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## **Trust in the Catholic Reformation. Genoa, 1594-1664**

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### **Citation**

Peeters, T. D. H. M. (2020, March 31). *Trust in the Catholic Reformation. Genoa, 1594-1664*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/97601>

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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**Issue Date:** 2020-03-31

## 7. Between trust and obedience. Jesuit *indipetae* from Genoa and Corsica

So far, we have seen that trust played a pivotal role in the strategies of reformers even though it came with clear downsides, and distrust surfaced when those involved were not conceded a minimum of freedom.<sup>1</sup> The previous chapter shed light on the fact that religious groups consciously developed trust relationships that could help them in a new environment. In this final chapter, I set out to explore the meaning of trust in the life of individuals who were part of a religious congregation and its relation to obedience and other important religious values of that time. For this, we return to the Society of Jesus. Two characteristics of the Society make it a good case study for our inquiry. First, the Society was very advanced in using different forms of information management. Secondly, it valued a high level of individual discernment and introspection from its members. Both aspects come together in the correspondence of Genoese Jesuits with their Superior General in Rome and especially in the so-called *indipetae*.

The *indipetae* were letters in which individual Jesuits asked to be selected for one of the many missions of the Society around the world and expressed their hopes of a positive response. They were part of a centrally coordinated administration of vocations, even though the recruitment of missionaries could partially go through other channels.<sup>2</sup> The letters were at the same time bureaucratic documents full of

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<sup>1</sup> A slightly different version of this chapter will be published as an article (entitled: ‘Trust in the *Indipetae* from Seventeenth-Century Genoa and Corsica’) in a forthcoming publication edited by Girolamo Imbruglia.

<sup>2</sup> Aliocha Maldavsky, ‘Rome et les provinces Hispaniques dans l’administration des vocations. L’expédition pour le Pérou de 1604’, in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions Religieuses Modernes*, 45–70. Pierre Antoine Fabre, ‘La décision de partir comme accomplissement des Exercices: Une lecture des *Indipetae*’, in *Ite inflammate omnia: selected historical papers from conferences held at Loyola and Rome in 2006*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Rome: Istitutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2010), 50–51.

specific rhetoric, and thoroughly spiritual and personal texts.<sup>3</sup> The rhetorical strategies that the Jesuits used in their *indipetae* do not completely obscure the spirituality, desires, difficulties, and expectations of those who, for wide-ranging reasons, wanted to go to the missions.<sup>4</sup> As Giovanni Pizzorusso reminds us, the *indipetae* can be characterised as “texts at the margins of autobiography” because, although embedded in a specific spiritual and bureaucratic discourse, they testify to “the personal vocational trajectories of the Jesuit missionaries and the story of such an experience of introspection”.<sup>5</sup> These rare records of introspection make the *indipetae* particularly interesting for further exploring what trust meant for the people we study, in this case the members of an important religious congregation. That is why this chapter focuses on the Jesuits and their missionary desires, even though their particular spirituality and the practices it inspired do not always directly apply to the seventeenth-century clergy as a whole. My hopes are that uncovering what trust meant for the lives of individual Jesuits in Genoa will also help us to identify the path forward for further research into the trust experiences of early modern clergy.

Writing from the Jesuit college in Genoa in 1616 to his Superior General in Rome, Pietro Antonio Gente thus described a dynamic that is central to all *indipetae*:

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<sup>3</sup> Giovanni Pizzorusso, ‘Autobiografia e vocazione in una lettera indipeta inedita del gesuita Pierre-Joseph-Marie Chaumonot, missionario in Canada (1637)’, in *Per Adriano Prosperi. L’Europa divisa e i nuovi mondi, vol. II*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 192. The candidates carefully chose their words and used specific rhetoric. The Jesuits were taught to think carefully about the style they used in their letters, depending on the recipient and goal of the message. Grant Boswell, ‘Letter Writing among the Jesuits: Antonio Possevino’s Advice in the “Bibliotheca Selecta” (1593)’, *Huntington Library Quarterly, Studies in the Cultural History of Letter Writing* 66-3/4 (2003): 252–53.

<sup>4</sup> “Quello che possiamo leggere però ci racconta cose interessanti: certo oggi siamo consapevoli di non poter esagerare il valore privato e narrativo delle *indipetae*. Chi racconta di sé, lo fa mirando al preciso obiettivo di convincere il destinatario della propria attitudine alla missione. Detto questo, non possiamo neppure sottovalutare l’interesse della fonte per ricostruire desideri e speranze dei candidati, che anche se filtrati dall’obiettivo rimangono indiscutibilmente espressioni di sé, della propria vita concreta e del proprio sentire.” Claudio Ferlan, ‘Candidati alle Indie. Le lettere indipete nella Compagnia di Gesù’ (Padre Kino e i suoi tempi. Una riflessione storica, Trent, 2011), 9. Paulo Roberto de Andrada Pacheco and Marina Massimi, ‘A experiência de “obediência” nas *Indipetae*’, *Memorandum* 17 (2009): 22–44.

<sup>5</sup> Pizzorusso, ‘Autobiografia e vocazione’, 197.

I come again with this [letter] to supplicate V.P.<sup>6</sup> [...] to allow me [...] to leave from these parts of Italy and go to the new world of the Indies: I cannot give another reason than that I feel called by Jesus [...]. When I consider the end to which I have been created and for which I have been called to a religious life, I know that I am very much obliged [to go], and that V.P. is also partially obliged to grant me what I ask for, because without V.P. I cannot do anything.<sup>7</sup>

In the *indipetae*, a pressing desire that was perceived as an indication of God's plan merged with the awareness of total dependence on the permission from the Superior General, whom every Jesuit was expected to obey as God's representative. This dynamic resulted in circa 14,000 such letters that have survived in the Jesuit archives in Rome, documenting the hopes and desires of many Jesuits and their attempts to convince the Superior General of their suitability for work in one of the many missions.

There are three themes permeating the *indipetae* that can help us better understand how contemporaries experienced trust: desire, obedience, and indifference. The letter writers often showed great trust in their own desire for the mission, a desire that was believed to be given by God. The Jesuits, however, did not automatically see this desire as proof of a missionary vocation: only in time and after careful self-examination – following the precise method taught in the spiritual exercises – would a Jesuit start to trust his desire. Such scrutinised desire that indicated a divinely given vocation was essential for the missionary endeavour that characterised the Society of Jesus: towards the end of the sixteenth century, local superiors in Brazil claimed that the Jesuits who did not want to learn the language or

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<sup>6</sup> V.P. is an abbreviation of *Vostra Paternità*. The Jesuits used to address their Superior General in this way. In the citations, I will leave the acronym "V.P." as in the original.

<sup>7</sup> "Vengo di nuovo con questa à supplicar V.P. à volermi conceder la mia gia tanta bramata petitione di partirmi da queste parti d'Italia et andarmene nel nuouo mondo dell'Indie: ne so io apportar altra raggione, se non che mi sento chiamar da Gesù, e considerando il mio fine si per il quale sono stato creato, e chiamato alla religione mi conosco obligatissimo e V.P. ancor in parte obligata à concedermi quel che domando, poiche senza lei io posso far niente." Pietro Antonio Gente, 18-03-1616, ARSI, FG, 735, no. 411.

habits of the people among whom they worked, did not have a vocation.<sup>8</sup> Sending people without a strong desire to work in the missions was counterproductive. In Portugal, the superiors composed catalogues in which they specified not only the candidates' health, place of birth, number of years within the Society, and the years the candidates had been studying or teaching, but also information about their spiritual state; especially their calling and 'zeal for the mission'. Superiors thus hoped to make sure that only those with a real vocation would be sent.<sup>9</sup> This fact already shows that the free will of the missionaries was deemed to be of primary importance in their selection for the missions. Ignatius of Loyola himself was convinced that having a calling, rather than the needs of the Society, should be the only thing that counted.<sup>10</sup> The vow of obedience was not to be misused by sending missionaries against their will, even though according to the *Constitutions* of the order, this vow implied that one "ought to allow himself to be carried and directed by Divine Providence through the agency of the superior as if he were a lifeless body which allows itself to be carried to any place".<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, desire alone was not sufficient for a Jesuit with a missionary vocation. He was bound to obey the orders of his superiors and could not decide of his own accord to leave for the mission.

Historians are beginning to understand that obedience, a second major theme in the *indipetae* and a value that permeated every fibre of the Society, was less monolithic than one might think.<sup>12</sup> The life of the thirteenth Superior General of the Society, Tirzo González (1687-1705), for example, shows that obedience was a fluid category. There were different people whom González was supposed to obey in

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<sup>8</sup> Charlotte De Castelnau-L'Estoile, 'Élection et vocation: le choix des missionnaires dans la province jésuite du Portugal à la fin du XVIIe siècle', in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions religieuses modernes*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–29.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 248–49. See also: Amélie Vantard, 'Les vocations pour les missions ad gentes (France, 1650-1750)' (Université du Maine, 2010), 303–4.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan, eds., *Avventure dell'obbedienza nella Compagnia di Gesù: teorie e prassi fra XVI e XIX secolo*, Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento. Quaderni 86 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012); Silvia Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581-1615)* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

different phases of his life: the Superior General, local superiors, the Pope, and last but not least, his own conscience, in which God manifested His will and which made it possible to “disobey for the sake of obedience”.<sup>13</sup> González trusted his own conscience as a criterion for the truth when there were contrasting possibilities of obedience.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, all Jesuits were taught to respect other people’s consciences and what God wanted to communicate through the movements of one’s inner being, something which Thomas Aquinas had already taught three centuries before.<sup>15</sup> It was exactly this emphasis on one’s own scrutiny that gave room for possible friction between two types of obedience: obedience to the inner guidance of truth, which was to be respected by the superiors (or other authorities) because it was given by God, and obedience to the superiors themselves.<sup>16</sup> In her work about Jesuit obedience, Silvia Mostaccio identifies two tendencies in the Counter-Reformation period: while it was the time in which “obedience became synonymous with ‘orthodoxy’”, we see the simultaneous emergence “of ‘conscience’ as a new authority”.<sup>17</sup> This produced, according to Mostaccio, a climate of “on the one hand, growing faith in the capacity of discernment possessed by the individual and, on the other, the requirement for a society of subjects, obedient to their political and religious masters”.<sup>18</sup> Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan have defined the dynamic

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<sup>13</sup> Colombo, ‘In virtù dell’obbedienza’, 99.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas gave two reasons that exempted people from obedience. First, “the command of a higher power”. Since the highest power is God, this allows for one’s use of conscience and thus creates the possibility of a hierarchy of ‘obediences’. Secondly, “in matters touching the internal movement of the will man is not bound to obey his fellow man, but God alone.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 104, art 5, resp. Disobedience, moreover, is justified when a superior commands something that is contrary to God or the rule one professes. With respect to religious people, Aquinas specifies that “they are bound to obey in those matters only which may belong to the regular mode of life, and this obedience suffices for salvation. If they be willing to obey even in other matters, this will belong to the superabundance of perfection; this is, however, provided such things be not contrary to God or to the rule they profess, for obedience in this case would be unlawful.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 104, art 5, ad. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Laura Vilela e Souza and Marina Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare nelle Litterae Indipetae: le condizioni psicologiche per l’azione nella narrativa di giovani gesuiti del sedicesimo secolo’, *Memorandum* 3 (2002): 57.

<sup>17</sup> Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits*, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 166.

that results from these (seemingly contrasting) developments as “negotiated obedience”.<sup>19</sup>

Historians have noted a contradiction between the obedience and freedom of conscience within a religious order that had made blind obedience the central element of its *way of proceeding*, and a fundamental condition for belonging to the order. Mostaccio, for example, writes that “the renunciation of the will by the individual [in obedience] could not happen unless it operated under certain controlled conditions,” without however defining these conditions.<sup>20</sup> In my view, it is here that trust comes in: examining the role of trust in the *indipetae* will shed light on this seemingly contradictory attitude towards obedience. Since these letters offer a view on how ordinary Jesuits adopted the Society’s teachings in practice, they will also help us to better understand why trust was so crucial for obedience.

