

Theses Completed (Abstracts)

Lazar, Lance. *Bringing God to the People: Jesuit Confraternities in Italy in the Mid-Sixteenth Century*. PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1995.

Scholars as diverse as Hubert Jedin and Jean Delumeau have seen the sixteenth century as a time of profound evolution across Europe from a magical and communal Christianity to a moral and individual Christianity; a time when the conscience of one individual, such as Martin Luther, could change the beliefs and practices of nations. These historians point to a widening of the gap between elite and popular culture and a greater disparity between church-led reforms and popular religion. More recently, many scholars have begun to exploit confraternities as an ideal source for exploring these issues, since these lay fraternal organizations directed much of the festive life and public charities of their communities. Throughout Mediterranean Europe, their many shapes and goals have proved an excellent barometer of popular piety and *mentalité*, and within Italy, they played a major role in society until well into the eighteenth century. While historians such as Louis Chatellier and Ronald Po-chia Hsia have begun to document Jesuit use of confraternities in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, little has been published on Jesuit participation in confraternities from their origins in Rome.

According to Brian Pullan, the most telling legacy of sixteenth-century poor relief was its expansion to include not only relieving 'respectable citizens', but also amending the morals and behaviour of the outcast poor, so as to integrate them within a highly disciplined Christian society. This dissertation examines the role of the first Jesuit confraternities in Italy, which were at the forefront of this trend. It focuses primarily on three confraternities founded in the 1540s in Rome, which became the models for similar institutions and which administered houses for reformed prostitutes, daughters of prostitutes, and converted Jews.

Although the call for piety and internal reform swept all layers of early modern society, prostitutes, Jews and Muslims especially stood out as symbols of the need for conversion because they were high-profile figures who remained outside God's grace. In an early incarnation of the new reforming spirit, Pope Leo X created the first Roman monastery of reformed prostitutes (*convertite*) in 1520. Yet, clearly, the monastery was not an acceptable alternative for every prostitute who felt the compunction to reform. It was precisely to provide other alternatives that Ignatius of Loyola established in 1542 the "Casa di Santa Marta", with a confraternity in charge of its administration. The important innovation was in providing a place for women to stay before deciding whether to become a nun, to be reconciled with their husbands, to get married, or in a few cases, to be placed as domestic servants for aristocratic women. An institution providing such a range of self-determination for the woman in question was unheard of

in sixteenth-century Europe, and as with many such social experiments, within a few years the “Casa di Santa Marta” reverted to the more traditional format of a monastery of *convertite*. Yet it became a flagship institution for the Jesuits and was transplanted to at least 17 other cities along the Italian peninsula which preserved, to greater or lesser degrees, the original formula.

Almost simultaneously, Ignatius addressed another perceived need in Rome by forming another important new institution for women. The house and confraternity of “Santa Caterina delle vergini miserabili” admitted daughters of prostitutes and other young girls who were in poverty, and therefore, in the eyes of sixteenth-century society, in great jeopardy of turning to prostitution. Recently, Sherrill Cohen has shown that descendants of Santa Marta, Santa Caterina, and similar institutions served as direct ancestors for the Magdalen House founded in London in 1758, which in turn provided a model for the entire English-speaking world, leading up to homes for battered women and prostitutes in the United States today.

In the same way, efforts to convert non-Christians also exhibit the intersecting goals of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the new religious orders, and the laity in the sixteenth century. Ignatius influenced Paul III to remove the requirement for Jews and Muslims to forfeit all property upon conversion, and obvious impediment to encouraging new Christians. Shortly thereafter, he formed a confraternity and house where new converts (“catecumeni”) could live while learning the new faith. The mid-sixteenth century was a particularly troubled time in relations between the Church, Muslims, and Jews, but the innovation of the “Casa dei catecumeni” made it easier for those who wished to do so to become Christians, and the Jesuits replicated it throughout Italy.

Beyond these three institutions—which form the core of this study due to the wealth of archival documentation, including statutes, membership lists, congregation minutes, finances, bequests, and documents cataloguing the recipients of charity—I have researched over 40 confraternities founded or reformed by the Jesuits in Italy before 1570. While other new orders like the Barnabites, the Theatines, and the Oratorians tended to focus on one pious work, the Jesuits aimed at great breadth, propelling them into the full life of the community. Besides targeting prostitutes and new Christians, numerous confraternities helped orphans and taught Christian doctrine. Other Jesuit confraternities focused on the poor: helping poor nobles too ashamed to beg, providing dowries for women to be married, or visiting and financially assisting those in debtors’ prison. A few others had no externally-directed focus at all, but only organized devotion to the Eucharist or to Mary. Interestingly, the majority were open to both women and men—in fact, the Jesuits made many of their initial contacts and received financial support via the prominent aristocrats’ wives whose confessions they heard and to whom they administered the “Spiritual Exercises.” All early confraternities were in theory open to both rich and poor, while in practice many focused primarily on the aristocrats (to establish funding) and then perhaps expanded to admit others. Often, the Jesuits used their Spanish connections to full effect in funding these organizations, particularly in the south of Italy.

A close examination of the many confraternities founded by the Jesuits at the outset of their ministry in Italy brings us to a richer understanding of the profound changes

in *mentalité* sweeping across Europe and the innovative efforts to cope with increased poverty and illness. Focusing this research on institutions for prostitutes, young girls, and Jews and Muslims also helps to recover women's roles in Catholic reform, and to measure attitudes toward sub-cultures perceived as threatening in an age of European expansion. It is often by examining the treatment of its outcasts that a society's primary values come into sharpest relief. Thus, the story of the birth, growth, and influence of these first organizations provides us with a clearer picture of the Jesuits themselves, popular reform movements, and popular culture in the formative decades of the sixteenth century.

Sella, Barbara Anna. *Piety and Poor Relief: Confraternities in Medieval Cremona, c. 1334-1499*. PhD Thesis, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, 1996.

This dissertation focuses on confraternal piety and poor relief in the northern Italian city of Cremona between the mid-fourteenth century and the end of the fifteenth century.

It draws upon previously unedited archival documents (Latin and Italian statutes, contracts, letters, and account books) housed in Cremona's Archivio di Stato. The records of the Consortium of the Donna (f. 1334) and the Consortium of St. Omobono (f. 1357) were examined to show the origin, character, and activities of these two confraternities.

One result of this research concerns the reasons for and the methods by which the cult of the Virgin's conception spread throughout northern Italy in the mid-fourteenth century. The cult spread both because Franciscan friars sponsored lay confraternities in honour of the Virgin's conception, and because the feast so closely resembled other well-established Marian feasts. More importantly, although these new confraternities were founded a generation after Duns Scotus had presented his defense for the Virgin's "immaculate" conception, confraternal statutes suggest that the Franciscans were not openly publicizing the immaculist position of their Order.

A second conclusion is that the Consortium of St. Omobono was founded not just to promote charity and combat heresy, but also to restore some of the civic pride of a city that in 1334 had been conquered and incorporated into the Duchy of Milan. The establishment of a confraternity in honour of Cremona's patron saint gave the Cremonese a renewed sense of their own unique identity. Furthermore, it gave the confraternity's administrators a sense of purpose and autonomy in relation to the Milanese authorities.

A third result pertains to the transformation and rationalization of confraternal charity in northern Italy. Here the work of the Cremonese confraternities is compared with that of charities in neighbouring Milan (particularly the Scuola delle Quattro Marie). Innovations included the adoption of city-wide distributions, double entry accounts, and identifying tokens. These innovations permitted the confraternities to assist the poor on a larger scale than previously recognized.