

CARDINAL  
BENDINELLO SAULI  
AND CHURCH PATRONAGE  
IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY



Helen Hyde

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CARDINAL BENDINELLO SAULI AND CHURCH  
PATRONAGE IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY

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SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY

*Helen Hyde*



THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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TO MY MOTHER, BRENDA BATTSON (1931–95)

# Contents

List of illustrations	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Abbreviations	xii
Family trees	xiii
Introduction	1
PART I: THE SAULI AS MEN OF THE CHURCH	
1 Politics and money: the career of Cardinal Sauli	17
2 Cardinal Sauli: 'gubernator utilis et ydoneus'?	32
3 The Sauli and early <i>cinquecento</i> reform	48
PART II: THE PATRONAGE OF CARDINAL SAULI	
4 'He surpassed all in splendour and pomp'?	71
5 Cardinal Sauli and humanist patronage	89
6 Portraits of Cardinal Sauli	111
PART III: THE PLOT TO KILL THE POPE	
7 The plot to kill Leo x	131
8 'Vir bonus et innocens'?	149
Conclusion	173
Bibliography	181
Index	197

## List of Illustrations

Frontispiece/jacket illustration: Anonymous North Italian draughtsman, *Bust of the Cardinal Bendinello Sauli, after Sebastiano del Piombo* (? sixteenth century) (Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth House). Reproduced by permission of the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees. Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art.

*Between pages 128 and 129*

1. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Cardinal Bendinello Sauli and three companions* (1516) (Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington). Photograph © Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
2. Raphael, *School of Athens* (detail) (c. 1508) (Vatican Museums, Vatican City). Photograph © Vatican Museums, Vatican City.
3. Raphael, *Portrait of a cardinal* (c. 1511) (Museo Prado, Madrid). Photograph © Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
4. Raphael, *Disputa* (detail) (1509–10) (Vatican Museums, Vatican City). Photograph © Vatican Museums, Vatican City.

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Helen Hyde  
November 2008

## *Abbreviations*

ACR	Archivio Capitolino di Roma
ADGG	Archivio Durazzo Giustiniani, Genoa
ASG	Archivio di Stato di Genova
ASI	Archivio Storico Ingauno
ASL	Archivio di Stato di Locri
ASR	Archivio di Stato di Roma
ASS	Archivio di Stato di Siena
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BCIS	Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati di Siena.
BUG	Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova
ASI	<i>Archivio Storico Italiano</i>
ASLSP	<i>Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria</i>
ASRSP	<i>Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria</i>
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</i>
RIS	<i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i>