Thomas Aquinas already argued that obedience was reasonable when demonstrated toward superiors who followed the will of God (the first authority to obey) more than oneself.<sup>21</sup> Claudio Acquaviva (1553-1615), the fifth Superior General of the order, was also aware that effective obedience could only be accomplished when obedience to the inner criterion, one’s conscience and thus one’s will, did not contrast with obedience to one’s superiors. In a 1581 letter directed to all superiors about the “happy progress” of the Society of Jesus, he exhorted:

The most effective means for guiding them must be to win over the will; hence it must not satisfy a superior of the Society that a subject obeys him and goes on doing this or that in any old manner, but he must have an eye to his doing it perfectly, which is greatly helped when subjects truly know that they are loved by their superiors.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan, ‘Storie di obbedienza negoziata’, in *Avventure dell’obbedienza nella Compagnia di Gesù. Teorie e prassi fra XVI e XIX*, ed. Fernanda Alfieri and Claudio Ferlan (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 104, art 2. ad 2.

<sup>22</sup> Claudio Acquaviva, “A’ superiori della Compagnia del felice progresso”, in: *Lettere de’ prepositi generali. A’ Padri, e Fratelli della Compagnia di GIESV*. Rome, 1606, 97.



The words of Acquaviva point to a crucial issue that might help to understand how obedience and conscience could go together: obedience does not remain a reluctant act, because a person has to obey, when he is willing to do what is asked of him, convinced that the order is for his benefit and is requested out of love.

The willingness to obey is therefore based on trust, i.e. the expectation that the superior whom one should obey has similar interests as oneself and is able to judge what is best. In fact, in the eyes of one Cistercian philosopher, Pierre de Saint-Joseph (1594-1662), superiors sinned gravely if they did not work for the spiritual and temporal well-being of their subordinates.<sup>23</sup> We have seen this same dynamic in the Lazarists' relationship with Cardinal Durazzo: their obedience grew because they experienced that he cared for their well-being and shared their interests. In this chapter we will consider how this same experience played out on a personal level, where it becomes clear that the criterion for trusting, and thus for judging whether the superior should be obeyed 'blindly', were one's own experiences as well as one's conscience.<sup>24</sup>

Our understanding of the third essential element of the *indipetae*, the *indifferentia* that all letter writers claimed to be their fundamental attitude, is also helped by studying trust. Indifference was not the absence of desires, but trusting more in God's plan, voiced by the Superior General, than in one's own thoughts and wishes.<sup>25</sup> Without understanding the complexity of *indifferentia* it might seem that indifference was often only proclaimed and not felt, since Jesuits frequently mentioned it in the *indipetae* together with pronounced preferences.<sup>26</sup> However, if after careful self-examination a Jesuit trusted that his desire came from God, this God-given desire would not contrast with indifference (i.e. trust in God), as is suggested in this letter of Alessandro Sappa:

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<sup>23</sup> Pierre de Saint-Joseph, *Summula casuum conscientiae, continens brevem et accuratam explicationem Praeceptorum Decalogi* (Leiden, 1666), 175.

<sup>24</sup> Alfieri and Ferlan, 'Storie di obbedienza negoziata', 8, 16–17.

<sup>25</sup> Vilela e Souza and Massimi, 'Il desiderio dell'oltremare', 66. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 79–80.

<sup>26</sup> Alfieri and Ferlan, 'Storie di obbedienza negoziata', 11.

I would not have the courage to insist again [...] (because it seems that after having stated what I desired to the superior, I ought to let myself be ruled and governed by him) but because I do not think that I go against indifference [with my letter], and I feel that the vehemence of the desire also urges me to do this [...] I ask V.P. to pardon me.<sup>27</sup>

Just as obedience is more complex than we might think, so too *indifferentia* is not a monolithic category. Its complexity arises from the fact that indifference, too, depended on trust, and trust – in God, in one’s own desire, in the future – was only built over time, influenced by experience. The more one trusted, the more one was truly indifferent to the outcome of writing an *indipeta* and thus free to take up the pen and ask for the mission, but at the same time free to be obedient if one’s request were not heard.<sup>28</sup>

The great communal and personal urgency for the missionary endeavour, both in Europe and in the newly discovered remote parts of the world, has been one of the characteristics of early modern Catholicism. In order to explore how the Jesuits who felt this urgency experienced trust, I have studied the many letters sent by Jesuits who were either natives or residents of Genoa and Corsica. Since Genoa was a major port city, many Jesuits leaving for the mission passed through the city and instilled their missionary enthusiasm in the novices residing there.<sup>29</sup> Corsica, the island that fell under Genoese dominion, was the place where the Jesuit idea of “Our Indies” was born: the Jesuits working there experienced their labours as a foretaste of the faraway missions that they aspired to.<sup>30</sup> I have examined letters from 1590, the year of the first *indipeta* from Genoa, to the end of the Genoese Superior General Giovanni Paolo Oliva’s generalate (1681). Diverse as this corpus may be, several

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<sup>27</sup> “Non haurei già io l’ardire con questa di nuouo instare V.P. (parendo che dopo hauer proposto quello che desidero al Superiore dourei da lui lasciarmi reggere, e gouernare) ma non pensando io di contrauenire a questa indiferenza, [...] e sentendo che anco a cio fare mi sprona la uehemenza del desiderio [...] pregho VP hauermi per scusato.” Alessandro Sappa, 30-06-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 191.

<sup>28</sup> Vilela e Souza and Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare’, 64–66; Mariana Leal de Barros and Marina Massimi, ‘Releituras da indiferença: um estudo baseado em cartas de jesuitas dos sécalos XVI e XVII’, *Paidéia* 15, no. 31 (2005): 201.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Francesco Girone, Genoa, 31-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 329.

<sup>30</sup> Prospero, *Tribunali della coscienza*, 555.

recurrent features and arguments concerning the discernment of a missionary vocation allow us, in the first part of this chapter, to further explore the three key vocational elements mentioned above - desire, obedience and indifference - and see how they relate to trust. These elements were central to the *indipetae* and to Ignatian spirituality as a whole, but also to early modern Catholicism in general. Secondly, we will look at the way in which the letter writers tried to convince their Superior General of their suitability and win his trust. Thus, it becomes clear what contemporaries thought would foster people's trust in them. Finally, the chapter sheds light on the fact that initiative 'from above', namely to staff a certain mission, relied on obedience, and this obedience, in turn, was only feasible in the context of a trust relationship.

### **Trust 'from below'**

Even though historians now understand how major the phenomenon of the *indipetae* was, we should at the same time not forget that writing such a letter was not an obvious step. To be sure it was one that could possibly have life-changing implications: once the desire to leave for the "Indies" was expressed, a Jesuit from one of the coastal towns of Liguria, for example, might be sent to the interior of Paraguay never to see his homeland again.<sup>31</sup> The choice of writing therefore must have required at least some basic form of trust on different levels: in the first place, trust in the religious order to which one gave one's life and professed one's obedience, secondly, trust in one's own desire for the missions as a calling from God, and lastly, trust that working in the mission would bring benefits, which made it worthwhile to take this step towards the unknown.

#### *1) Trusting the Society of Jesus*

From the time that I came to know the Society, which must be [...] around ten years ago, I have always had the ardent desire to join, having the firm hope of being sent to the Indies one day; and never was it possible to become attached to other religious orders

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. De Castelnau-L'Estoile, 'Élection et vocation', 42.

merely because I did not have any hope of fulfilling this desire [with these orders].

In this letter written in January 1616, Cosmo Bacchetta, a novice from the Jesuit college in Genoa, expressed a thought shared by many *indipetae* writers, namely that among all religious orders it was the Society of Jesus where one had most chance of following a missionary vocation.<sup>32</sup> One year after entering the Society, Bartolomeo Bergonzo likewise recalled that he had chosen the Jesuits from many other religious orders because this choice implied the possibility of becoming a missionary.<sup>33</sup> We can think of other reasons that drove people to join the Society: for instance, the promise of receiving an education and having an ecclesiastical career, or the prestige of the order that could foster family pride. Yet a substantial part of those Jesuits who asked to be sent to the missions had indeed entered the Society because they consciously entrusted their future—which they sometimes hoped would be adventurous—to this religious order.<sup>34</sup> They put their trust in the Society *because* they desired to go to the mission.

We see that for youngsters who wanted to join the Society of Jesus trust really involved an expectation based on direct or indirect experience: young boys expected that joining the Society would bring a life of adventure and sacrifice in faraway lands because of the stories of missionaries who had already gone there. Francesco Girone's letter illustrates this point, as he wrote from Genoa:

V.P. should [...] know that one year before I entered the Society, when I heard some fathers tell about the great good and the martyrdoms that they had gone through in the Indies, such a desire filled me to follow them, that one day when I was hearing mass, I made a vow, I do not know how and certainly too hastily, that

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<sup>32</sup> “Da che io hebbi conoscenza della Compagnia che saranno à ponto da dieci anni, hebbi sempre ardente desiderio di entrar in essa, con ferma speranza d’essere un giorno mandato all’Indie, ne fu mai possibile c’io mi affettionassi ad altre religioni per entrarmi solo perché non vedevo speranza d’adempire questo desiderio”. *Indipeta* from Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa 06-01-1616, FG 735, no. 287.

<sup>33</sup> *Indipeta* from Bartolomeo Bergonzo, 09-12-1611, Genoa, FG 734, no. 380.

<sup>34</sup> See also: Maldavsky, ‘Mobilités religieuses - Société urbaine et désir de mission’, 18; Ferlan, ‘Candidati alle Indie. Le littere indipete nella Compagnia di Gesù’, 2–4.

when I entered the Society I would try with all my strength to go to the missions in the Indies.<sup>35</sup>

The confidence required to join the Jesuits was elicited by the stories aspirant members heard in their youth about the experiences of others who had already joined the Society.<sup>36</sup> However, trust in the Society's capacity and willingness to help with accomplishing what one desired was not enough to confidently take up the pen and ask to be accepted for the mission. Indeed, once they entered the Society, the Jesuits had to learn when to trust their own desire.

## 2) *Trusting one's desire, trusting God*

Discernment was one of the cornerstones of Ignatian spirituality. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, which all Jesuits followed before entering the Society and continued to attend frequently, should help the individual to discern God's will and thus come to the right choices.<sup>37</sup> In terms of discernment, plain desire was not necessarily seen as positive, because even the devil could inspire human desires for his own purposes.<sup>38</sup> To make sure that one was following God's will, affections and desires had to be ordered and put into their right place, by careful discernment: this could be achieved, for instance, through prayer and meditation, doing the Spiritual Exercises and consulting one's superior.<sup>39</sup> But writing an *indipeta* and thinking

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<sup>35</sup> "V.P. dunque hà da sapere ch'un'anno auanti ch'entrassi nella Compagnia dal sentir alcuni nostri Padri à raccontare il gran bene, ed' i martirij che riceueuano nell'Indie, mi uenne un tal desiderio di seguirarli, che un giorno udendo messa feci uoto, non sò come, certo troppo frettoloso, che s'entrauo nella Compagnia procurassi à tutto potere di chieder la missione all'Indie." Francesco Girone, 25-02-1679, ARSI, FG 748, no. 255.

<sup>36</sup> For another example, see Ludovico Pozzo's letter from Genoa, 22-06-1611, ARSI, FG 734, 367. See also: Camilla Russell, 'Imagining the "Indies": Italian Jesuit petitions for the overseas missions at the turn of the seventeenth century', in Donattini, Marcocci, and Pastore, *L'Europa divisa*, 182–83; Maldavsky, 'Mobilités religieuses', 13.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Fabre, 'La décision de partir comme accomplissement des Exercices: Une lecture des *Indipetae*'. Leal de Barros and Massimi, 'Releituras da indiferença: um estudo baseado em cartas de jesuitas dos sécalos XVI e XVII', 199.

