

Early Modern Cardinals and Theology

Normativity and agency of a knowledge in decline

When thinking of the relationship between theology and the cardinalate, what comes to mind is of the example of cardinals who were prominent theologians such as Robert Bellarmine, Juan de Lugo, or Pietro Sforza Pallavicini. Yet such figures may have been obscured by hagiography or even by some heroic historiography that isolates them from their environment. Though they were not exactly the prototypical cardinal, they were not necessarily exceptions either; and the figure of the cardinal theologian was quite ordinary through the Early Modern period. We would probably have a better understanding of such examples if we better understood what the customary institutional and religious patterns were within which their action made sense for their contemporaries.

If some theologians became cardinals, or if some cardinals were still active in the academic field of theology, it is not merely because a theological framework structures the Church as a public space. Cardinals – still more than other princes or church officials – operated from within such a theologically-determined framework and had a particular need for theologians. Cardinals ordinarily patronized theologians and turned to them for counsel in order to accomplish their duties, particularly regarding their contribution to government in the curia.

Exploring the relationship between the Cardinal (from the historian's point of view in a mostly political ecclesiastical position) and theology (from the historians' point of view first and foremost a discipline of knowledge rather than a mere discourse) is a difficult task. First and foremost, because it would require a social and cultural history of theology which we utterly lack. While historians of Early Modern Catholicism, for the last twenty years, and with Italian historians leading the way, have been more willing to engage with theological material as a source, there remains an important historiographical obstacle to such an agenda. We do not have an actually historical history of theology itself – one that would answer the questions and meet the criteria of contemporary scientific studies. Our history of theology is still too dependent on the narrative put forward by theologians themselves; and as the history of other forms of knowledge shows, in such cases, such a history is usually one of winners and losers which translates far more into contemporary preoccupations (whether religious or not) than into the actual historical dynamics that presided over the making of the knowledge itself. Therefore engaging a discussion of the relationship of such powerful churchmen as cardinals to theology can be one more exercise in advancing an agenda for a social and cultural history of theology.

This paper will do so by turning to three different set of questions: (1) the discourse of theologians regarding the office of cardinals; (2) the theological proficiency of cardinals; and (3) their

relationship to theological expertise and the figure of the expert cardinal theologian.

I. The Cardinal as a difficult theological object

Despite significant ecclesiological shifts in Early Modern Catholicism, Ecclesiology did not emerge as a distinct discipline within theology.¹ Yet, not only did some theologians discuss the cardinalate as an office from within more general discussions regarding the Church, theology also influenced the discourse of other specialists particularly canonists. When Giovanni Girolamo Albani wrote his 1541, *De cardinalatu liber* he discussed issues that bore upon Church law as well as theology (such as the very nature of the Cardinal's office within the Church, its institution, and the virtues that it required). So did Francesco, Cardinal Albizzi when he published his disputation *De Iurisdictione quam habent SRE Cardinales in Ecclesiis suorum*.

Theologians also discussed the stature and nature of the cardinalate from within more general ecclesiological discussions or while discussing moral cases that could pertain to the office or to the relationship between lay persons, clerics, and cardinals. Yet, as Sylvio de Franceschi states – in an important paper for the issue at hand here – the cardinalate did not obviously pertain to the field of theology and 'there were not that many Catholic theologians who dealt with cardinal's office'.² Early modern theologians and canonists inherited a significant weight of scholarship produced on this issue during the Great Schism and in its aftermath. Parisian theologians, whose ecclesiological model can be described in broad terms as less monarchic and more aristocratic than of other contemporary theologians, paradoxically contributed to the discussion by extolling the Cardinal's office at the expense of the papal one: Gerson's *De Statibus Ecclesiasticis* and Pierre d'Ailly's *Liber de Ecclesia et cardinalium auctoritate* are important texts in this regard. D'Ailly in particular influenced later discussion by arguing, with Gerson, that the Cardinal's office was *de jure divino*, adding that the Apostles were primarily Peter's councillors, and therefore their office came prior even to that of bishops. To d'Ailly, the Sacred College was therefore the true successor to the Apostolic Senate that had ruled the Church before the dispersion of the Twelve and before Peter ever came to Rome.

Controversy with Protestantism was an important step in the elaboration of a more articulate theological discourse about cardinalate. Bellarmine discussed the issue in a specific chapter in his

¹ Stefania Tutino, 'Ecclesiology/Church-State Relationship in Early Modern Catholicism' in Ulrich A. Lehner, Richard A. Müller, A. G. Roeber, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016 ,
² Sylvio H. de Franceschi, « La théologie catholique face au statut des cardinaux de l'Église romaine. Origines et fonctions du cardinalat selon le discours ecclésiologique du catholicisme posttridentin », Sylvio Hermann De Franceschi, « La théologie catholique face au statut des cardinaux de l'Église romaine. Origines et fonctions du cardinalat selon le discours ecclésiologique du catholicisme posttridentin », *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 127/2, 2015.

disputation *De membris ecclesiae militantis*.³ Bellarmine reasserted against Calvin and other Protestant theologians, that the Cardinal's office in the Church was threefold. First, each cardinal is foremost bishop, priest, or deacon. Second, the cardinals elect the pope. Third, they support and advise the pontiff in the government of the Universal Church. One of the main points of contention with reformed theologians – particularly with those of the emerging Anglican Church – was the relationship between Cardinalate and episcopacy. Bellarmine distinguished jurisdiction, sacramentality, and government: while cardinals were inferior to bishops in the first two regards, they were superior, and acknowledged as such within the Church hierarchy, because of their role in the government of the Universal Church.

As De Franceschi notes, such an affirmation also challenged the ecclesiology of other interpretations of Catholicism. Even before he broke with Catholicism, the Venetian Marco Antonio de Dominis utterly dismissed the authority of cardinals over other clerics in his 1617 *De Respublica Christiania* by arguing that the sacrament of Orders is the sole foundation of Church hierarchy and that the Roman Cardinalate usurped a more general and original Cardinalate within the Universal Church. While not every theologian would agree that the Cardinalate was *de iure divino*, most Catholic theologians praised and defended the institution as ecclesologically legitimate and necessary. For instance, in his 1623 *Pro Sacra Monarchia Ecclesiae Catholicae* – a text that while answering de Dominis in detail remained compatible with some Gallican claims and that was published with the support of the French monarchy – the French Dominican theologian Nicolas Coëffeteau vindicated Bellarmine almost entirely. In 1641, the French Jesuit Louis Cellot, whose *De hierarchia et hierarchiis* attempts to account for the structure of the Church theologically, argued that the cardinals were, without any doubt, above any other within the Church because of their immediate connection to the Pope (*ut contigua sui corporis membra*). He acknowledged their status as judges within the Universal Church and therefore went as far as writing that 'in terms of state of perfection' they were higher than the bishops whose office was mostly pastoral.

