorta, tenendo come certa la mia andata [...]." Stanislao Palio, Genoa, 09-06-1617, ARSI FG 735, nr. 179.

⁷¹ "quell'houra si felice per me in cui venissi essaudito", Giovanni Antonio Sertola, Bastia, 02-11-1655, ARSI, FG 746, no. 460.

the procurator whom they had met. Aspirants tried to raise their chances of being chosen through personal contact with the procurator involved. We can imagine that such contact made the unknown less mysterious and increased trust in a missionary future based on the witnessed experience of others.

Early in 1617, Nicolò Trigault, the procurator of the China mission, passed through Genoa on his tour around Europe. Trigault's visit gave rise to seven *indipetae* letters written in May and June by four Jesuits of the Genoese College.⁷² Clearly this group of companions was inspired by Nicolò Trigault's presence: some of them explicitly talked about their conversations with the procurator and the possibilities that he had presented. A similar hype occurred in 1640, when the visit of the procurator of the Philippines stimulated six aspirants to write to their Superior General.⁷³ Besides these procurators, several groups of missionaries from Italy on their way to the mission also sojourned in Genoa.⁷⁴

It is difficult to determine whether the *indipetae* writers truly understood what to expect from the missions, but imagining the possibility of being chosen seemed to bring them great joy: "Oh how fortunate and happy I would consider myself," Giovanni Boscareno wrote, referring to the idea of suffering in the service of God.⁷⁵ Many letters testify to similar expectations. Such emotions fostered not only the candidates' trust in their missionary future; for superiors, the emotions of joy that

⁷² The names of these Jesuits are Girolamo Pincirolo, Alessandro Sappa, Giovanni Gregorio Montalio, and Stanislao Palio. The latter was certainly not heard: he died in 1641 in Turin (Fejér, *Defuncti*, IV N-R, 70). For the list of all rhetores, see: ARSI MED 1, 22r.

⁷³ Cf. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 103.

⁷⁴ Noël Golvers, 'Ferdinand Verbiests Chinaroeping: het beslissende keerpunt (Sevilla-Genua, 1655)', *Verbiest Koerier*, 10 (2008), 12. One of the first missionaries to the famous China missions was a Genoese. From the Genoese harbour many departed for that mission. Mario Colpo, 'Un missionario genovese compagno di P. Matteo Ricci: P. Lazzaro Cattaneo (1561-1640)', in *I Gesuiti fra impegno religioso e potere politico nella Repubblica di Genova. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica. Genova, 2-3-4- dicembre 1991*, ed. Claudio Paolucci, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrare di bibliografia e cultura ligure, V (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1992), 61–68.

⁷⁵ "o quanto mi riputerei avventurato e felice". Giovanni Boscareno, Corsica, 05-07-1620, FG 736, no. 165. Alochia Maldavsky has studied this aspect of how much candidates could know of the mission for the Jesuits and the Milanese elite surrounding them: Maldavsky, 'Mobilités religieuses - Société urbaine et désir de mission', 12–16; See also: Aliocha Maldavsky, 'Pedir las Indias. Las cartas indipetae de los jesuitas europeos, siglos xvi-xviii, ensayo historiográfico', *Relaciones. Estudios de historia y sociedad* 132 (2012): 155–59.

candidates experienced upon hearing the news that they were chosen, were proof of a real vocation and therefore confirmed their trust in these candidates.⁷⁶

The anticipated gladness, which in the language of the time was often expressed as “consolation” (*consolazione*), but also as “happiness” (*felicità*) - happiness not only in the hereafter but also partially in this world⁷⁷ -, was the ultimate aim of the letter writers, as might be assumed from the letter that Filippo Grimaldi wrote after he went to Goa:

It would seem to me that I would give V.P. grounds to rightly wonder whether I am unhappy to have left Europe, if, after having asked so fervently for the mission in Japan, now that I am already arrived in this city of Goa [and]... so near my desired destiny, I did not bear witness to the consolation that I enjoy because of it. Therefore, with the present [letter] I come to inform V.P. [...] that I am so happy in my heart that [...] I do not know what else to desire.⁷⁸

Grimaldi added that the only possible further fulfilment of his desires would consist of being able to die in Japan while giving his life for the salvation of souls.⁷⁹ The experience of consolation or happiness already at the moment of meditating the mission and later when receiving the news of selection, facilitated both the candidates and their superiors in trusting that a candidate’s desire was given by God.⁸⁰

Whether Filippo Grimaldi would be sent from Goa onward to Japan or whether his companions, who had remained in Genoa, would be considered for the

⁷⁶ De Castelnau-L’Estoile, ‘Élection et vocation’, 28–29.

⁷⁷ Pacheco and Massimi, ‘The Experience of “Consolation” in the Litterae Indipetae’.

⁷⁸ “Mi parebbe di dare à V.Ptà fondamento dà dubitare giustamente, s’io sta scontento d’ahuer lasciata l’Europa, se, dopo hauer chiesta con tanta istanza la Missione del Giappone, hor che gia gionto in questa Città di Goa, mi uedo si uicino al bramato termine, non dessi alcuna testimonianza della consolatione che ne godo. Vengo per tanto con la presente à darle parte [...] che d’animo sto si contento, che per ultimo compimento di mie brame in questa uita altro piu non sò desiderare.” Filippo Grimaldi, Goa, 24-01-1667, ARSI, FG 747, no. 229/1.

⁷⁹ Martyrdom was often mentioned in the *indipetae* as the ultimate goal. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 74.

⁸⁰ Paulo Roberto de Andrada Pacheco, ‘Liberdade e indiferença: a “experiência-modelo” jesuítica em cartas de jovens indipetentes espanhóis dos séculos XVI e XVII’ (Universidade de São Paulo, 2004), 293; Vilela e Souza and Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare’, 63.

mission, ultimately depended on the decision of the Superior General. Indeed, the whole selection system relied on the convergence between individual vocations and the needs of the Society of Jesus. Often the trust that one was destined to work in the missions was such that the writers thought God would cause the Superior General to cooperate in the venture. Francesco Spinola, for example, remarked that God “has moved me to ask for it, [so] likewise he will inspire V.P. to give me that grace”.⁸¹ One of the most fascinating aspects of the *indipetae* is indeed the combination between the experience-based confidence of the writer and his great uncertainty about the decision of the Superior General, upon which the whole endeavour ultimately depended. In the next section we see how the Genoese candidates tried to cope with this ambiguity.

Trust ‘from above’: “I hope to obtain from V.P. the patent for heaven”⁸²

“Please give me some sign that I will be among the elect,” the Genoese Francesco Pallavicino wrote to his Superior General in 1662. And he added: “Does V.P. command that I come barefoot [...] to Rome to ask at his feet for his grace? I will do it.”⁸³ These words voice the uncertainty of many *indipetae* writers who were convinced of their own desire, but were uncertain about the best strategy to win the trust of the Superior General (because, as one missionary wrote, Jesuits could “negotiate” with their Superior General even about something so personal as their missionary vocation⁸⁴). The number and frequency of letters that an applicant should

⁸¹ Francesco Spinola, Genoa, 27-07-1641, ARSI, FG 743, no. 115. See for another example of this attitude: Giovanni Boscarenò, Corsica 15-10-1619, ARSI, FG 736, 83. “Ma poiche di ciò hà da essere l’instrumento Vostro. Non mancherò di pregare continuamente il Signore, che si come à me ha dato, e dà tuttauia questo desiderio così à V.P. ispiri e doni la uolontà di concedermi il poterlo effettuare.”

⁸² “spero d’ottenere da V.P. la sottoscrizione della patente per il Cielo”, Giuseppe Boniperto, 13-05-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 48.

⁸³ “[M]i dia qualche contrasegno [che?] sarò degli eletti. V.P. comanda che io uenghi scalzo [...] à Roma per supplicarla a suoi piedi della gratia? Lo farò.” Francesco Pallavicino, 23-05-1662, ARSI, FG 747, no. 145/4.

⁸⁴ Emanuele Colombo, ‘Repetita iuvant. Le litterae indipetae di Metello Saccano (1612-1662) e compagni’, in *Scrivere lettere. Religiosi e pratiche epistolari tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, ed. Pierluigi Giovannucci (Padova: Padova University Press, 2018), 90.

write, for example, was subject to much doubt. Some indicated that a positive reply had convinced them that they would soon be chosen, only to hear from others that insistence was more effective.⁸⁵ Giovanni Antonio Sertola tellingly wrote in his second letter:

until now I have followed the principle that it would be a great charity not to trouble V.P. with continuous letters because it is enough to harass God with prayers, but since I see that only those who are importune receive the grace, I declare that from now on I want to come to you every month, until I am heard.⁸⁶

That this was not necessarily an efficient strategy is suggested by the response of Superior General Vitelleschi to Carlo Doria, in which he stated that “it is not necessary that you multiply letters in order to declare your desire [...] because I have enough information”.⁸⁷

The only general principle that the constitutions of the Society suggested superiors should follow in order to select the right people for a certain task was: “that for matters of greater moment and where it is more important to avoid mistakes, [...] persons ought to be sent who are more select and in whom greater *confidence* is had”.⁸⁸ The constitutions specified that this confidence was born from the experience with the candidates: “in matters that involve greater bodily labours, [one should choose] persons who are more strong and healthy. In matters which contain greater spiritual dangers, persons more *proven* in virtue and more reliable.”⁸⁹ The aspiring candidates for the missions therefore tried to win the trust of their superiors. Hence,

⁸⁵ See e.g.: Gio' Battista Lucerna, Genoa 09-11-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 255; Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa, 12-11-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 253.

⁸⁶ “Sin' hora io son caminato con questo principio, che fosse gran Carità non molestar V.P. con continue lettere bastando l'esser importuno à Dio nelle preghiere, ma poiche ueggo, che quelli solo, che sono in ciò olesti, sono aggratiati, io mi dichiaro, che da qui auanti poco men che ogni Mese uoglio esser da lei, sinche uenga essaudito.” Giovanni Antonio Sertola, Bastia, 02-11-1655, ARSI, FG 746, no. 460.

⁸⁷ “Non è piu necessario, che moltiplicherà lettere per dichiararmi il uostor desiderio d'andare all'Indie perche ne ho sufficiente notitia”. Letter to Carlo Doria, 12-08-1634. ARSI, MED 26, 432v.

⁸⁸ My italics. George E. Ganss, trans., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, 1st ed. (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 288, §624.

⁸⁹ My italics. Ibid.

their writings give insight into what they thought would foster trust. They applied different tactics in their letter content: we find short letters and long confessions, simple messages and extensive descriptions, sober tones and dramatic rhetoric.⁹⁰ There were as many different approaches as there were Jesuits that asked to go to the missions. But a number of general patterns may nevertheless be discerned in the corpus of *indipetae* written from Genoa and Corsica.⁹¹

1) *Recounting experiences*

As we have seen above, the Genoese candidates often elaborated on how their trust in their own desire grew. But as the number of applicants was much larger than the number of those who actually went to the missions, convincing the Superior General that one had a true desire often did not seem sufficient. An additional strategy was to recount one's experiences in the Society, especially those regarding the "internal Indies". Corsica, the isolated island under the dominion of the Genoese, was often mentioned by the Genoese *indipetae* as a good place to test one's virtue: as Giovanni Maria Leria recounted, the island was a "suitable place for the novitiate of Japan where there was no lack of opportunities to acquire firmness of virtues."⁹² It was there that a candidate missionary could show readiness for a greater challenge. The work in the popular missions (periods of intensive preaching mostly in rural parishes) was experienced as a trial from God who, as Giovanni Boscareno wrote, "tests me in these Indies of Corsica, where I imagine [...] I am doing the novitiate and prepare myself for those other greater Indies, until V.P. wants to send me there".⁹³ The conviction that having experience with the "internal Indies" (which included not only

⁹⁰ Cf. Pizzorusso, 'Autobiografia e vocazione', 192.

