

# Tears and Weeping on Jesuit Missions in Seventeenth-Century Italy

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Recent studies, both in the history of emotions and other disciplines, have enhanced greatly our historical understanding of crying, especially in its social and cultural contexts.<sup>1</sup> This essay identifies a particularly fruitful area of research in the history of crying from the religious sphere: the early-modern Jesuit penitential missions. The evocation of emotion, leading to penitence and conversion, all were central elements in these missions, and reports about them often mention participants who shed many tears.

The golden age of the popular missions was the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The Society of Jesus played an active role not just in missions outside Europe but also within its territories, both Catholic and Protestant. These European missions were of two basic types: catechistic and penitential. In both cases, a variety of methods were developed that varied from mission to mission, and brought forth an endless series of sub-types. In France, and in other countries where there was an even stronger Protestant presence, it was more common

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- 1 Among the vast secondary literature on the subject, some orientational studies include: Lutz, *Storia delle lacrime*; Fögen, ed., *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*; Mosetti Casaretto, ed., *Lachrymae*; Gertsman, ed., *Crying in the Middle Ages*; Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance*; Patton, Stratton Hawley, eds., *Holy Tears*; Horstmanshoff, King, Zittel, eds., *Blood, Sweat and Tears*, (on tears: 551–626). See also the literature referenced in the footnotes, throughout.
- 2 Cf. Orlandi, “La missione popolare in età moderna”; Châtellier, *La religione dei poveri*; Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo*. Concerning the Jesuit missions in Italy, for an English-language overview of (especially Italian) scholarship prior to 2006, see, Lazar, “Jesuit Missions in Italy”.

for missions to be undertaken with the aim of teaching and spreading the faith, while in Spain and Italy penitential missions generally were more influential. Catechism was important as well, but it occupied a much more restricted space in the missions than the other very public and often large-scale events within them.<sup>3</sup>

The scope of the penitential missions generally was expanded through various accompanying ceremonies: local church dignitaries, prominent secular figures and ordinary people met the missionaries on the outskirts of towns and gave them a celebratory welcome; on certain days the ringing of church bells accompanied the processions as they entered towns, and acts of public pardon ensued, but the most spectacular event was the evening penitential procession. Participants wore penitential clothes, with crowns of thorns on their heads and chains around their necks; they carried huge crosses, while singing the *Miserere*. A permanent element in the event was the mission father's public flagellation, which often encouraged the participants to follow suit.<sup>4</sup>

The focus of this essay is the penitential missions that the Jesuits organised in seventeenth-century Italy, and is part of ongoing research on religious emotions in Jesuit missions.<sup>5</sup> A particular aim of this study is to analyse the meanings, emotions, functions, gestures and rites connected to tears and crying in these popular missions, based on manuscript and printed sources, drawing on the specific features of Jesuit spirituality. It focuses especially on the textual representations of crying,<sup>6</sup> and takes its cue from the following statement of John Corrigan:

...[r]eligions offer both direct and indirect cues about emotionality to their adherents. Ministers preach for the cultivation of certain emotions, devotional reading models desirable emotionality, scriptures are interpreted to support certain emotional styles and

3 For a general description of penitential missions, see Orlandi, "Missioni parrocchiali e drammatica popolare", 309–10.

4 For the characteristic features of one type of penitential mission – the Segnerian – see Marucci, "Paolo Segneri e le missioni rurali".

5 On Jesuits' emotions, but under different circumstances (suppression of the Society of Jesus) and in the eighteenth century, see Haskell, "Suppressed Emotions".

6 It does not deal with visual representations; neither does it deal with theories of crying from various disciplines, nor the history of crying. Nevertheless, the findings presented here are aimed at providing potentially useful data and insights for these areas of research. For more on these subjects, see the literature listed in note 1.

discourage others, ritual performs emotion in ways sanctioned by religious authorities, and material culture — a cathedral window, for example — inspires awe and in so doing legitimates it for religion. Exploring the language of sermons, the details of ritual, or the ways a religion has materially represented itself accordingly can yield much information about what a religion expects emotionally of its members.<sup>7</sup>

Questions concerning the emotionality of the wider Catholic religion do not fall within the purview of this investigation; rather, the study explores the themes of tears and crying through a close analysis of one group within the Catholic sphere, the Jesuits. The theoretical starting point for the study is Barbara H. Rosenwein's concept of the emotional community, defined as "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value — or devalue — the same or related emotions".<sup>8</sup> Rosenwein further identified that "[a]n emotional community [...] is also possibly a 'textual community', created and reinforced by ideologies, teachings, and common presuppositions. With their very vocabulary, texts offer exemplars of emotions belittled and valorized".<sup>9</sup> Such frameworks facilitate the examination of words related to emotion in a textual setting, resulting in a still subtler picture of distinct emotional communities.<sup>10</sup> While developed in relation to the medieval period, these analytical frameworks were conceived as being broadly applicable to other periods and can be legitimately applied here.<sup>11</sup> To this end, we shall start from the assumption that the Jesuits under consideration constituted a community, including a textual one, whose emotions, and the preferences and norms relating to their expression, we will study closely and consider from the perspective of crying.

The essay investigates which emotions and spiritual experiences were related to the shedding of tears in the Jesuit context covered by this study, and what expectations — both direct and indirect — did the Jesuits have regarding how one should cry? In exploring

7 Corrigan, "Introduction", 18.

8 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 2.

9 Ibid., 24–25. Rosenwein borrows the term "textual community" from Brian Stock (*The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1983).

10 Rosenwein's framework is discussed in Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 67–71.

11 Plamper (ibid., 69) observed that Rosenwein's term "was quite consciously formulated as being universally applicable, for all times and cultures."

these questions the aim is to resolve, not whether people really did cry during popular missions, and with what frequency and to what extent they did so, but, rather, how Jesuits interpreted and represented crying. Of course such interpretive and representational treatments of tears “have a strong cultural dimension”, as research has frequently shown.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the present study, the defining elements of this cultural dimension are the Catholic and Jesuit traditions.

In accordance with the objectives of this research, the first part of the essay considers examples taken from several types of devotional prose texts, to illustrate how Jesuits thought about the importance and functions of tears, and how they categorized them. In the case of these texts, the emotional and textual community extends beyond the limits of the Society of Jesus, since these works were popular among both the clergy (including non-Jesuits) and the laity, and were printed in several editions. The second part attempts to answer questions relating to the functions and meanings of tears, mentioned above; it does this primarily on the basis of manuscript sources and missionary reports made for the internal use of the Order.

Through an analysis of these sources, it will be argued that, despite their formulaic and repetitive style, the rhetorical-linguistic elements of the texts under consideration are organised into a narrative and offer models of crying. It will be shown, further, that an understanding of these models of crying can take us closer to the expectations which are described in certain emotional performances. In so doing, it is hoped that this research may represent a first step towards determining whether the early-modern Jesuits can be considered an emotional community, which (also) possessed its own characteristic features, allowing, at the same time, for many variations and divergences among members of the Society. The findings presented in this essay thus point to possible future directions for further investigation, as well as seeking to deepen our knowledge of the nature of the Jesuits in this sphere and facilitate comparisons with other religious institutes, monastic orders, and even with other religious faiths.

### **1. Tears in Ignatian Spirituality and in Jesuit Religious Literature**

It is well known that tears were frequent elements in Ignatius of Loyola’s spirituality and pious practice.<sup>13</sup> It is less known, however,

12 Cf. for example Gouk, Hills, “Towards Histories of Emotions”, mainly 26–27.

13 For these features of Ignatius’ spiritual state, see Guibert, *La spiritualità della Compagnia di Gesù*, 36–40.

what meaning Ignatius ascribed to them. While writing the Constitutions of the Order, Ignatius made spiritual notes, which in the Jesuit tradition were called a “spiritual diary”.<sup>14</sup> According to these notes, Ignatius always felt devotion, and/or interior warmth and interior impulses while shedding tears. For him, tears were the signs of God that informed him that he had made a correct decision regarding the Constitutions of the Society, or that he had regained his state of grace, or proved to him the presence and love of God. At the same time, tears expressed the praying Ignatius’s gratitude towards God, and they mediated his requests. They also played a role in religious knowledge, as accompaniments of enlightenment, which Ignatius considered of higher value than the knowledge acquired by rationality.

Frequent and abundant crying became an important sign of sanctity in biographies of Ignatius of Loyola,<sup>15</sup> appearing later as a hagiographic element in the biographies of several other Jesuits as well.<sup>16</sup> Francis Xavier almost lost his eyesight as a result of so much weeping,<sup>17</sup> while Aloysius Gonzaga SJ<sup>18</sup> soaked his clothes and books in tears.<sup>19</sup> However, the gift of tears was not the sole prerogative of European Jesuits with a saintly reputation, but also of lesser known ones: tears quietly flowed from the eyes of Francesco Gaetano SJ,<sup>20</sup> a teacher of grammar in Jesuit colleges in Sicily, both in the presence of others, and (it was reported) that he sobbed and sighed when he was alone as well.<sup>21</sup> The Sicilian missionary, Luigi La Nuza SJ,<sup>22</sup> cried

14 The following observations in the remainder of this paragraph draw on Ignatius’s notes recorded between February 11–19, 1545: Ignatius of Loyola, “Spiritual Journal”, 137–46.

15 Cf. Ribadenera, *Vita del p. Ignatio Loiola*, passim; Bartoli, *Della vita e dell’istituto di S. Ignatio*, passim.

16 On the gift of tears as a sign of sanctity in the Middle Ages, see Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge*.

17 Massei, *Vita di S. Francesco Saverio*, 144.

18 Luigi Gonzaga, \* 9.III.1568 Castiglione delle Stiviere (Italy), SJ 25.XI.1585 Roma (Italy), † 21.VI.1591 Roma (Italy) (*DHCI II*, 1779–80).