While theologians therefore acknowledged some sort of pre-eminence of the cardinals, one could still argue that the evolution of a theological discourse about them also registers the decline of their importance relative to both the episcopacy and the papacy itself. A good guide here is Juan Azor who is one of the few theologians to have included an extensive discussion of cardinals in a theological treatise with no direct controversial purpose. He dedicated two chapters of his *Institutionum Moralium* – one of the most important work of casuistry and one that would strongly influence later Catholic moral theology – to this very discussion.⁴ While acknowledging that theologians and canonists stood on both sides of this debate, he sided with those who, like

³ *De membris ecclesiae militantis*, b. 1, *De clericis*, ch. 16 *De cardinalibus*. See De Franceschi, *art. cit.*

⁴ Juan Azor, *Institutionum Moralium*, t. 2, p. 2, lib. 4, ch. 1-2, Rome, 1606.

Domingo de Soto, did not regard the Cardinalate as *de iure divino* as Bellarmine later would; he considered Soto's opinion to be the most probable. Yet if he did so, it was because he felt that all the cardinals' power came from that of the Pope himself (*tota Cardinalium potestas a Romanis Pontificibus manavit ac fluxit*), including their power to elect his successor or to act as councillors to him. More importantly, Azor broke with the ecclesiological heritage of the Great Schism, and even with Albani, by arguing that it was a common doctrine that the pope could make important decisions (namely creating new cardinals, transferring bishops, appointing a legate *a latere*, alienating Church property, conceding a major fief or even going to war, etc.) irrespective of the consensus and consent of the cardinals whose advice he took. And again one can understand here how he would be reluctant to acknowledging the Sacred College as existing *per se* and *ex iure divino*: this would have conflicted with his rather more absolutist understanding of the Church's monarchical government. The downplaying of the role of ecclesiastical councillors within the Church mirrored by that of political government in political theory at the very same time.

On what the virtues and education of a cardinal should be, the few theologians who discussed the cardinalate could ever go very far. The issue pertained to the more general discussion of the appointment of candidates to benefices within the Church (with most theologians arguing that those in charge did not have to look for the worthiest candidate as long as the man who was chose was worthy enough). Theologians also had to deal with the reality of the Cardinalate they were confronted with and could hardly criticize the actual appointees too openly. Azor argued that, considering the part the cardinals played in judging matters for the Universal Church, they required a significant degree of either theological or canonical literacy and that relying on the expertise of more knowledgeable men could not suffice. While acknowledging that there was no clear legal requirement in this regard, he reclaimed the prescription of the Council of Constance that required at least a licence in either canon or civil law, or in theology. Yet, he also noted that the sons, brothers, or nephews of princes could and would often be deemed literate enough, without having taken the necessary degrees.

II. Theological proficiency and ecclesiastical careers.

One might assume that for most cardinals, going through the ordinary steps of an ecclesiastical career meant at least some sort of theological proficiency. This is basically true, with the major *caveat* that the theological education of most priests changed dramatically over the course of the early modern era. There is little doubt therefore that – except for such exceptional profiles as that of those cardinals who came from the military orders – most cardinals had gone through the ordinary stages of clerical education. While this may have included little theology in the early sixteenth century, this

was no longer the case in the eighteenth century, when the curriculum for career clergymen had been stabilized and consolidated in order to include more than basic theological knowledge. In the eighteenth century, many Roman cardinals went through the *Seminario Romano* – the Jesuit College – which meant they had attended classes not only of casuistry but also of basic theology with a curriculum itself close to that of the Jesuits themselves.

Yet, many difference subsisted late in the eighteenth century and secular priests, even those who clearly aimed at a top clerical career, could remain far less theologically proficient than their regular counterparts. In 1731 Clement XII Orsini created Giovanni Antonio Guadagni (1674-1759) cardinal. Guadagni had trained at the University of Pisa where he had gone through the entire legal curriculum acquiring doctorates in canon and civil law in 1696. Yet, after a religious conversion, Guadagni entered the reformed order of the Carmel. Only as a member of this order, did he have to ‘complete’ his education and take the classes in philosophy and theology that other religious did, and without which there would have been little possibility for him to access governing positions within the order. This occasional lack of theological education could not but have consequences for the cardinals when the issues at end require theological expertise and validation. Indeed, the persistence of the differences within the clerical curricula is also part of the reason why throughout the early modern era there continued to exist a distinct group of cardinals with specific theological expertise.

What was the importance of this group within the College of Cardinals and did it change? In order to answer these questions, we would need a more systematic prosopography of the cardinals than currently at hand. Yet, in order to arrive to a partial outline, we can rely on the biographical information gathered by Salvador Miranda and try to make the best of it. Using that information, I have distinguished four categories of educational background: one that is primarily legal, one that is primarily theological, one that is both, and finally one that is neither. Here therefore a ‘theologian’ can be a theologically trained and minded cleric rather than an actual professional theologian. The data is too unreliable here to provide actual figures but it certainly bears witness to some trends. But the numbers remain too small to make them sufficiently statistically significant to analyse precise patterns. What follows is therefore rather an attempt at an overview.

In terms of sheer size of the group, the proportion of cardinals in the Sacred College who were actually trained in theology appears small throughout the entire early modern era. In the sixteenth century never more than ten theologians were created cardinals over the course of a decade. The same goes for the seventeenth century. There is a small spike over ten in the 1710s and in the 1720s. The occasional addition of a number of clerics who were proficient both in theology and canon law does not change much in this regard – first, because the numbers here are even lower and, secondly, because more often than not, cardinals who held doctorates in both law and theology seem to have had careers that differed little from those of cardinals who worked mostly within the curia’s

administrative offices with only infrequent connections to those congregations that required theological expertise (the Inquisition, the Index, the Apostolic Penitentiary and – to a lesser extent – the *Propaganda Fide*). The second reason why these numbers are misleading is that, at any given time, a significant part of those cardinals who can be identified as having built an expertise in theology – or at least built their initial career on their mastering theology – were not Italians. For example, in the 1710s: the twelve cardinals who can be clearly labelled as theologians are Benito de Sala y de Caramany (a Spanish Benedictine), Wolfgang Hanibal von Schrattenbach, Henri-Pons de Thiard de Bissy, Imre Csáky, Léon Potier de Gesvres, Thomas Philippe d'Hénin-Liétard d'Alsace-Boussu, and Luis Antonio Belluga y Moncada. The same goes for the small group of four cardinals who were proficient in both theology and canon law: two, Mihály Frigyes Althan, José Pereira da Lacerda (who had taught both canon law and theology at Coimbra), were non-Italian, thereby accounting for half of the entire group. If we look at the corps of French cardinals throughout the entire early modern era, almost each and every one of them can be designated as a cardinal-theologian, with very few exceptions (mostly from the early sixteenth century, such as Odet de Coligny de Chatillon, who, then again, became a cardinal at sixteen, which means he hardly had the time to go through a theological curriculum before getting the *biretta*). Even men with very politically-oriented careers, such as Louis Armand de Richelieu, or diplomats such as d'Estrées or Bouillon in the seventeenth century, or all the Rohan cardinals in the eighteenth century, had wanted to receive a doctorate in theology, most of the time from the Sorbonne. Yet, absolutely none of these French cardinals was a professional theologian (this includes Pierre de Bérulle whose work would not be considered theology according to the standards of the time).