⁹¹ Whereas we look at what the candidates *thought* would be effective writing strategies, others have also analysed what were successful strategies. See e.g.: Vantard, 'Les vocations', 305–8.

⁹² "[...] luogo a mio giudizio opportuno per il Nouitiato del Giappone doue non ui mancano occasioni d'aguistare quella sodezza di uirtu, la quale desidera SP che habbino li suoi figliuoli diletti." Giovanni Maria Leria, Ajaccio 14-02-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 11/1.

⁹³ "E tanto maggiore è la mia speranza, quanto che ueggo che Nostro Signore hora mi proua in queste Indie della Corsica, doue mi imagino à punto di fare il Nouitiato, e prepararmi per quell'altre Indie maggiori, sinche parerà à VP. Di mandarmi colà". Giovanni Boscareno, Ajaccio, 23-03-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 137. See for another example, Giovanni Boscareno, Ajaccio, 17-05-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 25.

Corsica but also some of the poorest regions on the mainland⁹⁴) worked in one's favour was so strong that Girolamo Grimaldi even asked in 1648 to be sent to Corsica as a first step towards the faraway missions, "in order to prove his desire to go to the Indies."⁹⁵

The effect could indeed be positive. In 1646, when he wrote about his time on the island, Nicolò Ratti was told that "having been in Corsica [would] be very advantageous" for his request.⁹⁶ However, having worked among the Corsicans or in the Ligurian missions could also have the opposite effect: Giovanni Maria Lerio was told in 1619 that "Corsica and Japan are different only in name", and Giovanni Boscareno had to hear that he was "in places as needy as the Indies".⁹⁷ The similarity between the internal Indies and the real missions "with regard to the spiritual things and the many occasions to suffer for the love of God" could therefore be advantageous, but it could equally mean that one might be told to content oneself with spending a missionary life close to home.⁹⁸

Many *indipetae* testify to the belief that instead of using words one "should rather supplicate with works," and not only works related directly to the popular missions.⁹⁹ An example is Luigi Sesino's third *indipeta* that he sent from Genoa in 1623. In order to convince his Superior General that he was able to endure the hardships of the missions, Luigi related his ascetic experiences of the previous years:

It has been almost five years now that I delight in sleeping on the ground, with a cilice or cincture on, and with the discipline of

⁹⁴ 4, 181 and 5, 130. See e.g. also: Letter to Carlo Ottavio, 20-05-1622, ARSI, MED 24, 581v.

⁹⁵ "Il fratello Girolamo Grimaldi s'offerisce à far scuola nella Bastia in prova del suo desiderio d'andar all' Indie". Superior genera lto the provincial, Rome, 06-06-1648, 29, 120v. See also, ARSI, MED 29, 120r and 135v.

⁹⁶ "[...] l'essere stata V.R. in Corsica gioverà assai". Letter to Nicolò Ratti, 28-05-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 528v.

⁹⁷ "Corsica et il Giappone non differiscono in altro che nel nome", Letter to Giovanni Maria Leria, 07-06-1619, ARSI, MED 24, 202r; and "sete in paesi bisognosi non manco che l'Indie", Letter to Giovanni Boscareno, 07-06-1618, ARSI, MED 24, 201v.

⁹⁸ "[...] rispetto alle necessita delle cose spirituali, et alle molte occasioni di patire per amor del Signore giudico in Domino che ella non debba cercare altre Indie". Letter to Giovanni Battista Ferrero, 22-07-1617, ARSI, MED 23, 539r. For another example see the answer to Giovanni Battista Lucerna, 24-11-1617, ARSI, MED 23, 583v, and that to Pier Francesco Pioltello, 09-10-1624, ARSI, MED 25, 177r.

⁹⁹ Giovanni Abondio Donato, Genoa 19-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 328.

sleeping three to five hours; fasting three days a week [...]; drinking almost always water; keeping Lent by eating only after sunset; doing physical work in the hospitals; going around the towns to hear confessions and doing other things to help my neighbours.¹⁰⁰

Others, like Sesino, wrote that they trained themselves to endure hardships, but also that their spiritual disposition had proven to be the right one.¹⁰¹ Giovanni Casella, who dreamt about going to Japan, wanted to make sure that the Superior General would believe that he was also ready to go elsewhere. Therefore, in 1640 he wrote about his earlier experience at the time that he was chosen to leave for the Paraguay mission (even though he had asked for Japan), a trip that was eventually cancelled: “I am indifferent as to what place of the Indies,” Giovanni Casella emphasised, “as I *experienced* great joy when you told me last year that [...] I had been chosen for Paraguay because I had nothing of my own and I was willing to go.”¹⁰² Casella’s expression of indifference was intended to strengthen his case in the eyes of the Superior General.

Interestingly, several negative examples attest to the same awareness of how significant earlier experiences could be. We find proof of this awareness in a letter by Nicolò di Bedone who wanted to go to the missions in Canada and hoped that the Superior General would *not* take into account his “bad behaviour, nor the scandalous life that I have lived until now in the order”.¹⁰³ Similarly, Donato Fristiano

¹⁰⁰ “Sono quasi cinque anni che mi diletto di dormire in terra, con continuo cilicio, o cingulo, e dissiplina di dormire da tre, in cinque hore: di digiunare tre giorni la settimana [...], di beuere quasi sempre acqua: di far la quadragesima con cibarmi dopo il tramontar del sole; di trauagliare corporalmente negli hospedali, in andar per le ville confessano, e far altre cose in aiuto de’ prossimi.” According to Luigi Sesino, the fact that he never asked anything before was a convincing argument that his request was serious. Luigi Sesino, Genoa, 24-02-1623, ARSI, FG 737, no. 17.

¹⁰¹ Francesco Viva, Genoa 10-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 322 and Castiglione Giuseppe, Genoa, 18-01-1636, ARSI, FG 740, no. 396.

¹⁰² “Sono indifferente per qualsiuoglia luogo dell’Indie come *sperimentai* quando si disse per cosa certa l’altr’anno che io ero stato eletto per il Paraguai da S.P. delche molto me ne rallegrai per non hauerai cosa alcuna del mio et ero disposto per andare come gli ne diede parte con una mia” [my italics] Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa 23-08-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 369.

¹⁰³ “Spero che V.P. non hauerà risguardo alli miei mali portamenti, ne alla uita scandalosa che sin’hora hò menato nella Religione”. Nicolò di Bedone, Genoa, 15-06-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 328.

admitted that the “poor spirit” that he showed until the moment of writing might cause the Superior General to doubt his suitability, but he also asked him not to dwell on it too much, “since heaven is not closed to me because of this”.¹⁰⁴

Recounting positive experiences was thus a way to assure the Superior General of one’s trustworthiness and suitability for missionary work. Negative experiences, on the other hand, should be downplayed so that they would not stand in the way of a possible missionary future. Even so, communicating experiences in writing was perceived as less effective than direct contact. It was for this reason that many admitted in their *indipetae* that they would have preferred to make their case personally before the Superior General.

2) *Personal contact*

With a great sense of drama, Antonio Gallo wrote in 1614 that he would have liked to send his heart to his Superior General, or at least to communicate his desire in person.¹⁰⁵ Like many others, he supposed that it would be easy to convince the Superior General if they could talk to him face to face. For the same reason, acquaintance with the Superior General greatly enhanced the *indipetae* writers’ hope of being among the lucky few. In 1661, Gregorio Ferrari congratulated Giovanni Paolo Oliva upon his election as vicar general; the two knew each other and they both belonged to the Genoese elite. In the same letter, Ferrari admitted that he was glad because he *had already experienced* Oliva’s charity and cordiality and expressed his vocation for the Indies.¹⁰⁶ Ippolito Durazzo, the Genoese Jesuit whom we encountered in chapter two, claimed to be sure that Oliva loved him “with true love” and would therefore concede him the desired favour.¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, the Ligurian Jesuit Gian Filippo Marini relied on his acquaintance with Superior General Vitelleschi when he confidently confessed:

¹⁰⁴ “V.P. può con ragione dubitare di mè per lo poco spirito mostrato sin’ hora nella Compagnia; mà non per questo è serrato il cielo per me.” Donato Frisitano, Genoa 03-10-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 190.

¹⁰⁵ Antonio Gallo, Genoa, 14-11-1614, ARSI, FG 734, no. 469.

¹⁰⁶ Gregorio Ferrari, Bologna, 1661, ARSI, FG 747, no. 115/11.

¹⁰⁷ Gregorio Ferrari, Bologna, 1661, ARSI, FG 747, no. 115/11.

the love that you have always shown me, without my deserving it, does not leave me any doubt that in your thoughts I live more for the Indies and the other world, than for this world [i.e. the life in Italy].¹⁰⁸

Many other applicants, however, neither knew nor could verbally address their Superior General and thus relied on others who could communicate their message.¹⁰⁹

Vincenzo Vignoli, for example, wrote that even though he would have preferred to come himself, he was forced to rely on others:

I am like the poor man on the street who asks everyone that passes for help. Through the father assistant of Portugal [...], I have tried with many letters [to obtain] your approval to go to the eastern missions. [...] Now that Father Messia is passing through [...] I have supplicated him to ask you in my place; I believe that he will do it.¹¹⁰

Vincenzo's strategy, like that of many others, was to get someone to intercede for him personally with the Superior General. Pietro Gente similarly put his hopes in the mediation of someone higher up in the hierarchy, asking the Superior General in his letter to favourably listen to the assistant of Spain who, he believed, would lend his assistance.¹¹¹ Such oral recommendations were preferred, but it also frequently happened that a superior or spiritual director interceded for his subordinate in writing, for example in a postscript to an *indipeta*. In one such postscript, Dominico Minello was described as having “a soul like a dove and like an angel”, a “modest, devout, [and] clever” man whose departure would enrich the mission but be a loss for the local province.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ “L’amor che sempre m’ha mostrato fuor d’ogni mio merito la P.V. non mi lascia dubitare, ch’io non viua nella sua memoria più per le Indie, e l’altro Mondo che per questo nostro”. Gian Filippo Marini, Siena, 14-08-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 213.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. also: Russell, ‘Imagining the “Indies”’, 183–85.

¹¹⁰ Vincenzo Vignoli, Genoa 20-07-1608, ARSI, FG 734, no. 159.

¹¹¹ Pietro Antonio Gente, Genoa 18-03-1616, ARSI, FG 735, no. 411.

¹¹² “Non potrebbe credere V.P. quanto compito giovane sin questo ha un’anima com’una colomba et com’un angelo modesto deuoto ingegnoso gratiato in somma io quasi mi mortifico a raccomandarlo per l’Indie, ma il ben che uoglio all’Indie mi muoue, s’imagini V.P. se manda lui di mandar la un tesoro.” Dominico Minello, ARSI, ITAL 173, 37. See for another example, Gregorio Porta, 08-12-1615, ITAL 173, 38.

Trust grows through experience, especially direct experience. What could be a more convincing argument for selection than the support of “intelligent and prudent people” who knew you personally?¹¹³ It was common practice among *indipetae* writers to hint at the trust of local superiors in their abilities and missionary vocation and to explicitly mention that they agreed with the candidate’s wish.¹¹⁴ The younger novices in particular thought it wise to allude to the fact that they had consulted their spiritual director or superior, whose usual advice was to wait until the end of the novitiate or to dedicate more prayers and penitence to the matter.¹¹⁵ Whether or not an *indipeta* writer really saw his superiors as “true interpreters of the holy vocations,” as Antonio Bianchetto claimed in 1623 after he received the consent of his rector, they all found it wise to mention their superiors’ trust. Indeed, Giuseppe Boniperto, a successful candidate who spent his life in Paraguay,¹¹⁶ did not shy away from mentioning all those who gave their approval to his intention:

Having communicated my desire to the current visiting father [...] and after having examined it both in the past and now, following the advice of both the visiting father and Father Ottavio Bonino, who has been my confessor and spiritual director for many years, it seemed good to the [current] visiting father as well as the procurator of that province [of Paraguay], that I should make [my desire] known to you.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Ippolito Durazzo, Milano, 11-05-1661, ARSI, FG 747, 111/15, and Ippolito Durazzo, 22-06-1661, ARSI, FG 747, 115/5.