19 Ceparì, *Vita del B. Luigi Gonzaga*, 34.

20 Francesco Gaetano, \* 11.XI.1569 Sortino (Italy), SJ 1593 Messina (Italy), † 20.IV.1601 Messina (Italy) (Gaetano, *Vita di Francesco Gaetano*, 1, 3, 80, 86, 323; Rome. Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [ARSI], Sic. 60, f. 56v).

21 Gaetano, *Vita di Francesco Gaetano*, 236.

22 Luigi La Nuza, \* 21.VI.1591 Licata (Italy), SJ 16.I.1609 Messina (Italy), † 21.X.1656 Palermo (Italy) (*DHCI III*, 2244).

almost continuously, including while praying, celebrating mass, and preaching.<sup>23</sup> The biographer of Bernardo Colnago SJ,<sup>24</sup> who taught at the college of Naples, dedicated an entire chapter to the description of this gift.<sup>25</sup>

These texts were devotional readings offering crying as a pattern not only for members of the Society but also for the laity. As Karant-Nunn notes, when discussing early-modern Catholicism in connection with the emotional identification with Christ's Passion, affective piety — and within this we might include crying — was no longer “a semimystical form reserved to monastic adepts and a few close members of their inner lay circles”.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the subject of crying appeared in several types of religious texts during the period in question: research has shown, for example, that after the Council of Trent, from the last decades of the sixteenth century, the topos of crying became very frequent in Italian religious poetry, accounting for the birth of a rich literature of *Lacrime*.<sup>27</sup>

In the context of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius's spirituality certainly influenced the Jesuits' relationship with crying; however, there was a broader context as well: according to Imorde, the medieval theological tradition of tears also made its way into the theology of the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries thanks to the scholars at the Collegio Romano.<sup>28</sup> The theologians of late scholasticism passed on the ideas of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on the operation of the soul and its relationship with the body,<sup>29</sup> although no unified

23 Frazzetta, *Vita e virtù*, 149–50.

24 Bernardo Colnago, \* 16.IX.1545 Catania (Italy), SJ V.1563 Messina (Italy), † 22.IV.1611 Catania (Italy) (*DHCL*, 859–60).

25 Finichiaro, *Le attioni ed opere meravigliose*, 74–80.

26 Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, 60.

27 On this subject, see the valuable study undertaken by Piatti, “E l'uom pietà da Dio, piangendo, impari”, 53–106 (53–55). Another work dealing with tears in the context of religious sadness, analysing English poetic works, is Kuchar, *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow*.

28 Imorde, “Tasting God”, 257–69 (258).

29 For views on Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas related to this theme, see Knuutila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 24–47, 239–55; James, *Passion and Action*, 29–64. For the sections of Albertus Magnus' and Thomas Aquinas' commentaries on Aristotle related to the passions, and Thomas Aquinas' system of passions, see Casagrande, Vecchio, *Passioni dell'anima*, 113–62. For views on this subject by one of the outstanding figures of late scholasticism, Francisco Suárez SJ, see Edwards, “Suárez in a Late Scholastic Context”. For the commentators on *De anima* in a Jesuit context, see Simmons, “Jesuit Aristotelian Education”.

teaching on tears in devotion and pastoral activities was developed; as a consequence there were great similarities of opinion, but also certain differences.

In seventeenth-century Catholic oratory, of the three oratorical tasks, the function of *movere* gradually took over the leading role. One purpose of the sermon became to induce crying, in response to the use of rhetorical devices as means of affectivity.<sup>30</sup> The orator's ability to make his audience cry was considered a virtue. For example, the orations of the aforementioned Luigi La Nuza, according to his biography, made the whole congregation leave with repentance in their souls and tears in their eyes,<sup>31</sup> and the list of such examples could go on and on.

Weeping also appeared as a subject of preaching in this period.<sup>32</sup> Luigi Giuglaris SJ,<sup>33</sup> author of numerous sacred panegyrics, wanted to persuade his audience about the necessity and utility of tears, and he offered the following choice for them: "Sinners, sinners, come to your senses, you must cry or perish".<sup>34</sup> The Portuguese preacher, missionary and diplomat, António Vieira SJ,<sup>35</sup> built his sermon on the idea that the eyes are the only senses which have a double ability: they are able to see and to cry, so they are at the same time sources of sin and of penitence.<sup>36</sup>

However, some Jesuits only accepted Jerome's often quoted statement ("lacrymae auditorum laudes tuae sint") with limitations and additions, and drew attention to certain dangers associated with crying. Giulio Mazarini SJ,<sup>37</sup> renowned for his oratory (although also

30 Cf. Ardissino, *Il barocco e il sacro*, 74–81; Tasi, *Az isteni szó barokk sáfárai*, 142–87.

31 Frazzetta, *Vita, e virtù*, 35.

32 Francisco Labata SJ, for example, offers four possible propositions relating to tears for preachers: Labata, *Loci communes*, 460–64.

33 Luigi Giuglaris, \* 1607 Nice (France), SJ 15.X.1622 Nice (France), † 15.XI.1653 Messina (Italy) (*DHCI* II, 1739–40).

34 "Peccatori, peccatori, disingannatevi, ò piangere, ò perire bisogna". Giuglaris, *Quaresimale*, 212–24 (Predica sopra l'Evangelo della Samaritana, Nella feria VI. della terza settimana di Quaresima). Quote on p. 221.

35 António Vieira, \* 6.II.1608 Lisboa (Portugal), SJ 5.V.1623 Bahia (Brasil), † 18.VII.1697 Bahia (Brasil) (*DHCI* IV, 3948–51).

36 Vieira, *Prediche*, 174–84 (Predica XIII, Delle lagrime di San Pietro, detta nella Cattedrale di Lisbona l'Anno 1669).

37 Giulio Mazarini, \* 1544 Palermo (Italy), SJ 12.IV.1559 Palermo (Italy), † 12.XI.1621 Bologna (Italy) (*DHCI* III, 2589). See also Rurale's entry on Mazarini in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (vol. 72, 2008); online.

a controversial figure inside and outside his order), even confronted the Milanese cardinal archbishop, Carlo Borromeo (1538–84) in 1579, protesting against the latter's claim that the preacher who could not make his audience weep had failed to fulfil his mission. In the inquisitorial investigation initiated by cardinal Borromeo against Mazarini for the Jesuit's many unconventional sermons including vociferous protests against Borromeo and his own order, the accused admitted telling the women who listened to his impassioned sermons to hear his words internally ("interiormente"), and that if they only came to weep, they should go to another preacher.<sup>38</sup> However, Mazarini did not actually reject crying, as is clear from his 1615 guide on sermons (*Somma della vangelica osservanza: Ragionamenti sopra il sermonare del Signore*, published in Venice, and useful for highlighting certain strands of Jesuit thought on the subject, despite contemporary doubts about his views and conduct as a preacher). Indeed, he even considered it beneficial for influencing one's will, but emphasized that it was not enough for a preacher to aim solely to produce tears in his congregation, and that he should also aim to influence several kinds of emotions. After having sought to convince the faithful through rational arguments, he went on to advise that the appropriate emotion ("passione") most suited to the required goal subsequently should be aroused in them. If, for example, the preacher's words prompted a desire for revenge ("vendetta") among members of the congregation on account of their sins, there must be awakened within them feelings of contempt, horror, hatred and disgust ("sdegno, orrore, odio, abominio") towards themselves for having such responses.<sup>39</sup>

Mazarini also discussed the problem of simulation, and advised that to simulate tears is not worthy of a preacher, being something that an actor does.<sup>40</sup> The preacher first should feel internally, and

38 "Dissi invitando alla predica della passione che mi sarei affaticato di farla sentire interiormente, ma che se le donne volevano o venivano per piangere, ch'era bene andassero a qualche altro predicatore, ché io non havevo né mi sentiva tal talento et che non potevo predicare piangendo, ma se piangevo, che bisognava andassi via senza poter seguire la predica". Cited by Rurale, *I gesuiti a Milano*, 222. On the procedures against Mazarini: *ibid.*, 217–81.

39 Mazarini, *Somma della vangelica osservanza*, 594–602 (595–97).

40 Seventeenth-century English priests also connected simulated crying to actors, and disapproved of it. (Cf. Capp, "'Jesus Wept' But Did the Englishman?", 83, 99–102). On this, see also Fazakas, *Síralmas imádság*, 81, further references in the notes. Fazakas's monograph, especially Chapter 2, is an important parallel to this research, for it also deals with weeping in the seventeenth century, in a Protestant context, based on prayers and sermons.



then present externally, the signs of the emotions that he wished to make his audience feel.<sup>41</sup> Tears must be born from the soul's pain, he explained, because visible tears ("sensibili lagrime") were worthless unless they came from within.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, he described in another of his works the practice of internal and external penitence, the latter referring to manifestations such as tears, sighs, and mortification.<sup>43</sup> He warned, however, that these were not always necessary and, if exaggerated, could lead to sin.

Already in 1604, prior to Mazarini's treatise, similar caution was enjoined by Luca Pinelli SJ,<sup>44</sup> the theologian and author of ascetic writings, specifically in his treatise on penitence, in the part dealing with confession.<sup>45</sup> Pinelli distinguished between the tears of the eyes and the tears of the heart ("lacrime de gli occhi corporali", "lacrime del cuore"), identifying the former to be useful but not necessary for an adequate confession, whereas the tears of the heart, that is sorrow and repentance for the sins one has committed, were much more necessary. In this way, he viewed confession to be painful and tearful ("dolorosa e lacrimabile"), not as a result of the tears of the body, but as a consequence of *contritio*, meaning two things: the pain felt on account of the sinner's offence against God, and a strong determination not to commit the sin again in the future. Thus, for Pinelli, emotions of the heart were indispensable for an adequate confession and penance, but their external, physical representation was not. As we shall see, the penitential missions were based on a different conception and practice.