Figure 1. Bendinello Sauli *quondam* Pasqualotti and his descendants

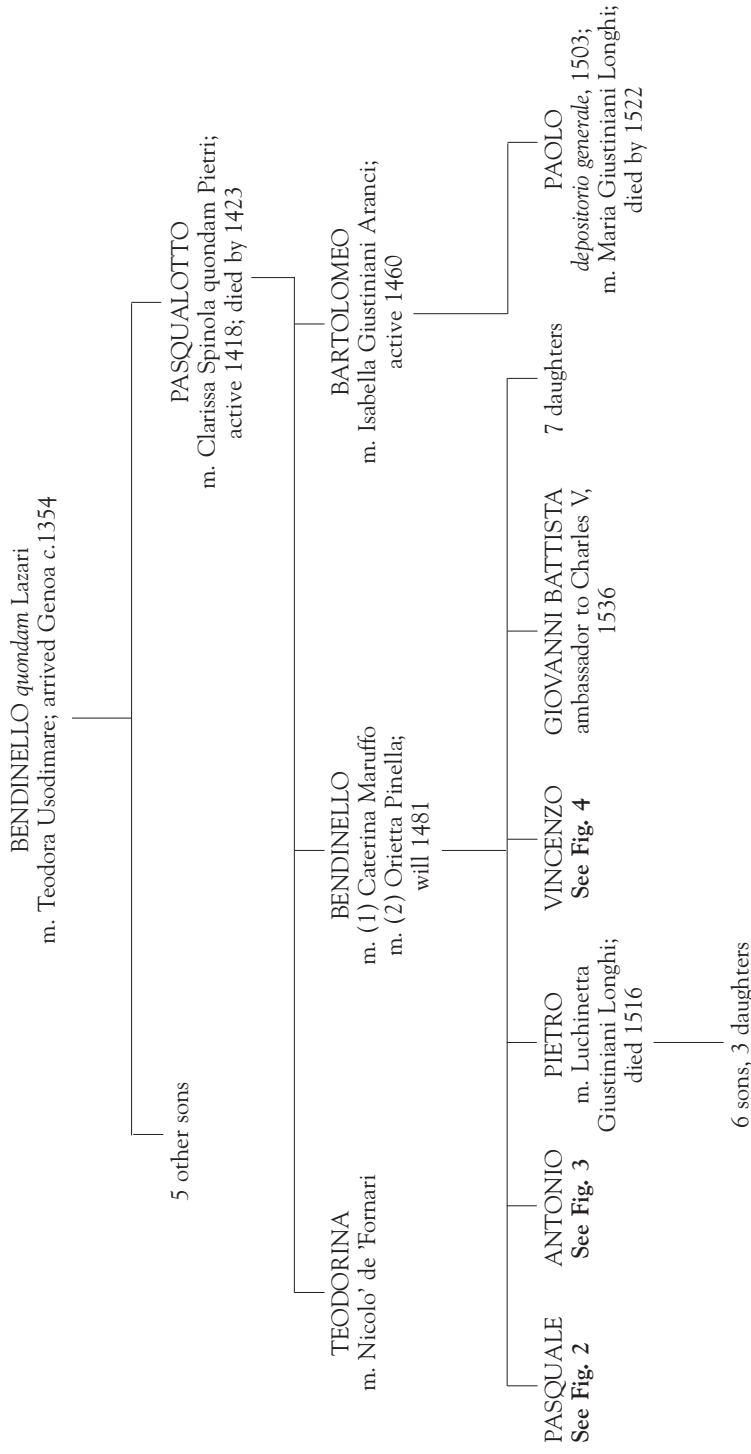
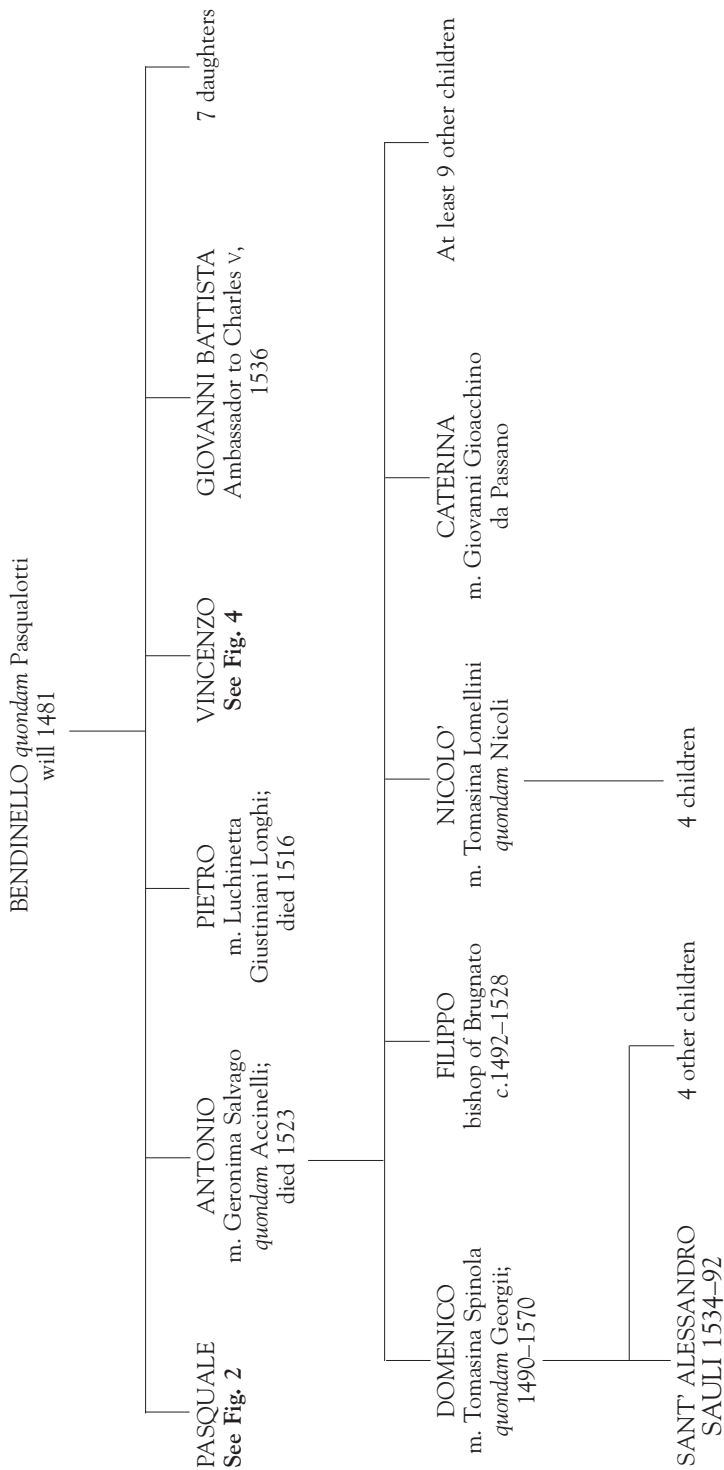




