

The Power of Religious Societies
in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identities

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The Power of Religious Societies in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identities

Rose-Marie Peake

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Three Worlds, Three Portraits:

Introduction

Abstract

The chapter introduces the subject, approach, and focus of the book. The book offers a new insight into the history of the unenclosed Catholic Company the Daughters of Charity (*les Filles de la Charité*) by focusing on the contents and implementation of its value system in the first half of the seventeenth century. The chapter discusses the backbone of the book, the methodological concept of moral management which is a 'traveling concept' (Mieke Bal) utilized here for the first time in research on seventeenth-century Catholicism. Moral management is defined as the implementation, within the organization and its charitable activities, of a specific value system that is expressed in actions, behaviour, and mentalities, and that aims at securing the survival of the Company threatened by its perplexing religious identity.

Keywords: moral management; travelling concepts; religious identity; performance studies; early modern Catholicism

One Sunday in April 1659, a group of women had gathered in a modest two-floor house in the *faubourg* Saint-Lazare in Paris. The clamour of the city seemed to be far away: the house, built of brick, had a walled front yard and garden as well as a stable and apricot trees.¹ The clothing of the women further enriched the rustic idyll: with their brimless hats and long grey dresses with little white collars they looked like typical peasant women of the Parisian region.² Some of them had indeed come to the house from the outskirts of the capital whereas others had just simply come down to the communal hall from the upper quarters of the residence where they lived.

¹ Brejon de Lavergnée 2011, 424–443.

² See Paul 1900–1985 (Paul FR), vol. II, doc. 534 (1641), p. 181, note 3.

But on that particular Sunday no-one had come to Paris to sell their produce. They had come to the capital to visit the motherhouse of their Catholic community called the *Filles de la Charité*, or the Daughters of Charity, and to hear their superior general speak. 'Dear sisters,' father Vincent de Paul began his talk, 'this conference is on our dear sister Barbe Angiboust (1605-1658), whom God has taken to himself'.³ With these words began a lengthy reminiscence about one of the most cherished members of the Company. The superior general as well as the superior of the Company, the devout widow Louise de Marillac, and the women, one after another, got up and testified about the virtuous life of their fellow sister. They grieved over the loss but at the same time also exalted God. Towards the end of his conference with the women de Paul burst into praise:

Or sus, or sus, Sisters, what a beautiful picture! How fortunate we are to have been with a soul who practiced such virtues! God has willed to show us this beautiful picture, Sisters, to help us by His grace to succeed in practicing those virtues.⁴

Sister Barbe Angiboust was by no means the only upright person of whom the members and directors of Daughters of Charity painted a virtuous tableau in their monthly meetings. In fact, the accolade and promotion, or in other words, the cherishment of Catholic morality was at the core of the mission of the Company. Furthermore, this 'moral management', as it can be called and will be discussed in depth later, was not only aimed at edifying the sisters. Through charity work among the underprivileged, the Company also aimed to manage the mentalities of French society at wide and implement a particular Catholic value system.

Considering the importance of the Daughters of Charity as one of the most well-known and influential charitable Catholic organizations in France, the examination of their ideas about the good Catholic way of life reveals an extensive programme of identity shaping on various levels of early modern French society: the upper, lower middle, and lower strata. The

3 Paul 1985 (Paul EN), vol. X, doc. 109 (27 April 1659), p. 511. French quotation: 'Mes sœurs, dit Monsieur Vincent, le sujet de cet entretien est de notre chère sœur Barbe Angiboust, de laquelle Dieu a disposé'. Paul 1952 (Paul *Conférences*), 27 January 1659, p. 886.

4 Paul EN, vol. X, doc. 109 (27 April 1659), p. 521. French quotation: 'Or sus, or sus, mes sœurs, quel beau tableau ! Que nous sommes heureux d'avoir conversé avec une âme qui a été dans la pratique de telles vertus ! Mes sœurs, Dieu a voulu nous représenter ce beau tableau, afin de nous donner confiance d'arriver, avec sa grâce, à la pratique de ces vertus'. Paul *Conférences*, 27 January 1659, p. 894.

focus was mainly on girls and women although their schooling activities touched also some poor boys. In this book these three strata of society will be dealt systematically in order to fully grasp the contents, aims, and motives behind the value system the Daughters of Charity imposed on early modern French society. The main chapters are composed around these three levels of society: Chapter 2 discusses the identity formation, or 'portrait', of the superior Louise de Marillac, Chapter 3 turns to the moulding activities aimed at the identity of the sisters, whereas Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the ideal 'portrait' of the poor the Company helped.

Together the chapters of the book aim to answer the following main question: what kinds of ideals of a good Catholic life and morality did the Company of the Daughters of Charity aim to create in early modern French society and what purposes did they serve? More specifically, the study aims to shed light on the full process of value and identity shaping. The study asks, on the one hand, what kinds of ideals were attached to Louise de Marillac, who, as the superior, acted as an authoritative role model to the sisters and, at the same time, was also in charge of the overall image of the Company in French society? On the other hand, what kinds of values were the sisters to embody as role models of Catholic womanhood for the underprivileged and as representatives of the Company in public? Moreover, how did the Company and its survival benefit from the use of these images? And what kind of an impact did these activities altogether have on society and identities at large? What lay at the core of the value system the Company imposed – did it challenge or reinforce existing ideas about social and gender order?

The focus of the book is in the early stages of the Daughters of Charity in the first half of the seventeenth century, starting roughly from the birth of the Company in 1633 up to the death of the founders, Louise de Marillac (also known by her married name Mademoiselle Le Gras, b. 1591, canonized 1934) and Vincent de Paul (b. 1581, canonized 1737) in 1660. This is a particularly fruitful period for research as it was during this time that the directors were able to gradually gain recognition for the Company and develop the foundation and main governing principles that were to guide communal life and charity work for centuries to come. Today the Daughters of Charity have their headquarters at 140, rue du Bac, Paris, and employ more than 14,000 sisters, who serve in 94 countries around the world.⁵ The Company continues to follow the principles laid out by the founders and remains one of the most important Catholic organizations of France.

5 Based on the figures given for 1 January 2019 by the Company at <http://filles-de-la-charite.org/fr/who-we-are/where-we-are/> (13 August 2019).