<sup>38</sup> Giovanni Boscareno explicitly states that he considered this option in his letter from Genoa, 03-02-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 115.

<sup>39</sup> Vilela e Souza and Massimi, 'Il desiderio dell'oltremare', 58–61.

through its possible consequences could also be a method of discernment, because it was seen as means by which a letter writer tried to understand God's will.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the letters therefore reveal the process of discernment by which a Jesuit came to trust his desire. The first thing that stands out when reading the Genoese *indipetae* is the conviction that the desire to go to the Indies came from God and was thus positive. Moreover, it originated *in experience*, especially the experience of a continuation or increase of this desire over time: "the long time that I have already felt this desire within me *does not leave me any doubt* that the vocation comes from God," Tommaso Bona wrote in 1629.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Giovanni Boscareno, a Jesuit who was sent to the Corsican town of Ajaccio, recounted his experience of "our Indies":

in an India that was not real, but foreshadowed [...] the occasions I had to labour and mortify myself in the service of God and our Society not only did not diminish the desire that God gave me from the beginning of my novitiate, but greatly increased it.<sup>42</sup>

A brother working in Genoa similarly emphasised that he had already written four years before (giving the exact date of 11 June 1630) and stated that his desire to go to the missions had not disappeared, which proved that it was real.<sup>43</sup> Giovanni Giacomo Pasquali, who wrote as many as thirty-one letters, claimed that his doubts were dispelled exactly because he saw his desire grow in time.<sup>44</sup> For some, an increase in desire brought particular urgency, as in the case of Cosmo Bacchetta, who preferred not to wait the three months that he needed to finish his novitiate. For others, it brought endurance, as in the case of the Genoese Filippo Grimaldo, who

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<sup>40</sup> Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 68.

<sup>41</sup> "la uocatione uenire dal S're Iddio *non mi lascia dubitare* il longo tempo che gia mi sento acceso di questo desiderio" [my italics]. Tommaso Bona, 10-06-1629, Genoa, FG 738, no. 354.

<sup>42</sup> Come a punto in un'India non uera, ma adombrata, e l'occasioni, che qui ho hauuto d'affaticarmi e mortificarmi per seruitio di Dio, e della nostra Compagnia non solamente m'hanno sminuito il desiderio, che il Signore mi diede sin dal principio del mio Nouitiato, ma molto me l'hanno accresciuto. Giovanni Boscareno 17-05-1619, Ajaccio, ARSI, FG, 736, no. 25.

<sup>43</sup> Carlo Margheriti, Genoa, 12-05-1634. ARSI, ITAL 172, no. 57.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Giovanni Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa, 26-06-1612, 734, no. 382.

claimed to have harboured the wish to go to the missions for twenty-five years.<sup>45</sup> The latter's persistence was rewarded when, some years later, he was finally sent to Goa.<sup>46</sup> The frequency with which *indipetae* writers referred to the longevity of their desire leaves no doubt that they themselves saw it as strong positive evidence of its trustworthiness.

The test of time was not the only confirmation of a true desire given by God. The experience of certain emotions (*affetti*), in particular that of consolation, could also enhance trust. According to Ignatius, consolation was the phenomenon “when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord”, or indeed “every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.”<sup>47</sup> In 1614, Antonio Gallo wrote that he experienced an inexpressible consolation (*consolazione indicibile*) when he thought about the mission: this strengthened him in his conviction that his was a true calling from God.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Carlo Ottavio Renzo identified the origin of his desire as the “happy encounter with two [missionaries] who are going to Brazil [which] has touched my heart more than anything else”.<sup>49</sup> The emotion experienced through this encounter strengthened Carlo's conviction that his desire was indeed a good one.<sup>50</sup> Yet it was not only positive feelings that could affirm the authenticity of a desire: even though his hopes collapsed because

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<sup>45</sup> Cosmo Bacchetta, 26-02-1616, Genoa, ARSI, FG 735, no. 377 and Filippo Grimaldo, Fermo, 13-06-1633, ARSI, FG 747, 164. For other examples see: Geronimo Colletta, Genoa, 25-05-1608, FG 741, no. 282, and Agostino Gherardi Genoa, 09-12-1638, FG 746, no. 460.

<sup>46</sup> Filippo Grimaldo, Goa, 24-01-1667, FG 747, no. 229/1.

<sup>47</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, § 316, Ganss ed., 202.

<sup>48</sup> Antonio Gallo, 14-11-1614, Genoa, ARSI, FG 734, no. 469. See also: De Castelneau-L'Estoile, ‘Élection et vocation’, 30; Paulo Roberto de Andrada Pacheco and Marina Massimi, ‘The Experience of “Consolation” in the Litterae Indipetae’, *Psicologia em Estudo* 15, no. 2 (2010): 343–52. See also: Raimondo Turtas, ‘Gesuiti sardi in terra di missione tra Seicento e Settecento’, *Bollettino di Studi Sardi*, no. 2 (November 2009): 69–70.

<sup>49</sup> Carlo Ottavio Renzo, 21-04-1622, Genoa, ARSI, FG 736, no. 354. “[il] felice incontro di due che vanno al Brasile m'è talmente ferito il cuore che niente più.”

<sup>50</sup> In a similar vein, Bartolomeo Caloriti recounts what “great pleasure and joy” [*gran gusto e allegrezza*] he experienced upon entering the novitiate of the Jesuits: this emotion was seen as a confirmation of the fact that one had chosen the right path. Bartolomeo Caloriti, 04-06-1628, Genoa, ARSI, FG 738, no. 222.

they were not answered, Giovanni Francesco Perego still continued to see them as the manifestation of a true desire, because “with all this, it seems to me that I live restlessly”. It was the restlessness that made Perego express his hopes again.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the feeling of hope caused by a positive answer to an *indipeta*, for example that one’s name was “written on the list of those who desire to go to the Indies”, also confirmed the truth of their desire for some.<sup>52</sup>

Besides special emotions or the longevity of one’s desire, inner experiences were essential for discernment, as well as dreams and visions.<sup>53</sup> Seeing that the longing endured after having thought it over very well and having meditated upon all the difficulties of the mission, greatly enhanced the *indipetae* writers’ trust:

Last lent, Tomaso Bona wrote, I recommended the matter more fervently to God, offering many communions to this purpose: and finding myself firm [in my desire] after all this, I decided to inform you.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting to note the attentiveness with which this Jesuit examined his inner experience.<sup>55</sup> According to Ignatian spirituality, the movements of the soul were signs that showed God’s will.<sup>56</sup> That after prayer Tomaso Bona “found himself” still desiring to go to the Indies gave him confidence to write to his Superior General. Bartolomeo Pensa testified about a similar experience, recounting how “doing the [spiritual] exercises before the vows and during the triduum of the renewal [of the vows], and many other times at different occasions, I felt stimulated to write again”.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Giovanni Francesco Perego, 23-03-1647, Genoa, ARSI, FG 745, no. 50.

<sup>52</sup> Giovanni Boscareno, Corsica, 01-11-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 195. However, hope is not enough for the soul, Alessandro Sappa added in his letter recounting the confidence that the Padre Assistente gave him. Alessandro Sappa, 30-06-1617, Genoa, 735, no. 191.

<sup>53</sup> Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 92.

<sup>54</sup> “la quaresima prossima passata raccomandai a Dio più caldamente il negotio offerendo a ciò molte communioni: e doppo tutto questo ritrouandomi fermo ho deliberato darne parte a sua Paternità” Tomaso Bona, 10-06-1629, Genoa 7, 354. See e.g. also: Marius Clemens Baratta, 21-01-1615, Genoa, ARSI, ITAL 173, 14; Vincenzo Solombrino, Genoa 25-11-1608, FG 734, no. 228; and Giovanni Boscareno, Genoa 03-02-1617, ARSI, FG 735, 115.

<sup>55</sup> Emanuele Colombo and Marina Massimi affirm that such attentive descriptions of the inner experience that led to the decision to ask for the mission became more prominent in the nineteenth century. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 137–38.

<sup>56</sup> Vilela e Souza and Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare’, 38.

<sup>57</sup> Bartolomeo Pensa, Corsica, 08-09-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 183.



Many candidates wrote that even considering all the possible dangers involved in the missions did not discourage them. Instead, it confirmed them in their desire: “In order to be certain that this [desire of mine] is not a sudden spirit or fervour,” Carlo Moneta assured his Superior General,

V.P. should know that [...] I communicated it to my master of novices, who advised me to let it mature well during the whole novitiate, whereupon with his guidance I applied myself to various prayers and communions in order to do what he advised me. After having frequently considered what could oppose me – that is, the continuous dangers and sufferings of the long voyage and the fact that one has death always in front of one’s eyes – this did not seem enough to stop me from conforming to the Lord who is calling me to those lands.<sup>58</sup>

Trust in one’s desire grew not only from spiritual experiences, but also from various practical circumstances that were seen as a positive sign from God. As Giuseppe Boniperto wrote from Genoa in 1639:

God is offering me in the meanwhile the comfortable opportunity of [having] the father procurator nearby, with whom I can learn the language easily and get ready for the hardships [...]. I would not want to pose any impediments to that happiness that God has started to put in front of my eyes.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “acchioche V.P’tà si possi assicurare non essere questo spirito ò feruore repentino, deue sapere come hà già un anno, et mezzo, che doppo hauermi il Sig’ re data questa Vocatione, la comunicai con il Padre mio Maestro de Nouizi qual mi consiglio a maturarla bene tutto il tempo del nouitiato, onde con il di lui indrizzo mi missi di proposito con uarie orationi, et communioni à far ciò, che egli mi consigliaua et doppo auer considerato molte uolte ciò che mi si potesse opporre, cioè li continoui [sic] pericoli et patimenti della longa nauigatione, et l’hauer sempre la morte dinanzi alli occhi, ciò non m’è parso bastante à trattenermi di non corrispondere al Signore che mi chiama in quei paesi.” Carlo Moneta, Genoa 10-09-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 282. See e.g. also: Giovanni Francesco Casella, Milan 29-01-1635, ARSI, FG 740, no. 287 and 30-12-1636, ARSI, FG 740, no. 420.

<sup>59</sup> “Offerendomi Dio intanto la commoda occasione del P’re Procuratore uicino, col quale puotrò con auantaggio imparar la lingua, e dispormi alle fatiche; [...] non ponga io impedimento a quella felicità che mi cominciò à porre auanti gl’occhi Dio” Giuseppe Boniperto, Genoa 13-05-1639, ARSI FG 742, no. 48.

It was the experience of such a convenient situation that convinced Giuseppe that his desire came from God. In answer to Giuseppe's question, the Superior General wrote that he would ask the provincial superior if there was still a place for him, but he added: "if you do not attain the fulfilment of your desire now, see to it that you keep it ever more alive in case another occasion arises".<sup>60</sup>

The experience of a long and growing desire that was well thought through and confirmed by special emotions as well as favourable circumstances brought many *indipetae* writers to believe that their desire was good and given by God. Some of them even described it as a precious present.<sup>61</sup> This experience could lead to confident expectations, such as those expressed by Cosmo Bacchetta: "I'm almost sure that I will obtain my intention, so great is the desire [...] that God gives me".<sup>62</sup> Gio Battista Lucerna went a step further:

You should not hesitate to send me, and if some doubts might intervene, you should not keep them in mind because I hold it for certain that these will be either based on poor information or falsehood, or on the conflict that the enemy of the human race uses against all good things.

For some, this conviction was so clear that they saw it as a matter of conscience to communicate their desire to the Superior General.<sup>63</sup>

Many of the *indipetae* writers equated their own confidence in their desire with trust in God, who gave them these experiences that made their desire trustworthy. It

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<sup>60</sup> "se adesso non conseguirete l'adempimento del uostro desideiro, procurate di tenerlo sempre più uiuo per qualche altra occasione". Answer to Giuseppe Boniperto, Rome 28-05-1639, ARSI, MED 27, 369v.