This reminds us of a fact which may appear to some somewhat paradoxical: while Rome was a centre for confessional Catholicism, and certainly fostered confessional emphasis on orthodoxy, theology played a much less central part in Roman Catholicism in Rome than it did in other European Catholicisms (whether these included an Inquisition, such as Spanish or Portuguese Catholicism, or did not, such as French, Belgian, or, indeed, English Catholicism).

In terms of proportion, Table Four aggregates most significant numbers and places and may prove more solid statistically. The pattern that emerges is first and foremost one of remarkable stability. Throughout the early modern era, at any given period of 30 years, the number of cardinals who were truly theologically proficient (including the mixed profiles) never amounted to more than 38% of the total of created cardinals. Yet, at the same time it never amounted to less than 18% percent of the total either – with a quite counterintuitive low of the end of the sixteenth century and again in the first third of the seventeenth century (i.e., the age of Bellarmine, which one might have expected to have been some sort of Golden Age of doctrine in Rome). From the sixteenth until the eighteenth century, the proportion of cardinal-theologians oscillated around 25% of the entire College. The group

of theologically proficient theologians was therefore constantly a minority within the cardinalate. Yet theology never disappeared as an important form of expertise or educational backgrounds for cardinals within the Sacred College. This bears witness to the fact that the long-term crisis of theology in the early modern era in the world of knowledge never truly translated institutionally within the Church. I would argue that this was mostly because of the inevitable normative status of theology in confessionalized Catholicism.

The other very significant pattern – and one that may prove quite difficult to explain – is that of the oscillation itself. This cannot be ascribed to popes' personalities or ideological inclinations, as the spike of the early eighteenth century shows. Pontificates which one might expect to occasion the appointment of more theologians, because of the religious ideals of pontiffs such as Innocent XI or Pius V, do not seem to have occasioned any significant increase in the number of cardinal-theologians, particularly of *Italian* cardinal-theologians. Could it be that there was a cycle within the curia? With theologically-minded cardinals regularly leaving room for other theologically-minded cardinals? While the hypothesis is not improbable, there is very little evidence to help answer the question, all the more so as the issue intertwines with several other dynamics within the Sacred College.

Indeed, theological proficiency did have a connection with the social background of the individual cardinals (a subject discussed in Maria Antonietta Visceglia's chapter). Italian aristocrats, whether Roman or not, did not ordinarily specialize in theology when they were aiming at an ecclesiastical career. Canon law offered far more chances of success, because it offered many more opportunities in the middle stages of an ecclesiastical career in Italy and particularly in Rome. This is quite clear for cardinals who were Genoese or Venetian patricians as well as for those from the Roman Aristocracy. No Colonna ever trained in theology with the exception of Marcantonio in the middle of the eighteenth century; neither did any Aldobrandini nor any Orsini, except in the case that he was a member of a religious order, as was the case of Vincenzo Maria Orsini (1649-1730; created 1672), who became a Dominican against the will of his parents and trained in his convent in Naples before teaching philosophy in the convent of Brescia. Cardinal Chigi (later Alexander VII) recommended Gregorio Barbarigo that he should study law, which he did at Padua before being made a cardinal in 1660, just five years after having his doctorate *in utroque jure*.

Theological proficiency would therefore always be connected either to a different social environment to that of the Italian Church. Three different types of cardinal-theologians can be found within the group. First – as we have seen – the foreigners coming from Churches where the power of theological institutions and the profit of investment in the study of theology were greater than in Italy (i.e., the rest of the Catholic world). The second type is that of the former heads of the religious orders who became cardinals because of their role in the government of their congregation and also because

of the type of involvement in the functioning of the Roman Curia that their Generalate could entail. An intermediary figure here is the figure of the Master General of the Dominican order, whose theological expertise often proved decisive in his own career within the order. The most famous case here would certainly be that of Tommaso de Vio (Cajetan). Cajetan started teaching theology in Padua aged twenty-four, after having attended the *Studium Generale* of the Province of Lombardy; he became Master in Sacred Theology (a distinction specific to the order) after a public dissertation with Pico della Mirandola at the general chapter of 1494. In 1501, he was called to the General curia of his order as Procurator and became vicar general in 1507, before being elected by the 1508 chapter. At the same time, he wrote and published extensively and his prominence as a theologian certainly contributed to his rise to be head of his order. He played a significant part in the defence of anti-Conciliarist principles under Julius II and in polemics against the Parisian school. His creation as cardinal in 1517 therefore came as both an acknowledgement of his government and of his theological works, including in the defence of Roman claims. Other Dominican Masters General had more low-key profiles, yet theological proficiency certainly played a significant part in their rise within their order, as well as into the Cardinalate. Agustín Pipia was first professor of theology in Majorca before being kept in Rome by Antonin Cloche after the 1694 General Chapter. There he became Regent of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, an office that came with significant involvement in the congregations of the Index and eventually the Inquisition. He became secretary of the Index in 1711 and consulted for the Inquisition and other congregations at the same time. In 1721, his Order chose him as Master General before Benedict XIII Orsini, himself a Dominican, created him cardinal in 1725. Both De Vio as well as Pipia appear as intermediary figures between the second and third type of cardinal-theologian, the third type being that of the expert theologian, appointed because of his expertise. Yet, the difference between De Vio and Pipia also illustrates a major difference within this third group. More often than not, the cardinalate did not come to assert the place of a theologian in the academic field but rather the work he had accomplished in the service of the Curia, particularly in the congregations of the Index and the Inquisition after they were created. Perhaps no case illustrates this as well as that of Desiderio Scaglia (1567/68-1638), ‘one of the most experienced inquisitors’.⁵ Scaglia’s theological training served in his work in the local and Roman Inquisition, and he played a significant role in the work of the Roman censorship during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Yet Scaglia left no theological work and remains known mostly for his 1616 *Prattica per procedere nelle cause del S. Offizio o Relatione copiosa di tutte le materie spettanti al tribunale del S. Officio*, which would remain a point of reference for the Inquisitors who followed him. This profile of a practically oriented theological expertise characterizes the career of several further cardinal-

⁵ See Thomas F. Mayer, *The Roman Inquisition. A Papal Bureaucracy and its Laws in the Age of Galileo*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, p. 68-71.

theologians up until the end of the eighteenth century.