The time period under scrutiny in this book is exciting also due to its transitional nature: it is an age in which European mentalities were marked by religious Reformations and upheaval. The question of identities is central as new ideas began to circulate in Christian anthropology. Questions like ‘what is an ideal Christian like?’ or ‘what is good Christian life?’ received new or at least more nuanced answers. Unlike medieval thinkers, sixteenth-century Protestants decided to reject the ideal of a nun or a monk as the most precious state of life. Instead, Protestants made the worldly vocation and married life the highest ideal especially for women.⁶

Attitudes were reshuffled in the remaining non-Protestant parts of Europe, although the change was more subtle. The church, now described as Catholic, began officially revising its decrees and ideals in the middle of the sixteenth century by means of a series of ecumenical meetings known as the Council of Trent (1545–1563). This launched a process generally known as the Counter-Reformation, or the Catholic Reformation, to use a less charged term.⁷ The process was, however, rather slow and inconsistent as some states refused to recognize the outcome of the council for several decades. In the case of France, it was not before the late 1610s that the refashioning of the church began properly.⁸

The Catholic Church also redefined its idea of the ideal human being, although only delicately: all states of life – and, thus, not only that of monastics – were now given more recognition than previously. The best example of a Catholic treatise in this vein is the contemporary ‘best-seller’, even over confessional boundaries, namely the *Introduction à la vie dévote*, or the *Introduction to the devout life* (1609/1619) by the Bishop of Geneva, François de Sales (1567–1622, canonized 1665), who also had an important influence on the Daughters of Charity. In his book de Sales gives people of ‘all sorts of vocations and professions’ instructions on how to seek perfection.⁹ During the reformation process, authors also started to publish manuals for husbands and wives, just like Protestants, and, thus, took a more active

6 For Luther’s view on monastic life and particularly the vows, see Luther 1521, especially p. 304–308; for Luther’s ideas on the supremacy of lay life as producing offspring, see Luther 1522, especially p. 17–21. See also Mikkola 2017; Wiesner-Hanks 2010, 78; Hendrix 2000, 337–339; Plummer 2012.

7 See Chapter 1 for a further discussion.

8 Forrestal & Nelson 2009; Bergin 2009, 3–14; Venard & Bonzon 2008, 15–18, 102; Parsons 2004; Tallon 1997; Martin 1919. Other states hesitant to receive the decrees of Trent included Austria and Venice: see Beales 2003, 34.

9 French quotation: ‘toutes sortes de vacations et professions’, in Sales 1641, 10. See also Bireley 1999, 178–181.

stance toward marriage than their medieval predecessors who were more uniform in their appraisal of the monastic lifestyle.¹⁰

Another important aspect in the revised Catholic faith was the strengthening of the focus on the marginalized of society. Challenged by the Protestants and their claim of salvation through faith alone, the Catholic Church declared charity work in favour of one's neighbour to be an integral part of a good Catholic life. Vast programmes of intellectual, spiritual, and physical education were launched bringing the underprivileged into close contact with elite ideas of morality.¹¹

In France, the impulse to charity coincided with a powerful monastic revival, which made especially women engage fervently in religious communal life. Although the nun's vocation in a contemplative monastery continued to be popular, a significant number of devout women decided to combine a life of prayer with active charity work among the disadvantaged, whose way of life was to be edified.¹² The Daughters of Charity are the most well-known and successful example of this line of religious commitment. However, these charitable activities went against the decrees confirmed in Trent regarding religious women who were to prefer contemplative monasteries and stay out of the streets:

The holy council [...] commands all bishops that by the judgment of God to which it appeals and under threat of eternal malediction, they make it their special care that in all monasteries subject to them by their own authority and in others by the authority of the Apostolic See, the enclosure of nuns be restored wherever it has been violated and that it be preserved where it has not been violated [...]. No nun shall after her profession be permitted to go out of the monastery, even for a brief period under any pretext whatever, except for a lawful reason to be approved by the bishop; any indults and privileges whatsoever notwithstanding. Neither shall anyone, of whatever birth or condition, sex or age, be permitted, under penalty of excommunication to be incurred *ipso facto*, to enter the enclosure of a monastery without the written permission of the bishop or the superior.¹³

10 Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 31–34, 219, 230; Wiesner-Hanks 2010, 134–137.

11 For the canons on the importance of good works for one's salvation, see *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 2011, 6: canons 11–12, 24, 32, p. 43–46.

12 Diefendorf 2004, 135–136.

13 *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 2011, 25:5, p. 223–224. In fact, Trent actually resurrected a decree called 'Periculoso' issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298. See Makowski 1997. For a general discussion on the changes in monastic life in the sixteenth and seventeenth

Thus, the first half of the seventeenth century in Catholic France was an era of constant negotiation: women had to negotiate with church authorities not only their own identity as religious laywomen but also that of the underprivileged, whom they, as women, were not supposed to help as it required leaving the communal house. The content of poor relief was to be carefully assessed not to provoke authorities.

All of this had an impact on the contents and motivation of religious charity work and can be studied in depth in the case of the Daughters of Charity. Due to this backdrop, the early path of the Daughters of Charity was rocky: the semi-religious Company was officially recognized only more than 20 years after its founding. As late as in 1650, Louise de Marillac reported about the reservations of the Procurator General, an appointee of the King who was to be persuaded in order to get royal acceptance for the Company:

He asked me if we considered ourselves regular [cloistered] or secular [non-cloistered]. I told him that we aspired only to the latter. He told me that such a thing was without precedent. I cited for him Madame de Villeneuve's Daughters¹⁴ and pointed out to him that they go everywhere.¹⁵ He said many good things about the Company and added that he did not disapprove of our plan. However, he said that something of such importance merited much thought.¹⁶

According to de Marillac's letter, the Procurator General deemed the mission of the Daughters of Charity unique, without precedent, which required

centuries, see Mullett 1999, 69–110; DeMolen 1994. The tension between women's religious vocation and charitable activities was born in the later Middle Ages that witnessed the upsurge of religious lay movements attracting especially women. In Northern Europe and in the Low Countries they were often called Beguines and in Italy Penitents. Often religious laywomen were associated with the mendicant orders such as the Dominicans or the Franciscans. For a general introduction to medieval religious laywomen, see Lehmijoki-Gardner 2006; Makowski 1997, 9–20.

14 Madame de Villeneuve was a friend of Louise de Marillac and the founder in 1641 of the *Filles de la Croix*. She had died quite recently, in January. See Marillac 1983 (Marillac FR), L. 30 (3 October 1640), p. 42, note 6.

15 The Daughters of Charity did not live in enclosure either, except for the sisters working in hospitals: 'The Daughters shall not go out into the city', de Marillac wrote in her undated Rules for the sisters working in hospitals. Marillac FR, A. 88 (between 1633 and 1647), p. 742.