Figure 3. Antonio Sauli *quondam* Bendinelli and his descendants





## Introduction

Bandinello Sauli was born in Genoa in about 1481 into a wealthy family of merchants. His ecclesiastical and curial career began in 1503 and he attained the cardinalate in 1511. By early 1518 he was dead, stripped of all but the appearance of rank.<sup>1</sup>

The call by Gian Giacomo Musso in 1958 for a monograph dedicated to this 'remarkable figure' went unanswered and this is, to date, the first in-depth study of Sauli's life and career.<sup>2</sup> Monographs on cardinals were, and remain, unfashionable but this is not the only probable cause for his neglect: the view of Genoa as a backwater of the Renaissance may well have led those qualified to investigate Sauli's life to disagree with Musso's assessment.<sup>3</sup>

In fact Sauli has suffered from mixed reviews to the present day. He is either an angel or a demon depending on the commentator, whose stance generally reflects his opinion of the event which caused Sauli's downfall, disgrace and death: his implication in 1517 in the plot to murder Leo X. Assessments vary, from remarking on 'his many outstanding qualities of mind and body which he had acquired by his own personal virtue ... a lively and intelligent disposition' and his 'possessing every type of virtue' to noting that 'he was an ambitious and envious man', 'he had the soul of a factious baron

<sup>1</sup> The spelling of Sauli's Christian name varies but the form 'Bandinello', which is to be found in all Genoese family documents, is used throughout this book.

<sup>2</sup> G. G. Musso, 'La cultura genovese fra il quattrocento e il cinquecento', *Miscellanea di storia ligure*, i, Genoa 1958, 121–87 at p. 166 n. 45. For Sauli see H. Hyde, 'From devotion to damnation: the Sauli as men of the Church in the early *cinquecento*', *Devotio* i (2000), 41–72; J. Jungic, 'Prophecies of the angelic pastor in Sebastiano del Piombo's "Cardinal Bandinello Sauli and three companions"', in M. Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the high Renaissance*, Oxford 1992, 345–70; and B. Kempers, 'The canonical portrait of a cardinal: Bendinello Sauli, Raphael and Sebastiano del Piombo', in M. Gallo (ed.), *I cardinali di Santa Romana Chiesa: collezionisti e mecenati*, ii, Rome 2001, 7–21. The latter two concentrate upon the portrait of *Cardinal Bendinello Sauli and three companions* (Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington).