¹¹⁴ Gio’ Antonio Sertola for example writes: “[...] aggiungo solo che di quanti Padri Spirituali han maneggiato l’anima mia, tutti hanno approuato per buona la Vocatione, Resta solo, che V.P. la riconosca per tale, e mi esaudisca”. Gio’ Antonio Sertola, Bastia, 02-11-1655, FG 746, no. 460. “Con l’occasione de P.P. Missionanti del nuouo Regno, che si ritruouano in questa nostra Città di nuouo, inuitato à così fate, e dal P. Procuratore, e dal mio P. Spirituale faccio istanza della gratia d’andar all’Indie, qual’altre uolte chiesi.” Francesco Sirone, Genoa, 31-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 329. Cf. Russell, ‘Imagining the “Indies”’, 183.

¹¹⁵ See among others: Carlo Moneta, Genoa, 10-09-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 282; Tomaso Bona, Genoa, 10-06-1629, FG 738, no. 354; Gio’ Francesco Casella, Genoa, 29-01-1635, ARSI, FG 740, no. 287; Carlo Moneta, Genoa, 05-11-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 312; Antonio Ripario, Genoa, 08-08-1629, ARSI, FG 738, no. 366.

¹¹⁶ Hugo Storni, *Catalogo de los jesuitas de la Provincia del Paraguay: Cuenca del Plata 1575-1768* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 1980), 41.

¹¹⁷ “Hauendo io, per cooperare dalla parte mia alla diuina dispositione, conferito col Padre Visitatore presente il desiderio, [...] doppo d’haue

The candidates knew that their request would be favoured if they could show that many people supported them. Since trust was based on experience, it might increase through direct contact. It was for this reason that the *indipetae* writers preferred personal contact with the Superior General. When this was impossible, they relied on others who could provide “complete information”.¹¹⁸ These intermediaries, who knew and trusted the candidates from their own experience, could also persuade the ultimate authority. The Superiors General, in their turn, relied on local superiors for reliable information about the candidates.¹¹⁹

3) *Ability and willingness*

As important as it was to position oneself as a trustworthy candidate who enjoyed the support of local superiors who could recount experiences in his favour, there were other frequently used strategies to win favour and trust ‘from above’. Simply listing one’s abilities that could distinguish oneself from other candidates was one of them. Some applicants thought that mentioning their years of study would help, while others pointed to their practical skills in nursing, cooking, washing and tailoring.¹²⁰ Age was considered significant as well, because it meant that one was

rlo e prima, et adesso esaminato conforme al consiglio del Padre Visitatore, e del Padre Ottauo Bonino già di molt’anni mio confessore, e padre Spirituale, è parso bene al medesimo Padre visitatore, come ancò al Padre Procuratore di quella prouincia, ch’io lo rappresenti à V.P. per conformarmi affatto al suo uolere” Giuseppe Boniperto, Genoa 13-05-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 48.

¹¹⁸ Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa, 06-01-1616, ARSI, FG 735, no. 286. For another example see, Carlo Margeriti, Genoa 12-05-1634, ARSI, ITAL 173, 57 and Gregorio Porta, Bastia, 18-02-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 130. Markus Friedrich rightly points to the fact that the Society relied greatly on correspondence. However, individual Jesuits still preferred direct contact. Markus Friedrich, ‘Government and Information-Management in Early Modern Europe. The Case of the Society of Jesus (1540-1773)’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 539–63.

¹¹⁹ Vantard, ‘Les vocations’, 344–45.

¹²⁰ Antonio Bianchetto writes: “quanto tocca a me son pronto à far il cuoco, et il minimo officio della Compagnia”, Genoa, 02-12-1623, FG 737, no. 81; and Carlo Margheriti writes “io son stato infermier quatro anni a Brera, et speciarìa posso cucire, et cucina e lauar drappi”, 15-07-1634, ARSI, FG 749, no. 154, and Gio’ Battista Andrioli mentions that he is a tailor and nurse in his letter from Genoa, 24-09-1633, ARSI, FG 739, no. 268. Carlo Amato wrote: “M’aiuterà alla meglio di seruire in alcun di quei Collegij nell’ officio della Sartoria, quale hora esercito qui nella Casa Professa, ma se altro talento ui sia in me lo lascio riconoscere da altri.” Genoa, 13-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 285.

either mature and experienced, or young and thus ready to learn.¹²¹ Knowledge of languages or a certain “ease in learning” them, was certainly a favourable quality.¹²² Yet even without special abilities one might recommend oneself by declaring, like Carlo Lemugio, that one was disposed to do whatever was needed: “be it to continue teaching or to carry the luggage of the fathers that go to the missions or [to perform] any other task”.¹²³ Unfortunately, Carlo’s openness did not earn him the place for which he longed in the mission to Paraguay. Another candidate asked the Superior General not to forget “his poor Carlo Ottavio”. He too claimed to be ready to do the humblest tasks: “I will at least carry the luggage and run the household while the others work, if I am unworthy of anything else”.¹²⁴

Besides self-proclaimed abilities, the *indipetae* are full of expressions of willingness. These went beyond merely describing one’s desire with rhetorical elaborations. Many tried to stand out by showing their enthusiasm was greater than that of others, first by writing very often (although, as we saw earlier, this strategy was not necessarily effective). Some of the candidates wrote once a month for years. Frequently sending dry reminders was a common strategy.¹²⁵ Francesco Girone was so convinced of the importance of making himself heard, that he wrote:

even though I understand well that at this moment I cannot be heard because of my young age [and] my [lacking] studies and virtue, I did not want to disregard this means, because I hope that

¹²¹ E.g. Francesco Pallavicino, Milano, 15-03-1662, FG 747, no. 138/1; and Antonio Ripario, 08-08-1629, ARSI, FG 737, no. 366.

¹²² Luigi Sesino, Genoa, 18-10-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 86.

¹²³ “sia per fare continuamente la scola, o per portare dietro a Padri che nelle missioni andranno le bisaccie o altro qual si uoglia officio”. Carlo Lemugio, Genoa, 15-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 287.

¹²⁴ “non si scordi per le viscere di Giesù, del suo pouero Carl’ Ottavio; almeno portarò le bagaglie, et gouernarò la casa, mentre altri laurano, se non ualerò per altro.” Carlo Ottavio Renzo, Genoa, 21-04-1622, ARSI, FG 736, no. 354.

¹²⁵ See e.g. Gio’ Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa, 02-10-1611, ARSI, FG 734, no. 374; Gio’ Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa, 24-08-1613, ARSI, FG 734, no. 393; Donato Fristiano, Genoa, 03-10-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 190; Francesco Spinola, Genoa, 16-12-1639, FG 742, no. 203; Francesco Pallavicino, Milan, 28-07-1663, ARSI, FG 747, no. 164/1 and Milan, 08-09-1663, ARSI, FG 747, no. 164/4.

by anticipating the request, one day it will help me to obtain its realisation more easily.¹²⁶

Francesco thus prepared to document the longevity of his desire at a later time.

Although many *indipetae* writers only wrote a small number of letters, they usually tried to justify their apparent lack of enthusiasm; fearing that their silence would suggest a feebleness of desire. “V.P. will maybe say ‘why didn’t you write before?’”, one Jesuit wrote to his superior. The reason he gave was that he wanted to avoid the impression that the “fervour of a novice,” as opposed to mature discernment, had induced him to write.¹²⁷ Other possible justifications included that one had been encouraged to finish his studies and increase his virtues, or waited for a convenient occasion.¹²⁸ One novice in Genoa ascribed his earlier hesitations to the feeling that he was “too much of a small child in the order [*troppo tenero bambino in Religione*]”.¹²⁹ Another mentioned his troublesome family situation, which had kept him from expressing his desire.¹³⁰

That at least in some cases such justifications were not mere excuses but could be the result of extensive self-examination is apparent from the example of Donato Fristiano’s letter:

from the beginning of my vocation in the Society, I felt called by Our Lord to the mission of the Indies, and the reasons that I did not write until now have been diverse in different times [...]. At

¹²⁶ “benche ben intenda non esser al presente capace d’esserne essaudito atteso il puoco dell’età, studij, e uirtù, tuttauia non ho uoluto trascurar questo mezzo, sperando che l’hauerne anticipata la dimanda, mi debba seruire un di ad ottenere più facilmente l’adempimento”. Francesco Girone, Genoa, 25-02-1679, ARSI, FG 748, no. 255.

¹²⁷ “Dirà forse V.P. perche non hauete scritto prima” “sin dal principio del mio Nouitiato hauerei scritto, se non hauessi temuto, douesse V.P. stimar cio feruor da Nouitio [...]”. Stefano Teodoro Roveta, Genoa, 02-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 269.

¹²⁸ Alessandro Sappa mentioned that others urged him to first finish his studies: Alessandro Sappa, Genoa, 05-06-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 177; The nineteen year old Oratio Vimercato mentioned that his master of novices suggested he should first grow in virtue before asking for the mission: Genoa, 24-07-1628, ARSI, FG 738, 246; Another novice mentioned that he had waited 22 months before writing so as to test his desire: Ottavio Quatterca, Genoa, 29-09-1617, FG ARSI, 735, no. 237; “Però andato tardando nel dimandar la licenza à V.P. M R’ a per aspettare ch’ hauessi finito la Filosofia, e si offerisse opportuna l’occasione, per la quale s’ottenuto hauessi la licenza potessi più facilmente effettuarla”. Carlo Lemugio, 07-09-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 228.

¹²⁹ Giuseppe Castiglione, Genoa, 18-01-1636, ARSI, FG 740, no. 396.

¹³⁰ Francesco Spinola, Genoa, 18-11-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 189.

the time of my noviciate, the master of novices held me back saying that I should first attend to my mortification; then my father died leaving many children, all younger than me and in need of my help; then I was busy in the building process and other matters of ours [i.e. of the Jesuits] during my studies, to which I dedicated whatever time I had left, not paying attention to other plans. At the end of my theology studies I found myself very desolate, and almost through cowardliness I was quite happy to focus only on my own salvation [...]. Finally, last year, when I was in the third year of the Noviciate [and lived] more quietly, I heard again more clearly the voice of God, which had already called me at other times. And I was about to write (as I had been at other times) when I found out that I was to become procurator of this house in Genoa [...]. But now that the mortification of this office has passed [...] my conscience would be troubled if I did not respond to such a vocation.¹³¹

Taking the reader through the events of his life, Donato hoped that his circumstances would explain the lateness of his request and even reinforce it: the careful description of his life events, which he believed to be God-given (according to Jesuit spirituality¹³²), was to clarify how his current request was the result of long deliberation.