16 Marillac 1991 (Marillac EN), L. 283 (April 1650), p. 318. French quotation: 'il me demanda si nous prétendions être régulières ou séculières; je lui fis entendre que nous ne prétendions que le dernier; il me dit cela être sans exemple; je lui alléguai les filles de la Madame de Villeneuve et lui prouvai qu'elles allaient partout. Il me témoigna ne pas désapprouver notre dessein, disant beaucoup de bien de la Compagnie; mais qu'une chose de telle importance méritait bien y penser'. Marillac FR, L. 283 (April 1650), p. 317.

careful thought before acceptance could be given. This means that despite the fact that there were provably other active communities of which the King's appointee had approved already a decade ago,¹⁷ the Daughters of Charity stood apart. Barbara Diefendorf has argued that it was the extensiveness of the Company's mission and its rapid expansion that made it very visible in the religious landscape.¹⁸ As a result, it stood out from the other active communities operating on a smaller and, thus, less provoking scale. A later section in the aforementioned letter by de Marillac reveals that the directors had deliberately taken a slow track: they had wanted to first cement the foundations of the Company for twelve to fifteen years before soliciting official recognition in order to see if it really was an effort 'pleasing God'¹⁹ – and thus the authorities, one could plausibly add. This cautious attitude was also reflected in the early considerations of the location of the motherhouse as Vincent de Paul was weary about moving the headquarters of the Daughters too close to the Lazarist priests in order to avoid gossip.²⁰ The Company received official recognition from the Cardinal de Retz in 1655, from the King in 1657 and from the Pope in 1668.²¹

Furthermore, the tension had also internal reflections: the founders had to tackle criticism coming from the inside, which is an aspect that has escaped scholarly attention until now. As late as in 1660, Vincent de Paul had to explain to a new Lazarist priest why the Lazarists were allowed to mingle with the Daughters of Charity when interaction with nuns was forbidden.²² Sources dealing with the identity-shaping of the sisters offer further evidence. As Chapter 3 discusses, the Daughters expressed explicit desires for a more contemplative vocation, which the founders wanted to curtail. These curtailing measures included for example certain spatial arrangements

17 According to Diefendorf 2004, 215, 224, 302 note 31, the *Filles de la Croix*, for example, had received approbation from Louis XIII already in 1642; and the *Filles de la Providence* had been recognized by Queen Anne of Austria (regency 1643–1651) in 1643. A third Company, originally not from Paris but from Bordeaux, the *Filles de Saint-Joseph*, running an orphanage for girls, had, for their part, received royal approval already in 1641.

18 Diefendorf 2004, 217–219, 224–225, 302 note 31.

19 Marillac FR, L. 283 (April 1650), p. 317.

20 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité aux origines: documents 1989* (*Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*), doc. 147 (March 1636), p. 137.

21 For the official approbation from the Cardinal de Retz on the 18 January 1655, see *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*, doc. 613 (18 January 1655), p. 676–677, from the King through the *Lettres Patentes* (doc. 707 (November 1657), p. 806–811) and from the Pope on the 8 June 1668, see 'Confirmation par le cardinal de Vendôme, légat du Saint-Siège, de la Congrégation des Filles de la Charité', Archives Nationales (AN), Documents.

22 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*, doc. 783 (7 February 1660), p. 899–901.

(namely, the rejection of a grill) in the Company's houses and the creation of an unambitious intellectual programme to create an image deferring from that of a cloistered order and help the sisters maintain it. These examples show that the religious identity of the Company was indeed disconcerting and called for both external and internal measures to ensure survival.

The central idea of this book is to analyse the survival of the Company by looking at its moral management activities. It puts forward the argument that the Daughters of Charity cherished a rather traditional, medieval value system in order to survive. Moreover, the study asserts that efficient moral management was a key element also in its success as an important conservative shaper of early modern French society, values, and identities.

Studying the moral management of the Daughters of Charity: methods and sources

To analyse the activities of the Daughters of Charity and its survival, the study employs most importantly the concept of *moral management*. The concept is used to highlight and efficiently grasp the new aspect this study brings to scholarship on the Daughters of Charity and seventeenth-century religious communities in general: that survival and success was importantly linked to the efficient management of morality. In other words, moral management is used as an umbrella term encompassing and explaining the different morality-centred activities of the Company. A concise definition of the concept as it is understood in this study is as follows: it is the implementation, within the organization and its charitable activities, of a specific value system that is expressed in actions, behaviour, and mentalities, and that aims at securing the survival of the Company threatened by its perplexing religious identity.

The use of the concept of moral management is a reflection of the influence cultural studies has had on the study. Cultural studies are often interdisciplinary surpassing traditional boundaries of disciplines by means of combining different approaches. Mieke Bal has discussed the nature of cultural studies by arguing that they often utilize 'travelling concepts':

[Concepts] travel – between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods, and between geographically dispersed academic communities. Between disciplines, their meaning, reach, and operational value differ.²³

23 Bal 2002, 24.

Moral management is also a concept that has travelled between disciplines and is employed in scholarship on seventeenth-century Catholic communities for the first time in this study. The aim of this study is to take the methodological use of moral management further in the field and in the discipline of history in general. Up until now, the term has been used in the history of psychiatry, cultural historical studies on early modern emotions, in business ethics studies, and cultural anthropology. In all of these fields except psychiatry, the term is used in quite similar ways: it is used to understand the means by which an organization or a person aims to influence morality and values to attain a certain end.²⁴ The two latter fields have been able to do this with assigning more analytical power to moral management than cultural history, as will be discussed below.

Historian Penelope Gouk and art historian Helen Hills mention moral management in their introduction to the volume *Representing Emotions. New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine*. Gouk and Hills define moral management in relation to religion as 'a general framework for both understanding and controlling human passions, above all in their relation to the soul'. Furthermore, they claim, 'the desire to establish a right relationship with God through appropriate forms of worship and daily conduct is at the root of most medieval and early modern discourses on moral management'.²⁵ Gouk's and Hills' main source of inspiration is Norbert Elias who discusses the management of the emotions in his *The Civilizing Process*.²⁶ Unfortunately the term is not used later in the volume leaving the operational and methodological value of moral management unclear.