This typology also means that – particularly considering the number of cardinal-theologians who belong to the second and third type – the theologians who became cardinals were also significantly older than the rest of the Sacred College. The raw number of creations of theologically proficient cardinal is therefore certainly misleading: because of their higher-than-average rate of mortality, they amounted to even less of the actual body of cardinals at any given time than the statistic of creations suggests. The length of their membership of the College could be quite short. While Scaglia enjoyed a much-desired biretta for eighteen years, and Bellarmine for twenty-one years, Agostino Oreggi was created at age 53 and died at age 55 and Michelangelo Ricci received it at age 81 only to die the very next year. The more a theologian is associated with the daily work of the Roman bureaucracy the more receiving the biretta seems to have been a sign of his impending death.

III. Cardinals and theological expertise

The significant and persistent presence of expert theologians within the Sacred College bears witness to how theology continued to provide a discursive framework for the work of Roman congregations, something which both made theologically-proficient men necessary and also secured theology as valid opinion for social promotion in the environment of the early modern Curia.

Indeed, the cardinals themselves often relied on the theological expertise of others. Amongst the expert theologians who later became cardinals, many had themselves at some point been the theologian of another cardinal or even the pope. A specific connection appears here, because many such figures were often both a theologian and their patron's confessor. The theological intricacies brought about by the combination of local and ecclesiastical government certainly encouraged cardinals to choose theologians as their confessors and to appoint them within their household. Lorenzo Cossa for instance was at one point confessor and theologian of Cardinal Urbano Sachetti. Leandro di Porzia (1673-1740), a Benedictine, who had first taught theology at the University of Padua, came to Rome to the monastery of S. Callisto, serving as consultor in several congregations including the Index and the Holy office. Cardinal Lorenzo Corsini (the future Clement XII) chose Pietro Maria Pieri (1676-1743) as his librarian and theologian after the latter had appealed to him in his capacity as protector of the Order of the Servites – Pieri wanted to avoid being appointed Master General of his congregation as Clement XI had ordered.

When looking for theological counsel, cardinals were likely to turn to more expert figures in the field of theology than merely to theologians working within the Roman bureaucracy. In some rare instances, this could end with the promotion of such figures to the cardinalate – this was the case for

Agostino Oreggi and Juan de Lugo. Oreggi (1577-1635) had received an extensive education in theology, law, and oriental languages. As canon theologian of the chapter of Faenza, he taught theology for several years and consulted both for the Roman nobility as well as for various cardinals, particularly Bellarmine, thereby taking a significant part in the handling of the Galileo affair; he also worked also alongside Terenzio Alciati on his project of answering Paolo Sarpi. A client of Maffeo Barberini, he continued in his office as personal theologian after the latter's election as Urban VIII, before Urban created him a cardinal in 1633. He remained an active and publishing theologian throughout his career. A series of treatises published between 1629 and 1633 (*De Deo uno*, *De individuo sacratissimae Trinitatis mysterio*, *De angelis*, *De opere sex dierum*, *De sacrosancto incarnationis mysterio*) made him a prominent figure on the European theological scene. Several of his works were published during his time as cardinal. Juan de Lugo's career was also firmly academic. His success as a teacher prompted the Jesuit General Muzio Vitelleschi to appoint him to the *Collegio Romano*. While he Rome, he published several important works but also consulted for several cardinals and the pope. His most famous work, the *De Iustitia et Iure* was published in 1642, after he had entered Urban VIII's personal service. Urban created him cardinal in 1643. One of the most prominent theologians of the mid seventeenth century, the Jesuit Théophile Raynaud, though apparently not destined for the College himself enjoyed the patronage of cardinals and this very patronage proved decisive in making him the central figure whom his order would try and promote by the end of his life. For a long time – and with some good reason – Raynaud was regarded as a disobedient and dangerous subject, one more likely to bring woe than honour to the Society. Yet, at an early stage in his career, he enjoyed the patronage of Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia, acting as his theologian and confessor when that cardinal was sent on a diplomatic mission to France. Despite this protection, and that of the Savoia family, in the early 1640s, Raynaud's career and position in the Society seemed to have come to a dead end. The cardinal's rebellion made his dynasty's protection unhelpful, and Raynaud's association with the family left him perceived as potentially dangerous to the French political authority. Indeed, Raynaud was eventually imprisoned in Avignon. Yet, it was at this very time that he met vice-legate Federico Sforza and managed to change the latter's opinion on his behalf. Sforza made Raynaud his confessor and theologian and took him to Rome where he managed to obtain his new protégé's appointment as a professor at the *Collegio Romano*. This completely turned Raynaud's career around: in Rome – enjoying also the protection of the Barberini – he published many still unpublished manuscripts and when he came back to his province he had become a theological treasure whom his provincial authorities could no longer not acknowledge.

Raynaud's case also helps better understand what a prince of the Church could look for in a theologian. When Sforza returned from Avignon to Rome in 1645, he made the theologian his secretary and confessor, and according to Raynaud's autobiography the 'arbitrator of his conscience'.

This also inserted Raynaud within the Barberini clientele. For the Barberinis and Sforza, protecting such a man as Raynaud came with several benefits. The theologian helped them to connect better to several printers and bookseller and also assisted in building up their library. Yet, it was certainly Raynaud's theological expertise that proved most important. In his autobiography, Raynaud relates one of the consultations for which Sforza came to him. At the time of Innocent X's election, rumours flew around Rome that the election had been tainted by simony. Sforza asked Raynaud not only his opinion about the rumours themselves but also about how he should behave in a context where doubt could be cast on the pope's legitimacy. The theologian answered by arguing that the office of pope was not like any ordinary ecclesiastical office and that it could not be revoked in doubt without very strong proofs. The expertise that cardinals sought of a theologian was therefore not merely bureaucratic and administrative, it also came from within their own commitment to religious doctrine and norms and – as this instance shows – could have potentially strong political implications.

