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The Sacred City: Catholic Reform and Urban
Devotion in Venice, 1545-1693

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the transformation of Catholic devotional culture in the city of Venice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1545-1693). This period witnessed profound inward reform of Catholicism that changed the nature of everyday religious life with consequences for Catholic cities. My research focusses on understanding these changes by investigating the redefined role of sacred immanence in shaping urban devotional life. Assumptions about the immanence of the sacred – the idea that the holy could work in everyday life through miracles, saintly interventions, and holy places – divided Western Christians during the European Reformations. For Catholics, the accentuated role of palpable manifestations of the sacred became an ever more defining feature of urban devotional life. This project argues for the central role that belief in sacred immanence played in changing Catholic identity in Venice during this period. This thesis addresses two main research questions: what aspects of Catholic religious life in Venice were transformed by contemporary emphasis on the immanence of the sacred? And what do these changes tell us about how Catholicism was experienced and practiced in early modern Catholic cities? I answer these questions through close examination of a range of early printed books along with archival material pertaining to the activities of Venetian confraternities. This thesis makes three key contributions to our understanding of the social and cultural history of early modern religion. Firstly, I draw attention to the central role that shifting attitudes towards sacred immanence played in the transformation of a range of devotional activities in this period. Second, this project contributes to our understanding of urban religious life by emphasising the role of the city in offering Catholic people a strong concentration of diverse points of encounter with the sacred. Finally, by bringing interactions between institutions, individuals, and communities to the centre of study, religious change is cast as a collaborative

process involving a range of lay and clerical agents responsible for reshaping the everyday experience of Catholicism in the city of Venice.

Abbreviations

ASV	Archivio di Stato di Venezia
PC	Provveditori di Comun
Reg.	<i>Registro</i>
fol.	<i>folio</i>
fols.	<i>folios</i>

Spelling and Conventions

Italian spellings in direct quotations have not been standardised or otherwise changed from the original Venetian printed and archival sources. Words that require an accent such as ‘perchè’ or ‘più’ appear without in several texts, including interchangeable usages (perche/perchè) in the same text. In quoted passages, I have chosen to retain the form in which such words appear in individual instances. The names for Italian churches, convents, and monasteries have been retained (‘Santa Maria dei Miracoli’ rather than ‘Saint Mary of the Miracles’) unless standard English names apply (‘Saint Mark’s Basilica’ rather than ‘Basilica di San Marco’). Italian names and Venetian titles have been retained where English equivalents do not exist or do not retain meaning in English translation. Where standard English titles do exist, then these have been used in place of the Italian ones (‘Saint’ rather than ‘Santo/Santa’).

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Introduction

In the winter of 1545, high-ranking ecclesiastics met at the Italian city of Trento to deliberate the reformation of the Catholic Church and the souls under its care. At the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the reforming Church outlined an ambitious agenda: to extirpate heresy, to defeat the enemies of Christianity, to restore unity to the Church, and to reform clerical and lay Catholics.¹ As John O'Malley put it, these lofty aims addressed both matters of 'doctrine' and 'reform'. With the former, Trent sought to outline the error of Protestant heresy which threatened the hegemony of Catholic Christianity. With the latter, Trent turned to the state of the Catholic house and decided how to put it into better order.² The 'reform of Christian people' was a bold goal but was vague in practice. The decrees that emanated from the eighteen years and twenty-five sessions of Trent offered little in the way of innovation.³ Instead, rulings affirmed rather than changed existing teachings. There was neither radical remaking of doctrine nor dramatic rejection of tradition in the process of Catholic reform in contrast to the breakaway movements that occupied Protestant reformers. Agostino Borromeo has commented that although the practical application of the Tridentine decrees was often 'slow, laborious, and uneven [...] this process of implementation produced significant fruits and helped to promote that evident religious renewal which seems to characterise the life of the Church in the early modern period'.⁴ Notwithstanding this point, Catholic reform was not a straightforward matter. Celeste McNamara has recently highlighted that Trent provided

¹ H. J. Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford: TAN Books, 1978), p. 13.