<sup>3</sup> The few studies of cardinals of this period include P. Paschini, 'Tre illustri prelati del Rinascimento: Ermolao Barbaro, Adriano Castellesi, Giovanni Grimani', *Lateranum* n.s. xxiii (1957), 11–207 at pp. 45–130; D. S. Chambers, *Cardinal Bainbridge in the court of Rome, 1509 to 1514*, Oxford 1965; K. J. P. Lowe, *Church and politics in Renaissance Italy: the life and career of Cardinal Francesco Soderini, 1453–1524*, Cambridge 1993, and 'Questions of income and expenditure in Renaissance Rome: a case study of Cardinal Francesco Armellini', in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds), *The Church and wealth* (Studies in Church History xxiv, 1987), 175–88; and relevant *DBI* entries. For the current neglect of Genoa see H. Hyde, 'Genoa: "urbem ... cuius similem non habet orbis universus"', *Bulletin for the Society of Renaissance Studies* xviii (Oct. 2000), 1–7.

rather than that of a priest', or even 'a totally insignificant personality'.<sup>4</sup> Such a wide range of opinions is not in itself remarkable but to pass judgement on Sauli purely on the basis of his involvement or otherwise in the plot is to do him an injustice, not least because so little was known about Sauli the cardinal when these judgements were passed. More needs to be known of the context within which the plot occurred and the events leading up to it. The aim of this monograph is thus twofold: through a detailed study of Sauli's life and career to provide not only some idea of the man himself but also about the Church and Italy during the early *cinquecento* and the dynamics of power and patronage which governed the life of a Renaissance cardinal and his family.

### The Sauli and Genoa

Sauli came from a socially and politically ambitious family which employed a combination of money, political influence, marriage and artistic patronage to become, some ten years after the cardinal's death, a force in the new Genoese ruling class. The first members of the Genoese branch of the Sauli left Lucca and arrived in Genoa at the beginning of the fourteenth century and the progenitor of the second line of the family (that of Cardinal Sauli) had settled in the city by 1354.<sup>5</sup> By that date the People's Republic (1339–1528) had been established: headed by a doge, it was marked by factional fighting and instability, often resulting in domination by foreign powers such as France or Milan. Although much has been made of the hostility between the two dogal factions, the Adorno and the Fregoso, this was far from being the only cause of internal bickering in Genoa. More important for the Sauli (and in their case also better documented) was the competition for political office in the city's councils and the social prominence accorded to certain families.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A. Ciaconii, *Vitae et res gestae pontificum romanorum et SRE cardinalium*, Rome 1630, 1385; BAV, MS Vaticanani Latini 9167, fo. 526r; E. Rodocanachi, *Histoire de Rome: le pontificat de Jules II, 1503–13*, Paris 1928, 126–7; A. Ferrajoli, 'La congiura dei cardinali', *Miscellanea della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria*, vii, Rome 1920, i–355 at p. 98

<sup>5</sup> H. Hyde, 'Early *cinquecento* "popolare" art patronage in Genoa, 1500–1528', unpubl. PhD diss. Birkbeck College London 1994, i. 124 n. 4; Biblioteca Civica Berio, Genoa, sezione conservazione, raccolta locale, MS m. r. IX. 5, iv, fo. 386.

<sup>6</sup> The complex contemporary Genoese political scene is best analysed in R. Musso, 'Lo "stato cappellazzo": Genova tra Adorno e Fregoso (1436–64)', *Studi di storia medioevale e di diplomazia* xvii (1998), 223–88 at pp. 224, 232, 249–52. For the fluidity of the support given to the Adorno and Fregoso see A. Pacini, 'Ideali repubblicani, lotta politica e gestione del potere a Genova nella prima metà del *cinquecento*', in S. Adorni Braccesi and M. Ascheri (eds), *Politica e cultura nelle repubbliche italiane dal medioevo all'età moderna*, Firenze, Genova, Lucca, Siena, Venezia: atti del convegno (Siena 1997), Rome 2001, 189–236 at p. 200, and for the support of the Sauli at pp. 206–7; cf. BUG, MS C. IX.19/21, iii, fo. 144v.