Yet cardinals' relationship to theological expertise also certainly changed as the place of theology in the religious system of Roman-style Catholicism evolved. Turning to theological experts was not merely a question of handling the theological issues of the day but also of taking part in the power games that these discussions turned out to be more and more in the seventeenth century – on account of what recent scholarship has characterized as the politicization of theological controversies. A short example may help understand this better. In 1690, under Alexander VIII, the Inquisition condemned a doctrine that Jansenist polemics had found in a thesis defended in a French college, the so-called *philosophical sin*. The condemnation was both a political and theological battle. The heirs of Innocent XI's Augustinian reformism within the Curia strongly sought the condemnation, while the Jesuits and their allies fought to avoid it. Yet, the discussion had strong political and diplomatic overtones. The French court did not favour condemnation – Cardinal Bouillon relayed this in his discussions within the Inquisition – and the matter became part of the more general issue of settling the relationship between France and Rome after Innocent XI's contentious pontificate. With both theological oppositions and diplomatic stakes weighing in on the discussion, the tensions within the Inquisition were at their highest. Yet playing out these tensions required a high level of theological proficiency among the cardinals. At an initial meeting, those cardinals in favour of condemnation sought the strongest qualification. Cardinal Aguirre, the most ardent defender of Innocent XI's legacy wanted it condemned as clearly heretical while Bouillon and a few others pleaded that the proposition did not deserve any form of condemnation at all. The remaining cardinals supported a condemnation, but with lesser qualification than heresy and according to what the qualificators had recommended. In a second Congregation, however, the positions remained the same but they played in quite different ways theologically. Those who opposed condemnation now wanted the proposition called heretical

but with conditions, namely a condemnation of the proposition as it stood (*ut jacet*) and some other provisions, that made it clear that there remained a possible Catholic understanding to what the Jesuit professor had stated. A few who were previously uncommitted also wanted the proposition censured *ut jacet*, yet did not want the qualification of heresy. Those actually in favour of censure renounced the claim of heresy and were now satisfied with what the qualifiers had proposed. A third congregation finally led to the condemnation after the pope arbitrated the cardinals' disagreements. This political and religious conflict played out through the mobilization of theological expertise by the embattled cardinals. The politicization of religious controversies did not limit the agency of theology and theologians within the Roman court, but rather transformed it without necessarily marginalizing theologians – either alongside the cardinals or within the Roman curia itself, the bureaucratic work of which still partly relied on them.

Indeed, neither the politicization of religious debates nor the growing bureaucratization of the Curia made the rare figure of the cardinal theologian disappear altogether. But it certainly did change it. As we have seen, there was a somewhat regular presence of theologians, chosen because of their theological expertise within the Sacred College: such prominent and public figure as Cajetan, Bellarmine, or later De Lugo come to mind for the first half of the early modern era. Their specificity is that their expertise and service in Rome, through consultation, also came with some form of academic acknowledgement in the wider academic space of European theology. This does not mean that more low-key profiles did not exist among the group of cardinal-theologians, particularly those whose rise depended on the structure of the Dominican order. Yet, it seems in the seventeenth century the growing bureaucratization of the curia offered greater opportunities for theologically trained men who did not engage too much with the contentious sphere of publication.

Two such examples from the end of the seventeenth century illustrate the religious, scholarly and institutional dynamics that affected the place of theology and theologians within the College of Cardinals: Lorenzo Brancati di Lauria (1612-1693) and Michelangelo Ricci. Lorenzo di Lauria was born into a noble family in the Kingdom of Naples with quite limited social prospects. In 1628, against his parents' will, he became a cleric for the diocese of Policastro before entering the order of the Friars Minor Conventuals. His scholarly abilities convinced the superiors of his order to send him to Rome to study theology in the Franciscan Collegio di San Bonaventura. As many an academically well-trained religious, he then worked for the order's governing structure as a theologian. In 1654, with the support of Cardinal Chigi, he rose to prominence on the Roman theological scene by being appointed to the Chair of Dogmatic Theology at *La Sapienza* University. He played a significant role as theological advisor (for instance for the drafting of Alexander VII's bull on the Immaculate Conception) and as a consultor for several Roman Congregations. In 1670, Clement X made him *custos* of the Vatican Library. Well inserted in Roman scholarly circles, he played an ever-growing

role within the Holy Office where he had been sworn in as a consultor in 1658. He fit very well into the ideological environment of Augustinian reformism in the 1670s, particularly during Innocent XI's pontificate. Innocent created him cardinal in 1681 and Lauria later acted as a staunch ideological defender of the latter's legacy during subsequent pontificates. While Lauria did publish during the time of his professorship and of his activities as a consultor (particularly a noted commentary on Duns Scot), the core of his activity remained his work within the Curia, and it is his engagement with the conflictual dynamics of religious controversies from within the Inquisition that certainly explains his being chosen by the pope in 1681 not his less central position in the following, and less ideologically minded, pontificates. Michelangelo Ricci (1619-1682) belonged to the same generation and also benefited from Innocent's patronage, joining the Sacred College in the same consistory as Lauria. Thanks to Francesco Bustaffa's thesis, we now know a lot about this quite ordinary yet interesting figure or erudite and religious life in seventeenth-century Rome. Ricci was born there into a family of merchants of cloth from Como which gave several sons to the Mendicant orders. Two of Ricci's brothers would also later teach theology. Little is known about his education, but Ricci did have a degree *in utroque jure* and also studied the ecclesiastical sciences, the humanities, geography, and mathematics. He played a central part on Rome's scientific scene of the second half of the seventeenth century and had strong connections with the Galileans. Around 1656, he started working for the Index, mobilizing both his scientific and theological expertise. Ten years later he became qualificator and, a few weeks after that, consultor of the Holy Office, where he worked with several like-minded experts, such as Lauria and Giovanni Bona, who played a very important role in the evolution of Roman policies towards Jansenism. Innocent XI's pontificate saw the apex of his career. Ricci was part of the pope's entourage and worked in close connections with his closest advisers, particularly his favourite Agostino Favoriti; within five years he had become cardinal. The official tract published to inform the public of the promotions made in the consistory mentioned him last, as '*sacrae theologiae professor, Romanus*'. Despite the large and multi-disciplinary scope of his scholarship, he was promoted as a theologian, despite his having never published any work in theology. Just like Lauria, he was not promoted merely because he was theologically proficient but also because he took part in the polarization and politicization of the Roman theological scene. For both Lauria and Ricci, ideological commitment and anti-Jesuitism proved socially profitable. In turn, their cases also show that if the dynamics of politicization and polarization did not change the place of theologians within the Sacred College, it was because theology – alongside law – continued to provide the very language through which the Roman Curia functioned.

Conclusion

The cardinals who had a background in theology clearly did not belong to the Roman social elite which dominated the Sacred College. The group of theologically-proficient cardinals remained a small minority throughout the Early Modern era. Yet, at no point was their presence challenged or put in crisis. Theology appears to have been a viable social option for a few clerics, particularly those from within the religious orders, who benefitted from the Curia's seventeenth-century expansion. They also bear witness to theology's continued agency as a discipline within the shifting scholarly environment of both Roman and European Catholicism. While theology certainly lost ground in the wider cultural environment, it preserved its importance in Rome where it remained embedded in the functioning of the Curia's machinery. The few cardinals who were theologians embodied how much theology remained one the Curia's principal languages which in turn contributed to the preservation, yet also possibly to the cultural obsolescence, of Roman theological institutions. It was not without paradox, after all, that theologians still had a hard time to account for the Cardinalship as an essential part of Catholic ecclesiology.