<sup>61</sup> See, for a letter that mentions that the desire was good: Gio' Battista Astria, Genoa, 03-01-1616, ARSI, FG 735, no. 284; and Gio' Maria Leria, Ajaccio, 12-03-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 23/1. For a letter that mentioned that this desire was a gift, see: Antonio Gallo, Genoa, 06-12-1613, ARSI, FG 734, no. 404 and Giovanni Boscareno, Genoa, 03-02-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 115.

<sup>62</sup> Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa, 06-01-1616, FG 735, no. 287.

<sup>63</sup> Gio' Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa 18-02-1611, ARSI, FG 734, no. 354. "scaricandomene la coscienza". See, for another example, ITAL 173, no. 71. Others did not rely that much on their own desire for the good, as on the occasion that the mission would offer to abstain from other worldlier desires: not so much the accomplishment of their desire but that of the salvation of their soul, in their words, depended on whether they would be elected or not. See e.g. Ottavio Quatterca, Genoa, 29-09-1617, ARSI, FG 740, no. 124; Luigi Sesino, 09-06-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 259; Gregorio Porta, Milano, 08-12-1615, ARSI, ITAL 173, no. 38.

is interesting to note that trust in God (and thus in the desire that the writers came to see as given by God) mirrored the dynamic of normal trust. We have defined the latter as the experience-based expectation that somebody is able and willing to do what one asks of him. In the case of the Jesuit *indipetae* writers, trust in God was the experience-based belief that God intended and was able to realise one's desire for the mission. Not only did the petitioners carefully observe the early experiences on which this expectation (and therefore their trust in a missionary future) could be based, but they also noted and explained how, in their experience, God had already shown himself able and willing to act in their favour. Giovanni Francesco Casella expressed this dynamic when he wrote to his Superior General:

Because, upon entering the order I have *experienced* the wondrous effects of grace and divine providence, I am *certain* that I will experience these evermore every day.<sup>64</sup>

Three years later, he used the same argument:

I'm in good health, and I have already *experienced* that whoever places himself in the hands of the Lord is favoured in his efforts, and that which to men seems, as it were, impossible, God makes easy for those who desire to work for his love.<sup>65</sup>

In the eyes of the Jesuit aspirants to the mission, it logically followed from these earlier experiences that they should trust God and the desire he had inspired in them:

I recognise [the calling from God] and I cannot pretend to be blind, or I would have to pretend that God is *foolish* [...]. I will definitely never regret having confided in God.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “sicome nel ingresso in religione *ho prouato* l'effetti merauigliosi della gratia, e prouidenza Diuina cosi sono *certo* di douerla sperimentare ogni giorno maggiormente.” [my italics] Giovanni Francesco Casella, Milan 29-01-1635, ARSI, FG 740, no. 287.

<sup>65</sup> “Sto con buona santità, e gia ho *prouato*, che chi si ponen elle mani del Signore Iddio viene fauorito nelle sue fatiche, e quel che all'huomini pare, per dir cosi, impossibile, Iddio rende facile, a chi desidera per amor suo impiegarsi. [my italics] Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa, 12-11-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 253.

<sup>66</sup> “Lo cognosco ne posso fingermi cieco, se non uolessi fingermi un Dio *insensato* [...] Certo non mi pentirò mai d'hauer confidato in Dio.” [my italics] Nicola Maria Pallavicino, Genoa, 05-07-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 328.

Many others argued in the same way, namely that God could not act illogically by giving a true desire without answering it. They used words comparable to those of Ignatio Bertolati, who wrote: “I trust [*confido*] that He who freely gave this desire to me, will also not fail to give me the strength.”<sup>67</sup>

Indeed the word *confido* was used very frequently, in combination with an expression of the expectation that God would make up for the candidate’s lack of abilities: “I do not doubt that God out of infinite goodness can do greater things,” Giovanni Montali wrote, and Giovanni Donato stressed that he trusted “divine kindness” just as much as he distrusted his own “tepidity”.<sup>68</sup> Much emphasis was put on one’s own unworthiness and the confidence that God could use the “weakest instruments” and “the most abject and useless things in the world”, so that it was “up to him to revive this dead instrument for his glory”.<sup>69</sup>

### 3) *From discernment to trust*

That the *indipetae* writers expressed great confidence in divine grace is possibly not surprising, nor that they saw their Superior General as the unquestionable voice of this divine grace. Interestingly, however, their letters clearly reflect the Jesuit habit of looking at a diverse range of experiences to increase confidence and discern God’s plans. The path of discernment that led from a fragile desire to a mature confidence in one’s calling is expressed effectively in a letter from Stanislao Palio. He first recounted how he began this path:

The good desire and the many inspirations that the Divine Goodness gave me during the time of the novitiate and after, namely to go to the mission in Japan or China, have always kept

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<sup>67</sup> “Chi questo desiderio liberalmente mi hà dato, confido anchora che non mancherà di somministrarmi le forze.” Ignatio Bertolati, Genoa, 01-1625, ARSI, FG 737, no. 238.

<sup>68</sup> “Non diffido d’una bontà infinita può fare maggiori cose il Signore, se vuole, come vuole.” Giovanni Gregorio Montali, Basti, 26-06-1622, ARSI, FG 737, no. 375; and; “confidando altrettanto nella Divina Bontà, quanto diffido per la mia tepidezza.” Giovanni Abbondio Donato, Genoa, 18-03-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 309. See also: Giovanni Francesco Perego, Ajaccio, 23-03-1629, ARSI, FG 738, no. 336.

<sup>69</sup> “delle cose più abiette et inutile del mondo”, Carlo Lemugio, Genoa, 07-09-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 228; “gl’instrumenti piu fiacchi”, Agostino Gherardi, Genoa, 09-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 282, and “à lui toccherà ravnivare questo morto strumento per la sua gloria.” Gio’ Abondio Donato, Genoa, 19-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 328.

awake in me such passion for those souls that it seemed to me that in my prayers I was forced to pray especially for them [the Chinese and the Japanese], and for those who put themselves at their service [...].

Then, however, his own plans and ideas interfered with what he later understood to have been a true desire all along:

I would have written you earlier on, were it not that I was held back by the thought that I could serve the Lord [...] better in these lands [i.e. in Monferrato, Italy, where he lived],[...] and I had the plan that [...] through me, [the Jesuits] could come [to that city]: but now that war has continued for four years it has made me lose all hope [...].

Since his own thoughts and his earlier desire did not match, a verification of these was needed in order to understand whether it was either the old desire or the new plans that were to be trusted. Verification, in the eyes of Stanislao, was possible by looking at what the God-given circumstances suggested to one's inner being:

because of your letter for the mission I'm more enthusiastic, and because of the current, and very convenient occasion of the Father Procurator of Japan, [...] I am more moved inwardly than ever before; that is why I decided to tell you the circumstances of my vocation, which are these.

Interestingly, Stanislao then started to list those past and present experiences that made the verification of his desire possible:

First of all, after having thought a lot in my prayers, and having examined [my vocation] in the Lord, I find [this vocation] similar in every respect to the vocation that I had of joining the Company. Even more, [I hope that] it pleases the Lord that it is also similar both in the consequences as in the rest [...].

He was confirmed in trusting his desire not only by past experience, but also by the fact that *in the present* his desire for the mission made him live a better life and made him happier:

[this vocation for the missions] encourages me towards perfection, and makes me inwardly consoled, and [...] this [i.e., all these signs]

makes me almost certain that you will give your consent so that I can follow my vocation [...].

The discernment and therefore the inner confidence were only complete when submitted not merely to one's personal experiences but also to prayer and the judgment of one's superior:

Finally, it seems that the Lord calls me also outwardly, because the father rector, together with large part of the college, exhort me to do this, and they see it as a certain thing that I will go...<sup>70</sup>

Stanislao's letter illustrates how the *indipetae* writers tried to determine which possible path or decision merited their trust by carefully scrutinising their (spiritual, emotional and concrete) experiences.

4) *Trust in the unknown: "that happy hour in which I would be heard"*<sup>71</sup>

How did the aspiring missionaries come to trust that joining the Society's remote missions would bring them what they hoped for? Partially, because they came to know what life in these missions implied. Indeed, it was predominantly when the procurator of a certain mission would pass through Genoa that the local Jesuits would take up their pens and ask to be sent to that same mission in the company of

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<sup>70</sup> "Il buono desiderio e molte inspirationi che nel tempo del Nouitiato, e fuori di quello la diuina Bontà m'ha dato della missione del Giappone, o Cina, hanno sempre tenuto desto in me tale zelo di quell'anime che mè sempre parso nelle mie orationi d'esser stato forzato a pregare particolarmente per loro, e per quelli che in lor seruitio s'impiegaro et io prima d'adesso hauerei scritto di cio a VP se il pensiero ch'hauera di poter maggiormente seruire al Signore [...] in questi paesi non m'hauesse ritenuto et [...] hauero in animo di fare che [...] per mezzo mio ui entrassero: ma ecco che questa guerra continua di quatr'anni affatto mi toglie ogni speranza [...]. [T]rouandomi [...] per la lettera di V.P. a quella missione maggiormente animato e per la presente, e buona occasione del P. Procuratore del Giappone [...] più che mai interiormente mosso ho deliberato di esporre a V.P. le circostanze della mia uocatione, e sono queste. Io primieramente doppo d'hauerui molto pensato nell'oratione, ebene esaminato a nel Sigorre la trouo in tutto simile alla mia uocatione della Compagnia. Anzi piaccia al Sigore che cosi simile sij nell'effetto come nel resto [...]. [Questa vocazione] m'accende incredibilmente alla perfettione, e mi lascia interiormente consolato, et [...] mi rende quasi sicuro della licenza di poterla effettuare da V.P. [...]. Finalmente pare che il signore ancor esteriormente mi chiami, perche il P. Rettore con la maggior parte del Collegio à questo m'essorta, tenendo come certa la mia andata [...]." Stanislao Palio, Genoa, 09-06-1617, ARSI FG 735, nr. 179.

<sup>71</sup> "quell'houra si felice per me in cui venissi essaudito", Giovanni Antonio Sertola, Bastia, 02-11-1655, ARSI, FG 746, no. 460.

the procurator whom they had met. Aspirants tried to raise their chances of being chosen through personal contact with the procurator involved. We can imagine that such contact made the unknown less mysterious and increased trust in a missionary future based on the witnessed experience of others.

Early in 1617, Nicolò Trigault, the procurator of the China mission, passed through Genoa on his tour around Europe. Trigault's visit gave rise to seven *indipetae* letters written in May and June by four Jesuits of the Genoese College.<sup>72</sup> Clearly this group of companions was inspired by Nicolò Trigault's presence: some of them explicitly talked about their conversations with the procurator and the possibilities that he had presented. A similar hype occurred in 1640, when the visit of the procurator of the Philippines stimulated six aspirants to write to their Superior General.<sup>73</sup> Besides these procurators, several groups of missionaries from Italy on their way to the mission also sojourned in Genoa.<sup>74</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the *indipetae* writers truly understood what to expect from the missions, but imagining the possibility of being chosen seemed to bring them great joy: "Oh how fortunate and happy I would consider myself," Giovanni Boscareno wrote, referring to the idea of suffering in the service of God.<sup>75</sup> Many letters testify to similar expectations. Such emotions fostered not only the candidates' trust in their missionary future; for superiors, the emotions of joy that

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<sup>72</sup> The names of these Jesuits are Girolamo Pincirolo, Alessandro Sappa, Giovanni Gregorio Montalio, and Stanislao Palio. The latter was certainly not heard: he died in 1641 in Turin (Fejér, *Defuncti*, IV N-R, 70). For the list of all rhetores, see: ARSI MED 1, 22r.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 103.