The method whereby eligible citizens were elected to the governing councils pitted the *nobili* (a term which had originally denoted those who took part in government and was used to distinguish them from the governed) and the *popolari* against each other in the distribution of offices.<sup>7</sup> But the ‘inherent hatred’ between these two groups, noted by the contemporary chronicler (and Sauli intimate) Agostino Giustiniani, derived not just from political but also from economic and social competition.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the *nobili* were socially dominant: gathered into *alberghi*, or groups of families who took the same name, their power lay in their ties of blood and their day-to-day proximity, with most members of an *albergo* living in a specific area around the *domus magna* of the clan, its square, loggia and often the clan’s own church or *parrocchia gentilizia*.<sup>9</sup> It was through the *alberghi* that appointment to half of the seats on the different councils of the republic was made. Yet if the *nobili* were socially homogenous, the *popolari* were anything but. They were based in different areas of the city and came from different social and economic backgrounds (for the most part the rich mercantile and artisan bourgeoisie). Subdivided as they were into *mercatores* and *artefices*, they were appointed to civic offices according to the district in which they lived. They rarely formed *alberghi*, and when they did these were more often temporary groupings based on commonly-held business interests rather than on blood ties.<sup>10</sup> In turn this militated against the establishment of dynastic symbols such as the *domus magna* and the *parrocchia gentilizia*.

How did this situation reflect on the Sauli and what, if anything, could they do to improve their position? They were classified as *mercatores* and, as members of the *popolari*, they were part of the ruling class, but their power and influence, especially at a social level, were strictly limited. Yet there is clear evidence of concerted efforts by the family to raise their social and political profile and to show themselves the equals of any other family. This began with the first branch of the family, yet it was the money and influence of Cardinal Sauli’s grandfather, Bendinello *quondam* Pasqualotti (d. 1481)

<sup>7</sup> G. G. Camajani, *Il ‘Liber nobilitatis Genuensis’ e il governo della repubblica di Genova fino all’anno 1797*, Florence 1966, 3–4. For the division of offices and its permutations see J. Heers, *Gènes au XVe siècle: activité économique et problèmes sociaux*, Paris 1961, 602, 606, and Pacini, ‘Ideali repubblicani’, 195, 198–9, and ‘I presupposti politici del “secolo dei genovesi”: la riforma del 1528’, *ASLSP* n.s. xxx/1 (1990), 7–422 at pp. 29–30.

<sup>8</sup> A. Giustiniani, *Castigatissimi annali con la loro copiosa tavola della eccelsa & illustrissima repubblica di Genoa, da fideli & approvati scrittori, per el reverendo Monsignore Agostino Giustiniani Genoese vescovo di Nebio accuratamente raccolti*, Genoa 1537 and anastatic edn 1981, c. 258r. For the divisions between the two groups see cc 253v, 257v, 258v. See also A. Borlandi, ‘“Janua, janua italiae”: uno sguardo al quattrocento genovese’, *ASI* cxliii (1985), 15–38 at p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> J. Heers, *Le Clan familial au moyen âge*, Paris 1974, 85–90, 149.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, *Gènes*, 582.

(see Fig. 1), that were employed openly to demonstrate the family's ambitions.<sup>11</sup>

The family acted on two fronts. In an attempt to attain political prominence they used their economic expertise (gained through their banking and mercantile activities) to obtain positions in the administration of the public debt known as the *Casa di San Giorgio* and in governmental offices involved in the city's finances such as the *ufficio della moneta*. They also vied for power as members of the *anziani* and for prestige as representatives of the republic on diplomatic missions. Bendinello's sons, in particular Antonio (d. 1523) (see Fig. 3), Pietro (d. 1516) and Vincenzo (c. 1467–mid 1550s) (see Fig. 4), were also protagonists of the (initially anti-*nobiliare*) *popolare* revolt of 1506–7 and Antonio, followed by other members of the family, was then involved in the political reform process of the following decades which aimed to promote union and equality amongst the Genoese.<sup>12</sup> At the same time they also employed their vast wealth to make a series of socially advantageous marriages (into both *nobile* and wealthier *popolare* clans) and to pursue what can only be described as a systematic imitation of the artistic patronage of the *nobili*.<sup>13</sup>