Appendix : Educational backgrounds of Early Modern Cardinals

Table 1a: Sixteenth century

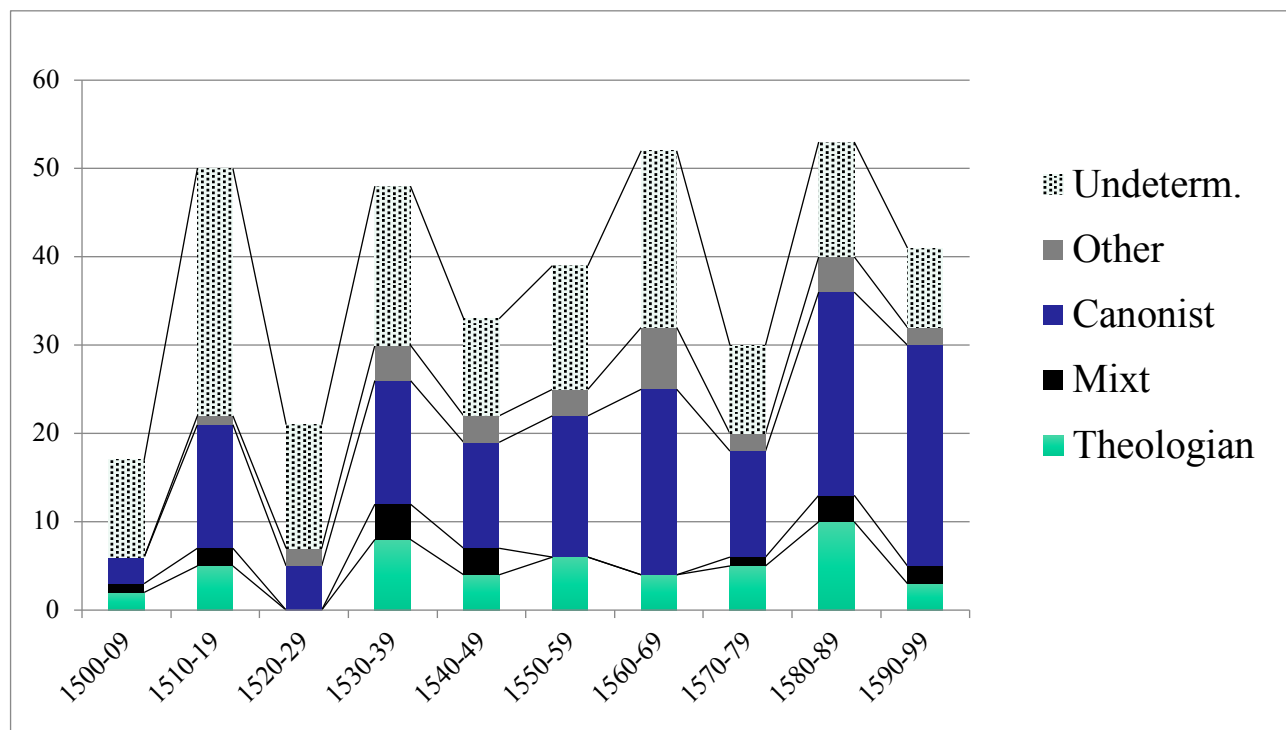


Table 1b : Sixteenth Century (proportions, undetermined ruled out)