Jesuit books on meditation, spiritual exercises and spiritual guidance also paid close attention to tears. For example, writing in the 1620s, Luis de la Puente SJ (known as Lodovico Ponte in Italian)<sup>46</sup> was a popular author of works of this genre, writing about tears with respect to prayers. He enlisted the Scriptures to demonstrate

41 Mazarini, *Somma della vangelica osservanza*, 597, 599–600. "...l'oratore procede con verità, desta e prova in se medesimo tutti quei movimenti affettuosi che vuole negli altri eccitare". Quote on p. 599.

42 Ibid., 596.

43 Mazarini, *Cento discorsi*, 516.

44 Luca Pinelli, \* 1543 Melfi (Italy), SJ 22.IV.1562 Roma (Italy), † 19.VIII.1607 Napoli (Italy) (*DHCI* IV, 3138–39).

45 Pinelli, *Del sacramento della penitenza*, 111–12. "...dolore di havere offeso Dio, & confermo proposito di non offenderlo per l'avenire". Quote on p. 111.

46 Luis de la Puente, \* 11.XI.1554 Valladolid (Spain), SJ 2.XII.1574 Medina del Campo (Spain), † 16.II.1624 Valladolid (Spain) (*DHCI* III, 2244–45).

that a prayer accompanied by tears was always heard.<sup>47</sup> While he considered that tears in themselves were neutral, he argued that a person could use them both rightly and wrongly. He held that the inclination to cry could be a temperamental issue that may be beneficial for the practice of piety, but did not mean anything in itself, because good and evil equally could inform this inclination. He warned that tears could originate with the devil as well, such as when tears were shed for wicked and vain reasons, for example, those of hypocrisy and simulation.

Following St Gregory the Great, Luis de la Puente differentiated between two types of tears: one derived from love and consideration of things divine and heavenly; the other came from fear, sadness and reflection of the misery around us. He identified five sources of tears, which, he claimed, corresponded to Christ's five wounds.<sup>48</sup> He offered Biblical examples to the reader: David, Mary Magdalene, the Apostle Peter and the Virgin Mary; but he also pointed out the dangers of crying. The early saints functioned as models too: referring to the seventh *gradus* in John Climacus' celebrated seventh-century description of the soul's ascent towards God through ascetic practice (in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*),<sup>49</sup> de la Puente cautioned against excessive crying and mortification, which, he argued, made the heart go dry. He warned against immodesty, too, which may arise in those who possessed the gift of tears, and who may look down on those who could not cry: the devil eagerly made use of this, he wrote, encouraging such people to cry publicly.

Bartolomeo Ricci SJ,<sup>50</sup> mostly known for his illustrated life of Christ, also cautioned readers about the shedding of tears in his instructional work on meditation, published in 1600.<sup>51</sup> His typology of tears contained four categories: natural ("lacrime naturali") and spiritual ("lacrime spirituali"), and, within the latter, good ("buone") and bad ("male"). For Ricci, the presence of natural

47 Ponte [Luis de la Puente], *Guida spirituale*, 253–65.

48 In one of his meditations based on the Biblical passage "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4), he speaks of five kinds of tears, which can partly correspond to the five senses. Ponte [Luis de la Puente], *Meditazioni*, 107–08.

49 Cf. Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 70–80. For the role of tears in spiritual life in the Climacus tradition, see Benke, *Die Gabe der Tränen*, 29–90.

50 Bartolomeo Ricci, \* 1542 Castelfidardo (Italy), SJ 10.IX.1566 Roma (Italy), † 12.I.1613 Roma (Italy) (*Sommervogel* VI, col. 1782–84; ARSI, *Rom.* 170, f. 167<sup>r</sup>).

51 Ricci, *Istruzione di meditare*, 534–38.

tears was understood in terms of the quantity and proportion of bodily fluids, which were thought to be most prevalent in women and feminine men. This view corresponded with contemporary philosophy and medical theory and practice, based on humoral theory, which identified women's humoral disposition as making them more prone to crying.<sup>52</sup>

Ricci noted that among the different reasons for crying, there were three good spiritual sources for tears: *via purgativa, illuminativa, unitiva*. These good tears were shed by people for their own or others' sins, for the misery and suffering of others, or they shed tears of joy. Bad tears were caused by the devil, who was capable of making some humans cry for vanity, so that others would see and mistakenly admire this shedding of tears. Ricci thus advised the person who meditated: "Remember therefore how that time was intended for prayer, and not for crying. However, I do not deny that a few little tears, when they flow spontaneously, should not be retracted, since the Holy Church added to its Missal the prayer of *Petitione lacrymarum*: but be sure to continue your meditation immediately".<sup>53</sup>

In the works presented above, sweet and joyous tears were the privilege of those who attained higher levels of spiritual life, but according to Cesare Alucci SJ,<sup>54</sup> founder of the Jesuit College of Chieti, and writing in 1625, the feeling of spiritual joy was always present in a tearful penitence.<sup>55</sup> His categorization predictably enlisted the historical authority of St Gregory the Great; but he used another source too: the near-contemporary fellow-Jesuit, Francisco de Toledo SJ,<sup>56</sup> theologian and professor at the Collegio Romano, who recorded seven types of spiritual tears in the Bible.<sup>57</sup> Alucci twice mentioned that tears could be interpreted as signs of penance, but his formulation

52 See the studies in the volume, Perfetti, ed., *The Representation of Women's Emotions*.

53 Ricci, *Istruzione di meditare*, 537: "Ricordati tu dunque, che quel tempo è stato destinato per orare, e non per piangere. Non niego però, che quattro lacrimucce, quando vengono spontaneamente, non le debbia pigliare; poiche la Santa Chiesa hà fatto nel Messale l'oratione pro, *Petitione lacrymarum*: ma avverti di seguir tosto la tua Meditatione".

54 Cesare Alucci, \* 1568 Chieti (Italy), SJ 16.IV.1584 Chieti (Italy), † 1634 Italy (ARSI, Rom. 53 I, f. 88r).

55 Alucci, *Il legno della vita*, vol. 1: 55–66.

56 Francisco de Toledo, \* 4.X.1532 Córdoba (Spain), SJ 3.VI.1558 Salamanca (Spain), † 14.IX.1596 Roma (Italy) (DHCI IV, 3807–08).

57 Alucci, *Il legno della vita*, vol. 1: 64.

implied that the link between the *contritio* of the heart and the tears of the eyes was not always exclusive and consequential, but merely probable.<sup>58</sup>

It is possible to ascertain from these examples that Jesuits in the early seventeenth century wrote about crying in texts of varying genres and lengths. While Jesuit writings continued to vary on the subject throughout the seventeenth century and beyond, the issue did receive a systematic treatment in 1617. In that year, Robert Bellarmine's<sup>59</sup> popular work on the theme was published, the *De gemitu columbae, sive De bono lacrymarum*: it remained influential throughout the seventeenth century, and was translated into seven languages in at least forty-one editions, and even a Lutheran paraphrase.<sup>60</sup> In his explanation of the title, Bellarmine identified the struggling Church – of which the Society of Jesus was a part – with a crying dove. His purpose was “to awaken Christian believers and urge them to taste the sweet and delectable goodness of spiritual tears”.<sup>61</sup> The work was dedicated to fellow-members of the Society, and the contents indicate that it was intended for use by clergy.

Bellarmino distinguished between three types of tears: natural (“naturali”), pernicious (“perniciose”) and salutary (“salutifere”).<sup>62</sup> According to this schema, natural tears in themselves were neither good, nor bad; they were caused by worldly misfortunes. Pernicious tears derived from sins such as artifice, hypocrisy and simulation. Salutary tears, instead, were identified as coming from the Holy Spirit, and could be signs of a sinner's hatred and pain at

58 Ibid., 57: “...le lagrime della penitenza sono inditio, e segno molto probabile, ch'il giaccio del peccato si strugge, e disfà, mediante il vento caldo dello Spirito santo, e della sua divina carità, che piglia possesso dell'anima penitente, e la dilegua in lagrime”. (Emphasis author's own.) Ibid., 58: “...le lagrime di penitenza ci assicurano maggiormente, che la nostra contritione di peccati, è vera contritione; e che il dolore di essi, è vero dolore”.

59 Roberto Bellarmino, \* 4.X.1542 Montepulciano (Italy), SJ 20.IX.1560 Roma (Italy), † 17.IX.1621 Roma (Italy) (*DHCI* I, 387–90).

60 Amata, “Introduzione alla lettura”, 9–21. Summaries of Bellarmine's work include: Mezzadri, “Alle origini di un tema barocco”, 72–77; Benke, *Die Gabe der Tränen*, 285–99.

61 The work was first published with the title, *De gemitu columbae, sive De bono lacrymarum libri tres*, in 1617. This analysis uses the Italian edition, published in the same year as the Latin one: Bellarmino, *Del gemito della colomba*, 6: “...di svegliare, e d'incitare i fedeli Christiani à gustare il dolce, e saporito bene delle lagrime spirituali”.

62 Ibid., 14–15.

sins committed; they further could be signs of love, spiritual joy, and the desire for God. It was with this second category that he dealt in his work.

*De gemitu columbae* constitutes three books, each in twelve chapters, in which Bellarmine argued for the necessity of salutary tears, using examples from the Bible as well as Patristic and liturgical texts (Book 1); he listed the sources of tears (Book 2), and finally dealt with the fruits of crying, that is, the uses of tears (Book 3). The first three sources of tears identified in the work — sin, hell and the Passion of Christ — were themes that appeared frequently in penitential missions, discussed below.

Thus far, then, it has been possible to identify the theme of crying in a number of texts with Jesuit authorship, and in several genres. These works demonstrate that, in seventeenth-century Jesuit spirituality and devotional practice, crying was just as much a community and public event (preaching, procession), as it was an individual and private one (prayer, meditation), although in both cases clear distinctions were made about the potential respective efficacy or danger of shedding tears, depending on the motivations that prompted them. It is the former of these two types of crying — in public — that is the focus of the next part of the study.