There were yet other ways of underlining one's willingness. Several *indipetae* writers did so by mentioning that they took a special, fourth vow: they promised to do everything in their power to be sent to the missions. Casella, for example,

¹³¹ “sin dal principio della mia vocatione alla Compagnia, mi sento chiamato da Nostro Signore alla missione dell’Indie, et le cagioni per le quali sin’hora non hò scritto sono state in diuersi tempi varie [...]. Al tempo del nouitiato mi ritiraua il Mastro de Nouitij col dirmi che prima attendessi bene alla mortificatione di mestesso poi morì mio padre lasciando molti figli tutti miei minori, et bisognosi d’aiuto mio poi fui occupato in fabriche, et altri negotij da’ nostri nel tempo de miei studij, laonde se mi auanzaua tempo, lo poneuo in studiare non dando orecchie ad altri disegni. Nel fine della Teologia mi trouai molto arido, et quasi per pusillanimità, ero contento pensare alla salute mia [...]. Finalmente l’anno passato stando al 3’o anno di Nouitiato sentij di nouo con maggior quiete più chiaramente la voce di Dio, che già altre uolte m’haueua chiamato. Et stetti in atto di scriuere (come pure haueuo già fatto altre uolte) quando seppi di douer essere procuratore di questa Casa di Genoua, [...]. Mà hora che la morteficatione dell’Ufficio è passata, [...] mi pare di non essere sicuro in conscenza [sic], s’io non coopero dalla mia aparte a tal uocatione.” Donato Fristiano, Genoa, 17-03-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 141.

¹³² Pacheco, ‘Liberdade e indiferença’, 293.

mentioned that after the normal vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, he had added a promise to the Virgin Mary that he would dedicate himself to “the apostolic mission to the Indies, [...] according to the will of the Father General”.¹³³ Giovanni Pietro Vacca had made a similar promise to Saint Francis Xavier on his sickbed, namely to sacrifice his life in the missions if he survived his illness.¹³⁴

What added value did it bring to communicate this personal commitment? The same as writing often or justifying silences: to emphasise once more that one’s desire was exceptional, greater than that of others; in other words, that one’s willingness was unmistakable and unshakable. There was good reason for underlining one’s commitment: not only were the candidates aware that very few among them could be sent, but the superiors also knew how much inconvenience it caused if a missionary changed his mind after being sent to the missions. This happened with Giovanni Agostino Spinola, a young man of 23 years old. Upon his election, Giovanni had already expressed the fear that his father might resist his departure for the mission:

I thought it would be good to immediately beg you [...] to show me the great favour of resisting his prayers [...]. I promise, as is my duty [...], that I want to overcome all difficulties in case my relatives, who are blinded by worldly love, would attempt to dissuade me from my very firm proposition.¹³⁵

However, while already in Spain on his way to Paraguay, Giovanni had to return to Italy.¹³⁶ He may have been influenced by his family who, if we may believe him,

¹³³ “Nel giorno de SS. Pietro e Paolo, nel quale doppo il Nouitiato gia mi dedicai alla Maestà Diuina per suo vero seruo alla Messa del P. Ottauio Bonino doppo quelle parole della formula Voces Paupertatem, Castitatem, obedientiam perpetuam in Soc’e Jesu, aggionsi Et praecipue Apostolicam Missionem Indicam Tibi Beatiss’ae Virgini MARIAE iuxta voluntatem Patris Generalis.” Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa, 23-08-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 369.

¹³⁴ Giovanni Pietro Vacca, 21-11-1644, ARSI, ITAL 173, no. 75.

¹³⁵ “m’è parso bene pregare instantissimamente V.P., che [...] mi facci tanta gratia di resistere alle preghiere d’esso[...]. Ch’io imprometto da douero à VP. [...] uoler superar ogni difficoltà, che da canto da parenti acciecati dall’amor mondano si sforzasse di distogliermi dal mio stabilissimo proponimento.” Giovanni Agostino Spinola, 08-08-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 204.

¹³⁶ Letter to Gio’ Nicolò Spinola, 28-01-1635, ARSI, MED 26, f. 494r. Storni, *Catalogo de los jesuitas de la Provincia del Paraguay*, 276.

opposed his departure for the mission.¹³⁷ Even though he later changed his mind again, the experience of this moment of doubt was enough for the Superior General to lose his trust in him.¹³⁸ In a letter to Giovanni's family, the Superior General admits that he did not expect Giovanni to change his mind during the voyage, because, he wrote, before Giovanni departed "we have used all possible diligence to assure ourselves of his constancy". He added: "but now that experience has shown the opposite [and] we have to think that our Lord God wants to be served by him in some other way, we will give orders that he should come back to Italy at the first opportunity in order to finish his studies".¹³⁹ To avoid such inconvenience, the Jesuit superiors tried to verify the constancy of a candidate's desire. That is why, besides enumerating special abilities, it was seen as advantageous to show in some way one's steadiness of will.¹⁴⁰ It is not unlikely in Giovanni's case that his main obstacle was not a feebleness of desire, but a family who opposed the idea of losing their son from their sight. Trust is not only the expectation of willingness, but also the belief that one is able to carry out what is asked of one: a Jesuit who was hindered in his movements by his own family could not be relied on for the task of missionary.

Conclusion

A young Genoese Jesuit with the desire to travel the world and serve in the missions had to convince his Superior General that he would not regret choosing him. It is not hard to imagine that mentioning concrete situations and favourable circumstances was a logical step in this process. The Genoese Jesuits did not hesitate to emphasise that "from Genoa the departure is nearer and easier".¹⁴¹ Such were the

¹³⁷ Giovanni Agostino Spinola, 08-08-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 204. See chapter two for the ways in which families could influence the lives of their Jesuit relatives.

¹³⁸ Letter to Gio' Nicolò Spinola, 24-02-1635, ARSI, MED 26, 494r.

¹³⁹ Letter to Gio' Nicolò Spinola, 24-02-1635, ARSI, MED 26, 494r. "s'è usata tutta la diligenza possibile per assicurarci della sua costanza. Ma adesso che l'esperienza ha mostrato il contrario, douiamo pensare che il s'r Iddio uoglia esser da lui seruito in altro si darà ordine, che ritorni in Italia con la prima commodità per seguitare li suoi studij."

¹⁴⁰ We already mentioned the existence of an administration of vocations; on the lists that tracked one's calling, 'passion' was a separate entry. De Castelnau-L'Estoile, 'Élection et vocation', 28.

¹⁴¹ Carlo Ottavio Renzo, Genoa, 21-04-1622, ARSI, FG 736, no. 354.

hopes elicited by this convenience that Giacinto Grillo asked not to be sent back to Lombardy now that he was already in Genoa, “at the port of the first boarding”.¹⁴² The beginning of the sailing season, the news that a certain mission was open or, even better, the personal preference of a procurator for a certain candidate, were all worth mentioning.¹⁴³ Even though we find many letters that simply stated the desire to go to the Indies without any concrete plans, others provided complete itineraries that they were planning to follow, in order to make a positive decision likelier.¹⁴⁴

Whether offering such concrete possibilities was more effective than trying to win the *trust* of the Superior General is hard to establish: even though we can trace back the history of many Genoese Jesuits, in most cases there is no explicit mention of the exact reasons why someone was preferred above others, which leaves historians with a difficult task. Scholars have tried to establish connections between the selection of a missionary and his argumentation, circumstances, abilities, personal network, and the demand from the missions.¹⁴⁵ In this chapter, we have focused instead on how the Genoese *indipetae* writers themselves perceived the election process in order to better understand what trust meant to seventeenth-century ecclesiastics. This focus reveals an aspect of the selection system that previous historians had not yet studied: i.e. that the strategies of persuasion that we see reflected in the *indipetae* echo a dynamic of trust, and that the system can therefore be better understood by considering this factor.

¹⁴² “Gionto al porto del primo imbarco” Giacinto Grillo, Genoa, 18-08-1623, ARSI, FG 737, no. 56. See for another example: Paolo Tridi, Genoa, 31-11-1631, ARSI, FG 739, no. 163. Francesco Pallavicino, originally from Genoa, instead feared that his absence from the city would not impede his vocation. Francesco Pallavicino, Alessandria 5-10-1663, ARSI, 747, 164/11.

¹⁴³ “essendo sù le porte per così dire per imbarcarmi ad ogni minimo cenno di S.P’tà senza far altri viaggi, et essendo ancora al fine del mio Nouitiato con sì bella stagione di nauigare”. Paolo Tridi, Genoa, 1631-11-31, ARSI, FG 735, no. 338; Examples of letter writers who mention that a certain mission was open: Alessandro Sappa, Genoa, 22-01-1615, ARSI, ITAL 173, 15; Gio’ Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa 09-04-1614, ARSI, FG 734, no. 425, Pietro Paolo Forro, Bastia 22-02-1627, ARSI, FG 738, no. 18; Filippo Grimaldi points at the fact that one procurator accepted him to join his mission: “il Padre Marini si compiace accettarmi per suo compagno, et insomma concorrono tante altre conuenienze”. Filippo Grimaldi, 13-06-1663, ARSI, FG 747, no. 164.

¹⁴⁴ See, for instance: Luigi Sesino, Genoa, 18-10-1623, ARSI, FG 737, no. 71; Gio’ Francesco Casella, Genoa, 09-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 281; Gio’ Francesco Casella, 08-07-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 83.

¹⁴⁵ See, for the influence of the demand from the mission, Anna Rita Capoccia, ‘Le destin des Indipetae au-delà du XVIIe siècle’, in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions religieuses modernes*, 89–110.

The type of trust that the candidates needed from their Superiors General was the expectation (based on direct or indirect experience) that they would be able to work well in the mission and that they were persistent in wanting to leave everything behind for this goal. We saw that the Jesuits from Genoa and Corsica emphasised those experiences that could reinforce such positive expectations. They understood that the more directly these experiences were communicated, the more effectively trust could be built. In the many cases when personal contact with the Superior General was not possible, the Genoese candidates relied on indirect experience: superiors who knew them personally were asked to provide signs of support. Last, the letter writers tried to prove their willingness and abilities by using a diverse array of arguments and strategies, ranging from writing every month for years to recounting how one was used to sleeping on the ground.

Hidden behind dramatic rhetoric or a flood of letters was the attempt to win the trust of the Superior General. Indeed, as shown by the criteria for selection mentioned in the constitutions and by the case of Giovanni Spinola, it was not on mere obedience that the decision of the superior relied, but on the trust, based on direct or indirect experience, that a candidate would be able and willing to work well in the mission.

Likewise, it was trust in God, in his desire, in the Society, and in a possible missionary future, that enabled a Jesuit to take up the pen and ask for the mission, most of them conscious of the fact that very few were chosen.¹⁴⁶ The descriptions that the Genoese Jesuits gave of their inner and external experiences help us to discover how this trust was built, and thus to better understand several key concepts – desire, obedience and indifference – the complexity of which challenges historians nowadays. Trust grew when the Jesuits, following their particular education, submitted their experience to scrutiny: a desire could prove to be true in experience by lasting for years; blind obedience to one's superior could only prove to be justified by testing the trustworthiness of this superior and comparing his orders and insights with what one's conscience suggested; and indifference, i.e. trust in God's plans

¹⁴⁶ Colombo and Massimi claim that *indipetae* writers knew that only few were chosen: Colombo and Massimi, *In Viaggio*, 33.

rather than one's own, stemmed from the conviction born from experience that God had a good plan for one's life.

Since these different forms of trust were based on long-term experiences over the years, this trust could range from feeble expectations (if based on limited or contradicting experiences) to a belief that came close to certainty. It is not hard to imagine that the Jesuit candidate who was trying to read his experiences, be they the inner movements of the soul or the practical circumstances and orders from the outside, could have various levels of trust towards his local superior (who might oppose the decision), his Superior General, his missionary future, his family, and so forth. It is also the reason why obedience was negotiated and indifference was variable in time: both the capacity of being obedient and that of being indifferent depended on experiences that generated the necessary trust.