² John O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), pp. 14-16.

³ The notable exception is the reform of matrimony enunciated by the Council of Trent through the *Tametsi* ruling of 1563. The decree made the presence of a priest a necessary condition for a canonically valid marriage to clamp down on clandestine unions. See Philip L. Reynolds, *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 725-982; Jutta Sperling, 'Marriage at the Time of the Council of Trent (1560-70): Clandestine Marriages, Kinship Prohibitors, and Dowry Exchange in European Comparison', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 8.1 (2004), 67-108.

⁴ Agostino Borromeo, 'I vescovi italiani e l'applicazione del Concilio di Trento', in *I tempi del Concilio: Religione, cultura e società nell'Europa tridentina*, ed. by Cesare Mozzarelli and Danilo Zardin (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1997), pp. 27-107 (p. 76).

reforming bishops with a ‘blueprint of what they were supposed to repair and rebuild’ but did not tell them how to in practical terms.⁵ How and when aspects of Trent were put to practice differed from diocese to diocese and strongly reflected individual bishops’ priorities, personalities, and levels of motivation. Catholic reform offered only a general ideal rather than specific directives on how Catholicism should be changed in practice. The reforms of Catholicism implemented through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries nonetheless touched the lives of all Catholic people. This thesis focusses on understanding these consequences for the devotional lives of the people of Venice.

This period of reform witnessed a profound inward transformation of Catholicism that sought to reshape everyday religious practice. I seek to untangle what this shift meant for Catholic devotional culture by examining the redefined role of sacred immanence in shaping urban devotional life in Venice. Assumptions about the immanence of the sacred – the idea that the holy could inhere within in and change everyday life – divided Western Christians during the European Reformations. For Catholics in Venice, the accentuated role of palpable manifestations of the sacred became an ever more defining feature of urban devotional life. Arguing for the central role that a reasserted sense of sacred immanence played in shaping Catholic identity and devotional life in Venice during this period, this thesis will address two main research questions. What aspects of Catholic religious life in Venice were transformed by contemporary emphasis on the immanence of the sacred? And what did these changes mean for Catholic devotional culture?

⁵ Celeste McNamara, *The Bishop’s Burdon: Reforming the Catholic Church in Early Modern Europe* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), p. 5.

Historiographical context

Any Anglo-American study of early modern Catholic reform must engage with the questions of terminology – what do we call sixteenth and seventeenth-century Catholicism? And how do these choices influence how we approach our subject and the conclusions that we reach?⁶ Simon Ditchfield memorably dubbed the dialogue driving the ‘Counter-Reformation versus Catholic Reformation’ debate as something of a now ‘hackneyed Punch-and-Judy show’.⁷ Ditchfield’s quip may seem facetious at face value, but the sentiments that underpin it demand serious attention from scholars of Catholicism. Different terms can be used to convey very different, but no less valid, ideas about what Catholicism ‘was’ and what Catholicism ‘did’ in this period of reform, renewal, and reinvention.⁸ As Mary Laven has argued, the value of the term ‘Counter-Reformation’ lies in its ability to foreground the newness of Catholicism in this period and ‘forces us to consider it comparatively’.⁹ With a ‘view from Italy’, Massimo Firpo has pointed out that the choice of language is something that engages Anglo-American scholars of Catholicism most urgently given the strong support for both ‘reform’ and ‘Reformation’ in their writings.¹⁰ Firpo highlights that ‘Catholic Reformation (or “Catholic Reform”) and “Counter-Reformation” describe alternative routes, even if they sometimes crisscrossed each other’.¹¹ Ulrich L. Lehner has recently and strongly

⁶ For an overview of the origins of these debates, see John W. O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁷ Simon Ditchfield, ‘Of Dancing Cardinals and Mestizo Madonnas: Reconfiguring the History of Roman Catholicism in the Early Modern Period’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 8 (2004), 386-408 (p. 386).