## **2. Tears as Signs: Connections between Inner Emotions and External Behaviour**

It has been argued that the later-medieval period saw the formalisation and ritualisation of crying, in part as a result of the Church's increasing need for control.<sup>63</sup> However, beyond the strictly religious sphere, crying in seventeenth-century Jesuit missions was also a powerful public event, occurring in a formalised, ritualised and controlled social framework. For this reason, the phenomenon needs to be analysed in a wider social context than the specifically religious one.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the public nature of these tears has led some scholars to consider the theatricality of weeping, enlisting specific examples from a number of religious events involving public weeping (for example, in early-modern Spain) to show that these events were devised within a well-designed dramaturgy specifically meant to trigger weeping, a phenomenon termed "provoked weeping".<sup>65</sup>

63 See Nagy, "Religious Weeping", 131–33.

64 This view, which the current analysis shares, was put forward by Ebersole, "The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited", 213–14.

65 See the work of William Christian, in, "Provoked Religious Weeping", 97–114, especially 100.

Although Jesuits appear regularly in these examples of religious events, the place of tears in the popular missions of the Society has received comparatively little attention, despite the survival of substantial documentary testimony; the Jesuit missions, and the nature of the textual evidence about them, thus remain a valuable line of research that can shed further light on the subject. Here, they will be used to investigate further the historical specificity of these manifestations of weeping, by exploring tears through the relationship between inner emotions and external behaviour. This shall be done through an analysis of the reports produced about penitential missions in the Italian provinces. The authors of these reports most often were the missionaries themselves, or, on occasion, observers, such as local members of the clergy.

Jesuits tended to present both the mission as a whole and the various modes of expressing penitence as deriving from God and the participants' fervour, and rejected the idea that the missionaries would have influenced the participants in any way.<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, weeping also was regarded as a spontaneous emotional manifestation. However, the reports clearly show that the missionaries urged imitation both in words and by their example,<sup>67</sup> and guided the participants' actions.<sup>68</sup> In this way, the participants in part cried because they had learned from the missionaries that this was appropriate behaviour, which they wanted to conform to. However, their crying also could be considered "mimetic weeping". According to Tobias Döring, in the context of early-modern English theatre, tears were not "regarded as expression of some personal pain"; instead, the weeper (for Döring, the actor; in our case, the

66 See, for example, one of the letters of the missionary Paolo Segneri SJ: "...queste dimostrazioni esteriori di penitenza non mai venivano o persuase o richieste con verun'arte, ma suggerite solamente a ciascuno dal suo fervore". Segneri, *Lettere*, 21.

67 See, for example, *Missione fatta a 4. d'ottobre*, 18: "...i Padri della Compagnia precedendo gl'altri, non solo con le parole, ma con l'esempio, le lagrime, i sospiri, i gridi, & atti di contrizione, e schiaffi, che si davano in faccia non contentandosi della disciplina sola, facevano parere quel loco la carcere de' penitenti di San Giovanni Climaco".

68 See ARSI, *Neap.* 76 II, f. 337r: "...dopoi preso il Santissimo in mano un Padre della Compagnia di nuovo eccitando il Popolo a' chieder misericordia con le lacrime agl'occhi diede la santa beneditione, che il Signore confirmò ne cuori di tutti con fiumi d[j] lacrime". Transcriptions of sources are as faithful as possible to the original versions, without losing meaning. Where necessary, the letters v and u have been distinguished. Lowercase letters after periods have been changed to capital letters. Abbreviations have been expanded.

missionary) "...presents a stirring sight which calls for compassion and so moves the observer to a physiological response".<sup>69</sup> There are only faint references to this view of weeping in the popular mission sources.<sup>70</sup> However, a number of other documents can help explore whether the Jesuits made use of this opportunity for mimetic weeping and, if so, how they managed to incorporate it into the opinions they had formed regarding crying. An appropriate starting point for this research is the texts by Jesuit authors from the world of Catholic theatre.<sup>71</sup>

Many textual examples demonstrate that Jesuits tended to view external bodily signs as referring unambiguously to certain internal emotions and states of mind, and that in this way tears also were the external manifestation of internal emotion. External and internal penitence were held to be inseparable from one another, as the author of one of the reports wrote: "internal and external penitence usually tend to be sisters, just like internal good health results in the attainment of a healthy colour in the complexion, from which we may deduce a good internal state".<sup>72</sup>

The same view was put into practice by the unnamed missionary who, stepping into church, and speaking to the congregation:

...gave the order to sing the first verse of the Miserere, which was sung with a fine musical style, in a very low intonation. And from an elevated place, and in view of the whole people, he explained first the need for penitence using the example of Nineveh,<sup>73</sup> and how *the exterior must correspond to the interior of the heart*; then he scattered ashes onto his head, and tied a rope around his neck, and proceeded to scatter the rest of the ashes throughout the church, and everyone yearned for them as they would for a valuable relic; even the most respectable people went to the front so that they [the ashes] might remain sprinkled on their clothes. And meanwhile *no other voices*

69 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, 146–47.

70 Cf. ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, f. 45r; *Ven.* 103, ff. 4v–5r; *Ven.* 103, f. 23v; *Ven.* 106 I, f. 179v.

71 That this may well be a fruitful line of research is shown by the following study: Majorana, "Governo del corpo, governo dell'anima".

72 ARSI, *Neap.* 74a, fasc. 2, f. 196v: "...la penitenza interna et esterna sogliono ordinariamente esser sorelle, come la buona salute di dentro fa che si mantenghi il sano color nel volto. E da questo si argomenta la buona dispositione interna".

73 Nineveh in the Biblical tradition was saved from the threat of God's destructive wrath by the mediating intervention of Jonah, and as a result of the entire city's repentance (Jon. 3:1–10).

*could be heard than ashes, penitence, mercy, which – accompanied by a most bitter weeping – demonstrated that they were not uttered for appearance's sake, but with a truly contrite spirit [anima].*<sup>74</sup>

Cries, tears, sobbing, sighs, mortification, and penitential clothing were proof of the “internal fervour of the soul”,<sup>75</sup> of the “penitent heart”,<sup>76</sup> and the “inner trembling of the soul”,<sup>77</sup> and were visible for everyone to see:<sup>78</sup> as one mission report described, “...the rush couldn't be stopped, everyone wanted to get to the podium before the others, and wanted to incriminate themselves publicly on their knees, weeping, with hands clasped, and with faces on the ground, and it seemed to them that they would not be satisfied until they had been visible in that place to the whole people”.<sup>79</sup> The physical

74 ARSI, *Rom.* 132 II, f. 522r: “...diede ordine, che s'intonasse il primo versetto del Miserere, che fù cantato da buona musica in tono assai flebile, ed egli in un luogo sollevato a' vista di tutto il popolo, havendo prima esposta con l'esempio di Ninive la necessità della penitenza, e come *l'esterna doveva haver corrispondenza con l'interna del cuore*, aspersosi con quelle ceneri 'l capo, e postosi un capestro al collo si diede a' sparger per la Chiesa la cenere rimasta, che veniva ambita da tutti come pretiosa reliquia, facendosi avanti anche persone più qualificate, perche ne rimanessero aspersi li loro vestimenti, e in tanto *non si sentivano altre voci, che cenerre, penitenza, misericordia, quali accompagnate da un amarissimo pianto dimostravano non esser detto per cerimonia, ma con animo veramente contrito*”. (Emphasis author's own.) Similarly, in another place: ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 487v: “...finiva sempre la predica con dirottissime lagrime, e voci di misericordia, e di perdono, non dette per cerimonia, ma che veramente si sentiva e si vedeva che venivan dal cuore”.

75 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 38: the full phrase is, “...[un cittadino facultoso] spinto da *interno fervore di spirito*, di cui davan buon testimonio le perpetue, & affettuose sue lagrime”. (Emphasis author's own.)

76 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 23: “...dimostranze d'un *cuor pentito*”. (Emphasis author's own.) The phrase, or concept that it refers to, appears often in the texts. See, for example, Elia, *Relatione di una missione*, 7–8: “...sentendo ciascuno realmente nel cuore quel che proferiva la bocca”; Bartolini, *Relatione delle Missioni*, 10: “...nella esterna mutatione, che facevano i loro corpi d'habiti sfoggiati in penitenti, rappresentavano l'interna de' cuori”. (The transcription of the report can be consulted here: <https://sites.google.com/site/raimondomontecuccoli/tracce-del-passato-1/documenti-storici-on-line/per-una-storiografia-del-frignano/la-storia-del-frignano/vii-dal-1644-al-1714>. Since the transcriber [Paolo Bernardoni] does not keep the original page numbers, I refer to the page numbers of the cited pdf document).

77 ARSI, *Rom.* 132 II, f. 517v: the full phrase is, “...si battevano con tal vehemenza, e con tante lagrime, che ben dimostravano la *commotione interna dell'animo*”. (Emphasis author's own.)

78 On the intentionality of Pope Clement VIII's (r. 1592–1605) publicly shed tears, see Imorde, “Tasting God”.

79 ARSI, *Rom.* 181 I, f. 265v: “...non fu possibile rattenere l'impeto che tutti facevano



signs of penitence had to be taken onto the stage, but the authors of the sources were silent about the possibility of simulation and the spiritual dangers that accompanied it.

However, not all of those in contact with penitential missions agreed with such an intimate relationship between the internal and the external states, as we shall see in the following text, written by the Jesuit, Scipione Paolucci, and published in 1651.<sup>80</sup> In his account of the popular missions in the Kingdom of Naples covering the first half of the seventeenth century, we learn that a local priest had lost his brother at the hands of his enemies and, although the priest had forgiven them in his heart, he would not speak to them, explaining that he was: “only obliged to forgiveness of the heart, which he had already done; he judged any other external manifestation to be superfluous”.<sup>81</sup> The author of the report found this argument unsatisfactory, and even dangerous, claiming that: “the connection between the external and the internal in our behaviour is all too intrinsic; they cannot be separated without great difficulty, and very rarely”.<sup>82</sup>

Paolucci further reported that an unnamed critical observer who was apparently familiar with the missionaries’ methods asked whether there was any need for these external manifestations if

a gara, di salire su il Palco, e genuflessi, e piangenti, con le mani accoppiate, e con il volto in terra accusarsi pubblicamente parendo loro di non sodisfare, se non si facevano vedere da quel posto à tutto il popolo”.