<sup>74</sup> Noël Golvers, 'Ferdinand Verbiests Chinaroeping: het beslissende keerpunt (Sevilla-Genua, 1655)', *Verbiest Koerier*, 10 (2008), 12. One of the first missionaries to the famous China missions was a Genoese. From the Genoese harbour many departed for that mission. Mario Colpo, 'Un missionario genovese compagno di P. Matteo Ricci: P. Lazzaro Cattaneo (1561-1640)', in *I Gesuiti fra impegno religioso e potere politico nella Repubblica di Genova. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica. Genova, 2-3-4 dicembre 1991*, ed. Claudio Paolucci, vol. 2, Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrare di bibliografia e cultura ligure, V (Genoa: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 1992), 61–68.

<sup>75</sup> "o quanto mi riputerei avventurato e felice". Giovanni Boscareno, Corsica, 05-07-1620, FG 736, no. 165. Alochia Maldavsky has studied this aspect of how much candidates could know of the mission for the Jesuits and the Milanese elite surrounding them: Maldavsky, 'Mobilités religieuses - Société urbaine et désir de mission', 12–16; See also: Aliocha Maldavsky, 'Pedir las Indias. Las cartas indipetae de los jesuitas europeos, siglos xvi-xviii, ensayo historiográfico', *Relaciones. Estudios de historia y sociedad* 132 (2012): 155–59.

candidates experienced upon hearing the news that they were chosen, were proof of a real vocation and therefore confirmed their trust in these candidates.<sup>76</sup>

The anticipated gladness, which in the language of the time was often expressed as “consolation” (*consolazione*), but also as “happiness” (*felicità*) - happiness not only in the hereafter but also partially in this world<sup>77</sup> -, was the ultimate aim of the letter writers, as might be assumed from the letter that Filippo Grimaldi wrote after he went to Goa:

It would seem to me that I would give V.P. grounds to rightly wonder whether I am unhappy to have left Europe, if, after having asked so fervently for the mission in Japan, now that I am already arrived in this city of Goa [and]... so near my desired destiny, I did not bear witness to the consolation that I enjoy because of it. Therefore, with the present [letter] I come to inform V.P. [...] that I am so happy in my heart that [...] I do not know what else to desire.<sup>78</sup>

Grimaldi added that the only possible further fulfilment of his desires would consist of being able to die in Japan while giving his life for the salvation of souls.<sup>79</sup> The experience of consolation or happiness already at the moment of meditating the mission and later when receiving the news of selection, facilitated both the candidates and their superiors in trusting that a candidate’s desire was given by God.<sup>80</sup>

Whether Filippo Grimaldi would be sent from Goa onward to Japan or whether his companions, who had remained in Genoa, would be considered for the

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<sup>76</sup> De Castelnau-L’Estoile, ‘Élection et vocation’, 28–29.

<sup>77</sup> Pacheco and Massimi, ‘The Experience of “Consolation” in the Litterae Indipetae’.

<sup>78</sup> “Mi parebbe di dare à V.Ptà fondamento dà dubitare giustamente, s’io sta scontento d’ahuer lasciata l’Europa, se, dopo hauer chiesta con tanta istanza la Missione del Giappone, hor che gia gionto in questa Città di Goa, mi uedo si uicino al bramato termine, non dessi alcuna testimonianza della consolatione che ne godo. Vengo per tanto con la presente à darle parte [...] che d’animo sto si contento, che per ultimo compimento di mie brame in questa uita altro piu non sò desiderare.” Filippo Grimaldi, Goa, 24-01-1667, ARSI, FG 747, no. 229/1.

<sup>79</sup> Martyrdom was often mentioned in the *indipetae* as the ultimate goal. Colombo and Massimi, *In viaggio*, 74.

<sup>80</sup> Paulo Roberto de Andrada Pacheco, ‘Liberdade e indiferença: a “experiência-modelo” jesuítica em cartas de jovens indipetentes espanhóis dos séculos XVI e XVII’ (Universidade de São Paulo, 2004), 293; Vilela e Souza and Massimi, ‘Il desiderio dell’oltremare’, 63.



mission, ultimately depended on the decision of the Superior General. Indeed, the whole selection system relied on the convergence between individual vocations and the needs of the Society of Jesus. Often the trust that one was destined to work in the missions was such that the writers thought God would cause the Superior General to cooperate in the venture. Francesco Spinola, for example, remarked that God “has moved me to ask for it, [so] likewise he will inspire V.P. to give me that grace”.<sup>81</sup> One of the most fascinating aspects of the *indipetae* is indeed the combination between the experience-based confidence of the writer and his great uncertainty about the decision of the Superior General, upon which the whole endeavour ultimately depended. In the next section we see how the Genoese candidates tried to cope with this ambiguity.

**Trust ‘from above’: “I hope to obtain from V.P. the patent for heaven”<sup>82</sup>**

“Please give me some sign that I will be among the elect,” the Genoese Francesco Pallavicino wrote to his Superior General in 1662. And he added: “Does V.P. command that I come barefoot [...] to Rome to ask at his feet for his grace? I will do it.”<sup>83</sup> These words voice the uncertainty of many *indipetae* writers who were convinced of their own desire, but were uncertain about the best strategy to win the trust of the Superior General (because, as one missionary wrote, Jesuits could “negotiate” with their Superior General even about something so personal as their missionary vocation<sup>84</sup>). The number and frequency of letters that an applicant should

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<sup>81</sup> Francesco Spinola, Genoa, 27-07-1641, ARSI, FG 743, no. 115. See for another example of this attitude: Giovanni Boscarenò, Corsica 15-10-1619, ARSI, FG 736, 83. “Ma poiche di ciò hà da essere l’instrumento Vostro. Non mancherò di pregare continuamente il Signore, che si come à me ha dato, e dà tuttauia questo desiderio così à V.P. ispiri e doni la uolontà di concedermi il poterlo effettuare.”

<sup>82</sup> “spero d’ottenere da V.P. la sottoscrizione della patente per il Cielo”, Giuseppe Boniperto, 13-05-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 48.

<sup>83</sup> “[M]i dia qualche contrasegno [che?] sarò degli eletti. V.P. comanda che io uenghi scalzo [...] à Roma per supplicarla a suoi piedi della gratia? Lo farò.” Francesco Pallavicino, 23-05-1662, ARSI, FG 747, no. 145/4.

<sup>84</sup> Emanuele Colombo, ‘Repetita iuvant. Le litterae indipetae di Metello Saccano (1612-1662) e compagni’, in *Scrivere lettere. Religiosi e pratiche epistolari tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, ed. Pierluigi Giovannucci (Padova: Padova University Press, 2018), 90.

write, for example, was subject to much doubt. Some indicated that a positive reply had convinced them that they would soon be chosen, only to hear from others that insistence was more effective.<sup>85</sup> Giovanni Antonio Sertola tellingly wrote in his second letter:

until now I have followed the principle that it would be a great charity not to trouble V.P. with continuous letters because it is enough to harass God with prayers, but since I see that only those who are importune receive the grace, I declare that from now on I want to come to you every month, until I am heard.<sup>86</sup>

That this was not necessarily an efficient strategy is suggested by the response of Superior General Vitelleschi to Carlo Doria, in which he stated that “it is not necessary that you multiply letters in order to declare your desire [...] because I have enough information”.<sup>87</sup>

The only general principle that the constitutions of the Society suggested superiors should follow in order to select the right people for a certain task was: “that for matters of greater moment and where it is more important to avoid mistakes, [...] persons ought to be sent who are more select and in whom greater *confidence* is had”.<sup>88</sup> The constitutions specified that this confidence was born from the experience with the candidates: “in matters that involve greater bodily labours, [one should choose] persons who are more strong and healthy. In matters which contain greater spiritual dangers, persons more *proven* in virtue and more reliable.”<sup>89</sup> The aspiring candidates for the missions therefore tried to win the trust of their superiors. Hence,

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<sup>85</sup> See e.g.: Gio' Battista Lucerna, Genoa 09-11-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 255; Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa, 12-11-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 253.

<sup>86</sup> “Sin' hora io son caminato con questo principio, che fosse gran Carità non molestar V.P. con continue lettere bastando l'esser importuno à Dio nelle preghiere, ma poiche ueggo, che quelli solo, che sono in ciò olesti, sono aggratiati, io mi dichiaro, che da qui auanti poco men che ogni Mese uoglio esser da lei, sinche uenga essaudito.” Giovanni Antonio Sertola, Bastia, 02-11-1655, ARSI, FG 746, no. 460.

<sup>87</sup> “Non è piu necessario, che moltiplicherà lettere per dichiararmi il uostor desiderio d'andare all'Indie perche ne ho sufficiente notitia”. Letter to Carlo Doria, 12-08-1634. ARSI, MED 26, 432v.

<sup>88</sup> My italics. George E. Ganss, trans., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, 1st ed. (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 288, §624.

<sup>89</sup> My italics. Ibid.

their writings give insight into what they thought would foster trust. They applied different tactics in their letter content: we find short letters and long confessions, simple messages and extensive descriptions, sober tones and dramatic rhetoric.<sup>90</sup> There were as many different approaches as there were Jesuits that asked to go to the missions. But a number of general patterns may nevertheless be discerned in the corpus of *indipetae* written from Genoa and Corsica.<sup>91</sup>

### 1) *Recounting experiences*

As we have seen above, the Genoese candidates often elaborated on how their trust in their own desire grew. But as the number of applicants was much larger than the number of those who actually went to the missions, convincing the Superior General that one had a true desire often did not seem sufficient. An additional strategy was to recount one's experiences in the Society, especially those regarding the "internal Indies". Corsica, the isolated island under the dominion of the Genoese, was often mentioned by the Genoese *indipetae* as a good place to test one's virtue: as Giovanni Maria Leria recounted, the island was a "suitable place for the novitiate of Japan where there was no lack of opportunities to acquire firmness of virtues."<sup>92</sup> It was there that a candidate missionary could show readiness for a greater challenge. The work in the popular missions (periods of intensive preaching mostly in rural parishes) was experienced as a trial from God who, as Giovanni Boscareno wrote, "tests me in these Indies of Corsica, where I imagine [...] I am doing the novitiate and prepare myself for those other greater Indies, until V.P. wants to send me there".<sup>93</sup> The conviction that having experience with the "internal Indies" (which included not only

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Pizzorusso, 'Autobiografia e vocazione', 192.

<sup>91</sup> Whereas we look at what the candidates *thought* would be effective writing strategies, others have also analysed what were successful strategies. See e.g.: Vantard, 'Les vocations', 305–8.

<sup>92</sup> "[...] luogo a mio giuditio opportuno per il Nouitiato del Giappone doue non ui mancano occasioni d'aguistare quella sodezza di uirtu, la quale desidera SP che habbino li suoi figliuoli diletti." Giovanni Maria Leria, Ajaccio 14-02-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 11/1.

<sup>93</sup> "E tanto maggiore è la mia speranza, quanto che ueggo che Nostro Signore hora mi proua in queste Indie della Corsica, doue mi imagino à punto di fare il Nouitiato, e prepararmi per quell'altre Indie maggiori, sinche parerà à VP. Di mandarmi colà". Giovanni Boscareno, Ajaccio, 23-03-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 137. See for another example, Giovanni Boscareno, Ajaccio, 17-05-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 25.