The Sauli had little alternative but to imitate the patronage of the *nobili*: the reign of a Genoese doge was often short-lived and bloody leaving little time for, or interest in, the arts. The most powerful symbol of social predominance was the *parrocchia gentilizia*. These, although limited in number, were an overt manifestation of the privileged status of the *albergo* which, in a situation almost exclusive to Genoa, had sole rights over the church.<sup>14</sup> It was thus not always possible for the *popolari* – as was indeed the case for the Sauli – to become patrons of their neighbourhood church and they had to seek chapels in other churches, many of which were also patronised by these same *nobili*. This was not necessarily a disadvantage *per se*: the Sauli turned to the church of San Domenico and from 1316 members of both branches of the family were buried in the cloister, but these humble beginnings were transformed in 1467 when Bendinello *quondam* Pasqualotti seemingly profited from his own reputation, and the expansion of the body of the church in the mid-*quattrocento*, to join an elite of patrons (which included various *nobili*) and build a chapel dedicated to the Annunciation.<sup>15</sup> Yet his ambitions lay on a much larger scale.

<sup>11</sup> Genoese notarial documents of the period use the term 'quondam' to denote the relationship of 'son of the late'. The term is used throughout this book.

<sup>12</sup> C. Taviani, "Franza popolo e fora lo gatto": una rivolta cittadina nelle guerre d'Italia: Genova 1506', unpubl. PhD diss. Perugia 2004, 1, 15, 41, 46–8, 52, 58, 81; Hyde, 'Early cinquecento', ii, appendices 2.3, 2.1, 2.4; Pacini, 'I presupposti politici', 199–200.

<sup>13</sup> ASG, MS 494, fo. 23.

<sup>14</sup> M. Moresco, *Le parrocchie gentilizie genovesi*, Turin 1901, passim and at p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Hyde, 'Early cinquecento', i. 143–5.

In his will of 16 October 1481 Bendinello blatantly imitated the *nobili* and laid the financial basis for the dynastic celebration of the Sauli through the foundation of their own *parrocchia gentilizia*, S. Maria and SS Fabiano and Sebastiano (now known as S. Maria Assunta di Carignano). This was to be built after sixty years when a complicated investment in the *Casa di San Giorgio* matured. The splendour, size and magnificence that he detailed in his will were more than met by the architect Galeazzo Alessi when construction of the church began in the mid-*cinquecento*.<sup>16</sup> The claim to social equality promulgated by the elder Bendinello was then continued by his sons in their rich, ambitious endowments of chapels in different churches both in and outside Genoa.<sup>17</sup> When Vincenzo Sauli became patron of the main altar of the church of the Benedictine-Cassinense monastery of San Girolamo della Cervara in the early *cinquecento* he provided Gerard David's *Cervara altarpiece*<sup>18</sup> and also the (now lost) surrounding tapestries and altar frontals.<sup>19</sup> The commission was of a scale and expense rarely encountered in Genoese patronage and again reflected the Sauli desire for prestige and commemoration.

But to the younger Sauli the erection of S. Maria Assunta must have seemed a distant dream. Sixty years was a long time to wait and in reality little had changed in Genoa. The family was prominent – in 1506 Jean d'Auton listed the Sauli as amongst the 'great houses' of Genoa – but effectively powerless.<sup>20</sup> They chose again to publicise their ambitions through a further, audacious, act of artistic patronage. On 14 August 1515 several members of the family (including Cardinal Sauli and his brothers) registered a joint holding in the *Casa di San Giorgio*, the profits of which were to pay for the celebration of a daily mass in the now destroyed 'chapel or oratory' of SS Fabiano e Sebastiano, founded in Carignano by the family in the same year and of which they held the *iuspatronatus*.<sup>21</sup> The very foundation of the oratory confirmed the Sauli's desire to have their personal place of worship and was a clear imitation of the *parrocchie gentilizie*: even the main *Altarpiece of Sts Fabian and Sebastian*<sup>22</sup> by the Pavian artist Lorenzo Fasolo (c. 1463–c. 1518), was modelled on the *Altarpiece of Sts Sebastian, John the Baptist and*

<sup>16</sup> M. Bologna (ed.), 'L'archivio della famiglia Sauli di Genova', *ASLSP* n.s. xl/2 (2001), 11–661 at p. 38; ADGG, Archivio Sauli, no. 299, fos 1v, 2r–v.