80 Scipione Paolucci, \* 1610 Napoli (Italy), SJ 12.X.1625 Napoli (Italy), † 27.IV.1665 Napoli (Italy) (*Sommervogel* VI, col. 176; ARSI, *Neap.* 103, f. 62v). His work is organised as a series of reports about the missions. In the first chapters, he outlines the missionary practices of the province of Naples; in subsequent chapters he provides a detailed account of the results of the missions (which, predictably, were always positive), such as conversions, reconciliations, restitutions, miraculous events, and so on. While never personally involved in the missions (he was a teacher at the College of Naples), the viewpoint of the text is mainly his; no protagonists are named directly, but are simply referred to as: “Padri delle missioni/missionanti”. While an explicit motivation for the text is not stated, this kind of report appears to have been written as a testament to the effectiveness of the Jesuit missionary activity in that province, possibly for readers both internal and external to the Society.

81 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 128: “...di non esser’obligato, che ad un perdono di cuore; che tale già l’havea conceduto; ogni altra estrinseca dimostrazione giudicava superflua”.

82 *Ibid.*: “...troppo è intrinseca la connessione trà l’esterno, e l’interno nostro portamento, ne senza gran difficoltà, e ben rare volte si trovano disuniti”.

true penitence must come from the heart.<sup>83</sup> In his answer, Paolucci summarised the role played by these methods as: “mostly the effects of the mortification of the heart and sometimes also the reasons for it”.<sup>84</sup> Thus, if external manifestations could themselves prompt mortification, this meant that they could induce pain in the heart, and therefore did not function solely as signs.<sup>85</sup>

Sources on penitential missions show that the Jesuits assumed a close relationship, and mutually informing and influencing connection, between the external and the internal realms of the human being. This corresponded to the view presented in Italian physiognomy treatises of the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries.<sup>86</sup> Jesuit writers of these missionary sources do not mention false emotions, or the simulation of external signs: tears were the unequivocal signs of contrition, and for this reason weeping was considered to be of great importance for those participating in the missions.

Research on these popular missionary accounts carried out by this author has produced only one incident thus far that alludes to the quality of the tears as a concern to the missionaries. Paolucci’s 1651 publication includes an account of how, during a mission in the territory of the Kingdom of Naples, a bishop and his flock grieved together for a church which had burnt down. For the missionary, the community’s tears were the result of a natural response, shed because of their human attachment to the visual beauty of the church (described as the “*tenerezza de gli occhi*”). In response, he delivered a speech to move their hearts to a greater compassion (“*muovere à*

83 Ibid., 207: “...di quando in quà una penitenza, che per esser vera hà da esser di cuore, e in conseguenza tutta interna; si dee risolvere in non sò quali inutili apparenze, e estrinseche dimostrate?”

84 Ibid., 209: “...per lo più sono effetto, e talvolta anche cagione della mortificatione del cuore”. Cf. the statements the Jesuit Giulio Fazio made for clerics about internal and external mortification: *Trattato utilissimo della mortificatione*, 170–78.

85 Gergely Tamás Fazakas (*Siralmas imádság*, 82–84, quote on p. 82.) claims, on the basis of examples from England, that “according to some early modern interpretations, physical and linguistic manifestations should not only be regarded as representation of the internal self, but *external practices can potentially transform it*”. (Emphasis in the original.) With the exception of the quote above, this research has not produced further traces of such a view, observed as demonstrably prevalent in a Protestant context, but relatively absent in the documentary evidence from the Jesuit missions.

86 Gualandri, *Affetti, passioni*, 19–23.

più efficace compassione i lor cuori”),<sup>87</sup> and so imbued their weeping for a worldly loss with spiritual content. In the missionary’s view, physical tears were insufficient in themselves, and their spiritual value was questionable because of their source; therefore, through his words he sought for them the transformation of the internal reason for their grief, and, according to Paolucci’s account, thus changed the type of tears as well.

### 3. Tears in Jesuit Popular Missions

In this part of the analysis focusing on the practice of popular missions, a symptom of a larger process can be observed, whereby Catholic piety in this period can be seen to have had a strongly dramatic and affective character. This can be traced, for example, in Passion sermons and other devotional texts, clearly aimed at affecting the emotions, and bringing them to the surface. As Karant-Nunn has argued on the basis of her analysis of these texts, the sentiments contained therein “set Catholics distinctly apart from Protestants”,<sup>88</sup> and became one of the distinguishing features of Catholic identity. The discussion that follows deals with one of the characteristic elements of this Catholic piety: crying.

#### 3.1. Penitential Processions

Reports of seventeenth-century penitential missions describe three types of events that involved much crying — the authors themselves remarked on the abundance of weeping at these events — and they thus warrant some detailed analysis here.<sup>89</sup> The first of these was the penitential processions that took place at night. The subjects of the processions corresponded to the first three sources of tears identified by Bellarmine: sin, the Passion of Christ, and hell. The Jesuit, Antonio Baldinucci,<sup>90</sup> who wrote a summary of information (c.1705) about

87 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 262.

88 Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, 60–62. Quotation from p. 60.

89 See ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299 (Antonio Baldinucci, Avvertimenti a chi desidera impiegarci nelle missioni), f. 51r: “...suol essere tanto grande il pianto di tenerezza, che in tutti solleva, che avrebbe il cuor di selce chi non deponesse l’odio, che prima portava al nemico”; *Ibid.*, f. 33v: “Un altra funtione si suol fare di gran tenerezza, ed è il fare, che i figli o le figlie o grandi o piccoli che siano, tutti domandino pubblicamente perdono a loro genitori”; *Pratica delle missioni*, 13: “La dimostrazione di penitenza [...] è un spettacolo di somma compunzione [...]. L’altro spettacolo che cava lacrime da gl’occhi, segue nella Predica de Nemici”.

90 Antonio Baldinucci, \* 13.VI.1665 Firenze (Italy), SJ 21.IV.1681 Roma (Italy), + 7.XI.1717 Pofi (Italy) (DHCI I, 329). On the manuscript of Baldinucci, see Majorana, “La pauvreté visible”; online.

past missions and advice for undertaking future ones, described how in the mission the participants in the procession on the first occasion marched in penitential clothes singing the *Miserere*; on the second occasion, they carried Christ's image around in a coffin, singing the *Stabat Mater*; and on the third, the missionary preached about hell, while intermittently showing images of damned souls to the audience.<sup>91</sup> For Scipione Paolucci, in his text mentioned above, the function of these subjects in the missions (death, the Last Judgment, hell, mortal sins and the harm they caused) was to prepare souls for penitence.<sup>92</sup>

The penance of the heart, contrition and pain were seen to be manifested through various external signs in penitential missions. The participants wore sackcloth, placed crowns of thorns on their heads, wore the signs of the Passion, and carried other objects for mortification, as well as scattering ashes on their heads, and pulling their hair, and so on. They raised their arms and looked up to the sky; they sobbed, sighed, and begged for mercy. The clothes of the missionary always were meaningful as well, and adapted to the various elements of the mission: the surplice and stole were signs of joy, the rope and crown of thorns, of penitence.<sup>93</sup>

Processions always were prepared and organized in advance;<sup>94</sup> the weeping that invariably took place at them therefore would have been conceived as being an essential part of the event. As William Christian has observed in the context of early-modern Spain: "... weeping was considered something that people could learn how to do".<sup>95</sup> Accounts of the Italian missions reveal that this learning not only appeared as an unconscious imitation of the missionary, but

91 ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, ff. 42r–43v.

92 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 22.

93 Cf. ARSI, *Rom.* 181 I, ff. 195rv: "...deposta perciò la stola e la Cotta, segni della allegrezza, e d'innocenza, coronato il capo di spine, con una gran fune al Collo, gridando a Dio per se e pel Popolo pietà, si destò in quella numerosissima Udienza una Contritione sì grande, che era cosa da intenerire ogni più duro cuore, come di fatto molti ostinati s'intenerirono". ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, f. 56v: "ma egli [il Padre] in tanto prevedendo le recidive di molti, attribuendo ciò alle proprie colpe le piangerà a piedi del Crocifisso Signore, onde deposta la cotta, e la stola, con cui solo in questo dì suol predicare, e presi di nuovo gl'ammanti di penitenza, cioè la corda al collo e corona di spine in capo, si toglie con celerità la propria veste, restando con un'altra aperta alle spalle, s'inginocchia avanti la sacra Imagine, e si flagella interrompendo con qualche colloquio".

94 Cf. ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, ff. 38r–46r; *Pratica delle missioni*, 12–13.

95 Christian, "Provoked Religious Weeping", 97.

on occasion also constituted a conscious activity. A report about participants responding to a sermon during a mission in 1654 stated that, among various individual reactions: "...others arrived home, noting in a small book the things that they felt had moved them the most, and then they would return on another occasion to discuss them with the [Jesuit] Father".<sup>96</sup>

The sources shed light on a number of further themes pertaining to the practice of penitential weeping in the period more broadly, including gender roles and social hierarchies. Authors enthusiastically repeated that penitence not only was observed by women, but also by men of all ages and social ranks, and that they wept too.<sup>97</sup> The question often was raised at the time about whether women could be present for these processions and flagellations. In his advice concerning missions, Baldinucci observed that, providing certain precautions were taken, "it is much more useful that they [the women] take part [in penitential processions]: since they are the first to be driven to regret, the men will be moved to regret more easily by their example".<sup>98</sup> Thus, the missionaries exploited what they saw as the natural inclination of women to cry (a theme often remarked upon in treatises on the subject), with the aim of moving men to tears and contrition as well. Nevertheless, it remained universally forbidden for women to flagellate; as a result, the accounts describe how, in many cases, while the men were flagellating in the church behind closed doors, outside the women received their share of mortification through the act of crying. Despite these gendered distinctions in the acts of mortification, it is important to note that in the sources under consideration here, both men's and women's crying were accepted and desired forms of behaviour. It seems that in this religious context the sharp differences between the two sexes in their manifestation of emotions was reduced.<sup>99</sup>

The behavioural expectations operative in the sacred space and time of the penitential mission sometimes went against the general rules applying to individual social groups. Those participating in

96 ARSI, *Rom.* 132 II, f. 515r: "...altri arrivati a' casa notavano in un librettino quelle cose, dalle quali si erano sentiti più muovere, e poi tornavano in altro tempo a' conferirle col Padre".