Studies generated outside the discipline of history have used moral management in a more analytical way. In business studies, professor of management Andrew Sikula was the first to coin the term in his *Moral Management: Business Ethics* from 1989. In an article published in 1996, he further clarifies the term along with another interconnected term, moral maximization. To him, moral management 'is management with ethics, a state of ethical excellence, and the practice and implementation of the moral maximization principle'. Moral maximization, on the other hand, is 'behaviors, actions, and decisions that result in the greatest enhancement of

24 In the history of psychiatry, moral management has been used synonymously with moral treatment (from the original French 'traitement moral') to describe the new softer methods in the treatment of mental illnesses in England and in France in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. See Crump 1998; Reuber 1999. This differs from the way the other mentioned fields define and use moral management in their analysis.

25 Gouk & Hills 2005, 19.

26 Elias 2000, 158 et passim.

individual and collective human rights, freedoms, equity, and development'. As an example, Sikula uses the ice cream company Ben & Jerry's famous for their interest in socially responsible business.²⁷ The case of the Daughters of Charity, although relating to a religious context and a completely different historical period, can be compared to an organization aiming at moral maximization by means of implementing in the organization carefully planned moral management. The directors Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul aimed to mold behavior and actions in order to reform people to meet specific moral standards based on early modern Catholic values and those that served the survival of the Company. This was aimed at not only on the individual level of the members of the Company but also more generally in society through the Company's charity work.

Cultural anthropologist Laura D. Stanley has used the concept moral management in connection with survival strategies. In her article, Stanley studies AIDS/HIV patients considered non-typical in the United States: white, middle-class women. She finds that for the women their disease was a moral issue that demanded the reconstruction of a coherent moral identity. To achieve this end, the women employed several psychological and spirituality-flavoured strategies: they considered their diagnosis either a calling, redemption, or a blessing or gift. Stanley refers to this reconstruction process as a whole as moral management.²⁸ Stanley's use of the concept, despite the completely different context, resonates with the understanding of it in this study: fundamental motivation for moral management in the Company of the Daughters of Charity also rose from the desire to protect and repair if not a stigmatized but at least a disconcerting religious identity.

The deconstruction of the concept helps to further describe its utility in this study: it is formed by two words directing thought toward ethics and control. Definitions of *moral* in the Merriam-Webster dictionary include 'of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behaviour', 'expressing or teaching a conception of right behaviour', and 'conforming to a standard of right behaviour'. Right kind of behavior in the form of 'establishing a right relationship with God through appropriate forms of worship and daily conduct' (following Gouk's and Hill's line of thought) is at the core of religious communities and the activities of its members. *Management*, for its part, is defined for example as 'the conducting or supervising of something (such as a business)'. 'Management is as old as human civilization,' John F. Wilson

27 Sikula 1996, 182, 187–188. For more on Sikula's use of the term moral management, see Sikula 2009.

28 Stanley 1999.

and Andrew Thomson write in their survey of the history of management in Britain. Management is derived from the French ‘menager’ referring to household management. Another close etymological relative is the Italian ‘maneggiare’, horse-handler.²⁹

Supervision and control are closely associated with management and are central concepts also in religious communities that are typically organized around a clear-cut hierarchy. In the Early Modern Period, the hierarchy was strengthened by the Council of Trent. Highest local authority was exercised by the bishop to whom all religious Companies were to be subject, at least in principle. In female communities, a male superior general or an abbot held the second highest position and after him the female superior or abbess. A hierarchy existed also among the sisters with postulants, prospective sister candidates, holding the least amount of power.

Control in early modern religious communities has also links to control in early modern secular society. Discipline and social order are important concepts in classical sociology of religion and evolutionary biology as well as in early modern scholarship on the secular sphere. For example Émile Durkheim has argued that religion is an important element of social cohesion in general,³⁰ whereas evolutionary biologist David Sloan Wilson has found that moral codes are central in the survival of religious groups.³¹ Historical theories of early modern society for example by Hans Schilling, Michel Foucault, and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, have described the tightening of social order and emphasized ambitions of disciplining the underprivileged to serve elite interest. This development brought the secular and ecclesiastical spheres closer to each other: Ulrike Strasser has argued that monks and nuns were virtual prototypes of the modern subject.³² The moral management activities of the Daughters of Charity arose from this ecclesiastical and secular landscape emphasizing proper order and control. Consequently, focus on how and why the Company aimed to create order is sound and has the potential of broadening our understanding of seventeenth-century Catholic communities and power.

In practice, the concept of moral management as a method in the study is one form of close reading that directs the researcher’s gaze, while reading the source material, toward elements of morality-centered teachings and advice

29 Wilson & Thomson 2006, 6.

30 Durkheim 1912.

31 Wilson 2002.

32 Cf. Strasser 2004a, 119–148; Strasser 2004b, 533, 539–542, 553; *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 2011, e.g. 25:20, p. 227; Bergin 2009, 100, 127, 143–144.

on how to become a good Daughter or Christian or how to remain one. The study observes these kinds of elements on three levels. On the executive level (Chapter 2), the source material on the directors and especially on Louise de Marillac is read with an eye on the way spiritual authority was assigned to her. This chapter analyses the ways resources for the activities of the Company were ensured. On the level of the members, in Chapter 3, the sources are analysed by means of paying attention to the efforts the directors put into moulding the behaviour and mentalities of the sisters. This chapter discusses the means the directors utilized to create a uniform body of members to efficiently execute the charity work of the Company. The writings on the purpose and aims of the charity work are studied in Chapter 4, which turns to discussing the multiple ways the sisters were to make the beneficiaries, the poor they helped, conform to the value system of the Company.

Chapter 2, in its discussion of the image making of Louise de Marillac, also uses the theoretical framework of performance studies. Main inspiration comes from the approach of Päivi Salmesvuori in her study on saint Birgitta of Sweden (1303–1373, canonized 1391). Building on the classic studies of Gabriella Zarri and Aviad Kleinberg on living or recent saints of the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance,³³ Salmesvuori reads sources on Birgitta with an eye on the way she was able to perform her sanctity successfully and thereby gain authority.³⁴ Just like in the case of Birgitta and other medieval and early modern saints, the saintly reputation of Louise de Marillac is encountered in texts created by or in conjunction with other people, that is, her audience and their perceptions. This makes the process very much a performative one. Performance scholars maintain that meaning is generated in interaction between the performer engaging in actions and his or her surroundings.³⁵ Applying this approach to her study on Birgitta Salmesvuori writes:

In this study, the religious identity is not understood as fixed, but as continually constructed through performances. The investigation of religious performances reveals the strategies behind them and how they were interpreted. This can yield new understanding about power relations in Birgitta's world.³⁶

33 Zarri 1996; Kleinberg 1992.

34 Salmesvuori 2014.

35 For an introduction to the performance as a methodological tool, see Schechner 2013.

36 Salmesvuori 2014, 14. See also the collection of articles on late medieval spirituality and performance Suydam & Zeigler 1999.