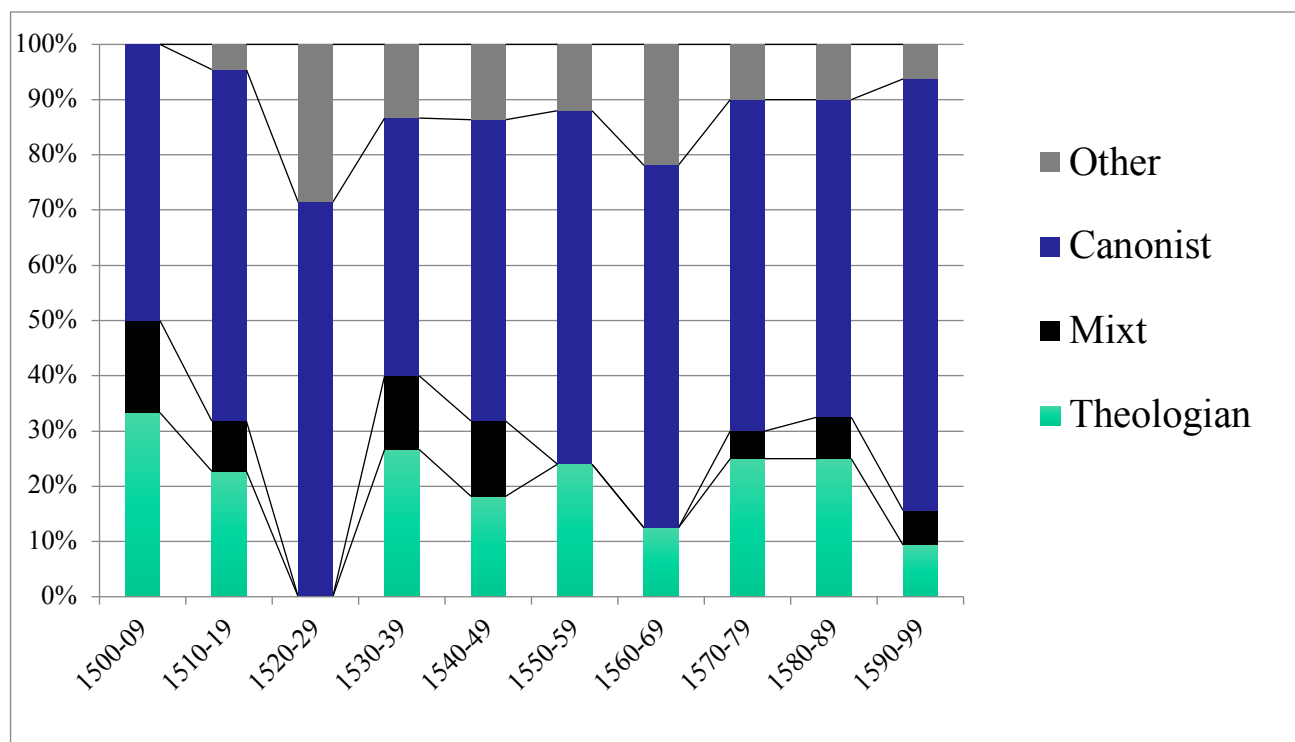


Table 2a: Seventeenth century

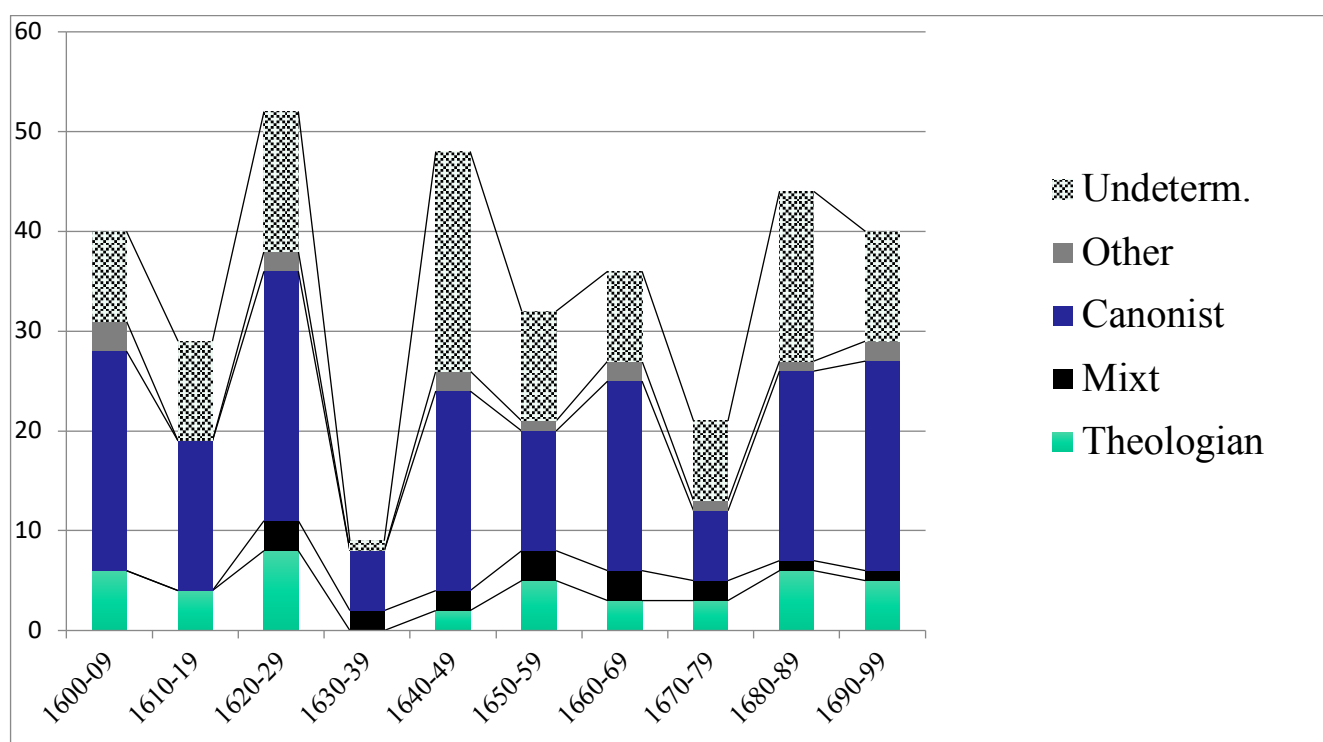


Table 2b: Seventeenth Century (proportions, undetermined ruled out)