97 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 23.

98 ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, f. 45r: "...ma se si fanno con le sopradette cautele, è molto più utile che [le donne] v'intervenghino: poiché essendo elle le prime a muoversi a compunzione, più facilmente gli uomini dal loro esempio si compungono".

99 See the observations made in the already cited volume of studies: Perfetti, ed., *The Representation of Women's Emotions*, passim.

the practice of penitence had to show submission, humility and obedience, which in the case of people of a higher social rank was directly the opposite of usual social practice. In order to prevent any problems that might flow from this, in the town of Bitonto (province of Naples), for example, the people agreed with the missionary that they would carry a single crown, thus avoiding any risk that the participants might get carried away and do something in the fervent atmosphere of the mission that they would later consider inappropriate to their social position.<sup>100</sup>

This problem occasionally was identified as a consequence of the incompatible opposition between the urban and rural spheres: critics of the mission argued that the method of the popular missions could be effective only amongst infidels and uneducated peasants, but not in an urban environment (and by inference, among the social elites residing there).<sup>101</sup> A Jesuit reporting on a mission in Cosenza (province of Naples) alluded to this issue, describing how: "...the drive was so great that no one was ashamed (as is usual at other times in large cities where sinners consider such a thing to be plebeian) to cry out to the Lord for mercy and the forgiveness of sins".<sup>102</sup>

Indeed, during the mission participants were encouraged to ignore the social norm that crying publicly was unbecoming. The process was gradual as the mission progressed and it went against usual behavioural expectations, as we can see from the following quotation: "...crying became a universal occurrence, and the Lord Bishop's daily presence at the sermons – often accompanied by tears – removed all human observance and natural shame that works to avoid being seen crying".<sup>103</sup>

100 ARSI, *Neap.* 76 I, f. 307v: "...accioche poi passato il fervore non havessero ò vergognarsi di quegli atti di che si dovebono gloriare, come talvolta è accaduto, onde all'altre Missioni si son resi restij per non esser costretti à far qualche atto, che poi à sangue freddo stimano indecente à lor grado".

101 ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, ff. 4v–5r: "...le missioni stanno bene tra gl'Infedeli, che non credono, o al più tra bifolchi di campagna, indocili, ed ignoranti, e non in terre culte, e civili, e molto meno nelle città degne di gran rispetto, e dove non manca chi possa al pari de missionarii a istruire gl'ignoranti, e correggere i traviati".

102 ARSI, *Neap.* 74, f. 137v: "...vi fù tanto moto, che nessuno si vergogno (come altre volte si suole in città grandi da peccatori tenendosi per cose da popolaccio) di gridar con voce alta misericordia, e perdono a Dio de peccati".

103 ARSI, *Neap.* 76 I, f. 50r: "...il pianto era già fatto universale, e la cotidiana assistenza di Monsignore Vescovo alle prediche accompagnata spesso da lagrime con edificazione di chi lo vedeva, toglieva ogni rispetto humano, e natural vergogna di non farsi veder piangente".

### 3.2. The “School of Mortification”

An emotional experience similar in intensity to that intended for the penitential processions, was the spiritual exercises, described in the sources as the “*scuola di mortificazione*”.<sup>104</sup> This was not always a part of the mission experience and, in contrast with the processions, the participants practised self-torture and self-humiliation in a closed environment. The process and location of the event were arranged beforehand in minute detail.<sup>105</sup> In the reports about these experiences, in addition to tears, another bodily fluid appeared: blood.

The connection of tears and blood derives from the Passion of Christ. Domizio Piatti SJ,<sup>106</sup> brother of the more famous cardinal, Flaminio, cited Bernard of Clairvaux’s teaching that Christ wanted to wash away the vast sins of mankind, not only with the tears of his eyes, but also with the tears of his entire body, through sweating blood.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, the imitation of Christ through drawing one’s own blood was a widely accepted method of penitence, which often was recorded as having taken place during penitential missions. One example of such a practice is that of a young man from Capua (province of Naples), who struck his chest with a sharp stone to make blood flow abundantly, with tears flowing just as abundantly from his eyes.<sup>108</sup>

In his *De gemitu columbae*, mentioned above, Bellarmine outlined a similar function of tears and blood in the purging of sins; he drew a parallel between tearful penitence and a martyr’s death, although the resulting pain was restricted to the spiritual and emotional

104 Cf. Selwyn, “Schools of Mortification” and, by the same author, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, which deals with this question, as well as providing a broader context for these and related themes concerning the Italian Jesuit missions in the Kingdom of Naples.

105 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 47–56.

106 Domizio Piatti, \* 1556 Milano (Italy), SJ 2.V.1589 Roma (Italy), † 26.XII.1643 Roma (Italy) (*Sommervogel* VI, col. 691-692; ARSI, *Med.* 47, f. 32r).

107 Piatti, *Trattato della passione*, 155: “...ce lo dichiara San Bernardo, il quale dice che il Signore volle sudar sangue; acciò non solo con le lagrime de gl’occhi per noi piangesse, & con quelle facesse un bagno, col quale si potessero lavare le nostre iniquità: ma anco con lagrime di tutto il corpo: & queste di sangue, acciò maggiormente ci dimostrasse l’enormità di essi, e più abbondantemente piangesse, & lavasse i peccati di tutto il corpo de’ fedeli”.

108 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 14–15: “...incominciò à batterlo [il petto] sì fieramente, che ne versava in abbondanza il sangue: piovevanli in tanto con non minor copia di lagrime gli occhi”. Quote on p. 15.

realm represented by the heart, not the physical realm of the body: "...just as the martyr's body is cut into pieces and lacerated, the true penitent crushes and grinds his own heart".<sup>109</sup> In reference to the view that placed emphasis on spiritual, not physical, pain, Paolucci observed that, for these advocates of spiritual rather than physical penitence: "...in cancelling guilt, the tears of the heart are much more suitable than is blood flowing from the veins".<sup>110</sup>

Many penitential mission narratives recount how participants appeared to desire martyrdom. According to Paolucci, in Castellammare di Stabia (province of Naples), people cried and scratched their faces until they were bloody; he described how several demonstrated such a strong drive and burning desire to suffer that if a tyrant had been there, it appeared they would have been ready to sacrifice themselves for the love of Christ.<sup>111</sup> In Cosenza, similarly, the faithful are described as declaring with tear-stained faces their desire to go to their deaths, and die an innocent martyr's death for Christ in Japan.<sup>112</sup> In these cases, the models of identification for the participants — or at least for the Jesuits who wrote about them — were the martyrs.

### 3.3. Acts of Reconciliation

The third kind of event that involved abundant weeping was reconciliation.<sup>113</sup> This too was a thoroughly prepared aspect of the

109 Bellarmino, *Del gemito*, 463–64. The full passage is: "...la lagrima spongia i peccati, e fatto illustre simile al martirio, perche sicome il Martire sparge il sangue, cosi il penitente sparge le lagrime; alla quale similitudine possiamo parimente aggiungere che sicome il Martire è tagliato, e lacerato nel corpo, cosi il vero penitente frange, e trita il cuor suo". Quote on p. 463.

110 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 37: "...per cancellare le colpe è assai più atto il pianto del cuore, che l sangue delle vene".

111 *Relatione della Missione* (1650), 41–42: "Alcuni hanno affermato, che il desiderio di patire era in essi sì vivo, & ardente, che in quel fervore pareva loro l'istesso martirio assai facile, e per niente l'haverebbono stimato. Anzi dicean tutti, che se in quella preparatione d'animo, in che essi all'hora si ritruovavano, fosse uscito fuori un Tiranno, minacciando tormentosissima morte à chi non havesse abbandonata la fede, non vi sarebbe stato alcuno, che non fosse corso di bonissima voglia à lasciarsi uccidere per amore di Giesù Christo". Quote on p. 42.

112 ARSL, *Neap.* 74, f. 139v: "...tutti bagnati di lacrime sospirando, ò come allhora ogn'uno havrebbe desiderato vedersi portare in quella forma alla morte, al Giappone condannato innocentemente per Giesù Christo".

113 Cf. Broggio, "I gesuiti come pacificatori"; Niccoli, *Perdonare*, mainly 170–185; Ferlan, "I mediatori gesuiti".



mission.<sup>114</sup> The Jesuit missionaries as a matter of course were informed in advance about any conflicts in the community, and preached accordingly. They also intervened personally or through mediators in their dealings with the conflicting parties. The reconciliation took place in a ritual form, which involved, in addition to tears, falling to one's knees, and embracing and exchanging kisses between the parties.<sup>115</sup>

The path to reconciliation always was through conversion, but the representation of this was not always part of the narrative. One source gives a very detailed account of a case in Capua, where a young man felt a desire to make peace with an old enemy of his. He rushed to the church to ask for the help of the Jesuit fathers; he put down his sword and knelt in front of the main altar, "beginning to send out the signs of his internal fire" — as the author commented.<sup>116</sup> Then he asked very loudly for God's forgiveness, beat his chest with his fist, and held the cross on the altar and kissed Christ's feet on the crucifix with tender love, all the while shedding hot tears. The internal process of conversion thus became visible for the external onlooker who could read the signs, in this case the Jesuit father. After this, the reconciliation between the parties took place in the abovementioned way.