The idea that saintly identity (or reputation) is the product of continual negotiations and performances that reveal power structures is also the starting point in my study of Louise de Marillac.

Lastly, an important method in the study is also the method of moving from the particular toward the general by means of using the Daughters of Charity, the most important charitable organization in seventeenth-century France, as a mirror of wider trends in the early modern Catholic Church and French society. Thus, the study intends to decipher continuity and discontinuity in the ideas against a wider historical context of Christian anthropology, female spirituality, and social order.

Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul employed four means to implement moral management in the Daughters of Charity: de Paul's speeches (called conferences), the Rules of the community, and writings and correspondence. Consequently, these groups form the most important primary source base of the study. The corpus has persisted surprisingly well and is composed of thousands of letters and other writings. One reason for the survival of the material is the ever-present need for moral management: the material has been used to train subsequent generations of Daughters of Charity for almost 400 years. As a result of this incessant need, almost all seventeenth-century material has been edited in the original language and also translated by sisters and brothers close to the Daughters of Charity in the twentieth century. Editing projects were occasioned especially by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) encouraging religious communities to return to the sources.³⁷ As religious communities consider original source material primarily as holy legacy instead of an object of scientific research, the editors have modernized the French language to better reach the target audience, twentieth and twenty-first-century sisters and brothers. The original manuscripts are stored in the archives of the motherhouses of the Daughters of Charity (AFC), located at 140, rue du Bac, Paris, and of the *Congrégation de la Mission*, the Congregation of the Mission (CM), found at 95, rue des Sèvres, Paris, which was Vincent de Paul's main organization for Lazarist priests who serve as the superior generals of the Daughters of Charity. The archives of the sisters were opened partially to secular researchers only in the 2000s and remain incompletely organized as we speak. This means that access to original manuscripts is restricted. Nevertheless, permission was given to consult the most central documents: *Règlement de vie of Louise de Marillac* written before 1633³⁸, *Vertus de Louise*

37 Ryan & Rybolt 1995, 225; Charpy 1995, 8–9.

38 Archives de la Maison Mère des Filles de la Charité (AFC), *Règlement de vie*.

de Marillac composed in 1660³⁹, and *Règles communes des Filles de la Charité, servantes des pauvres malades* prepared in 1672⁴⁰. The manuscript of Louise de Marillac's Pentecostal vision written after 4 June 1623 and archived at the Congregation of the Mission was consulted⁴¹. In addition, the Archives Nationales (AN) in the Marais, Paris, were consulted to check the official approbations of the Company⁴². Comparison of editions to the originals revealed only minor errors. Thus, the editions are trustworthy and suitable for secular academic research conducted with source criticism. Consequently, this study has been conceived by using mainly the French language editions, in addition to the aforementioned consultable original manuscripts. English translations have only been used in quotations, and even then only when found accurate.

The speeches of Vincent de Paul form the most important source group. As the superior general of the Company, de Paul gave a speech to the Daughters at the motherhouse in Paris at least once a month.⁴³ These talks, called conferences (*conférences*), are very much like sermons which were very popular in seventeenth-century France, the great age of preachers such as Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629), Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), and Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663–1742). The conferences were important and awaited social events which gathered the sisters residing at the motherhouse and in the Paris area together. The sisters living further away were reached through transcriptions of the conferences composed by Louise de Marillac and the Parisian sisters. In the speeches, a common rhetorical technique is the citing of saints' lives and other heroic Christian biographies. The communal examination of the virtues of deceased sisters was another popular oratorical practice. Usually de Paul opened conferences on the subject by asking the daughters to share their remarks on the qualities of their departed fellow sister and concluded the session by a brief summary of the good qualities the Daughters were to learn from the case and adopt. This Socratic method of asking questions to stimulate the thinking of the

39 AFC, *Vertus de Louise de Marillac*.

40 AFC, Alméras 1672.

41 Archives de la Congrégation de la Mission (CM), *Lumière de Pentecôte*.

42 AN, Cardinal de Vendôme; Documents. The collection for the Company dates back to 1792 when the Commune of Paris closed down the motherhouse of the Company and contains most commonly official and administrative material of the motherhouse and individual communities mostly from the late seventeenth century up to the Revolution. Some documents have gone missing not only during the Revolution but also after the 1980s, as historian Susan Dinan notes (see Dinan 2006, 129 note 38).

43 Dodin 1960, 48.

audience is a common trait running through all conferences and, thus, the most important teaching technique of de Paul.

The surviving 120 conferences have been edited by the Lazarist priest Pierre Coste in the first half of the twentieth century. They are found as an independent publication by the name *Conférences aux Filles de la Charité* (1952).⁴⁴ Coste claims to have used the original transcriptions or fragments and the most reliable copies of the surviving 120 talks. Several of these primitive notebooks have unfortunately been lost. The remaining 54 original leaflets are conserved at the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

The Company's Rules had likewise paramount importance in the moulding of the sisters' behaviour who vowed to follow them. As in all religious companies, the Rules provided the rudiments of communal and individual spiritual life and were to be read regularly. The Rules regulated the daily rhythm of the Daughters hour by hour and gave the sisters concrete examples of behaviour in relation to avoiding private property, nice food and clothes, and too close contact with men especially on the streets but including also confessors. The Rules also educated the sisters in the ways unity was to be maintained within the community, obedience shown to authorities, and the poor patients treated right. The Rules, an original manuscript compiled by René Almérás in 1672,⁴⁵ are found at the archives of the motherhouse. The manuscript has never been edited properly. It is noteworthy that the Company used a definite set of Rules only for five years of the time period under scrutiny in this study. It was originally Vincent de Paul, who started drafting the rules as early as in 1634 in his conferences held to the sisters.⁴⁶ It is known that Louise de Marillac had also written down a set of rules for the first Daughters in 1633.⁴⁷ De Paul wrote down the first set of regulations in 1645,⁴⁸ but a slightly modified version was approved by the Archbishop of Paris the following year.⁴⁹ It was not until 1655 that the Company received Approbation from Cardinal de Retz, who at the same time also approved a slightly modified version of the 1646 set of rules.⁵⁰ However, reading

44 Paul *Conférences*. Some conferences have also been edited by *sœur* Élisabeth Charpy in *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*.

45 AFC, Almérás 1672.

46 Paul *Conférences*, 31 July 1634, p. 1.

47 Marillac FR, A. 55 (1633), p. 722–723.

48 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*, doc. 392 (August–September 1645), p. 371–375.