Corsica but also some of the poorest regions on the mainland<sup>94</sup>) worked in one's favour was so strong that Girolamo Grimaldi even asked in 1648 to be sent to Corsica as a first step towards the faraway missions, "in order to prove his desire to go to the Indies."<sup>95</sup>

The effect could indeed be positive. In 1646, when he wrote about his time on the island, Nicolò Ratti was told that "having been in Corsica [would] be very advantageous" for his request.<sup>96</sup> However, having worked among the Corsicans or in the Ligurian missions could also have the opposite effect: Giovanni Maria Lerio was told in 1619 that "Corsica and Japan are different only in name", and Giovanni Boscareno had to hear that he was "in places as needy as the Indies".<sup>97</sup> The similarity between the internal Indies and the real missions "with regard to the spiritual things and the many occasions to suffer for the love of God" could therefore be advantageous, but it could equally mean that one might be told to content oneself with spending a missionary life close to home.<sup>98</sup>

Many *indipetae* testify to the belief that instead of using words one "should rather supplicate with works," and not only works related directly to the popular missions.<sup>99</sup> An example is Luigi Sesino's third *indipeta* that he sent from Genoa in 1623. In order to convince his Superior General that he was able to endure the hardships of the missions, Luigi related his ascetic experiences of the previous years:

It has been almost five years now that I delight in sleeping on the ground, with a cilice or cincture on, and with the discipline of

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<sup>94</sup> 4, 181 and 5, 130. See e.g. also: Letter to Carlo Ottavio, 20-05-1622, ARSI, MED 24, 581v.

<sup>95</sup> "Il fratello Girolamo Grimaldi s'offerisce à far scuola nella Bastia in prova del suo desiderio d'andar all' Indie". Superior genera lto the provincial, Rome, 06-06-1648, 29, 120v. See also, ARSI, MED 29, 120r and 135v.

<sup>96</sup> "[...] l'essere stata V.R. in Corsica gioverà assai". Letter to Nicolò Ratti, 28-05-1646, ARSI, MED 28, 528v.

<sup>97</sup> "Corsica et il Giappone non differiscono in altro che nel nome", Letter to Giovanni Maria Leria, 07-06-1619, ARSI, MED 24, 202r; and "sete in paesi bisognosi non manco che l'Indie", Letter to Giovanni Boscareno, 07-06-1618, ARSI, MED 24, 201v.

<sup>98</sup> "[...] rispetto alle necessita delle cose spirituali, et alle molte occasioni di patire per amor del Signore giudico in Domino che ella non debba cercare altre Indie". Letter to Giovanni Battista Ferrero, 22-07-1617, ARSI, MED 23, 539r. For another example see the answer to Giovanni Battista Lucerna, 24-11-1617, ARSI, MED 23, 583v, and that to Pier Francesco Pioltello, 09-10-1624, ARSI, MED 25, 177r.

<sup>99</sup> Giovanni Abondio Donato, Genoa 19-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 328.

sleeping three to five hours; fasting three days a week [...]; drinking almost always water; keeping Lent by eating only after sunset; doing physical work in the hospitals; going around the towns to hear confessions and doing other things to help my neighbours.<sup>100</sup>

Others, like Sesino, wrote that they trained themselves to endure hardships, but also that their spiritual disposition had proven to be the right one.<sup>101</sup> Giovanni Casella, who dreamt about going to Japan, wanted to make sure that the Superior General would believe that he was also ready to go elsewhere. Therefore, in 1640 he wrote about his earlier experience at the time that he was chosen to leave for the Paraguay mission (even though he had asked for Japan), a trip that was eventually cancelled: “I am indifferent as to what place of the Indies,” Giovanni Casella emphasised, “as I *experienced* great joy when you told me last year that [...] I had been chosen for Paraguay because I had nothing of my own and I was willing to go.”<sup>102</sup> Casella’s expression of indifference was intended to strengthen his case in the eyes of the Superior General.

Interestingly, several negative examples attest to the same awareness of how significant earlier experiences could be. We find proof of this awareness in a letter by Nicolò di Bedone who wanted to go to the missions in Canada and hoped that the Superior General would *not* take into account his “bad behaviour, nor the scandalous life that I have lived until now in the order”.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Donato Fristiano

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<sup>100</sup> “Sono quasi cinque anni che mi diletto di dormire in terra, con continuo cilicio, o cingulo, e dissiplina di dormire da tre, in cinque hore: di digiunare tre giorni la settimana [...], di beuere quasi sempre acqua: di far la quadragesima con cibarmi dopo il tramontar del sole; di trauagliare corporalmente negli hospedali, in andar per le ville confessano, e far altre cose in aiuto de’ prossimi.” According to Luigi Sesino, the fact that he never asked anything before was a convincing argument that his request was serious. Luigi Sesino, Genoa, 24-02-1623, ARSI, FG 737, no. 17.

<sup>101</sup> Francesco Viva, Genoa 10-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 322 and Castiglione Giuseppe, Genoa, 18-01-1636, ARSI, FG 740, no. 396.

<sup>102</sup> “Sono indifferente per qualsiuoglia luogo dell’Indie come *sperimentai* quando si disse per cosa certa l’altr’anno che io ero stato eletto per il Paraguai da S.P. delche molto me ne rallegrai per non hauerai cosa alcuna del mio et ero disposto per andare come gli ne diede parte con una mia” [my italics] Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa 23-08-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 369.

<sup>103</sup> “Spero che V.P. non hauerà risguardo alli miei mali portamenti, ne alla uita scandalosa che sin’hora hò menato nella Religione”. Nicolò di Bedone, Genoa, 15-06-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 328.

admitted that the “poor spirit” that he showed until the moment of writing might cause the Superior General to doubt his suitability, but he also asked him not to dwell on it too much, “since heaven is not closed to me because of this”.<sup>104</sup>

Recounting positive experiences was thus a way to assure the Superior General of one’s trustworthiness and suitability for missionary work. Negative experiences, on the other hand, should be downplayed so that they would not stand in the way of a possible missionary future. Even so, communicating experiences in writing was perceived as less effective than direct contact. It was for this reason that many admitted in their *indipetae* that they would have preferred to make their case personally before the Superior General.

## 2) *Personal contact*

With a great sense of drama, Antonio Gallo wrote in 1614 that he would have liked to send his heart to his Superior General, or at least to communicate his desire in person.<sup>105</sup> Like many others, he supposed that it would be easy to convince the Superior General if they could talk to him face to face. For the same reason, acquaintance with the Superior General greatly enhanced the *indipetae* writers’ hope of being among the lucky few. In 1661, Gregorio Ferrari congratulated Giovanni Paolo Oliva upon his election as vicar general; the two knew each other and they both belonged to the Genoese elite. In the same letter, Ferrari admitted that he was glad because he *had already experienced* Oliva’s charity and cordiality and expressed his vocation for the Indies.<sup>106</sup> Ippolito Durazzo, the Genoese Jesuit whom we encountered in chapter two, claimed to be sure that Oliva loved him “with true love” and would therefore concede him the desired favour.<sup>107</sup> In a similar vein, the Ligurian Jesuit Gian Filippo Marini relied on his acquaintance with Superior General Vitelleschi when he confidently confessed:

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<sup>104</sup> “V.P. può con ragione dubitare di mè per lo poco spirito mostrato sin’ hora nella Compagnia; mà non per questo è serrato il cielo per me.” Donato Fristiano, Genoa 03-10-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 190.

<sup>105</sup> Antonio Gallo, Genoa, 14-11-1614, ARSI, FG 734, no. 469.

<sup>106</sup> Gregorio Ferrari, Bologna, 1661, ARSI, FG 747, no. 115/11.

<sup>107</sup> Gregorio Ferrari, Bologna, 1661, ARSI, FG 747, no. 115/11.

the love that you have always shown me, without my deserving it, does not leave me any doubt that in your thoughts I live more for the Indies and the other world, than for this world [i.e. the life in Italy].<sup>108</sup>

Many other applicants, however, neither knew nor could verbally address their Superior General and thus relied on others who could communicate their message.<sup>109</sup>

Vincenzo Vignoli, for example, wrote that even though he would have preferred to come himself, he was forced to rely on others:

I am like the poor man on the street who asks everyone that passes for help. Through the father assistant of Portugal [...], I have tried with many letters [to obtain] your approval to go to the eastern missions. [...] Now that Father Messia is passing through [...] I have supplicated him to ask you in my place; I believe that he will do it.<sup>110</sup>

Vincenzo's strategy, like that of many others, was to get someone to intercede for him personally with the Superior General. Pietro Gente similarly put his hopes in the mediation of someone higher up in the hierarchy, asking the Superior General in his letter to favourably listen to the assistant of Spain who, he believed, would lend his assistance.<sup>111</sup> Such oral recommendations were preferred, but it also frequently happened that a superior or spiritual director interceded for his subordinate in writing, for example in a postscript to an *indipeta*. In one such postscript, Dominico Minello was described as having "a soul like a dove and like an angel", a "modest, devout, [and] clever" man whose departure would enrich the mission but be a loss for the local province.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "L'amor che sempre m'ha mostrato fuor d'ogni mio merito la P.V. non mi lascia dubitare, ch'io non viua nella sua memoria più per le Indie, e l'altro Mondo che per questo nostro". Gian Filippo Marini, Siena, 14-08-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 213.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. also: Russell, 'Imagining the "Indies"', 183–85.

<sup>110</sup> Vincenzo Vignoli, Genoa 20-07-1608, ARSI, FG 734, no. 159.

<sup>111</sup> Pietro Antonio Gente, Genoa 18-03-1616, ARSI, FG 735, no. 411.

<sup>112</sup> "Non potrebbe credere V.P. quanto compito giovane sin questo ha un'anima com'una colomba et com'un angelo modesto deuoto ingegnoso gratiato in somma io quasi mi mortifico a raccomandarlo per l'Indie, ma il ben che uoglio all'Indie mi muoue, s'imagini V.P. se manda lui di mandar la un tesoro." Dominico Minello, ARSI, ITAL 173, 37. See for another example, Gregorio Porta, 08-12-1615, ITAL 173, 38.

Trust grows through experience, especially direct experience. What could be a more convincing argument for selection than the support of “intelligent and prudent people” who knew you personally?<sup>113</sup> It was common practice among *indipetae* writers to hint at the trust of local superiors in their abilities and missionary vocation and to explicitly mention that they agreed with the candidate’s wish.<sup>114</sup> The younger novices in particular thought it wise to allude to the fact that they had consulted their spiritual director or superior, whose usual advice was to wait until the end of the novitiate or to dedicate more prayers and penitence to the matter.<sup>115</sup> Whether or not an *indipeta* writer really saw his superiors as “true interpreters of the holy vocations,” as Antonio Bianchetto claimed in 1623 after he received the consent of his rector, they all found it wise to mention their superiors’ trust. Indeed, Giuseppe Boniperto, a successful candidate who spent his life in Paraguay,<sup>116</sup> did not shy away from mentioning all those who gave their approval to his intention:

Having communicated my desire to the current visiting father [...] and after having examined it both in the past and now, following the advice of both the visiting father and Father Ottavio Bonino, who has been my confessor and spiritual director for many years, it seemed good to the [current] visiting father as well as the procurator of that province [of Paraguay], that I should make [my desire] known to you.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ippolito Durazzo, Milano, 11-05-1661, ARSI, FG 747, 111/15, and Ippolito Durazzo, 22-06-1661, ARSI, FG 747, 115/5.

<sup>114</sup> Gio’ Antonio Sertola for example writes: “[...] aggiungo solo che di quanti Padri Spirituali han maneggiato l’anima mia, tutti hanno approuato per buona la Vocatione, Resta solo, che V.P. la riconosca per tale, e mi esaudisca”. Gio’ Antonio Sertola, Bastia, 02-11-1655, FG 746, no. 460. “Con l’occasione de P.P. Missionanti del nuouo Regno, che si ritruouano in questa nostra Città di nuouo, inuitato à così fate, e dal P. Procuratore, e dal mio P. Spirituale faccio istanza della gratia d’andar all’Indie, qual’altre uolte chiesi.” Francesco Sirone, Genoa, 31-08-1680, ARSI, FG 748, no. 329. Cf. Russell, ‘Imagining the “Indies”’, 183.