Parents and their children also took part in a scene very similar to public reconciliation, in which they begged for forgiveness from God and from each other after a sermon on the subject. In one account of children seeking forgiveness of their parents, the process followed a series of steps: after reconciliation with God had taken place, accompanied by abundant tears, the parents rose to their feet while the children fell to the ground in front of them, put their hands together, and asked for their forgiveness in a loud voice, after which the parents blessed them. Seeing this, everybody burst into tears.<sup>117</sup> In this event the tears were understood, not merely as signs of the emotions connected to penitence, but also of the love between parents and children. Just as, with the reconciliation of enemies, tears helped to transform and put an end to the emotions of conflict that left their mark on the local community, here, in a family conflict, they were seen to have the same healing effect.

114 Cf. ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, ff. 50r–53r; *Pratica delle missioni*, 23.

115 Some examples: Segneri, *Lettere*, 22.

116 ARSI, *Neap.* 74, f. 271v: "...cominciando a mandar fuori i segni dell'interno incendio".

117 ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, ff. 33v–34r.

#### 4. Models of crying

In reports on penitential missions the authors enthusiastically drew parallels between the penitence of Biblical characters and saints, and that of their contemporary congregations.<sup>118</sup> The nature of the available documentation means that it is not possible to establish with certainty whether the participants themselves identified such associations, or whether they were devised later for the mission reports. However, it is quite probable that we are dealing with a more complex phenomenon involving more than one group in associating the spectacle with Biblical patterns, including during the missions themselves, and not just in their retrospective retelling. Several sources report, for example, that in certain places such associations were manifested through conscious performance by way of the staging of Biblical re-enactments, thus marking a cross-over from the preached mission to religious theatre. However, the author of one of the works under consideration here, Antonio Baldinucci, discouraged the missionaries from involvement in these performances, advising that it harmed the necessary veneration that Christ deserved.<sup>119</sup> In spite of this warning, sources reveal that participants dressed in costumes and acted out the Passion of Christ,<sup>120</sup> or the martyrdom of St Julia,<sup>121</sup> or dressed up as saints.<sup>122</sup>

At the same time, the missionaries themselves also mediated these patterns through their preaching (when mentioning the example of Nineveh) and their actions (when they placed a crown of thorns on their own heads, like Christ), so the possibility cannot be excluded that the participants consciously wished to emulate the saints when choosing their method of penance.

In these missions the figure of the Virgin Mary provided a pattern and a source of penitence and tears, in the same vein as Christ did. To illustrate her pain, penitents very often used a statue of Mary (“nostra Signora del pianto”), whose heart was penetrated by a dagger. When seeing this statue, the tears derived from two sources: the sorrow felt because her heart had been stabbed by the effects of human

118 For an examination of the Biblical models of crying in David, Peter, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene in early modern English preaching, see Lange, *Telling Tears*, 129–85.

119 ARSI, *Opp. Nn.* 299, ff. 44v–45r.

120 Bartolini, *Relazione delle Missioni*, 7, 15, 18, 23.

121 *Ibid.*, 22. The hagiographic tradition identifies Julia of Corsica as a Carthaginian saint martyred in Corsica in the fifth century.

122 ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 318v.

sin, and the compassion felt for Mary who suffered because of the torment and death of her son.<sup>123</sup> During the missions, when sinners demonstrated their pain and sorrow with an abundant shedding of tears, they were encouraged to see themselves, in so doing, as pulling the dagger out of the Virgin Mary's heart.<sup>124</sup>

The penitent who perhaps is most often mentioned in the reports is Mary Magdalene; this saint offered the possibility of identification primarily, but not exclusively, for female converts.<sup>125</sup> For instance, in his missionary preaching, Paolo Segneri SJ<sup>126</sup> compared the crowd which had gathered to Mary Magdalene.<sup>127</sup> Most often, however, the saint was invoked at the conversion of prostitutes: for example, in a mission in Naples a prostitute listening to a speech about vanity suddenly burst into tears and — we learn from the report — removed her decorative clothing, her earrings and necklace, and made her hair dishevelled; the author added: "...she seemed like a good disciple imitating the repentant Magdalene".<sup>128</sup> Another incident was strongly reminiscent of one of the Biblical episodes in which the Magdalene appeared: the account described how, while the missionary fathers were having their lunch, a woman living in an incestuous relationship entered and threw herself at their feet, "come un'altra Maddalena"; she wept so much that everybody was driven to compassion.<sup>129</sup> Mary Magdalene's example thus could be imitated externally in several ways: the author of one of the reports claimed that a group of widows showed their repentance by marching barefoot, with crowns of thorns on their heads and ropes on their necks; they held a skull in one hand, close against their chest, and a cross two feet high in the other, looking exactly like a painting of Mary Magdalene.<sup>130</sup>

Mary of Egypt also added to the high number of female models

123 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Gesu*, 42.

124 ARSI, *Neap.* 75, ff. 56r-57r.

125 He mentions the women of Bitonto as Mary Magdalenes and the holy women of Jerusalem: Elia, *Relatione di una missione*, 17, 19.

126 Paolo Segneri, \* 21.III.1624 Nettuno (Italy), SJ 2.XII.1637 Roma (Italy), † 9.XII.1694 Roma (Italy) (*DHCI* IV, 3547-48).

127 Bartolini, *Relatione delle Missioni*, 7-8.

128 *Missione fatta a 4. d'ottobre*, 26: "...pareva buona discepola imitatrice della penitente Maria Maddalena".

129 ARSI, *Rom.* 132 II, f. 517r.

130 ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 318v.

of penitence:<sup>131</sup> the converted prostitutes of Bitonto were compared to this model ascetic saint who lived approximately between the fourth and sixth centuries.<sup>132</sup> According to another author of a report, one woman on the mission resembled a painted Mary of Egypt by dressing in bulrush clothing and holding a skull in front of her chest.<sup>133</sup>

The use of male models of penitence was less frequent than for female ones. Of those that were mentioned, the authors alluded to Jerome several times when they described participants beating their chests with stones,<sup>134</sup> while a few other references to male Biblical characters and saints included Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (carrying large ladders),<sup>135</sup> and Aloysius Gonzaga (by piercing with a horseshoe),<sup>136</sup> still others tied themselves to crosses in reference to the one on which St Andrew was martyred.<sup>137</sup> Some participants' clothing, meanwhile, reminded one author of St Paul the Hermit and St Onuphrius the Hermit,<sup>138</sup> and the crying day and night of some penitents was reminiscent of King David's penitential tears.<sup>139</sup> However, the nature of the parallels identified in these cases between the behaviours and attributes of penitents and famous figures from the Bible and the lives of the saints, suggest that for the most part they were developed subsequently, and as the result of literary embellishment.

In addition to the imitation of clothing and behaviour, there are also reports of repeating and shouting out the words of saints, which participants no doubt heard from the missionary himself. In a mission of 1677 in the province of Rome, the participants are reported to have repeated the words of St Francis of Assisi ("Paradise, paradise, so great is the good which I expect that all pain is to me a delight"),

131 One Jesuit wrote an entire book about the penitent Mary of Egypt: Raynaud, *Sancta Maria Aegyptiaca*.

132 Elia, *Relazione di una missione*, 20.

133 ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 318v.

134 Segneri, *Lettere*, 21; *Missione fatta a 4. d'ottobre*, 20; *Relazione della Missione* (1650), 54; ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 497<sup>r</sup>.

135 Bartolini, *Relazione delle Missioni*, 7.

136 *Relazione della Missione* (1650), 54.

137 Bartolini, *Relazione delle Missioni*, 15.

138 ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 319r.

139 Paolucci, *Missioni de Padri della Compagnia di Giesu*, 85.

and then those of St Teresa of Avila (“Suffer or die”) in the process of manifesting their contrition.<sup>140</sup>

The penitence practised in these missions frequently was compared to an even earlier example of Christian penitence, described in the famous work of John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, mentioned above. In this work, Climacus described a monastery where the penitent monks:

...lifted up their eyes to Heaven, and with wailings and outcries, implored help from there. [...] Others stood in prayer with their hands tied behind their backs like criminals; their faces, darkened by sorrow, bent to earth. [...] Others sat on the ground in sackcloth and ashes, hiding their faces between their knees, and they struck the earth with their foreheads. [...] Others were continually beating their breasts. [...] Some of them watered the ground with their tears; others, incapable of tears, struck themselves. [...] Others sat pensive and bowed to the ground, swaying their heads unceasingly, and roaring and moaning like lions from their inmost heart to their teeth.<sup>141</sup>

The narratives claimed that the penitents of Cosenza, Bitonto, Durazzano, Nettuno, and perhaps many other places, behaved in a similar way to the monks of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.<sup>142</sup> In these cases, the documentation does not allow us to establish whether the similarity was introduced by the author later, or if the participants consciously followed this pattern. However, a report about a mission in Castellammare di Stabia proves that in certain places the prison described by Climacus, with its famous penitential scenes, did indeed become an object of imitation as a result of the missionaries’ preaching activity: we know from the reports on this mission that Climacus’s work was read aloud, followed by a meditation. At this point, we learn that the audience started crying and wanted to imitate the prisoners, which they did, following the example of the missionary father.<sup>143</sup>

140 ARSI, *Rom.* 181 II, f. 319r: “Paradiso, Paradiso, è tanto il ben che aspetto, che ogni pena mi è diletto”; “...ò patire, ò morire”. The words “Paradiso, paradiso” are missing from the saying attributed to St Francis of Assisi. Cf. *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, 172.

141 Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 55–56.

142 ARSI, *Neap.* 74, f. 139v; Elia, *Relazione di una missione*, 8; ARSI, *Neap.* 76 I, f. 37r; ARSI, *Rom.* 132 II, f. 587r.