49 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*, doc. 428 (20 November 1646), p. 441–445.

50 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*, doc. 614 (18 January 1655), p. 679–682. See footnotes for variants distinguishing the 1655 Rule from the 1646 one. The most important modification was that Cardinal de Retz confirmed the Company to be directed by the superior general of

the conferences of Vincent de Paul it becomes clear that the Rules, once published in 1655, were merely a collection of all the virtues and instruction preached by de Paul during the previous 20 years or so. René Almérás was the first successor of Vincent de Paul. According to tradition, Almérás was very careful in assembling the various writings and conferences of Vincent de Paul on the Rules and transforming them into a concise form without altering the words of his predecessor.⁵¹

The correspondence and writings of Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul form the largest source group of the study. Of the more than seven hundred letters of Louise de Marillac that have survived roughly half or even up to two thirds were written between the superior and the sisters. The letters reveal an effective centralized organization in which the superior personally not only supervised the practical issues in running a community or founding a new one, but also repeatedly educated the sisters about the principles that should govern their conduct and communal life. The superior asked for regular reports on the doings of the sisters in each community, reprimanded misbehaviour, and gave advice also in practical matters. The reciprocal correspondence of the directors attests to intensive collaboration and planning of the moral management activities with de Marillac taking a visible lead in especially administrative and practical issues.⁵²

The thousands of letters and notes of the directors are kept at the archives of the motherhouses of the Daughters of Charity and of the Congregation of the Mission. De Paul's writings can be found in the massive, thirteen-volume edition of Pierre Coste from the first half of the twentieth century.⁵³ Scholars working on de Paul use this edition commonly and consider the transcriptions accurate. Coste has also been translated into English⁵⁴ and Spanish. All versions are found online.⁵⁵ The writings of de Marillac have been edited by *sœur* Élisabeth Charpy in two volumes: Louise de Marillac,

the Congregation of the Mission, that is, Vincent de Paul, and his successors, instead of local bishops as in the 1646 version. See Dinan 2006, 49–50.

51 Paul EN, vol. XIIIb, doc. 149a (October 1655 to 21 July 1658), p. 147 note 1. See also Brejon de Lavergnée 2011, 234–239, who shows that the Almérás rule does include phrases not found in other writings on the subject by Vincent de Paul. But, 'even though the letters differ, the spirit remains the same', he concludes.

52 The subject will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

53 Paul FR.

54 Paul EN. Translation by a group of members of the American Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission in 1985. Translated quotations are taken from this volume when found suitable.

55 See <https://via.library.depaul.edu/lcd/> (13 August 2019).

*Écrits spirituels*⁵⁶ published in 1983 and translated into English (translation also found online)⁵⁷, as well as *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité aux origines: documents*⁵⁸ published 1989 but not translated nor found online. The latter also contains several important letters of the Daughters of Charity as well as their accounts about the virtues of their superior.

The edition history of de Marillac's writings is lengthy and, as a result, somewhat problematic: Élizabéth Charpy based her publication *Écrits spirituels* on an anthology composed in the late nineteenth century by a Daughter of Charity. The anthology is mainly based on primary sources, although a collection called 'cahiers Marguerite Chétif' is actually a copy of original manuscripts. The author of this collection is sister Chétif, de Marillac's first successor, who we know to have modified the original writings at least in regard to names of sisters and places. Her intention was to safeguard the anonymity of the members of the confraternity mentioned in the writings and still alive at the time of copying. In her edition, Charpy has rediscovered a great deal of these censored names through extensive archival work. She has also striven to maintain the original seventeenth-century language of the documents in regard to vocabulary.⁵⁹ Another question to ponder in relation to this nineteenth-century anthology is the motive for which it was created: it was very likely composed in view of the reinitiating of the canonization process of de Marillac.⁶⁰ Has the anthology been selective, has inauthentic material been added to portray de Marillac as saintly as possible? The massiveness of the corpus makes the deliberate manipulation of manuscripts a too laborious fraud to execute. And even if it was selective, it anyway offers abundant information on the way proper morality and saintliness was conceived in the seventeenth century.

Other source materials help to cross check the sources produced in de Marillac's name. They are particularly useful in shedding more light on the molding of her image as the superior. These sources fall in the genre of hagiography, but are more trustworthy than in many other cases, especially medieval hagiography. Instead of talking about the 'touch of the real',

56 Marillac FR. Meditations are marked by an A and letters by an L.

57 Marillac EN. Translation by an American Daughter of Charity, Louise Sullivan, in 1991. Translated quotations are taken from this volume when found suitable. See https://via.library.depaul.edu/ldm_1591-1660/ (13 August 2019).

58 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*.

59 See introduction in Marillac FR, p. vii-viii.

60 According to McNeil 1992, 118, 121-122, the Vatican reviewed Louise de Marillac's writings and gave permission to proceed with the canonization process on the 23 July 1894. She was beatified in 1920 and canonized in 1934. See also Renoux 1993.

used for example by Päivi Salmesvuori to assess the level of credibility of the hagiographic sources on Birgitta of Sweden,⁶¹ I would refer to my material as the ‘hug of the real’. We have important material produced by people who had known Louise de Marillac personally – her employees and Vincent de Paul – and recorded for the most part shortly after her death in March 1660. There are six notes or letters by the Daughters of Charity⁶² and two conferences by Vincent de Paul from July 1660⁶³ discussing the superior’s virtues. These are testimonies produced within the Company and primarily for internal use. They were used to pay tribute to the founder and first superior of the Company and to offer a role model of saintliness to the sisters. As canonization was not seriously reflected upon at this point, we can assume that the testimonies include genuine information about the actions – or performances – of de Marillac. It is unlikely that in this kind of a situation generic expressions, *topoi*, and fabricated material (all typical for the genre of hagiography in general) would inundate the testimonies in order to convince papal authorities. Furthermore, post-Tridentine hagiographic material was more regulated than in the Middle Ages. Narratives of saints and other saintly *personae* were composed in the spirit of humanist criticism increasing the credibility of hagiography.⁶⁴ Of course criticism should not be dismissed completely as the hagiographic genre always include religiously motivated exaggeration and interpretation. Nevertheless, I deem the material suitable especially for the study of image building which is basically about interpreting and combining ‘reality’ with ideals.