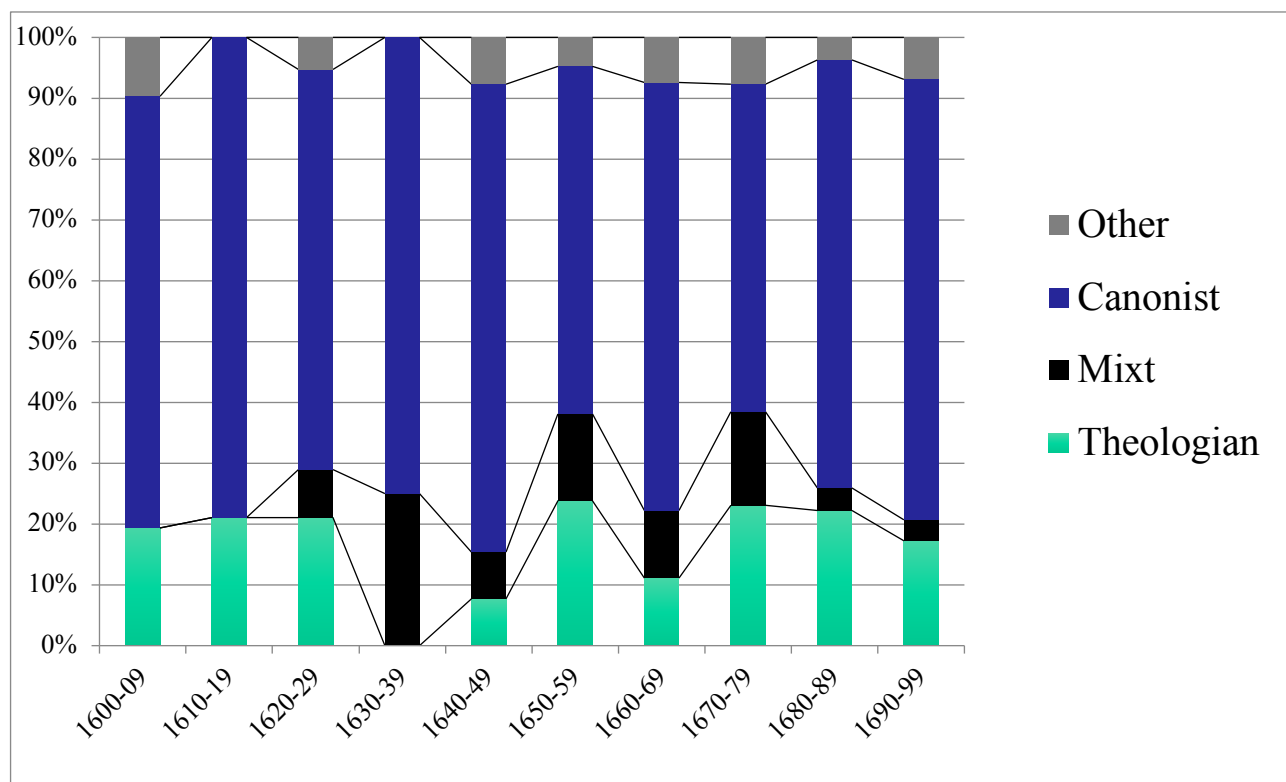


Table 3a: Eighteenth century

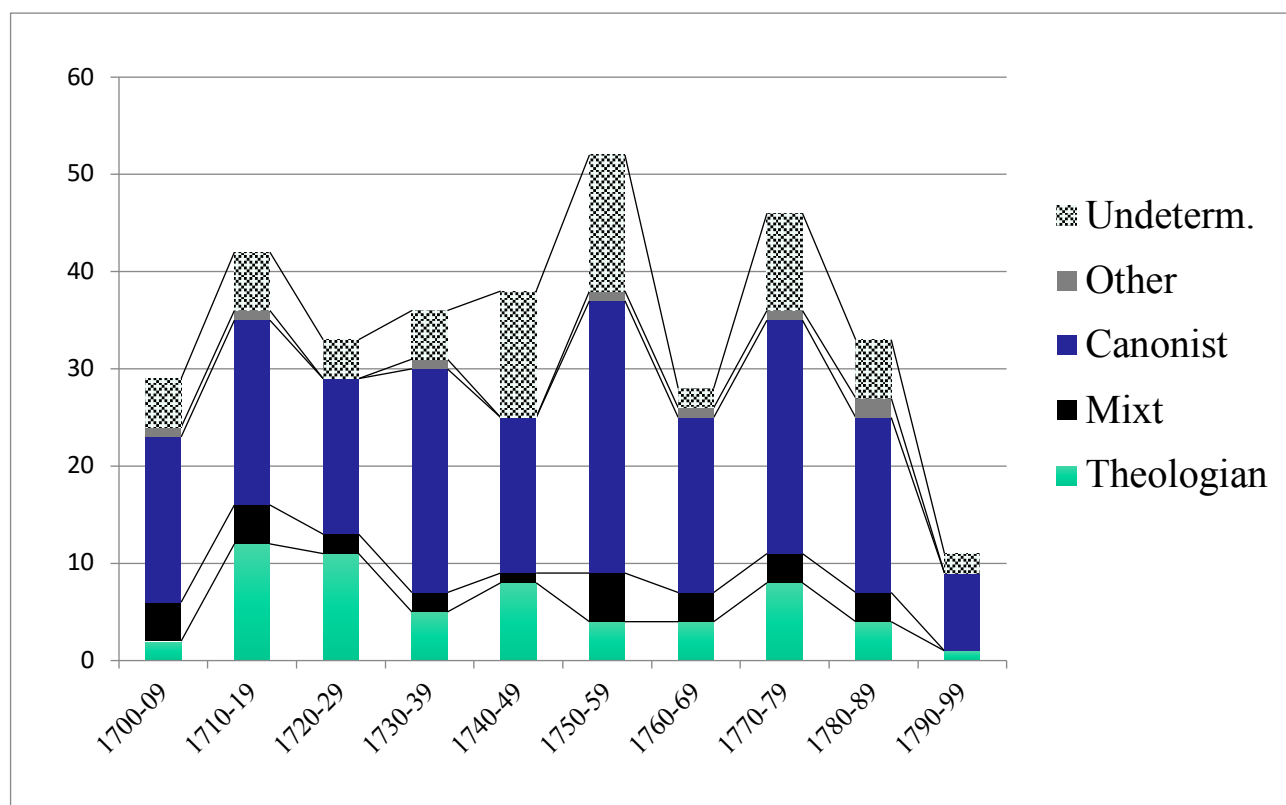


Table 3b: Eighteenth Century (proportions, undetermined ruled out)

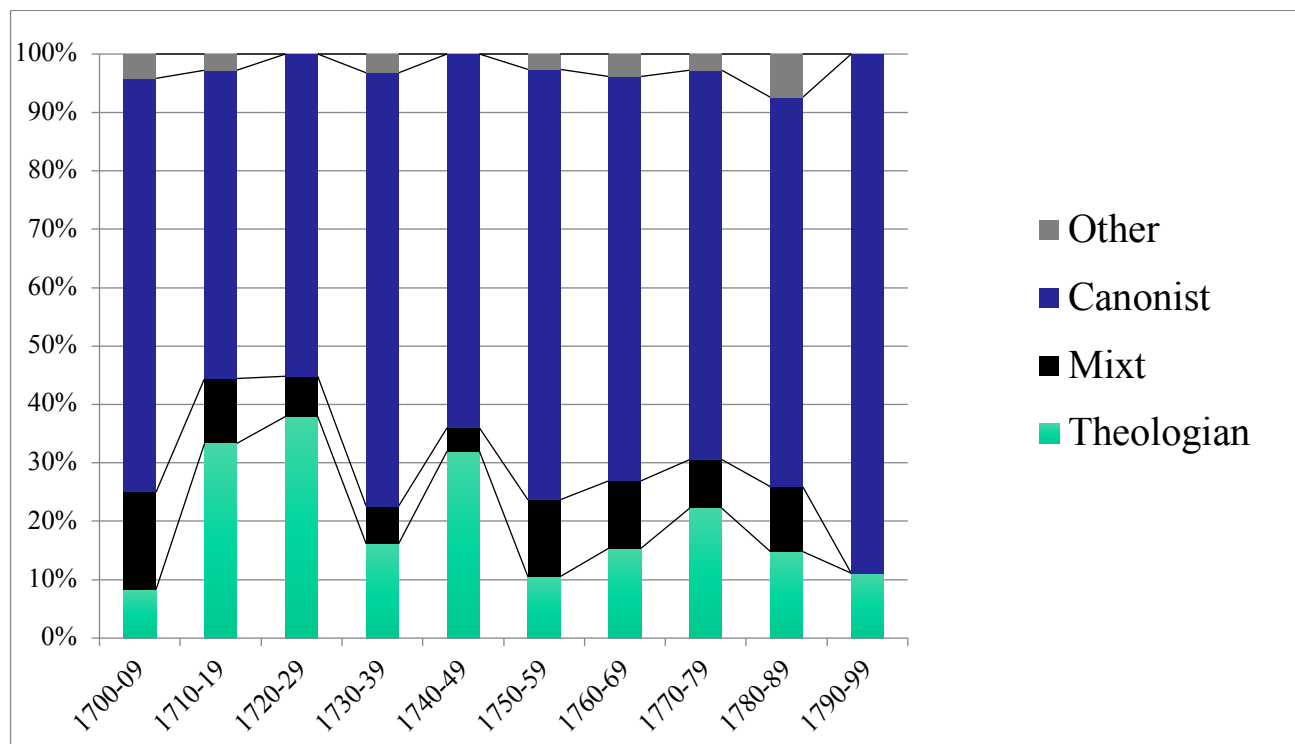


Table 4 : General overview (proportions, undetermined ruled out)