⁸ Simon Ditchfield, ‘Tridentine Worship and the Cult of the Saints’, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion, 1500-1660*, ed. by R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 201-224 (p. 224).

⁹ Mary Laven, ‘Encountering the Counter-Reformation’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59.3 (2006), 706-720 (p. 720). See also Mary Laven, ‘Introduction’, in *The Ashgate Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. by Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1-12

¹⁰ Massimo Firpo, ‘Rethinking “Catholic Reform” and “Counter-Reformation”’: What Happened in Early Modern Catholicism – a View from Italy’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 20 (2016), 293-312 (p. 294). Firpo notes in particular that in Polish, German, French, Spanish, and Italian scholarship, the term ‘Reformation’ is generally reserved for the “Protestant Reformation” whereas variations of the word ‘reform’ are most commonly used to refer to the period of Catholicism under study here.

¹¹ Firpo, ‘Rethinking “Catholic Reform”’, p. 295.

advocated for the term ‘Catholic reform’ due to its ability to permit examination of the ‘inner renewal of the Church’ in this period. Strikingly, Lehner argues that ‘by sidestepping questions about the importance of the Council of Trent or the papacy [...] I am focussing [...] entirely on means of spiritual transformation’.¹² For him, Catholic reform means ‘focussing on the inner renewal of the Church, often independent of Protestant challenges’.¹³ While I do not deny the usefulness of other terms, which are vital for drawing attention to specific aspects of Catholicism in this period, I will be clear about my own choice of terminology and how this shapes my approach to Catholic Venice.

I primarily use the term ‘Catholic reform’ to describe both the nature of the transformations to devotional culture which I examine throughout and the period under study here (1545-1693). I use terms ‘Tridentine’ and ‘post-Tridentine’ as chronological indicators in relation to the opening, duration, and aftermath of the Council of Trent. This choice is shaped by the fundamental question which drives this research: what did Catholic reform mean for Catholics? My aim here is to understand the transformations of Catholicism on their own terms, rather than as something occurring directly in relation to Protestant heresy. To be clear from the offset, this thesis does not cast the Protestant challenge as unimportant or inconsequential either in Venice or in relation to the development of Catholicism in this period. On the contrary, clerical and lay Catholics alike exhibited clear awareness of the religious controversies of the day and the stakes that they held in these. My approach shifts the analytical focus upon understanding the consequences of reform for Catholic devotional culture and Catholic people. At relevant moments, I use ‘Counter-Reformation’ where it most accurately captures the meanings of reaction, confrontation, and the polemical which characterise my understanding of the term. This is not a thesis about the Council of Trent, but

¹² Ulrich Lehner, *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform: From the Council of Trent to the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), Preface, xi.

¹³ Lehner, *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform*, p. 1.

it does draw attention to the ways that Tridentine reform was received, mulled over, and promoted in Venice by a range of Catholic people with consequences for their devotional lives.

The primary aim of this thesis is to contribute to the social and cultural history of the European Reformations. I do this by studying Catholic reform in a context of stable Catholic hegemony – the city of Venice. The value of both this approach, and the term ‘Catholic reform’, lies in their ability to foreground the devotional lives of Catholics. Reformations, religious wars, and confessionally-divided cities provide the historian with contexts of resistance and reaction that make the spiritual priorities of Catholic people highly discernible. Scholarship such as Barbara Diefendorf’s work on war-torn France, Marc Forster’s on confessionally-diverse Speyer (Germany), and Alexandra Walsham’s on Catholic minorities in post-Reformation England, have shown that the presence of confessional conflict, or the collective experience of being a Catholic minority shaped devotional priorities.¹⁴ Such contexts of resistance make devotional activity particularly perceptible for the historian. But what happens when we study Catholic reform in a context of comparatively secure Catholic hegemony? Did reform unfold differently? Was devotional culture shaped in different ways?

