

Tesauro, Emanuele. *Istoria della venerabilissima compagnia della fede catolica, sotto l'invocazione di San Paolo, nell'augusta città di Torino*, ed. Anna Cantaluppi. Quaderni dell'Archivio storico. Turin: Compagnia di San Paolo, 2003. Pp. 315 + 17 colour ill. ISBN 88-88284-03-6 (paperback) n.p.

With this volume, Anna Cantaluppi brings to the attention of scholars the very first history of the Compagnia di San Paolo, an organization that originated as a lay religious confraternity in Turin in January 1563 and eventually became one of the most important financial institutions not only in Piedmont, but in Italy. Today, the financial and philanthropic aspects of the company have been clearly separated and assigned to the Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino S.p.a. and to the Compagnia di San Paolo, respectively (1999). In the seventeenth century, however, when Emanuele Tesauro (1592–1675) published his history of the Compagnia (1657), such a clear separation was not in force, so his analysis is firmly focused on the social-economic issues of early modern Piedmont and especially its capital city, Turin.

A member of the confraternity, but also a respected historian, Tesauro prefaced his work with an introductory chapter on the founding of the confraternity and then followed it with eight further chapters (each of which he calls an *opera*, or 'work') that focus on various organizations and establishments that sought to improve the economic, social, and religious life of Turin and Piedmont at the time. These are: (1) the frequent partaking of the Sacrament as a way to sustain and promote the Catholic faith, (2) the arrival of the Jesuits in Turin and the establishment of their schools and missions, (3) the founding of the Congregation of the Most Blessed Virgin Annunciate and its impact on Turin, (4), the assistance offered to the 'shamefaced poor' (*poveri vergognosi*) and other charitable organizations established in Turin, such as the Compagnia delle Umiliate and the Monte di pietà, (5) the support offered to young unmarried women through the Casa del soccorso delle vergini (House for the assistance of virgins), (6) vows and devotions for the public good, such as the erection of the Oratorio della penitenza or of the Good Death, (7) other buildings erected to the honour of God such as the Cappella di San Paolo, and (8) the management of secular institutions for the benefit of the needy such as the Collegio de' convittori, the Albergo delle virtù, the Ospitale della carità, and the Monte della fede.

One of the recurring themes in Tesauro's narrative is the threat posed by the Reformation, which he saw as an absolute heresy, to the well-being of Piedmontese society. Tesauro points out how the Compagnia di San Paolo believed it could help restore true Catholic faith in the region and "purge the city of those devilish instructors" (*purgar la città da que' diabolici istruttori*; 114). Another theme in Tesauro's narrative is his continuous focus on women, their needs, and social status. Taking a cue

from Tertullian's *De virginibus velandis* (on the veiling of virgins), Tesauro points out that virgins and women left without their husbands should, for the sake of their dignity, wear a veil to keep shameful thoughts and physical threats away from them. A third theme is the chronic poverty that afflicted not only the indigent (*mendicanti*), but also better-off segments of society who, because of a socio-economic downturn, suddenly found themselves in need (the *poveri vergognosi*). Vast segments of society could, and were often pushed into need because of epidemics such as the bubonic plague that struck northern Italy in 1629–31, or military conflict, such as the French invasion of Piedmont in 1629–30 during the Thirty Years' War, which Tesauro saw as an attempt on the part of the Huguenots to spread their heretical beliefs in Italy. Within all these discussions of needs, threats, and assistance, Tesauro does not forget the fine arts; he recalls, for example, the contributions of artists such as Federico Zuccari to the embellishment of confraternal and other buildings in early modern Turin.

Tesauro's history of the Compagnia di San Paolo and other charitable organizations in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Turin offers modern scholars a wealth of quasi-contemporary descriptions of the economic, social, and religious crises of early modern Piedmont and the ways in which the local population and administrations sought to solve them. This current re-edition of Tesauro's history is enriched by Marziano Guglielminetti's preface (pp. 7–25), and by Anna Cantaluppi's extensive introduction (pp. 27–71) and explanatory footnotes.

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