The method by which the *indipetae* writers attained complete trust was determined by their particular spirituality. Also, the fact that we are able to examine their path of discernment is due to the elaborate administration that is particular to the Jesuits. What we learned by studying the role of trust in the lives and mentality of individual Jesuits, however, points to two findings that are relevant for a wider context: first, we have seen that a trust perspective provides a vital key to viewing the lives of those we study and to better understanding their individual choices. Second, we learned that, because trust was based on experience, it is helpful to find out which experiences elicited trust and which resulted in doubt. Only in this way can we understand, for instance, the surprising confidence with which many candidates, such as Giovanni Gregorio Montale, for example, asked for the mission. From the Jesuit college in Bastia he wrote that “with [help of] the divine arm in which I trust, I am most ready to go to any place that the Lord would determine, for his greater glory”. He subsequently had to accept that the place where he would work *ad maiorem gloriam Dei* was simply Italy: like many of the other *indipetae* writers in Genoa and Corsica, Giovanni died not in heroic martyrdom in a faraway mission, but of old age in a Jesuit college in Genoa.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Giovanni Gregorio Montale, Bastia, 26-06-1622, ARSI, FG 736, no. 375. Giovanni died on 5 February 1668 in Genoa; Fejér, *Defuncti*, vol. III I-M, 320.

Conclusion

In 1612, a group of scholars from the Florentine *Accademia della Crusca* published the first Italian language dictionary, the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. The fruit of many years of collective work, this *Vocabolario* was groundbreaking in that it organised its entries alphabetically rather than by subject as had previously been customary. According to the *Accademici*, the language of fourteenth-century Florence was the most beautiful and appropriate on the Italian peninsula. To inspire contemporary authors, the lemmas of the *Vocabolario* therefore included quotations from the three canonical writers of the Florentine ‘Golden Age’: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and from other fourteenth-century Florentine authors. These quotations illustrated the correct meaning and use of each word. The dictionary became well-known and was used widely throughout the Italian peninsula and beyond.¹

The concept that has been central to this study, that of trust, appears in the dictionary under the term *fidanza* (as well as under *fiducia*).² To convey its meaning, the *Accademici* adopted a citation from the third part of Dante Alighieri’s masterpiece the *Divine Comedy*. In this third part, called *Paradise*, the protagonist, who is Dante himself, is guided upwards through the heavens by Beatrice; this journey is an allegory for the soul’s ascent towards the vision of God. On his way through the nine celestial spheres, Dante meets Saint Benedict among other souls in heaven (in canto 22) and desires to see his face, as all bodies of the souls in celestial spheres were veiled by a warm light that hid their bodily appearance. Dante, initially, is too overwhelmed by everything that is happening to ask for this favour. Despite his initial

¹ For the history of the *Vocabolario*, see for instance: Luca Serianni, *La lingua nella storia d’Italia*, 2nd ed. (Rome; Milan: Libri Scheiwiller, 2001), 122–33; Claudio Marazzini and Ludovica Maconi, *La lingua italiana. Storia, testi, strumenti* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 159–1; Claudio Marazzini, *Breve storia della lingua italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 137–40.

² *Vocabolario dell’Accademia della Crusca*, first edition (Venice, 1612), 345. Online at: <http://www.lessicografia.it/pagina.jsp?ediz=1&vol=0&pag=345&tipo=1> (consulted on 27-06-2019).

fear, some way into the conversation with Benedict who speaks to him from inside the light, Dante explains how *trust* made him find the courage to ask anyway:

The affection you show in / speaking with me and the good appearance that / I see and note in all your fires [in the lights of the blessed souls in heaven whose bodily appearance Dante cannot see] / have made my *fidanza* blossom, as the / sun does a rose when it unfolds as much on / its stem as it has power to do.³

In reply, Benedict explains that Dante's request to see his human appearance can only be answered in the Empyrean, the highest of heavens, where all desires are fulfilled.

This passage from Dante's *Paradise*, cited in the *Vocabolario*, gives an interesting insight into what, in the early years of the period I have examined, the *Accademici* thought that trust entailed. The trust that Dante articulates involves an *expectation* of something good, namely the vision of Saint Benedict's face, which he hopes to see realised in the future. This expectation is expressed in the analogy of the rose that is still closed but waits to be brought to blossom. Dante's *fidanza* is based on the concrete, positive experiences that he has while speaking with Benedict, or, in his own words, on things he sees and notes (here, seeing is a faculty of the eye and noting is an act of the intellect). Experiences that foster Dante's trust in his interlocutor are the willingness he sees in Benedict and the other souls to work for his good. At this point in the journey, Dante has already noticed "the affection" that is shared by the souls of heaven ("la carità che tra noi arde") especially in Benedict's readiness to reveal to him who he is. Moreover, Dante's trust is founded in the conviction that Benedict is really able to help him, as expressed in the metaphor of the sun that is able to make a rose blossom to its full potential. Last, in these few lines on *fidanza*

³ "L'affetto che dimostri / meco parlando, e la buona sembianza / ch'io veggio e noto in tutti li ardor vostri, / così m'ha dilatata mia fidanza, / come 'l sol fa la rosa quando aperta / tanto divien quant'ell'ha di possanza" Canto 22, verses 52-57, Dante Alighieri, *Commedia. Paradiso*, ed. A. M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2000), 400. English translation from: Robert M. Durling, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume 3: Paradiso*, ed. Ronald L. Martinez, Reprint edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 439. I adapted the final last sentence of Durling's translation, that read "when it becomes as open on / its stem as it has power to do". For purposes of clarity, I also replaced "confidence" with the Italian original *fidanza*.

the experience of trust is closely linked to “good appearance”: though Dante has been unable to see the true human nature of those he has encountered in heaven, he has already perceived many clues that they are positively disposed towards him. One can say that the souls that Dante encountered have built a good reputation in his eyes. As we have seen, one’s reputation, matured over time, was closely linked to the experience of trust.

All facets of trust mentioned in the 1612 lemma on *fidanza* may be found in my research on the importance of trust in the Catholic Reformation. Though often not expressed in such exact words, the trust of the seventeenth-century people whom we have encountered seems to have been the expectation of something good based on the experience of the willingness and abilities of others. The result of our experiment of looking at trust and its importance in seventeenth-century religious reform is not a complete overview of the Church in Genoa in the seventeenth century; that was not its purpose. Important aspects of the early modern Genoese Church have been omitted: I did not delve into the many lay religious institutions such as confraternities and hospitals that operated on the border between the ecclesiastical and the secular spheres, nor did I extensively study the numerous lay devotions that were prevalent in the day-to-day life of the early modern Genoese people. Apart from the Lazarists and the Jesuits, other religious orders and congregations that played a key role in the local ecclesiastical landscape have received but little attention. Neither did this thesis place particular emphasis on the political aspects of early modern Catholicism. The conflicts about jurisdiction and precedence between the local Church and the Republic, the relationship between Genoa and the papal court, the influence on the local Church of family networks that were so prevalent in the city, and the role of the Inquisition, all deserve more attention. This dissertation is as much an attempt to contribute to what other historians have already revealed of the complicated reality of the early modern Church in Genoa, as it is an invitation to further explore the trust mechanisms at play in its different ambits, including those I did not touch upon.

The trust perspective used in my analysis did bring to light dynamics within the Catholic Reformation that would have otherwise remained out of sight. Recently, scholars have pointed to the fact that various pivotal aspects of the Catholic

Reformation such as the new efforts towards education and persuasion, disciplinary reform and the forging of confessional identity ‘from below’, all required a certain level of conscious cooperation between common people and the elite, as well as between laymen and clergy, and within the Church at large. Making explicit the ways in which trust relationships were at the heart of this cooperation and were consciously sought after or eschewed, depending on precise priorities, has helped us to go beyond mere power structures. Using trust and distrust as a lens to look at the Catholic Reformation also allowed us to consider two developments that occurred simultaneously and in equal measure: the changes and reforms that were imposed from above without the consent of subordinates, and those that involved the freedom and choice of people within and outside the Church hierarchy, whose support and cooperation was asked for. It furthermore helped explain why contemporaries, even though they were more or less conscious of the benefits of a trust approach, at times preferred tactics of distrust: in some cases, they followed priorities that left no room for the freedom of those involved (for instance, in the case of female cloistered convents).

Scholars of the early modern Church in Genoa will have encountered in this study situations and events that are familiar to them. In fact, without the many local studies on the religious landscape of the Republic, it would have been impossible to delve deeper in the manner that I have done. Yet the trust perspective, besides bringing to light lesser-known facets of the early modern Genoese Church, has sharpened our view on why the reform of the clergy was such a slow and troublesome endeavour in the Republic. The studies on criminal clergy and the image of the “good priest” that have recently dominated the historiography on the Church in seventeenth-century Genoa convey the impression of a priesthood that hardly changed, and whose exponents often prioritised worldly values like family honour and vengeance over Tridentine dictates. My research went a step further and has shed light on the reasons behind this slow transition: the secular clergy could only be reformed effectively via a trust approach, i.e. by trying to create a distinct ideal that people and other clergy trusted and would want to imitate. This approach, however, brought with it new trust-related problems. Two examples used in this thesis are the outrage among the laity at the sight of priestly garments – now worn more visibly –

being abused; and the scandal among the clergy of seeing certain groups of priests being favoured by the archbishop. Both developments, though intended to foster the reputation of the clergy, paradoxically also provoked distrust.⁴

The particular geopolitical situation of Genoa in the seventeenth century has helped us to appreciate even more clearly the importance of trust relationships for effective reform. Political power in the Republic was shared among elites who were internally divided. One might say that cooperation and a certain level of mutual trust were forced upon the Republic's citizens because they felt besieged by the powers that surrounded them and threatened Genoa's independence. The crises that struck the city in the 1620s (famine, war, financial setbacks) and the plague epidemic of 1657-8 brought the city even more instability and thus fostered the need for some level of cooperation. On an economic level, too, at least some mutual trust was expedient for the elites in order to agree on what direction the city should take to safeguard its position in a world of changing possibilities. Finally, we have seen that the Republic stood out for its particular relationship between the city and its hinterlands, on which the mere imposition of rules from above had little effect. This tactic had to be substituted – in both the ecclesiastical and secular sphere – with an attempt to win trust in order to effect durable change.⁵

Taking Genoa as a fruitful case study, we have seen that early modern trust can be studied not only in the field of politics, science, news and long-distance networks as previous historians of trust have done, but also in the context of institutional changes. A trust perspective offers the possibility of examining major institutions like the Church without overlooking the role of individuals within and outside, at the top or at the bottom. Our study also taught us more about early modern trust. It demonstrated that, contrary to what Frevert argued, trust could be a thoroughly positive experience even prior to the Enlightenment.⁶ It showed, at the same time, that the reasons to trust can change through time. For many early modern people, trust was central to their religious experience. This implies that if we want to

⁴ See chapters two and three.

⁵ See chapter two.

⁶ See pages 37-8.

understand early modern religion better, we have to study trust. The opposite is also true. If scholars want to deepen their understanding of how early modern people experienced trust, they are helped by studying religious values that contemporaries saw as essential (most importantly, obedience, but also freedom, vocation, indifference, etc.).⁷ We have furthermore learned that seventeenth-century clergy themselves were aware of the pivotal role that trust played in their lives and in their religious experience.