By focussing on Venice, this thesis offers a response to these questions. Venice was by no means religiously homogenous. Muslims, Jews, Protestants, Greek Orthodox Christians and Catholics both permanently lived in and moved through the lagoon city.¹⁵ Nor

¹⁴ Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); *Planting the Cross: Catholic Reform and Renewal in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Marc R. Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Alexandra Walsham, *Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); ‘Relics, writing, and Memory in the English Counter-Reformation: Thomas Maxfield and His Afterlives’, *British Catholic History*, 34.1 (2018), 77-109.

¹⁵ For an overview on Venice’s approach to foreign communities in this period see *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri XIV-XVIII secolo*, ed. by Donatella Calabi and Paola Lanaro (Rome: Laterza, 1998); Andrea Zannini, *Venezia città aperta: gli stranieri e la Serenissima XIV-XVII sec.* (Venice: Marcianum Press, 2009); Giorgio Fedalto, ‘Le minoranze straniere a Venezia tra politica e legislazione’, in *Venezia: Centro di*

do I dismiss the very real concerns of contemporaries about the potential status of Venice as the so-called ‘gateway’ through which Protestantism would enter Italy.¹⁶ The contributions of historians such as John Jeffries Martin and Federica Ambrosini have traced the very real activities of Protestants in Venice in this period and have accounted for heterodoxy’s potential appeal to different groups in the city.¹⁷ Despite Catholicism being woven into its physical, social, and civic fabrics, Venice was not impervious to heterodoxy. For the seventeenth-century, Federico Barbierato has drawn attention to the complexities of heterodoxy, clashes of ideas, and matters of belief that existed in Venice between the ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heterodoxy’ binaries. Barbierato has charted the process of religious dissent in Venice which from the 1640s ‘could count on an ideological apparatus and a readily available vocabulary’.¹⁸ The presence of heterodoxy in the city manifested in the *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni* – a charitable institution established in 1557 designed to facilitate the conversion of Jews and Muslims to Catholicism. Natalie Rothman has argued that the work of this institution, and concerns with religious conversion in seventeenth-century Venice more generally, were intrinsically linked to the attempt to ‘subject the populace to parish-based forms of social discipline [...] through Church activities’.¹⁹ Issues of heterodoxy and

mediazione tra oriente e occidente, secoli XV-XVI: aspetti e problemi, ed. by Agostino Petusi, Hans-Georg Beck, and Manoussos Manoussacas (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1977), pp. 143-163.

¹⁶ Massimo Firpo has examined a letter written by Catholic convert to Protestantism Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564) in which he expressed his expectation that Venice would be the ‘gateway’ of the Reformation in Italy. On Ochino’s expectations see Massimo Firpo, *Riforma protestante ed eresia nell’Italia del ‘500: un profilo storico* (Rome: Laterza, 2008), p. 17.

¹⁷ John Jeffries Martin, *Venice’s Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Federica Ambrosini, *Storie di patrizi e di eresia nella Venezia del Cinquecento* (Milan: Lunghezza Stampa, 1999); Massimo Firpo, *Artisti, gioiellieri, eretici. Il mondo di Lorenzo Lotto tra Riforma e Controriforma* (Rome: Laterza, 2004).

¹⁸ Federico Barbierato, *The Inquisitor in the Hat Shop: Inquisition, Forbidden Books and Unbelief in Early Modern Venice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), Foreword, p. xxx.

