Trust in the Catholic Reformation. Genoa, 1594-1664

Peeters, T.D.H.M.

3. Beyond appearance? Trusting and distrusting the secular clergy

Dio vede nel cuore, e gli vomini, secondo l'oracolo del Vangelo, vedono nella faccia, e nell'apparenza[1]

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]

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[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 ardire". 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

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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 overo prattica 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 quantonque 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

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[7] "una vera e propria congiura", Fontana, 'Con sacrilego ardire', 11.

[8] "alcuni di questo clero per render impunite le loro dissolutioni, seben di nascita bassissima e di niun studio, o lettere, mandano costì fedi 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 Herzig (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,

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[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 overo 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

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[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]

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[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 Europes, 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

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[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]

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[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 there 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

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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

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[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 Dioecesanae et Provinciales S. Genuensis Ecclesiae* (Genoa 1833).
[48] Louis Trichet, *Le costume du clergé. Ses origines et son évolution en France d'après les réglements 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 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

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[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 conditionnernent social dans les 'Examens partictuliers', 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

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[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 […]

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[64] "[…]. omnes ecclesiasticae personae […]; clerici item omnes […], talares 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 conspiccum". 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

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[69] "impediti da detto Signor Vicario e Canonici di poter seruirsi 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 archbischop 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'oratione 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

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The same type of question recurred several times: see: ACCS, Decreta 1617, f. 165v, 09-12-1617; , Pos. decr. + rescr. n. 7350, 26-02-1628; ACCS, Pos. decr. + rescr. 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. + rescr. 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 Blanchi 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

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[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 raggionevolmente 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

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[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 nausia che ricceue 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]

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[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

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[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

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[96] "La magior 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 publicamente portano armi prohibite, 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 latrocinii che si fanno in detto territorio et il macchianare et ordinare tutti li assasinamenti 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]

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[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 cattiue ationi e mala uita che teniua d'assasinare fu […] condanato 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 publicamente 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

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[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 frattello". 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

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[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 arciuescouo 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]

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[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

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soffrono con patienza 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

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[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 scritture, à quali non si deue 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

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[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

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[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 essaminato 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

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[139] "ma non così tosto si giunge al sacerdotio chi i preti allettati dalle grassime della Lombardia e dall'avidità de' guadagni forse poco honesti 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 habiti, 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 refformato 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 publicamente 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

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[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

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[155] Cf.: Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 1–2.

[156] Gattiglia, 'Gli abusi del clero', 26–27.

[157] [My italics] "l'vuomo 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, benche intrinsecamente non fosse tale, et altrimente farà degno di biasimo, e del castigo, quando operrarà in modo che nell'apparenza venga stimato vn mal Religioso, et inosseruante di quello, à che per le leggi comuni, ò veramente per le Regole particolari della sua Religione sia tenuto, benche 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

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[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 dì 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]

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[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.