Chapters two and three examined why the Catholic Reformation was such an ambiguous, multilayered process. They have revealed that precisely because reforms needed trust to become successful, the road to this success was not without obstacles and setbacks. The second chapter has shown that advocates of reform often adopted forms of trust management in order to reach their aim. Though reformers might not have thought about their approach in terms of trust, in all three examples that the chapter presented – that of the *missionari urbani* and their fellow clergy, the Lazarists and their popular missions, and the Jesuits and their families – trust management was the strategy employed because it was deemed more efficient than other methods. Durazzo adopted it to reform the clergy in his diocese: he created a trustworthy elite group in the hope that other priests would follow their example or else risk losing the trust of the lay people. The laity indeed started to trust and support the *missionari urbani* and similar groups more than the old clergy. A side effect of this policy, however, was that its success caused resentment among the priests who felt disadvantaged. Some give-and-take was inherent to trust management strategies. Preaching missions as a means to win trust and convert the people toward the Tridentine ideals always left room for individuals to return to their old habits. Still, the Lazarists' ability to win the trust of the rural population were seen by secular and ecclesiastical authorities as a convenient way to strengthen their grip on the countryside and to further reform. Finally, the Jesuits relied on forms of trust management because they needed important families as their allies in order to maintain their strong position in the urban landscape. However, at times this strategy entailed sacrificing the wishes of individual Jesuits for this aim. The three examples

⁷ See chapter seven.

thus demonstrate that the reform process involved much give and take, and that a trust perspective helps us understand better why this was the case. Also, they show that trust management strategies, even though they could make reform more complicated, were often deemed more efficient than the mere imposition of rules.

The third chapter showed that reforms intended to improve the trustworthiness of the clergy caused new trust-related problems. One central question that historians have recently dealt with regards the professionalisation of the secular clergy and why it was such a troublesome and ambivalent process. The example of the clothing regulations, aimed to foster the trustworthiness of the secular clergy, has given some insight into the following paradox: while the separation between clergy and laity slowly became clearer in the seventeenth century, as the Council of Trent had intended, abuse of the clerical status also became easier. Those who did not aspire to become priests but wanted to profit from the benefits of the ecclesiastical state by entering the minor orders blemished the cassock with their questionable behaviour. Moreover, the clearer the separation between the clergy and the laity, the more apparent dissimulation and other transgressions of the physical borders between the two spheres, which unsettled the laity and caused scandal and distrust. During the seventeenth century, which can be characterised as a period of transition, several reforms that generated a clearer (physical) separation between the clergy and the laity and that were meant to foster trust created instead new situations for distrust.

Chapters four and five focused on a second contrast that puzzles present-day historians: that between the common repression by the urban elites of women's freedom of choice regarding their (religious) vocation, and the recurrent support of new types of female religious vocations by both the laity and the clergy. What partly explains the contrast is the presence or absence of trust in the women involved, which in turn hinged on whether they were afforded a certain measure of freedom. Contemporaries were aware of the fact that people rarely make the effort to change their behaviour when they are not trusted in the first place. Still, the reform of Genoa's cloistered convents relied on distrust – on regulations and an attempt to pre-empt damage – and not on the expectation that the women were able and willing to change autonomously. The reason behind this attitude was mostly the urban elite's

refusal to change a system in which many girls were forced to enter the convent for reasons of family strategy. Seventeenth-century people – that is, the Church hierarchy, the nuns themselves, and even the people who worked for the *Magistrato delle Monache* – knew that it was precisely this lack of freedom that was the main reason behind the troubles in some female convents, and yet these cloistered convents were too convenient for noble families at a time when dowries were very high: the convent was a prestigious, safe, and relatively cheap alternative to giving one's daughter in marriage. While aware that the main problem of these convents was that their inhabitants lacked the freedom to choose what kind of life to live, the dominant approach was not to tackle this problem, but to mitigate its consequences by regulating visits, spying and punishing male visitors and interfering in the internal affairs of the convents: all without much success.

Contemporaries knew that often the most effective way to change the situation of female religious life so that it would conform to Tridentine ideals was to start a completely new and independent initiative, as several elite women in Genoa did in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet all new initiatives required trust, and trust, in turn, required freedom, something which elite women were not easily granted. Different factors could create this freedom: a woman's social position, the economic circumstances that created a specific need for charitable action, and the support of important patrons with particular interests that matched those of the prospective founder. When a new initiative remained outside public display, a female founder could operate in relative freedom and required less trust than if she needed to operate very publicly. Contrary to what we might expect, to elicit trust for a new cloistered convent was as difficult as finding support for a new type of apostolic life, though the obstacles varied greatly.

The final part of this dissertation has shown how obedience, a central value in early modern Catholicism and often used to paint a rather monolithic picture of a Counter-Reformation imposed from above, actually hinged on trust. The presence in Genoa of two male religious congregations, the Lazarists and the Jesuits, sheds light on the relationship between the two concepts of obedience and trust. First, the correspondence between the Lazarists who came to Genoa and their Superior General Vincent De Paul revealed that a new religious congregation with the

intention to establish itself in a different city was presented with a dilemma that centred around trust and obedience. Arriving in a city that already brimmed with other orders and congregations, this new group had to win and maintain trust. To do so it usually helped to please and obey prospective patrons. At the same time, the Lazarists did not want to deviate from their original mission and their *modus operandi* since these had earned them the initial trust in Genoa and elsewhere that enabled them to start new foundations. Hence, the Lazarists were instructed not to blindly obey outsiders, not even their main patron Cardinal Durazzo. The Lazarists slowly won Durazzo's complete trust, not by pleasing him through obedience, but by managing his expectations all the while safeguarding their authentic mission. Internal obedience, based on trust and goodwill between all members of the congregation, fostered this process. Similarly, it was only in time that the Lazarists started to trust Durazzo without reserve and could consequently obey him in everything, because they saw that he shared their interests. It was in this eventual voluntary obedience that the initial trust dilemma was resolved.

The Jesuit correspondence with their Superiors General, in particular the *indipetae* letters, gave further insight into obedience, a core value of the Society of Jesus. The obedience that the Jesuits professed in their letters to the Superior General in Rome, and the indifference that they proclaimed to experience – values that enabled them to write and to persist in the desire for the mission – both clearly depended on trust: the trust, fostered through experience, that the Superior General and God worked for the good of the letter writer. Trust in the Society, the validity of one's missionary desire, and divine providence empowered the individual Jesuit to take up his pen and ask to be sent to a faraway country. Trust also played a decisive role on the other side of the correspondence: Superiors General based their selection of missionaries on signs of a special suitability for the mission and a persistent willingness to go, namely on trust. Initiatives 'from above', from Durazzo and from the Jesuit Superiors General, relied on obedience. Yet this obedience was only feasible in the context of a trust-relationship matured over time. This insight helps us to better understand something that has recently preoccupied historians: the fact that these pivotal values in early modern Catholicism – obedience and indifference

– were not monolithic categories.⁸ Indeed, obedience and indifference varied because the trust relationships that supported these attitudes could change over time.

In answer to the question of this study – namely how practices of trust and distrust used in Catholic reform affected its success – we can conclude that the success of the Church’s reform was often linked to strategies of winning trust even though this approach came with shortcomings; we can also say that Catholic reformers were conscious of the importance of trust. Key players in the reform, such as proponents of the new religious orders and congregations, but also someone like Vittoria Bracelli who initiated a new religiously inspired charitable initiative, needed a capital of trust from several parties in order to flourish in any given area: from the local bishop, to the urban authorities, as well as the local people whose support was vital.

Secondly, trust was of particular importance in the Church’s reform endeavours because when aiming to elevate the trustworthiness of a group (i.e. when aiming for moral reform), this proved to be most effective when done on a voluntary basis. The reform of the secular clergy was difficult if the clergy were not convinced that living up to the Tridentine standards was for their own good, for example by seeing an alternative type of priest that attracted the laity and therefore resources and esteem. The same goes for the female cloistered convents and semi-religious initiatives: in those cases where the freedom of their members was safeguarded, the women were more capable and willing to live up to the Tridentine ideals and were creative in how they achieved this.

Third, our analysis has shown why practices of *distrust* used for reform were much less effective. Since distrust implies a negative expectation of the other’s capabilities and willingness, an approach of distrust does not allow a person the freedom to act in a fruitful way: it is for this reason that people never enthusiastically followed a reform when it was a clear expression of distrust. But even though disciplining and punishment provoked far fewer long-term changes, if not outright resistance, they often seemed more attractive strategies than a trust approach because they could produce some immediate, albeit less profound, results (for instance

⁸ See chapters 2 and 3.

because some rigorous rules could persuade people that their behaviour would have negative consequences).

Finally, I have argued that many Catholic reformers were well aware of the importance of trust and consciously used tactics to obtain and maintain certain trust relationships. They knew, for instance, that a trust relationship provided a stable base of support which, in turn, secured the financial means that were key to success.

This study not only aimed to delve into the role of trust in the Catholic Reformation but also to answer Geoffrey Hosking's call to explore the history of trust itself. One important conclusion that can be drawn is that, in the seventeenth century, a particular type of trust existed that Hosking and other students of trust have chiefly attributed to the twentieth century: that of "strong thin" trust. Strong thin trust means that people have to rely for important things on other people whom they hardly know and who are distant from them. We have seen that, for something so fundamental as the salvation of their souls, people in seventeenth-century Genoa, especially those from the countryside, had to trust an institution that went much beyond the local circle of trusted people. This trust was definitely thin and fragile, as the success of the Reformation in other parts of Europe has shown.

What also became apparent is that, at the Council of Trent and during the century that followed, many leaders of the Church were conscious of how "thin" – in Hosking's sense of the word – the trust of their faithful was. Many reformers therefore consciously attempted to turn it into strong *thick* trust: i.e., they tried to ensure that the confidence of the faithful in the universal Church became ever more grounded in a solid trust towards local Church exponents that were part of each adherent's small circle of people they knew well. These local exponents of the post-Tridentine Church – the secular clergy, religious men, cloistered nuns and semi-religious women – were to progressively embody the ideals that the higher echelons of the Church had envisioned at the Council of Trent. More than rules from above, it was this dynamic of trust that, where it functioned well, can explain the success of the Catholic Reformation. Yet, as reform relied on trust, it was a rather complex process that involved the free will of many people – within and outside the Church hierarchy – whose interests did not always coincide.

More research on how various types of trust were manifested in different periods of history is necessary: what my research on the Church in Genoa shows is that the idea of a linear development from a medieval prevalence of strong thick trust to our modern era with much reliance on strong thin trust can be nuanced. Moreover, a quick glance at the recent history of Catholicism tells us that the relationship of the individual faithful with the Church continues to rely on a delicate combination of strong thin- and strong thick trust. The occasion for crises of trust remains at hand precisely because the faithful rely on the Church for matters of great importance to them, which therefore involve “thick trust”.⁹

While I was working on this dissertation, several historians published studies that approach early modern Catholicism in a new way, via phenomena that have an intangible yet very real and personal dimension to them. In 2016, an edited volume appeared that centred on the concept of doubt in relationship to the Church(es) in different historical epochs: *Doubling Christianity: The Church and Doubt*.¹⁰ It included several contributions on the early modern period from different confessional viewpoints.¹¹ The work that Silvia Mostaccio published that same year (discussed in chapter seven) delved into the categories of obedience and conscience and their

⁹ John W. O'Malley, 'The Council of Trent and Vatican II', in François and Soen, *The Council of Trent*, 402–3.