¹⁹ Natalie E. Rothman, ‘Becoming Venetian: Conversion and Transformation in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean’, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 21.1 (2006), 39-75 (p. 40). Rothman has examined a seventeenth-century case of religious conversion facilitated through the *Casa dei Catecumeni* in the frameworks of linguistic boundaries and identity formation in her article ‘Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderlands’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 41.3 (2011), 601-633. Eric Dursteler has examined the emotional dimension of conversion in his article ‘Fearing the “Turk” and Feeling the Spirit: Emotion and Conversion in the Early Modern Mediterranean’, *Journal of Religious History*, 39.4 (2015), 484-505.

conversion among the populace aside, concerns about the wider Catholic status of Venice indeed existed in the period under study here. Earlier historiography has interpreted the Interdict controversy of 1606-7 as a clear signal of Venetian efforts to resist the process of Catholic reform being promoted by the Church.²⁰ The interdict, which involved a papal ban on the administration of the sacraments in Venice, was the culmination of political tension between the Venetian Republic and the Holy See. This viewpoint attracted significant pushback from scholars such as James Grubb who seriously brought into question the very notion of the ‘juxtaposition of Tridentine and Venetian ecclesiastical policies’.²¹ The temporary nature of the Interdict’s consequences for Venetian life has been emphasised more recently by Eloise Davies. Davies has argued that the controversy revived hopes for a Venetian conversion to Protestantism by English reformers, especially Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639), who sought to transform anti-papal feeling in Venice into a cause for national conversion. Yet, as Davies puts it, ‘on the face of it, these English efforts were a complete failure’.²² Venice signalled no intention to abandon the Catholicism which was the cornerstone of its national and religious identity.

Seriousness of such concerns notwithstanding, they never really materialised in Venice. Saint Mark’s city remained a steadfast bastion of Catholic Christianity in the period under study here. Antonio Santosuosso has identified 1547, the year of the establishment of the Venetian Holy Office, as a turning point. At this moment, Santosuosso sees Venice’s previously ambiguous attitude to Protestantism being overturned by a hard-line approach to

²⁰ See Gaetano Cozzi, *Paolo Sarpi tra Venezia e l’Europa* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979).

²¹ James S. Grubb, ‘When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 1.94 (1986), 43-94 (p. 57). See also Anthony D. Wright, ‘Why the “Venetian” Interdict?’, *English Historical Review*, 89 (1974), 534-550.

²² Eloise Davies, ‘Reformed but not Converted: Paolo Sarpi, the English Mission to Venice and Conceptions of Religious Change’, *Historical Research*, 95.269 (2022), 334-347 (p. 334). On the relationship between Venice and Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see also William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter-Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

the suppression of dissent that met the expectations of the reforming Catholic Church.²³

Despite some nervousness in the first few decades of the sixteenth century, Catholic hegemony in the city of Venice was not challenged by the Protestant Reformation in any meaningful or lasting way. On the contrary, this thesis will show that the process of Catholic reform in Venice transformed an already vibrant devotional culture in to an ever more ingrained, accessible, and spiritually charged urban context of Catholicism. This thesis therefore draws attention to the value of studying the changing nature of Catholicism in a context where such changes were not propelled by the immediate presence of a confessional divide or immanent challenges to Catholic hegemony. For this reason, the term ‘Catholic reform’ will be used. In doing so, I signal my intention to focus on the questions that the Catholic Church asked about itself in this period, and how these questions translated into transformations in devotional culture and practice for Catholic people. I approach the matters of Catholic life and reform in Venice through three interrelated themes: immanence and proximity, devotional encounters, and the sacred city.

Immanence and proximity

Blinking Madonnas, bleeding crucifixes, fragrant saintly bodies, celestial crosses in the sky, mystical ecstasies, and grace-giving sacraments told Catholics that the sacred world was near, approachable, and central to their devotions. Debates about both the nature and extent of God’s interaction with the world split Catholics and Protestants down the middle during the European Reformations.²⁴ Immanence was one of the most pressing questions of Western

²³ Antonio Santosuosso, ‘Orthodoxy, Dissent and Suppression in Venice in the 1540s’, *Church History*, 42. 4 (1973), 476-485 (p. 476).