The testimonies are for the most part repeated in the first official saintly biography of de Marillac composed by Nicolas Gobillon (c. 1626–1710) in 1676,⁶⁵ making also the *vita* an important source for historical research on ‘real’ performances. DePaul University has translated Gobillon’s *vita* into modern French and published it electronically, but the edition remains

61 Salmesvuori borrows the phrase ‘touch of the real’ from Gallagher & Greenblatt 2000 and uses it in connection to the debate in medieval studies on the reliability of hagiographic material after the linguistic turn. Salmesvuori is one of the scholars of the ‘middle ground’ in favour of using hagiographic material by means of careful contextualization and source criticism. See Salmesvuori 2014, 18–21.

62 Found in *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*, doc. 800 (9 June 1660), p. 917–918; doc. 801 (9 June 1660), p. 918–919; doc. 802 (July 1660), p. 920–921; doc. 803 (around July 1660), p. 921–924; doc. 822 (beginning of 1661), p. 946–956; doc. 823 (after 1680?), p. 957–958.

63 AFC, *Vertus de Louise de Marillac*. Found edited in *Paul Conférences*, 3 July 1660, p. 934–944; 24 July 1660, p. 945–952.

64 Burke 2005.

65 Gobillon 1676.

incomplete: the fifth chapter has been omitted.⁶⁶ M. Collet revised the hagiography in 1769⁶⁷, but the study does not use this later version as the first version is more suitable for analysing contemporary images and performances. The two versions of the life of Vincent de Paul by Louis Abelly, written in 1664⁶⁸ and 1667⁶⁹, respectively, are also used but considered secondary. The two *vitae* are voluminous and detailed but centre on the spirituality and works of de Paul especially with the Congregation of the Mission leaving information on the Daughters of Charity much vaguer.⁷⁰

Material at the Archives Nationales and at a provincial archive has been used to study the role of wealthy female patrons in the moral management activities. The Archives Nationales possess a manuscript with guidelines for the patrons in their work.⁷¹ Some 40 kilometres from Paris, the Oise area used to host an important community called *la Charité de Vineuil* or *St-Firmin* founded by the princess of Condé, Charlotte Marguerite de Montmorency (1594–1650), in the 1640s. Several letters and notes on the community have survived in the writings of Louise de Marillac.⁷² The archives at the castle of the Condés in Chantilly, Archives du Musée Condé, offer some mentions of the Daughters of Charity via the correspondence of the princess.⁷³

Study in scholarly context

Most scholarship on the Daughters of Charity has been apologetic or religious in nature. The most important Catholic scholar is Élizabeth Charpy, a Daughter of Charity. She is the editor of the letters and spiritual meditations of Louise de Marillac⁷⁴ as well as of other documents relating to the early history of the Daughters of Charity⁷⁵. Due to her expertise in the writings of de Marillac and other early material, Charpy was the first scholar to properly challenge the long hagiographic tradition by rewriting the *vita* of Louise de Marillac in a way that gives more credit to the role of the superior in the

66 See <http://via.library.depaul.edu/gobillon/> (11 March 2019).

67 Gobillon 1769.

68 Abelly 1664.

69 Abelly 1667b.

70 The most recent scholarship to follow on Vincent de Paul is that of Forrestal 2017.

71 AN, *Mémoire pour les Dames*.

72 Marillac FR, see entry Chantilly in Index.

73 Archives du Musée Condé (Condé), Série P, tome III.

74 Marillac FR.

75 *Compagnie des Filles de la Charité*.

founding and direction of the Daughters of Charity.⁷⁶ Despite the religious tone of Charpy's books – which as a rule refer to their subject as Saint Louise or even more intimately as Louise – her contributions have been valuable. She has cleared the way for modern and secular scholarship on Louise de Marillac and brought her out from the shadow of Vincent de Paul, who has received much scholarly attention.⁷⁷

The Daughters of Charity have been the object of two secular academic monographs: Susan Dinan's *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century France*⁷⁸ was published in 2006 and Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée's *Histoire de Filles de la Charité XVIIe-XVIIIe. La rue pour cloître*⁷⁹ came out in 2011. Both works are largely the result of the more open attitude the Daughters of Charity have adopted toward secular academic research in the twenty-first century: archives have been opened at least partially to researchers and the Company's interest in recording their history professionally has increased. Due to their pioneering nature, both studies concentrate mainly on tracing the institutional development and activities of the Company. This is particularly true in the case of Brejon de Lavergnée, who was commissioned by the Parisian Daughters themselves: he produced a carefully researched institutional history. Full access to the archives even allowed him to draw up quantitative data to explain the growth and social composition of the Daughters of Charity.

Dinan approached the Company with the same intention of revealing the 'full picture' regarding the nature and expansion of the organization, but with a more nuanced approach. (This is very likely due to less extensive access to original source material, which probably made her focus more on the content of original and edited material.) The present study is very much a continuation in the footsteps of Dinan's work, but with the aim to leave institutional descriptions aside altogether and concentrate on analysing in depth the religious life of the Company to explain survival. Dinan also discusses survival and puts forward three arguments. Most importantly,

76 See e.g. Charpy 1988 (among many other titles by the same author). Recent hagiographies of de Marillac include French, American and Spanish contributions, the most recent being that of Nuovo 2010. An early exception to this is the book of the Daughter of Charity Margaret Flinton: already in 1957, she aimed to decipher and describe the role and work of Louise de Marillac with the poor. I have used the 1992 edition of the book: Flinton 1992.

77 However, the scholarship on Vincent de Paul is also in need of revision which has been taken on by Alison Forrestal (see Forrestal 2017; Forrestal 2004). Most important works on Vincent de Paul include Coste 1934; Calvet 1948; Dodin 1960; Dodin 1985; Maloney 1995; Pujo 2003; Guillaume 2015.

78 Dinan 2006.

79 Brejon de Lavergnée 2011.

Dinan argues that Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul intentionally conspired to deceive local and Church authorities and that one important mean to achieve this was to manage the self-presentation of the Company and of the sisters to avoid association with a cloistered order. Nevertheless, many pages are devoted to description of the sisters' activities leaving discussion on image-moulding unnecessarily thin. This study is devoted completely to the multifaceted aspect of management which is deemed the most important factor behind survival. Management – termed in the study more precisely as moral management – is approached holistically by means of tracing it on all levels of the organization. One of the most important findings my holistic reading has yielded is the aspect of internal resistance. Close reading of the moral management activities aimed at the sisters revealed that the body of members were also questioning the active, non-cloistered way of life. This means that moral management was exercised not only to convince the authorities but also to curtail internal discord. Furthermore, this study not only describes these moral management activities, but also analyses their content and consequences: it discusses the inherent value system they carried and the way they shaped early modern identities both within the Company and in early modern French society in general. In this, the study is also filling a gap in scholarship identified already by Colin Jones in 1989: in his book on nursing in *Ancien Régime* and Revolutionary France Jones emphasize the role the Daughters of Charity played 'in the making of a new moral and social consensus' in France.⁸⁰ Until now, the thorough examination of the contents of this moral and social consensus created by the Company has been missing.