¹⁰ Frances Andrews, Charlotte Methuen, and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Doubling Christianity: The Church and Doubt*, *Studies in Church History* 52 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹¹ While entering the discussion about the possible coexistence of doubt and faith in the sixteenth century, Alexandra Walsham's main argument in her contribution is “that the conflicts and schisms engendered by the Reformation served simultaneously to exacerbate and complicate the uncertainties people experienced as internal struggles converged with the formation of confessional identities.” Ian Forrest's chapter expounded the similarities and differences in the ways that late medieval bishops, lay people and theologians trusted or doubted their knowledge of the material world and knowledge of God, while Patrick S. McGhee explored the role of doubt, unbelief and spiritual uncertainty in the writings of English post-Reformation theologians. Of particular interest is also Lucy Busfield's contribution that sheds light on the fact that, also within puritan spirituality, ministers were considered to be trustworthy and indispensable “pastoral specialists” in cases of spiritual distress or religious doubt. Alexandra Walsham, “‘Dowting of Ye Cupp’: Disbelief about the Eucharist and a Catholic Miracle in Reformation England”, *Studies in Church History* 52 (2016): 232–49; Ian Forrest, ‘Trust and Doubt: The Late Medieval Bishop and Local Knowledge’, *Studies in Church History* 52 (2016): 164–85; Patrick S. McGhee, ‘Unbelief, the Senses and the Body in Nicholas Bownde's *The Vnbeleefe of S. Thomas* (1608)’, *Studies in Church History* 52 (2016): 266–82; Lucy Busfield, ‘Doubt, Anxiety and Protestant Epistolary Counselling: The Letter-Book of Nehemiah Wallington’, *Studies in Church History* 52 (2016): 298–314.

significance for Jesuits around 1600.¹² In 2017, Moshe Sluhovsky published his book *Becoming a new self*, in which he addressed “not only early modern Catholic notions of selfhood and subjecthood, but also subjugation and the place of agency and desire in early modern Catholic imaginations”.¹³ Stefania Tutino examined in her 2018 book, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation Catholicism: A History of Probabilism*, how Church exponents during the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries dealt with uncertainty at a moral and epistemological level.¹⁴ The state of the art therefore suggests that historians of early modern religion, and particularly of early modern Catholicism, are entering a new realm of research: from doubt to obedience and from selfhood to uncertainty, subjects are tackled that centre around the individual believer and his attempts to cope with the complicated and changing reality of the time within the framework of his beliefs. My research on the importance of trust and distrust in early modern Catholicism fits within this trend. While the project has confirmed the fruitfulness of working with a rather intangible category, it had to leave out many aspects of the seventeenth-century Church that could also be studied through the lens of trust and could further our understanding of the Catholic Reformation. I therefore hope that my research encourages others to deepen the study of the historical implications of the ineradicable need for trust relationships in the life of each individual, including those individuals who shaped the Church in the early modern period.

¹² Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits*.

¹³ Moshe Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self. Practices of Belief in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 2. One of Sluhovsky’s earlier books deals with themes such as the discernment of the spirits, the reliability of witnesses, and early modern methods to distinguish truth from falsehood; all subjects that are closely related to our concept of trust. Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Stefania Tutino, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation Catholicism: A History of Probabilism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); By the same author: *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth in Post-Reformation Catholic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Stefania Tutino, *Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570–1625* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2007).

Abbreviations

ACCS	Archivio della Congregazione per le Cause dei Santi Pos. decr. + rescr Positiones decreta et rescripta Pos. Decreta Positiones, Decreta
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu FG Fondo Gesuitico ITAL Epistolae Italiae MED Epistolae Mediolanensis
ASCG	Archivio Storico Civico di Genova
ASCMG	Archivio Storico della Congregazione della Missione a Genova
ASDM	Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese AS Archivio Spirituale
ASDG	Archivio Storico Diocesano di Genova
ASG	Archivio di Stato di Genova AS Archivio Segreto
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano Congr. Concilio Congregazione del Concilio CVR Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari PE Positiones Episcoporum RE Registra Episcoporum Relat. Dioec. Relationes Dioecesium Segr. Stato Segreteria di Stato
CED	Pierre Coste, <i>Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents</i> , 14 vols. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1900). Unless indicated differently, I refer to the letter number in these volumes.
CT	<i>The Council of Trent. The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent</i> , edited and translated by J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848).
SPD Positio	<i>Synodi Dioecesanæ et Provinciales S. Genuensis Ecclesiae</i> , (Genoa 1833). <i>Januen. beatificationis et canonizationis Servæ Dei Verginiae Centurione Bracelli, viduæ fundatricis Instituti Sororum Dominae Nostræ a Refugio in Monte Calvario vulgo 'Brignoline' († 1651).</i>

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ASDG, Durazzo città AB

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AS, Jurisdictionalium 1081

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AS, Jurisdictionalium 1093

AS, Jurisdictionalium 1099

AS, Jurisdictionalium 1112

AS, Jurisdictionalium 1113

AS, Jurisdictionalium 1118

AS, Jurisdictionalium 1126

AS, Jurisdictionalium 1151

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Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In dit proefschrift onderzoek ik welke rol vertrouwen speelde in de Katholieke Reformatie. Vertrekkend vanuit de constatering dat de Reformatie een grote vertrouwenscrisis impliceerde, is mijn hypothese dat het antwoord van de Kerk op deze crisis alleen daar succesvol kon zijn waar het gepaard ging met een vertrouwensoffensief, dat wil zeggen, met een poging om het vertrouwen van mensen te winnen om zo de noodzakelijke veranderingen binnen de Kerk teweeg te kunnen brengen. Centrale vragen in dit onderzoek zijn dus waar we dit vertrouwensoffensief precies zien, maar vooral ook welke rol vertrouwen en wantrouwen speelden in hervormingen die een succes werden, en hoe hervormers zelf dachten over het effect van hun aanpak.

Om een antwoord te vinden op deze vragen onderzoek ik verschillende aspecten van de zeventiende-eeuwse Kerk die typisch zijn voor de Katholieke Reformatie: de poging om de seculiere geestelijkheid te hervormen, het ontstaan van nieuwe initiatieven binnen het religieuze leven voor vrouwen, de hervorming van bestaande vrouwelijke slotkloosters en de opkomst van religieuze ordes met een nieuw enthousiasme voor de missie binnen en buiten Europa. Deze aspecten analyseer ik aan de hand van respectievelijk drie thema's: de praktische uitwerking van vertrouwen op het succes van hervormingen, het belang van vrijheid voor vertrouwen en dus ook voor het teweegbrengen van veranderingen, en de relatie tussen vertrouwen en gehoorzaamheid, een deugd die centraal stond in het vroegmodern Katholicisme.

Vertrekkend vanuit eerder onderzoek naar vertrouwen heb ik de volgende definitie gevormd die, mijns inziens, ook de ervaring van zeventiende-eeuwse mensen goed vat. Onder vertrouwen versta ik iemands verwachting, gebaseerd op zijn ervaring, dat de andere partij in staat en bereid is om te doen wat er verwacht wordt. Het concept vertrouwen leent zich bij uitstek om voort te bouwen op wat de recente historiografie over de Katholieke Reformatie ons leert. Aan de ene kant

vormt het een alternatief voor de neiging van een aantal prominente Italiaanse historici om de vroegmoderne Kerk in hun land als een monolithisch machtsorgaan te zien dat de samenleving volledig in bedwang wilde en kon houden. Aan de andere kant helpt het om beter te begrijpen wat er ten grondslag lag aan de overredings- en onderhandelingsmechanismes, en aan de keuzes vanuit allerlei lagen van de bevolking die, zoals historici recentelijk aangeven, de Katholieke Reformatie vormgaven. Door op zoek te gaan naar situaties waarin vertrouwen en wantrouwen doorslaggevend waren, wordt het mogelijk om te zien waarom voor hervormingen soms strategieën van repressie en discipline werden gebruikt en op andere momenten een aanpak van overtuiging en opvoeding beter werd geacht. Bovendien kan mijn onderzoek helpen om licht te werpen op wat vertrouwen betekende voor mensen in de vroegmoderne tijd en laten zien waarom historici geholpen zijn als ze het concept vertrouwen in hun onderzoek betrekken.

Het onderzoeksterrein van dit proefschrift is de Republiek Genua tijdens de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw tot aan het einde van het episcopaat van Kardinaal Stefano Durazzo (1635-1664), een van de bekendste persoonlijkheden binnen de vroegmoderne Kerk in Genua. Haar economische en geopolitieke positie maakte de Republiek tot een plek waar veel mensen en goederen passeerden. Zo konden ook nieuwe religieuze ideeën en vormen van religieus leven er gemakkelijk hun weg vinden. De stad was bovendien rijk aan kloosterordes en liefdadigheidsinstellingen die voornamelijk uit de zak van de zeer rijke elite werden betaald. De Genuese Kerk in de vroegmoderne tijd is opvallend genoeg nog vrijwel onbekend terrein voor niet-Italiaanse historici. Deze en andere kenmerken maken de Republiek tot een geschikte casus om te onderzoeken hoe hervormingen binnen de vroegmoderne Kerk er op een praktisch niveau eruitzagen en op welke manier vertrouwen en wantrouwen van invloed waren op initiatieven tot hervorming.

Het eerste hoofdstuk geeft een overzicht van de geopolitieke en economische achtergrond van de Republiek in de zeventiende eeuw. Ook gaat het dieper in op de persoon van Stefano Durazzo en passeren de vele lokale studies die het vertrekpunt vormen van dit proefschrift de revue. Tenslotte belicht dit hoofdstuk de rol van leken binnen de vroegmoderne Kerk in Genua aan de hand van recente Engelstalige literatuur. Omdat juist dit aspect van de Katholieke Reformatie al wel aan bod is

gekomen in een aantal Engelstalige studies over Genua, staan niet zozeer de leken als wel de seculiere geestelijkheid, vrouwelijke religieuzen, en mannelijke ordes in mijn proefschrift centraal.

Het tweede hoofdstuk gaat over wat ik *trust management* noem. Het laat door middel van drie casussen zien hoe verschillende hervormers vertrouwensstrategieën gebruikten om een bepaalde groep voor zich te winnen – zowel geestelijken als leken – en hen van een gemeenschappelijk belang te overtuigen. Zo gaat de eerste casus over de manier waarop aartsbisschop Durazzo om de geestelijkheid te hervormen zijn vertrouwen stelde in een specifieke groep priesters, die vervolgens als voorbeeld moesten dienen voor de rest. Het vertrouwen dat door hem en door de leken in deze nieuwe groep zou worden gesteld, moest anderen aanzetten om zich ook aan te passen aan het nieuwe priesterlijke ideaal dat door deze groep werd uitgedragen. Een negatief neveneffect was echter dat een deel van de overige geestelijkheid, die aan populariteit verloor door de nieuwe priesters, wrok ging koesteren tegen hun bisschop. De tweede casus van het hoofdstuk gaat over de Lazaristen, een congregatie van priesters die in de ogen van de kerkelijke en de wereldlijke autoriteiten, erg goed waren in het winnen van het vertrouwen van mensen op het platteland. De autoriteiten zetten de Lazaristen dan ook in om hun eigen belangen te bevorderen, respectievelijk de verspreiding van de idealen van het Concilie van Trente en het vergroten van de controle van de stad over Ligurië en het eiland Corsica. Nadeel van deze aanpak ten opzichte van een die op regels en controle berustte, was dat de plattelandsbevolking na de missies van de Lazaristen ook weer zonder consequenties af konden zien van de idealen die hen waren onderwezen (en dat ook deden). In het laatste voorbeeld van dit hoofdstuk gaat het om Jezuïeten die het vertrouwen van hun belangrijkste weldoeners proberen te behouden. Ze hadden namelijk geld en mensen nodig om de belangrijkste idealen van de congregatie, waaronder de missie, gestalte te geven. Om het vertrouwen van hun weldoeners te behouden, moesten ze echter wel af en toe ingaan tegen de belangen en wensen van individuele Jezuïeten. De genoemde drie casussen die allemaal een belangrijk aspect van de Katholieke Reformatie betreffen – het (morele) niveau van de geestelijkheid, de missie op het platteland en de overzeese missies – geven zo inzicht in het feit dat vertrouwensstrategieën effectief waren maar tegelijkertijd ook nadelen kenden en dat

er vaak water bij de wijn gedaan moest worden om vertrouwen te behouden. Toch gaven hervormers regelmatig de voorkeur aan deze aanpak boven het opleggen van regels.