²⁴ Alexandra Walsham reminds us that Protestantism did not espouse a wholesale rejection of the concept of God’s interaction with the world by means of the supernatural, such as through miracles. She nonetheless emphasises how the Catholic notion of immanence was replaced by the Protestant emphasis on providence. See her ‘Miracles in Post-Reformation England’, in *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church*, ed. by Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge: Studies in Church History, 2005), pp. 273-306. See also her *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Christianity in this period, and the issue fuelled multiple debates regarding both doctrine and practice. Sociologist of religion, Guy Swanson, has gone so far as to argue that local attitudes to the matter of immanence determined whether or not a country converted to Protestantism during the European Reformations. I do not necessarily agree with Swanson's thesis regarding conversion, but I do draw upon his definition of sacred immanence in my own framing of the concept here. Swanson argued that 'immanence always refers to the manner in which [the sacred] dwells within something else, whether that something be another spirit, a person, a group, a mountain, or whatever'.²⁵ This definition is apt for this thesis in its willingness to extend the term 'sacred immanence' beyond the immediately material – relics, Eucharistic hosts, sacred spaces – and to consider more abstract aspects of Catholic devotional culture where sacrality made itself known – memory, identity, and history.

Materiality shaped Catholic devotional experience in this period. Objects and spaces, from worn-out rosary beads to ordinary foodstuffs, created specific religious experiences, stimulated the senses, engaged the emotions, and served as markers of devotional identity for Catholic people.²⁶ As Suzanna Ivanič has argued, not only purpose-made objects, but naturally-occurring ones too – 'the stuff of which the world was made' – were understood to be connected to the divine'.²⁷ While this thesis indeed examines central aspects of sacred

²⁵ Guy Swanson, *Religion and Regime: A Sociological Account of the Reformation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 25.

²⁶ For an overview of the broader relationship between materiality and Catholicism, see Maureen C. Miller, 'Introduction: Material Culture and Catholic History', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 101 (2015), 1-17. On the materiality of Catholic devotion in the period of reform, see Silvia Evangelisti, 'Material Culture', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. by Alexandra Bamji, Geert. H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). Andrew Spicer has examined the relationship between materiality and church spaces in his chapter 'The Material Culture of Early Modern Churches', in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* ed. by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 82-97. On the potential of spaces and objects to engage the senses in the period of Catholic reform, see *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, ed. by Marcia B. Hall and Tracy E. Cooper (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Eleanor Barnett has examined the role that food played in the making of confessional identity in Venice using the records of the Venetian Holy Office. See her 'Food and Religious Identities in the Venetian Inquisition, ca. 1560-ca.1640', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 74.1 (2021), 181-214.

²⁷ Suzanna Ivanič, *Cosmos and Materiality in Early Modern Prague* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 12.

immanence that could be touched, I also consider more intangible points of encounter that devotional culture facilitated between Catholic people and God. In relation to understanding these encounters, an important term is ‘hierophany’, as put forward by historian of religion Mircea Eliade. The word combines the Greek *hieros* (sacred) and *phainein* (to manifest). As Eliade puts it, hierophany refers to any moment in which ‘something sacred shows itself to us’.²⁸ In my own conception of sacred immanence throughout, I focus on the myriad ways that sacrality confronted Catholic people in Venice, and how these encounters changed in the period of reform.

Encountering the sacred occurred through affective moments, cultural consciousness, and expressions of civic identity. When speaking of sacred immanence, I refer to the sense that God made himself knowable, perceivable, and graspable through manifestations of his presence in his creation. Scholars of Protestantism have considered how far the Protestant challenge to Catholicism, especially regarding the expurgation of the ‘magical elements’ of Catholic devotion, resulted in the so-called ‘Disenchantment of the World’.²⁹ In such a context, Eucharistic hosts lost their ability to bleed, saints could neither see nor hear their earthly supplicants, and the rituals that allowed Catholics to tap into the spiritual potential of the sacred world were defunct. This thesis does not seek to directly respond to the abiding question of ‘disenchantment’, but it does call for deeper thought about the consequences of shifting attitudes towards sacred immanence for the devotional lives of Catholic people. Yet,

²⁸ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The History of Religion*, trans. by Willard Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), p. 11.