The other arguments Susan Dinan puts forward in her book are likewise aspects that resonate with the aims of this study but are taken further. Dinan claims that success and survival were also due to the protection the Company received from the French political and religious establishments. This study offers a more nuanced picture of the importance of networks by highlighting the role of especially Louise de Marillac and the successful management of her image. By examining the saintly image or reputation of the superior, the study is a contribution to new readings of the social roles that saints, both existing and putative, occupied in early modern Catholic societies. Pioneering work has been done by Peter Burke and Simon Ditchfield,⁸¹ and the field is becoming increasingly established as the recent volume

80 Jones 1989, 116. For a more recent study on the Daughters of Charity in the context of hospital sisters, see Dinet-Lecomte 2005.

81 See especially Burke 2005; Ditchfield 2010; 2009; 1995.

Lived Religious and Everyday Life in Early Modern Hagiographic Material suggests.⁸² Scholars such as Clare Copeland have produced brilliant studies on the making of early modern female saints and their cults.⁸³ In this study, emphasis is more on the connection of the saintly reputation of Louise de Marillac to authority and power during her lifetime than on the making of her cult. As de Marillac was canonized as late as in 1934, the study of the development of her cult would take the book beyond its scope. It would also defer it from its primary focus of interest, which is to understand how image making contributed to the survival of the Daughters of Charity in the seventeenth century.

Susan Dinan argues that the Daughters of Charity were able to avoid enclosure because the stipulations of Trent emphasizing enclosure for religious women were simply too unrealistic to achieve. Dinan points out that financial needs kept even the cloistered orders 'permeable' as patrons and boarders, sources of income, mingled with the nuns. This study takes this discussion further: it argues that not only financial needs but also persistent tradition kept religious *mentalités* less strict than deemed suitable by Trent. The study shows that although de Marillac and de Paul themselves did not identify their work as a continuation of medieval charity work by religious laywomen, their *de facto* strategies and spirituality are clearly connected to this tradition. This means that the stipulations of Trent were too radical an approach to women's spirituality in Paris in the first half of the seventeenth century, because local Catholics preferred their own, more traditional interpretation of the revised faith. In this respect, the study is also a contribution to reoccurring assumptions and premises in early modern scholarship: although many scholars acknowledge in their introduction the tradition of religious lay women in the middle ages, few have discussed systematically the significance of tradition in the ideals and work of early modern religious orders. Instead, the majority of scholars choose to describe the seventeenth-century active vocation anyway as an innovative and novel enterprise.⁸⁴

By analysing in depth the role and image making of Louise de Marillac, the present study aims to offer a more nuanced and detailed picture of female agency in the French Catholic Reformation. Scholars today agree that the Catholic Reformation in France – and especially in Paris, the cradle and

82 Kuuliala & Peake & Räisänen-Schröder 2019.

83 Copeland 2016.

84 See e.g. Dinan 2006, 57, 61; Lux-Sterritt 2005, 179; Diefendorf 2004, 14; Rapley 1990, 6; Brockliss & Jones 1997, 271; Jones 1989, 90.

most active centre of the Catholic Reformation which has also been studied the most – was mainly the result of the ingenuity and activity of the devout female elites, also known as the *dévotes*. The most important accounts come from Elizabeth Rapley and Barbara Diefendorf. Rapley was the first to argue for the feminization of seventeenth-century French religious life portrayed as misogynistic in previous scholarship. In her classic 1990 study *The dévotes: women and church in seventeenth-century France*⁸⁵, Rapley demonstrates the numerous ways in which women engaged in the Catholic Reformation and gained social and spiritual promotion, especially through work in the active communities of teaching nuns and *filles séculières*, the latter including also the Daughters of Charity. Rapley's *Social History of the Cloister*, published in 2001,⁸⁶ is a seminal work on everyday life in French teaching congregations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and illuminates even further the agency women were able to claim within the context of Catholicism.⁸⁷

Barbara Diefendorf continued in the footsteps of Rapley and produced in 2004 an in-depth study called *From penitence to charity: pious women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*⁸⁸ on the role of elite women and their piety in Catholic Reformation Paris in the first half of the seventeenth century. Studying not only the active but also the contemplative, enclosed communities, Diefendorf offers a refined discussion of the motivation and strategies of the *dévotes* in the monastic sphere. In addition to institutional history, she also studies women's piety and traces a shift from penitential practices to charity. Diefendorf explains this shift chiefly by the social and economic stresses France underwent in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. The Daughters of Charity are also discussed: the personal virtues of Louise de Marillac as having considerable administrative talent are mentioned as well as the importance of networks for the survival and success of the Company. The work of Rapley and Diefendorf was continued in 2014 by Jennifer Hillman who discussed elite women's agency in the religious sphere in the latter half of the century and in the context of Jansenism.⁸⁹

85 Rapley 1990.

86 Rapley 2001.

87 The first academic article on the agency of Louise de Marillac was published in 1979. Liebowitz 1979 discussed three female founders of seventeenth-century unenclosed religious communities. Calling the leaders blatantly 'activist women' and taking as a basic assumption that the active vocation was more emancipatory in nature than the contemplative one makes the article too one-sided from today's scholarly perspectives.

88 Diefendorf 2004.

89 Hillman 2014.

The final chapter of the study enters in dialogue with revisionist historians, such as Jean-Pierre Gutton, Robert Jütte, Pierre Deyon, and Alain Tallon,⁹⁰ to challenge Foucauldian conclusions about poor relief as a means of social control. Most of the aforementioned historians have written about or at least mentioned the Daughters of Charity and their poor relief activities. Susan Dinan and Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée have, for their part, described the extent and type of these activities, but no one has produced a systematic and profound study of the value system at play in these poor relief activities. The study shows that the idea of saintly poverty and thus empathy governed in the charity work and that its content was also part of the survival strategy. The study suggests that by schooling only the poor and teaching them a trade was a means to differentiate the Company from enclosed teaching orders.

90 See Gutton 1970; 2004; 2006; Jütte 2001; Deyon 1967a; 1967b; Tallon 1990; Tallon 1991.