Het derde hoofdstuk richt zich op een van de belangrijkste pogingen tot hervorming van de Kerk die het Concilie ondernam, namelijk de hervorming van de geestelijkheid. Priesters en religieuzen moesten volgens Trente door middel van hun betrouwbare voorbeeld het vertrouwen (terug)winnen van de gelovigen. Het hoofdstuk laat zien waarom maatregelen die dit moesten bevorderen in sommige gevallen averechts werkten. Als voorbeeld neem ik het uiterlijk van priesters en de regels die hierover werden uitgevaardigd. Paradoxaal genoeg zorgden deze regels die bedoeld waren om de herkenbaarheid van een betrouwbare groep, namelijk de geestelijkheid, te vergroten, juist voor verwarring. Hoewel ze maakten dat de scheidslijn tussen geestelijkheid en lekenstand gedurende de zeventiende eeuw langzaam duidelijker werd, werd het tegelijkertijd ook makkelijker om de status van geestelijke voor verkeerde doeleinden te gebruiken. Naarmate het uiterlijke verschil tussen geestelijkheid en leken evidentier werd, gaf het bovendien meer schandaal als deze fysieke grens werd overschreden doordat gewone mensen zich verkleedden als geestelijken of doordat geestelijken zich niet gedroegen naar de soutane of het habijt dat ze droegen. Zo kon het dus zijn dat de hervormingen die een duidelijkere scheidslijn tussen geestelijkheid en leken als doel hadden en dus vertrouwen moesten vergroten, zelf ook nieuwe gelegenheden voor wantrouwen creëerden. Hoofdstuk twee en drie laten dus beide zien dat hervormingen heel traag en met vallen en opstaan werden doorgevoerd, juist omdat er vertrouwen nodig was om ze tot een succes te maken: met dit vertrouwen (in tegenstelling tot beleid dat steunt op macht) moest er ook rekening worden gehouden met de wensen en willekeur van de mensen wier steun nodig was.

In hoofdstuk vier en vijf ga ik in op een paradox die historici recentelijk heeft beziggehouden, namelijk dat vrouwen die behoorden tot de stedelijke elites in vroegmodern Italië aan de ene kant heel weinig vrijheid kregen om over hun eigen roeping te beslissen, terwijl een aantal van hen aan de andere kant toch de steun kregen die ze nodig hadden om zelf een nieuw initiatief voor religieus leven te beginnen. Wat dit contrast deels uitlegt is of er wel of geen vertrouwen werd gesteld

in de vrouwen om wie het ging, en dit hing weer af van hoeveel vrijheid ze kregen. In hoofdstuk vier beschrijf ik hoe pogingen om de wereld van de vrouwelijke slotkloosters te veranderen helemaal gebaseerd waren op wantrouwen; dat wil zeggen op regels en op straffen voor wie die regels overtrad. Deze houding werd met name gemotiveerd door de onwil om een systeem te veranderen waarin het simpelweg gunstig was voor rijke families om hun dochters te laten intreden in een slotklooster. Dat die kloosterzusters zich vervolgens niet wilden of konden aanpassen aan een leven waar ze zelf niet voor hadden gekozen, is niet meer dan logisch. Hoewel men zich ervan bewust was dat deze onvrijheid de reden achter de ‘onbetrouwbaarheid’ van deze nonnen was, wilde de politieke elite het systeem toch niet veranderen en richtte zich in haar aanpak dus niet op de ouders die hun dochters min of meer dwongen in het klooster te gaan, maar op mannen die de kloosters bezochten. Deze bezoekers én de kloosterzusters zelf werden met wantrouwen bekeken: de mannen werden bespied, gewaarschuwd en eventueel bestraft, al hielp dit alles niet echt om ze op de lange termijn te beletten om de kloosterzusters op te zoeken.

Naast de wereld van de vrouwelijke slotkloosters werden ook vormen van religieus leven voor vrouwen *buiten* de slotkloosters met wantrouwen bekeken. In een aantal gevallen in het Genua van rond 1600 veranderde deze houding echter in vertrouwen jegens vrouwen die iets nieuws wilden beginnen. In hoofdstuk 5 analyseer ik hoe de Medee en de Brignoline genoeg vertrouwen wisten te genereren om succesvol hun religieuze leven buiten het slotklooster door te zetten. Het hoofdstuk beschrijft welke factoren bijdroegen aan de vrijheid die deze vrouwen nodig hadden om hun ideeën uit te kunnen voeren. Voorbeelden zijn de sociale positie van de vrouwen in kwestie, de economische omstandigheden binnen de stad, en de steun van belangrijke beschermheren. Ook analyseer ik hoe de Genuese Vittoria Maria Strata genoeg vertrouwen wist te winnen voor haar initiatief voor religieus leven: zij stichtte een nieuwe, zeer strenge slotkloosterorde die al gauw ook buiten Genua een groot succes werd. Opvallend genoeg was het net zo moeilijk om een nieuw slotklooster te beginnen als om een religieus initiatief te starten dat buiten de gebaande paden trad en op actief apostolaat was gericht. Welk wantrouwen er overwonnen moest worden verschilde echter sterk.

Het zesde en zevende hoofdstuk gaan dieper in op een groep die, naast de seculiere geestelijkheid en de vrouwelijke religieuzen, een grote rol speelde in de Katholieke Reformatie, namelijk de nieuwe religieuze ordes en congregaties. Daarbij onderzoek ik met name de relatie tussen vertrouwen en gehoorzaamheid. In hoofdstuk 6 richt het onderzoek zich op de komst van de Lazaristen naar Genua. Deze nieuwe, Franse congregatie kon zichzelf alleen in Genua vestigen door genoeg vertrouwen te winnen van verschillende partijen. Aan de andere kant moesten de religieuzen zelf ook uitvinden op wie zij in deze nieuwe omgeving hun vertrouwen konden stellen. De correspondentie tussen de Lazaristen die naar Genua gingen en hun generaal-overste in Parijs laat zien dat deze religieuzen zich sterk bewust waren van het belang van vertrouwensbanden voor het succes van hun congregatie. In de brieven werd ook nagedacht over de beste strategieën om het gewonnen vertrouwen te behouden. De Lazaristen vonden het in eerste instantie belangrijker om loyaal te blijven aan de oorspronkelijke missie van de congregatie dan om te gehoorzamen aan hun weldoeners in de nieuwe stad. Met de tijd echter gingen ze hun belangrijkste patroon, Kardinaal Durazzo, zozeer vertrouwen ze hem niet slechts vormelijk maar onvoorwaardelijk gingen gehoorzamen ook al gingen zijn opdrachten soms tegen hun eigen gewoontes in. Vertrouwen was dus een voorwaarde voor gehoorzaamheid.

Het laatste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift verdiept vervolgens de relatie tussen vertrouwen en gehoorzaamheid aan de hand van een bijzonder type bronnen: de *indipetae*-brieven. Dit waren zeer persoonlijke brieven waarin Jezuiten aan hun generaal-overste vroegen om geselecteerd te worden voor een van de verre missies. Om een dergelijke brief te schrijven moest de kandidaat een groot vertrouwen hebben, niet alleen in de congregatie, maar ook in zijn eigen roeping, in zijn verlangen naar de missie, en in Gods voorzienigheid. Hoe de Jezuiten tot zo'n groot vertrouwen kwamen, beschreven ze in hun brieven om zo ook de generaal-overste te overtuigen dat zij echt door God geroepen waren. De generaal-overste besliste namelijk of ze ook daadwerkelijk gezonden werden. Voor de deugden die volgens de Jezuiten nodig waren om een brief te schrijven, namelijk gehoorzaamheid aan de generaal-overste en *indifferentia*, d.w.z. de bereidheid om alles te doen wat God vroeg, had een kandidaat ook vertrouwen nodig, respectievelijk in zijn generaal-overste en in God. De generaal-overste, op zijn beurt, had vertrouwen nodig om tot een goede

beslissing te komen. Hij stuurde alleen kandidaten van wie hij de indruk kreeg dat ze bereid en geschikt waren om in de missie te werken. De *indipetae* geven ons zo inzicht in iets dat relevant is voor de zeventiende-eeuwse Kerk in haar geheel. Of het nu Kardinaal Durazzo was, de generaal-overste van de Jezuieten, of iemand anders op een hoge positie, allemaal hadden ze de gehoorzaamheid van hun ondergeschikten nodig om hun doelen te bereiken. Deze gehoorzaamheid was echter niet iets dat kon worden opgelegd: het was een vrucht van een vertrouwensrelatie die aan verandering onderhevig was en alleen met de tijd kon groeien.

In de conclusie beschrijf ik wat mijn experiment, dat eruit bestond om met een moeilijk te grijpen begrip als vertrouwen naar de complexe realiteit van de Katholieke Reformatie te kijken, heeft opgeleverd. Door vertrouwen en wantrouwen als lens te gebruiken kon ik in dit proefschrift twee ontwikkelingen in de zeventiende-eeuwse Kerk gelijktijdig analyseren: de hervormingen die uit een soort wantrouwen werden opgelegd ‘van boven’, en die welke werden doorgevoerd met instemming en medewerking van degenen wier vertrouwen werd gevraagd. Mijn proefschrift heeft bovendien laten zien dat het concept vertrouwen ook betekenisvol kan worden gebruikt in onderzoek naar institutionele verandering in de vroegmoderne tijd: door vertrouwen centraal te stellen kan de historicus naar grote en complexe instanties als de Kerk kijken zonder de rol van het individu te negeren. Het helpt bovendien om het risico te vermijden dat alle verandering wordt verklaard als een vrucht van machtsuitoefening en dwang. Daarnaast kunnen we concluderen dat een groter begrip van hoe vertrouwen werd beleefd, helpt om de religieuze ervaringen van vroegmoderne mensen te begrijpen. Het omgekeerde geldt ook: onderzoekers die vroegmodern vertrouwen beter willen begrijpen moeten, zo weten we nu, religieuze waarden als gehoorzaamheid, vrijheid, verlangen en *indifferentia* in aanmerking nemen.

In antwoord op de belangrijkste vraag van dit proefschrift naar de mate waarin vertrouwen en wantrouwen de effectiviteit van hervormingen beïnvloedden, kunnen we een aantal dingen concluderen. Ten eerste is het duidelijk geworden dat hervorming en nieuwe initiatieven binnen de Kerk regelmatig op een vertrouwensaanpak waren gebaseerd ook al zaten hier nadelen aan. Ten tweede kunnen we zeggen dat hervormers zich vaak bewust waren van het belang van vertrouwen om effectieve veranderingen teweeg te brengen. Vertrouwen was met

name van invloed waar de hervormingen zich richtten op het morele vlak, zoals bij de hervorming van de vrouwenkloosters of van de seculiere geestelijkheid, omdat het succes ervan afhing van de vrijwillige medewerking van degenen die het betrof. Een wantrouwende aanpak was wellicht effectiever op de korte termijn en werd dan ook veel aangewend, maar had geen blijvend effect terwijl ze soms wel averechts werkte. De keuze van zo'n aanpak was dan ook vaak gebaseerd op het feit dat prioriteiten elders lagen. De conclusie sluit af met een uitnodiging om niet alleen de relatie tussen vertrouwen en het vroegmodern Katholicisme te verdiepen door te kijken naar de vele aspecten die ik in dit onderzoek niet heb kunnen behandelen, maar ook om te blijven verkennen wat de historische implicaties zijn van de menselijke noodzaak om vertrouwensbanden aan te gaan.

Curriculum Vitae

Thérèse Peeters ('s-Hertogenbosch, 1990) completed her BA in Italian Language and Culture and her BA in History at Leiden University in 2012. She continued there, and specialised in missionary correspondence and the role of trust, while working on her research master's in Medieval and early modern European history in 2014. Thérèse also collaborated on the project "Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of the Mission, and the Papacy: Documents from the Vatican Archives (1625-1670)", a digital catalogue and edition of archival sources.

Cover illustration: Anonymous artist, *Gezicht op Genua* (Amsterdam, 1639-1677)

Resource: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.