<sup>17</sup> Hyde, 'Early *cinquecento*', i. 173–96.

<sup>18</sup> Now divided and to be found in the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Louvre, Paris.

<sup>19</sup> H. Hyde, 'Gerard David's *Cervara altarpiece*: an examination of the commission for the monastery of San Girolamo della Cervara', *Arte Cristiana* lxxxv (1997), 245–54.

<sup>20</sup> *Chroniques de Jean d'Auton*, ed. P. L. Jacob, Paris 1834, i. 4.

<sup>21</sup> ASG, Archivio del Banco di San Giorgio, Colonne San Lorenzo 1516, 610, fo. 476v; Archivio Sauli, no. 13, unfoliated; Hyde, 'Early *cinquecento*', i. 349.

<sup>22</sup> Private collection.

*Francis*<sup>23</sup> by Filippino Lippi which stood in the church of S. Teodoro, whose patrons were the *nobile* Lomellini.<sup>24</sup>

In October 1528 the Sauli gained their reward: under the *reformationes novae* they, with four other *popolare* families (who had also been active participants in the revolt and the ensuing attempts at political reform), became heads of five of the twenty-eight *alberghi* which made up a single order of ruling citizens, called, ironically, *nobili*.<sup>25</sup> The active participation of the Sauli in political life and the public image of the family promoted through their patronage fulfilled the ‘dignity of life’ required to have been shown by those who were included in the *alberghi*, and perhaps more particularly, by those who headed them.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly the singular achievement of the elevation to the cardinalate of Bendinello Sauli *quondam* Pasquali enhanced their standing. He was the first member of a genuine Genoese *popolare* family to become a cardinal: the only earlier example, Cardinal Paolo Fregoso (1480–98), had served as doge twice before receiving his cardinalate when his nephew, Battista Fregoso, was head of the republic.<sup>27</sup> Cardinal Sauli himself benefited from family connections, but in a different way. But how did the Sauli begin to make their influence felt within the papal Curia and finally secure the cardinalate for Bendinello?

### The Sauli and Rome: the breakthrough into papal finances

They did so by joining the ranks of the papal bankers (‘mercatores curiam romanam sequentes’) and by lending their financial wealth and support to three popes: Innocent VIII (1484–92), Julius II (1503–13) and Leo X (1513–21). Undoubtedly they turned their attention to Rome in the hope of profit, and, presumably, of social climbing.<sup>28</sup> The position of banker was prestigious and, as Peter Partner notes, ‘the bankers moved the cogs which made the great Roman machine rotate’.<sup>29</sup> In the *caput mundi* they might attain the pre-eminence which was denied them in Genoa and they might also bring further ‘honour and profit’ to their own house, and their native city, by the

<sup>23</sup> Palazzo Bianco, Genoa.

<sup>24</sup> Hyde, ‘Early *cinquecento*’, i. 354–5, 358–66.

<sup>25</sup> Pacini, ‘I presupposti politici’, 42, 202, 256, 269; Hyde, ‘Early *cinquecento*’, i. 201.

<sup>26</sup> Camajani, *Il ‘Liber’*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> M. Cavanna Ciappina, ‘Fregoso, Paolo’, *DBI* I (1998), 427–32, *passim*. The dates in brackets which follow the first citing of a cardinal refer to the length of his cardinalate.

<sup>28</sup> P. Hurtubise, ‘L’implantation d’une famille florentine à Rome au début du XVI siècle: les Salviati’, in S. Gensini (ed.), *Roma capitale: (1447–1527), Pisa and San Miniato 1994: atti del IV convegno di studio del centro studi sulla civiltà del tardo medioevo, 27–31 Ottobre 1992, San Miniato (Pisa)*, Pisa 1994, 253–71 at p. 268.

<sup>29</sup> P. Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500–1559: a portrait of a society*, London 1976, 148.