<sup>115</sup> See among others: Carlo Moneta, Genoa, 10-09-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 282; Tomaso Bona, Genoa, 10-06-1629, FG 738, no. 354; Gio’ Francesco Casella, Genoa, 29-01-1635, ARSI, FG 740, no. 287; Carlo Moneta, Genoa, 05-11-1621, ARSI, FG 736, no. 312; Antonio Ripario, Genoa, 08-08-1629, ARSI, FG 738, no. 366.

<sup>116</sup> Hugo Storni, *Catalogo de los jesuitas de la Provincia del Paraguay: Cuenca del Plata 1575-1768* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 1980), 41.

<sup>117</sup> “Hauendo io, per cooperare dalla parte mia alla diuina dispositione, conferito col Padre Visitatore presente il desiderio, [...] doppo d’haue



The candidates knew that their request would be favoured if they could show that many people supported them. Since trust was based on experience, it might increase through direct contact. It was for this reason that the *indipetae* writers preferred personal contact with the Superior General. When this was impossible, they relied on others who could provide “complete information”.<sup>118</sup> These intermediaries, who knew and trusted the candidates from their own experience, could also persuade the ultimate authority. The Superiors General, in their turn, relied on local superiors for reliable information about the candidates.<sup>119</sup>

### 3) *Ability and willingness*

As important as it was to position oneself as a trustworthy candidate who enjoyed the support of local superiors who could recount experiences in his favour, there were other frequently used strategies to win favour and trust ‘from above’. Simply listing one’s abilities that could distinguish oneself from other candidates was one of them. Some applicants thought that mentioning their years of study would help, while others pointed to their practical skills in nursing, cooking, washing and tailoring.<sup>120</sup> Age was considered significant as well, because it meant that one was

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rlo e prima, et adesso esaminato conforme al consiglio del Padre Visitatore, e del Padre Ottauio Bonino già di molt’anni mio confessore, e padre Spirituale, è parso bene al medesimo Padre visitatore, come ancò al Padre Procuratore di quella prouincia, ch’io lo rappresenti à V.P. per conformarmi affatto al suo uolere” Giuseppe Boniperto, Genoa 13-05-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 48.

<sup>118</sup> Cosmo Bacchetta, Genoa, 06-01-1616, ARSI, FG 735, no. 286. For another example see, Carlo Margeriti, Genoa 12-05-1634, ARSI, ITAL 173, 57 and Gregorio Porta, Bastia, 18-02-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 130. Markus Friedrich rightly points to the fact that the Society relied greatly on correspondence. However, individual Jesuits still preferred direct contact. Markus Friedrich, ‘Government and Information-Management in Early Modern Europe. The Case of the Society of Jesus (1540-1773)’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 539–63.

<sup>119</sup> Vantard, ‘Les vocations’, 344–45.

<sup>120</sup> Antonio Bianchetto writes: “quanto tocca a me son pronto à far il cuoco, et il minimo officio della Compagnia”, Genoa, 02-12-1623, FG 737, no. 81; and Carlo Margheriti writes “io son stato infermier quatro anni a Brera, et speciarìa posso cucire, et cucina e lauar drappi”, 15-07-1634, ARSI, FG 749, no. 154, and Gio’ Battista Andrioli mentions that he is a tailor and nurse in his letter from Genoa, 24-09-1633, ARSI, FG 739, no. 268. Carlo Amato wrote: “M’aiuterà alla meglio di seruire in alcun di quei Collegij nell’ officio della Sartoria, quale hora esercito qui nella Casa Professa, ma se altro talento ui sia in me lo lascio riconoscere da altri.” Genoa, 13-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 285.

either mature and experienced, or young and thus ready to learn.<sup>121</sup> Knowledge of languages or a certain “ease in learning” them, was certainly a favourable quality.<sup>122</sup> Yet even without special abilities one might recommend oneself by declaring, like Carlo Lemugio, that one was disposed to do whatever was needed: “be it to continue teaching or to carry the luggage of the fathers that go to the missions or [to perform] any other task”.<sup>123</sup> Unfortunately, Carlo’s openness did not earn him the place for which he longed in the mission to Paraguay. Another candidate asked the Superior General not to forget “his poor Carlo Ottavio”. He too claimed to be ready to do the humblest tasks: “I will at least carry the luggage and run the household while the others work, if I am unworthy of anything else”.<sup>124</sup>

Besides self-proclaimed abilities, the *indipetae* are full of expressions of willingness. These went beyond merely describing one’s desire with rhetorical elaborations. Many tried to stand out by showing their enthusiasm was greater than that of others, first by writing very often (although, as we saw earlier, this strategy was not necessarily effective). Some of the candidates wrote once a month for years. Frequently sending dry reminders was a common strategy.<sup>125</sup> Francesco Girone was so convinced of the importance of making himself heard, that he wrote:

even though I understand well that at this moment I cannot be heard because of my young age [and] my [lacking] studies and virtue, I did not want to disregard this means, because I hope that

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<sup>121</sup> E.g. Francesco Pallavicino, Milano, 15-03-1662, FG 747, no. 138/1; and Antonio Ripario, 08-08-1629, ARSI, FG 737, no. 366.

<sup>122</sup> Luigi Sesino, Genoa, 18-10-1619, ARSI, FG 736, no. 86.

<sup>123</sup> “sia per fare continuamente la scola, o per portare dietro a Padri che nelle missioni andranno le bisaccie o altro qual si uoglia officio”. Carlo Lemugio, Genoa, 15-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 287.

<sup>124</sup> “non si scordi per le viscere di Giesù, del suo pouero Carl’ Ottauio; almeno portarò le bagaglie, et gouernarò la casa, mentre altri laurano, se non ualerò per altro.” Carlo Ottavio Renzo, Genoa, 21-04-1622, ARSI, FG 736, no. 354.

<sup>125</sup> See e.g. Gio’ Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa, 02-10-1611, ARSI, FG 734, no. 374; Gio’ Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa, 24-08-1613, ARSI, FG 734, no. 393; Donato Fristiano, Genoa, 03-10-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 190; Francesco Spinola, Genoa, 16-12-1639, FG 742, no. 203; Francesco Pallavicino, Milan, 28-07-1663, ARSI, FG 747, no. 164/1 and Milan, 08-09-1663, ARSI, FG 747, no. 164/4.

by anticipating the request, one day it will help me to obtain its realisation more easily.<sup>126</sup>

Francesco thus prepared to document the longevity of his desire at a later time.

Although many *indipetae* writers only wrote a small number of letters, they usually tried to justify their apparent lack of enthusiasm; fearing that their silence would suggest a feebleness of desire. “V.P. will maybe say ‘why didn’t you write before?’”, one Jesuit wrote to his superior. The reason he gave was that he wanted to avoid the impression that the “fervour of a novice,” as opposed to mature discernment, had induced him to write.<sup>127</sup> Other possible justifications included that one had been encouraged to finish his studies and increase his virtues, or waited for a convenient occasion.<sup>128</sup> One novice in Genoa ascribed his earlier hesitations to the feeling that he was “too much of a small child in the order [*troppo tenero bambino in Religione*]”.<sup>129</sup> Another mentioned his troublesome family situation, which had kept him from expressing his desire.<sup>130</sup>

That at least in some cases such justifications were not mere excuses but could be the result of extensive self-examination is apparent from the example of Donato Fristiano’s letter:

from the beginning of my vocation in the Society, I felt called by Our Lord to the mission of the Indies, and the reasons that I did not write until now have been diverse in different times [...]. At

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<sup>126</sup> “benche ben intenda non esser al presente capace d’esserne essaudito atteso il puoco dell’età, studij, e uirtù, tuttauia non ho uoluto trascurar questo mezzo, sperando che l’hauerne anticipata la dimanda, mi debba seruire un di ad ottenere più facilmente l’adempimento”. Francesco Girone, Genoa, 25-02-1679, ARSI, FG 748, no. 255.

<sup>127</sup> “Dirà forse V.P. perche non hauete scritto prima” “sin dal principio del mio Nouitiato hauerei scritto, se non hauessi temuto, douesse V.P. stimar cio feruor da Nouitio [...]”. Stefano Teodoro Roveta, Genoa, 02-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 269.

<sup>128</sup> Alessandro Sappa mentioned that others urged him to first finish his studies: Alessandro Sappa, Genoa, 05-06-1617, ARSI, FG 735, no. 177; The nineteen year old Oratio Vimercato mentioned that his master of novices suggested he should first grow in virtue before asking for the mission: Genoa, 24-07-1628, ARSI, FG 738, 246; Another novice mentioned that he had waited 22 months before writing so as to test his desire: Ottavio Quatterca, Genoa, 29-09-1617, FG ARSI, 735, no. 237; “Però andato tardando nel dimandar la licenza à V.P. M R’ a per aspettare ch’ hauessi finito la Filosofia, e si offerisse opportuna l’occasione, per la quale s’ottenuto hauessi la licenza potessi più facilmente effettuarla”. Carlo Lemugio, 07-09-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 228.

<sup>129</sup> Giuseppe Castiglione, Genoa, 18-01-1636, ARSI, FG 740, no. 396.

<sup>130</sup> Francesco Spinola, Genoa, 18-11-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 189.

the time of my noviciate, the master of novices held me back saying that I should first attend to my mortification; then my father died leaving many children, all younger than me and in need of my help; then I was busy in the building process and other matters of ours [i.e. of the Jesuits] during my studies, to which I dedicated whatever time I had left, not paying attention to other plans. At the end of my theology studies I found myself very desolate, and almost through cowardliness I was quite happy to focus only on my own salvation [...]. Finally, last year, when I was in the third year of the Noviciate [and lived] more quietly, I heard again more clearly the voice of God, which had already called me at other times. And I was about to write (as I had been at other times) when I found out that I was to become procurator of this house in Genoa [...]. But now that the mortification of this office has passed [...] my conscience would be troubled if I did not respond to such a vocation.<sup>131</sup>

Taking the reader through the events of his life, Donato hoped that his circumstances would explain the lateness of his request and even reinforce it: the careful description of his life events, which he believed to be God-given (according to Jesuit spirituality<sup>132</sup>), was to clarify how his current request was the result of long deliberation.

There were yet other ways of underlining one's willingness. Several *indipetae* writers did so by mentioning that they took a special, fourth vow: they promised to do everything in their power to be sent to the missions. Casella, for example,

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<sup>131</sup> “sin dal principio della mia vocatione alla Compagnia, mi sento chiamato da Nostro Signore alla missione dell’Indie, et le cagioni per le quali sin’hora non hò scritto sono state in diuersi tempi varie [...]. Al tempo del nouitiato mi ritiraua il Mastro de Nouitij col dirmi che prima attendessi bene alla mortificatione di mestesso poi morì mio padre lasciando molti figli tutti miei minori, et bisognosi d’aiuto mio poi fui occupato in fabbriche, et altri negotij da’ nostri nel tempo de miei studij, laonde se mi auanzaua tempo, lo poneuo in studiare non dando orecchie ad altri disegni. Nel fine della Teologia mi trouai molto arido, et quasi per pusillanimità, ero contento pensare alla salute mia [...]. Finalmente l’anno passato stando al 3’o anno di Nouitiato sentij di nouo con maggior quiete più chiaramente la voce di Dio, che già altre uolte m’haueua chiamato. Et stetti in atto di scriuere (come pure haueuo già fatto altre uolte) quando seppi di douer essere procuratore di questa Casa di Genoua, [...]. Mà hora che la morteficatione dell’Ufficio è passata, [...] mi pare di non essere sicuro in conscenza [sic], s’io non coopero dalla mia aparte a tal uocatione.” Donato Fristiano, Genoa, 17-03-1620, ARSI, FG 736, no. 141.