143 *Relazione della Missione* (1650), 12: “Una mattina nella meditatione lesse egli

The sources relating to these missions repeatedly featured the images of the Last Judgment, Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, again in connection to penitence. For Giovanni Battista di Elia, author of the Bitonto mission's *Relatione* published in 1646, the church of Bitonto seemed like a sacred purgatory;<sup>144</sup> similarly, for the author of the 1665 *Relatione*, Foggia (province of Naples) seemed like Hell because of the beating of chests and crying, but also like Paradise, because of the participants asking for forgiveness and mercy.<sup>145</sup> Other accounts presented the penitential events of the mission as an approaching Last Judgment;<sup>146</sup> still other authors invoked the Old Testament city of Nineveh, and its own conversion *en-masse*, to describe the general conversions that took place after their preaching.<sup>147</sup> Sometimes such comparisons were made, not only by the narrator of the *Relatione*, but also through the actions reported of the missionaries, who blew actual trumpets to represent the Last Judgment,<sup>148</sup> and when, on one occasion, the Jesuit father is said to have shouted: "Poenitentiam agite quoniam appropinquavit regnum caelorum".<sup>149</sup> These accounts thus offer plenty of examples, both of narrative modelling introduced into the texts retrospectively, and of established patterns actually enacted during the mission, even if it is not always clear which of the two types of examples are being recorded.

[il Padre] attentamente, ponderandolo di passo in passo ciò che si scrive del carcere, che chiamano di Climaco: e cavò fiumi di pianto da gli occhi di chi l'udì, & accese nel cuore un ardentissimo desiderio d'imitare quei Carcerati. E nel vero la Chiesa del Giesù nel tempo di queste meditationi pareva appunto quel carcere da quell'Autore descritto, dove quanti intervenivano tutti piangevano, tutti sospiravano, tutti erano ambiziosi d'esser mortificati con ogni quantunque gravissima sorte di penitenza ad esempio del medesimo Padre, che precedendo sempre à gli altri".

144 Elia, *Relatione di una missione*, 11.

145 *Relatione della missione* (1665), 19. See also ARSI, Rom. 181 II, f. 454v: "...vi fù che disse, parer quella piazza, un'Inferno, un Purgatorio, un Paradiso; un'Inferno per le strilla, un Purgatorio per la sodisfattione delle colpe in tante lacrime, e finalmente un Paradiso per tanti atti d'amor di Dio".

146 ARSI, Rom. 181 II, f. 315v, 448v.

147 This is how Naples (*Missione fatta a 4. d'ottobre*, 30), Castellammare di Stabia (*Relatione della Missione* [1650], 43), Lecce (ARSI, Neap. 74, f. 337r), Trani (Beltrano, *Brevissimo racconto*, 8), Bitonto (Elia, *Relatione di una missione*, 11–12, 19), L'Aquila (Barone, *Della vita del P. Sertorio Caputo*, 455; ARSI, Neap. 76 II, f. 357v), Acquaviva (ARSI, Neap. 76 I, f. 80r), Monopoli (ARSI, Neap. 76 I, f. 126v) and Maserno (Bartolini, *Relatione delle Missioni*, 10) become Nineveh.

148 *Relatione della Missione* (1650), 53.

149 ARSI, Rom. 132 II, f. 518v.

## 5. Conclusion

We have seen that tears carried a variety of meanings for Jesuits: these meanings could differ among individual members of the Society, as well as from the moment when tears were shed, to when they were committed to paper in the Jesuits' accounts. The same can be said for the other protagonists present at these scenes, the penitents themselves, with differences among them, and between them and their Jesuit guides: while many may have been crying within the framework of penitence set for them by the Jesuits (and later recorded about them in the Jesuit texts), they may have been crying about entirely different things (so, not necessarily false tears but different kinds of tears from those ascribed to them by the Jesuits).<sup>150</sup>

However, an examination of the sources relating to the Jesuit popular missions, has shown that, for the Jesuits leading these missions tears had a reductive meaning. They were interpreted as the outward expression of a necessary emotion linked to penitence (e.g. *compunctio, contritio, commotio*), and as the external sign of interior conversion. The extent of the internal suffering experienced by the penitent thus was seen to be visible to the outside world through tears, and on occasion through blood.<sup>151</sup> Therefore public crying was a highly valued method of expressing emotion, and was an action expected of both female and male participants. In these sources, which included advice for fellow-Jesuits undertaking the missions, the authors did not account for the possibility of imitation, or false tears.

It can be established, further, that these sources represented crying

150 The myriad meanings of tears, also beyond those intended by the Jesuits, and mainly in the non-European context, is discussed in, Vélez, "Do not suppose that those tears proceed from weakness". The author observes: "Slavs, Guaraní, and Jesuits [...] could be caught [...] in the historical record in searingly honest moments of faltering and anguish. At first, they wept. Jesuits recorded tears that did not exclusively point to successful indoctrination, but that also indicated the stretching of Catholic practice, and its extension of meaning due to lived experience" (p. 40). And again: "To many Jesuits, tears in the Moxos missions stood as palpable proof of internal spiritual transformation"; however, Vélez advises, "tears have rarely been unilateral designators of Catholicism, regardless of where and when they were shed. To historians bent on retrieving gritty frontier experience, tears might also point to real trauma, personal suffering, or even community-building." (p. 23)

151 Here it is worth noting that Giovanni Bonifacio, in his work on physiognomy (*Arte de' cenni*, 1616), also felt that "Il dolore estremo e la disperazione sono spesso accompagnati da atti violenti, principalmente rivolti contro se stessi" ("Extreme pain and despair are often accompanied by violent acts, mainly directed against oneself"). Gualandri paraphrases Bonifacio in Gualandri, *Affetti, passioni*, 69.

through the application of certain patterns, which were first and foremost linked to the Bible, as well as to famous early saints, such as from the life of the penitent, Mary of Egypt, and the writings of John Climacus. These models were utilised both for the writers of these accounts, to compare the penitential acts taking place under their leadership with those of earlier times, as well as during the missions themselves, as models for emulation by the participants in the missions. This was done by invoking their Biblical and saintly models through dress, objects, and attributes linked to these figures, and through imitation of the penitential acts associated with their tradition. It was done with the participation and encouragement of the Jesuit mission leaders.

The subject discussed in this paper has been presented with the objective of shedding new light on tears and their various meanings within the context of the Jesuit missions, and thereby on their significance more broadly in the pre-modern period. In doing so, it has sought to point to several further possibilities for research: one of these strands, for example, is the means and methods of triggering and guiding emotions applied during missions, and their relationship with rhetoric and theatre.<sup>152</sup> Another fruitful topic of research would be to establish what other kinds of emotions — apart from the often-mentioned *compunctio* and *contritio* — the missionaries wanted to elicit, and why. Finally, on the basis of the discussion in this essay, it would seem to be important to place the subject into a wider analytical frame (for example, drawing together the disciplines of research in the history of emotions, ecclesiastical history and the history of social discipline in the pre-modern period), and to adopt comparative perspectives, such as comparing manifestations of emotion in Jesuit missionary practice and in other religious orders, as well as between geographical locations, for example in the Christian sphere inside Europe and outside it.<sup>153</sup> These investigations would take us closer to understanding the history of emotions, and the place of tears within this history, in the early-modern world.

Translated by Emese Czintos

Revisions and additional translations by George Seel

152 On the characteristics of missionary sermons and the scenography of penitential missions, see, primarily, the studies of Majorana, “Lo pseudo-Segneri”; “Elementi drammatici della predicazione missionaria”; “Missionarius/Concionator”; “Le missioni popolari”.

153 As mentioned above, for examples mainly from Jesuit overseas missions, and concerning weeping, but with a non-symbolic interpretation of tears, see, Vélez, “Do not suppose that those tears proceed from weakness”.



**Summary**

Recent studies both in the history of emotions and other disciplines have analysed crying in a social, historical and cultural context. This paper aims to present the meanings and actions connected to tears and crying within a specifically religious setting: the seventeenth-century penitential missions in Italy. It will do this based on manuscript and printed sources, and by drawing on the specific features of Jesuit spirituality. The first section, using examples from several types of prose works on piety, outlines the views that Jesuits held on tears. The second section deals with the relationships that the Jesuits identified as having existed between interior and exterior human experience, and by extension between emotions and their physical and behavioural manifestations. The third section analyses those aspects of the missions in which observers reported profuse crying; it considers the meanings it carried for those engaged in reconciliation in the social-political-familial setting in which the missions took place, shedding light thereby on the crucial role that religious life played in these spheres. The fourth section continues with an examination of the textual representation of crying, and identifies crying and penitence with established models that were used as valuable points of comparison and emulation, both by those following the missions and by the authors who later wrote reports of these missions. The result of the analysis aims to provide new insights into the roles and meanings attributed to tears in the early-modern period, through this exploration of Jesuit practitioners and observers of weeping in their roles as leaders of, and writers about, popular missions.

**Sommario**

In questi ultimi anni sono stati pubblicati numerosi studi, sia nell'ambito della storia delle emozioni nonché in quello di altre discipline, che analizzano il pianto in un contesto sociale, storico e culturale. Questo saggio, sulla base di fonti manoscritte e stampate e tenendo conto delle caratteristiche della spiritualità gesuitica, si propone di presentare i significati, le emozioni, le funzioni, i gesti e i riti che si collegano al pianto nelle missioni popolari di tipo penitenziale svolte dai gesuiti nell'Italia del Seicento. Nella prima parte del saggio si illustrano, attraverso vari esempi tratti da testi che appartengono a diversi generi della letteratura devozionale, le opinioni che i gesuiti si erano fatti in merito alle lacrime. La seconda parte, invece, si occupa delle correlazioni che i gesuiti supponevano esistessero tra il mondo interiore e quello esteriore, tra le emozioni e le manifestazioni corporali e comportamentali. Nella terza parte si

analizzano i momenti delle missioni in cui — stando alle relazioni dei gesuiti — i partecipanti versavano copiose lacrime. Il saggio si chiude con l'analisi delle descrizioni del pianto lasciate dai gesuiti missionari e riprese poi da autori successivi che scrissero di quelle missioni, dove si incontrano non solo i modelli di pianto e penitenza praticati, ma anche quelli immaginati, gettando nuova luce sui ruoli e significati attribuiti alle lacrime nell'età moderna.

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