<sup>132</sup> Pacheco, ‘Liberdade e indiferença’, 293.

mentioned that after the normal vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, he had added a promise to the Virgin Mary that he would dedicate himself to “the apostolic mission to the Indies, [...] according to the will of the Father General”.<sup>133</sup> Giovanni Pietro Vacca had made a similar promise to Saint Francis Xavier on his sickbed, namely to sacrifice his life in the missions if he survived his illness.<sup>134</sup>

What added value did it bring to communicate this personal commitment? The same as writing often or justifying silences: to emphasise once more that one’s desire was exceptional, greater than that of others; in other words, that one’s willingness was unmistakable and unshakable. There was good reason for underlining one’s commitment: not only were the candidates aware that very few among them could be sent, but the superiors also knew how much inconvenience it caused if a missionary changed his mind after being sent to the missions. This happened with Giovanni Agostino Spinola, a young man of 23 years old. Upon his election, Giovanni had already expressed the fear that his father might resist his departure for the mission:

I thought it would be good to immediately beg you [...] to show me the great favour of resisting his prayers [...]. I promise, as is my duty [...], that I want to overcome all difficulties in case my relatives, who are blinded by worldly love, would attempt to dissuade me from my very firm proposition.<sup>135</sup>

However, while already in Spain on his way to Paraguay, Giovanni had to return to Italy.<sup>136</sup> He may have been influenced by his family who, if we may believe him,

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<sup>133</sup> “Nel giorno de SS. Pietro e Paolo, nel quale doppo il Nouitiato gia mi dedicai alla Maestà Diuina per suo vero seruo alla Messa del P. Ottauio Bonino doppo quelle parole della formula Voces Paupertatem, Castitatem, obedientiam perpetuam in Soc’e Jesu, aggionsi Et praecipue Apostolicam Missionem Indicam Tibi Beatiss’ae Virgini MARIAE iuxta voluntatem Patris Generalis.” Giovanni Francesco Casella, Genoa, 23-08-1640, ARSI, FG 742, no. 369.

<sup>134</sup> Giovanni Pietro Vacca, 21-11-1644, ARSI, ITAL 173, no. 75.

<sup>135</sup> “m’è parso bene pregare instantissimamente V.P., che [...] mi facci tanta gratia di resistere alle preghiere d’esso[...]. Ch’io imprometto da douero à VP. [...] uoler superar ogni difficultà, che da canto da parenti acciecati dall’amor mondano si sforzasse di distogliermi dal mio stabilissimo proponimento.” Giovanni Agostino Spinola, 08-08-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 204.

<sup>136</sup> Letter to Gio’ Nicolò Spinola, 28-01-1635, ARSI, MED 26, f. 494r. Storni, *Catalogo de los jesuitas de la Provincia del Paraguay*, 276.

opposed his departure for the mission.<sup>137</sup> Even though he later changed his mind again, the experience of this moment of doubt was enough for the Superior General to lose his trust in him.<sup>138</sup> In a letter to Giovanni's family, the Superior General admits that he did not expect Giovanni to change his mind during the voyage, because, he wrote, before Giovanni departed "we have used all possible diligence to assure ourselves of his constancy". He added: "but now that experience has shown the opposite [and] we have to think that our Lord God wants to be served by him in some other way, we will give orders that he should come back to Italy at the first opportunity in order to finish his studies".<sup>139</sup> To avoid such inconvenience, the Jesuit superiors tried to verify the constancy of a candidate's desire. That is why, besides enumerating special abilities, it was seen as advantageous to show in some way one's steadiness of will.<sup>140</sup> It is not unlikely in Giovanni's case that his main obstacle was not a feebleness of desire, but a family who opposed the idea of losing their son from their sight. Trust is not only the expectation of willingness, but also the belief that one is able to carry out what is asked of one: a Jesuit who was hindered in his movements by his own family could not be relied on for the task of missionary.

## Conclusion

A young Genoese Jesuit with the desire to travel the world and serve in the missions had to convince his Superior General that he would not regret choosing him. It is not hard to imagine that mentioning concrete situations and favourable circumstances was a logical step in this process. The Genoese Jesuits did not hesitate to emphasise that "from Genoa the departure is nearer and easier".<sup>141</sup> Such were the

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<sup>137</sup> Giovanni Agostino Spinola, 08-08-1634, ARSI, FG 740, no. 204. See chapter two for the ways in which families could influence the lives of their Jesuit relatives.

<sup>138</sup> Letter to Gio' Nicolò Spinola, 24-02-1635, ARSI, MED 26, 494r.

<sup>139</sup> Letter to Gio' Nicolò Spinola, 24-02-1635, ARSI, MED 26, 494r. "s'è usata tutta la diligenza possibile per assicurarci della sua costanza. Ma adesso che l'esperienza ha mostrato il contrario, douiamo pensare che il s'r Iddio uoglia esser da lui seruito in altro si darà ordine, che ritorni in Italia con la prima commodità per seguitare li suoi studij."

<sup>140</sup> We already mentioned the existence of an administration of vocations; on the lists that tracked one's calling, 'passion' was a separate entry. De Castelnau-L'Estoile, 'Élection et vocation', 28.

<sup>141</sup> Carlo Ottavio Renzo, Genoa, 21-04-1622, ARSI, FG 736, no. 354.

hopes elicited by this convenience that Giacinto Grillo asked not to be sent back to Lombardy now that he was already in Genoa, “at the port of the first boarding”.<sup>142</sup> The beginning of the sailing season, the news that a certain mission was open or, even better, the personal preference of a procurator for a certain candidate, were all worth mentioning.<sup>143</sup> Even though we find many letters that simply stated the desire to go to the Indies without any concrete plans, others provided complete itineraries that they were planning to follow, in order to make a positive decision likelier.<sup>144</sup>

Whether offering such concrete possibilities was more effective than trying to win the *trust* of the Superior General is hard to establish: even though we can trace back the history of many Genoese Jesuits, in most cases there is no explicit mention of the exact reasons why someone was preferred above others, which leaves historians with a difficult task. Scholars have tried to establish connections between the selection of a missionary and his argumentation, circumstances, abilities, personal network, and the demand from the missions.<sup>145</sup> In this chapter, we have focused instead on how the Genoese *indipetae* writers themselves perceived the election process in order to better understand what trust meant to seventeenth-century ecclesiastics. This focus reveals an aspect of the selection system that previous historians had not yet studied: i.e. that the strategies of persuasion that we see reflected in the *indipetae* echo a dynamic of trust, and that the system can therefore be better understood by considering this factor.

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<sup>142</sup> “Gionto al porto del primo imbarco” Giacinto Grillo, Genoa, 18-08-1623, ARSI, FG 737, no. 56. See for another example: Paolo Tridi, Genoa, 31-11-1631, ARSI, FG 739, no. 163. Francesco Pallavicino, originally from Genoa, instead feared that his absence from the city would not impede his vocation. Francesco Pallavicino, Alessandria 5-10-1663, ARSI, 747, 164/11.

<sup>143</sup> “essendo sù le porte per così dire per imbarcarmi ad ogni minimo cenno di S.P’tà senza far altri viaggi, et essendo ancora al fine del mio Nouitiato con sì bella stagione di nauigare”. Paolo Tridi, Genoa, 1631-11-31, ARSI, FG 735, no. 338; Examples of letter writers who mention that a certain mission was open: Alessandro Sappa, Genoa, 22-01-1615, ARSI, ITAL 173, 15; Gio’ Giacomo Pasquali, Genoa 09-04-1614, ARSI, FG 734, no. 425, Pietro Paolo Forro, Bastia 22-02-1627, ARSI, FG 738, no. 18; Filippo Grimaldi points at the fact that one procurator accepted him to join his mission: “il Padre Marini si compiace accettarmi per suo compagno, et insomma concorrono tante altre conuenienze”. Filippo Grimaldi, 13-06-1663, ARSI, FG 747, no. 164.

<sup>144</sup> See, for instance: Luigi Sesino, Genoa, 18-10-1623, ARSI, FG 737, no. 71; Gio’ Francesco Casella, Genoa, 09-12-1638, ARSI, FG 741, no. 281; Gio’ Francesco Casella, 08-07-1639, ARSI, FG 742, no. 83.

<sup>145</sup> See, for the influence of the demand from the mission, Anna Rita Capoccia, ‘Le destin des Indipetae au-delà du XVIIe siècle’, in Fabre and Vincent, *Missions religieuses modernes*, 89–110.

The type of trust that the candidates needed from their Superiors General was the expectation (based on direct or indirect experience) that they would be able to work well in the mission and that they were persistent in wanting to leave everything behind for this goal. We saw that the Jesuits from Genoa and Corsica emphasised those experiences that could reinforce such positive expectations. They understood that the more directly these experiences were communicated, the more effectively trust could be built. In the many cases when personal contact with the Superior General was not possible, the Genoese candidates relied on indirect experience: superiors who knew them personally were asked to provide signs of support. Last, the letter writers tried to prove their willingness and abilities by using a diverse array of arguments and strategies, ranging from writing every month for years to recounting how one was used to sleeping on the ground.

Hidden behind dramatic rhetoric or a flood of letters was the attempt to win the trust of the Superior General. Indeed, as shown by the criteria for selection mentioned in the constitutions and by the case of Giovanni Spinola, it was not on mere obedience that the decision of the superior relied, but on the trust, based on direct or indirect experience, that a candidate would be able and willing to work well in the mission.

Likewise, it was trust in God, in his desire, in the Society, and in a possible missionary future, that enabled a Jesuit to take up the pen and ask for the mission, most of them conscious of the fact that very few were chosen.<sup>146</sup> The descriptions that the Genoese Jesuits gave of their inner and external experiences help us to discover how this trust was built, and thus to better understand several key concepts – desire, obedience and indifference – the complexity of which challenges historians nowadays. Trust grew when the Jesuits, following their particular education, submitted their experience to scrutiny: a desire could prove to be true in experience by lasting for years; blind obedience to one's superior could only prove to be justified by testing the trustworthiness of this superior and comparing his orders and insights with what one's conscience suggested; and indifference, i.e. trust in God's plans

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<sup>146</sup> Colombo and Massimi claim that *indipetae* writers knew that only few were chosen: Colombo and Massimi, *In Viaggio*, 33.



rather than one's own, stemmed from the conviction born from experience that God had a good plan for one's life.

Since these different forms of trust were based on long-term experiences over the years, this trust could range from feeble expectations (if based on limited or contradicting experiences) to a belief that came close to certainty. It is not hard to imagine that the Jesuit candidate who was trying to read his experiences, be they the inner movements of the soul or the practical circumstances and orders from the outside, could have various levels of trust towards his local superior (who might oppose the decision), his Superior General, his missionary future, his family, and so forth. It is also the reason why obedience was negotiated and indifference was variable in time: both the capacity of being obedient and that of being indifferent depended on experiences that generated the necessary trust.

The method by which the *indipetae* writers attained complete trust was determined by their particular spirituality. Also, the fact that we are able to examine their path of discernment is due to the elaborate administration that is particular to the Jesuits. What we learned by studying the role of trust in the lives and mentality of individual Jesuits, however, points to two findings that are relevant for a wider context: first, we have seen that a trust perspective provides a vital key to viewing the lives of those we study and to better understanding their individual choices. Second, we learned that, because trust was based on experience, it is helpful to find out which experiences elicited trust and which resulted in doubt. Only in this way can we understand, for instance, the surprising confidence with which many candidates, such as Giovanni Gregorio Montale, for example, asked for the mission. From the Jesuit college in Bastia he wrote that “with [help of] the divine arm in which I trust, I am most ready to go to any place that the Lord would determine, for his greater glory”. He subsequently had to accept that the place where he would work *ad maiorem gloriam Dei* was simply Italy: like many of the other *indipetae* writers in Genoa and Corsica, Giovanni died not in heroic martyrdom in a faraway mission, but of old age in a Jesuit college in Genoa.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Giovanni Gregorio Montale, Bastia, 26-06-1622, ARSI, FG 736, no. 375. Giovanni died on 5 February 1668 in Genoa; Fejér, *Defuncti*, vol. III I-M, 320.