²⁹ For an overview of the historiography of the concept relation to Protestant reform, see Robert W. Scribner, ‘The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the Disenchantment of the World’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23.3 (1993), 475-494. For a comprehensive account of the consequences of religious reform in both Catholic and Protestant contexts in relation to attempts to reshape the Christian world view, see Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Michelle D. Brock has argued that Reformed Protestantism’s emphasise on human depravity reshaped the way that Scots perceived the role of the Devil in relation to debates about the ‘disenchantment of the world’. See her *Satan and the Scots: The Devil in Post-Reformation Scotland, c. 1560-1700* (London: Routledge, 2016).

these shifts were not linear. In fact, ambiguity most accurately describes the reforming Catholic Church's approach to manifestations of the holy.

Historians of Catholicism have considered how the process of Catholic reform attempted to influence how people engaged with the spiritual world. Alexandra Walsham reminds us that the Catholic Church as much as Protestant reformers worked to both redefine the boundaries of the spiritual world and influence how it was interacted with by Christian people.³⁰ Indeed, the proscriptive role of the Church in this period has been well studied, and scholars have thoroughly investigated the consequences of institutional circumspection for lay devotional life. Anne Jacobson Schutte and Gabriella Zarri have raised the matter of the systematic prosecution of so-called 'feigned saints' in Italy, while Peter Burke has traced the fluctuations in the Tridentine Church's attitudes towards the cult of the saints as a whole.³¹ Historians of the Roman Inquisition have emphasised that the reforming Church attempted to purge the spiritual lives of Catholic people of superstitious elements.³² Scholarship dealing with the Inquisition's treatment of witchcraft in particular has emphasised the Church's attempt to reduce laypeople's engagement with a range of spiritual forces. Using the records of the Venetian Holy Office, Jonathan Seitz has argued that the Inquisition's desire to rally physicians to testify in cases of harmful witchcraft (*maleficio*) is indicative of the Church's effort to eliminate lay beliefs incompatible with Catholic doctrine. Seitz concludes that the Venetian Holy Office's efforts did not lead to an overall shift, or 'disenchantment' of

³⁰ Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation and "The Disenchantment of the World" Reassessed', *The Historical Journal*, 51.2 (2008), 497-528 (pp. 501-502). On 'disenchantment' in relation to Catholic disciplinary measures, see also Andrew Keitt, 'Religious Enthusiasm, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Disenchantment of the World', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 65.2 (2004), 231-250.

³¹ Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. by Gabriella Zarri (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991); Peter Burke, 'How to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint', in Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 48-62.

³² On the practice, procedures, and scope of the Roman Inquisition in the period covered by this thesis, see Adriano Prosperi, *L'inquisizione romana. Letture e ricerche* (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2003); Christopher Black, *The Italian Inquisition* (New Haven: Yale, 2009); *L'inquisizione romana, i giudici e gli eretici: studi in onore di John Tedeschi*, ed. by Andrea del Col and Anne Jacobson Schutte (Rome: Viella, 2017).

attitudes towards the supernatural in relation to witchcraft.³³ More comprehensively, Adriano Prosperi's influential study of the Roman Inquisition has argued that disciplinary measures encouraged Catholic people to examine their own consciences. Prosperi highlights the Inquisition's effort to exert both moral and social control over Catholic people and to encourage them to embrace true Catholic, that is Tridentine, doctrine, practice, and belief.³⁴ For Siena, Oscar Di Simplicio has identified a similar emphasis being placed by the Church on moral standards and the social conformity of the laity.³⁵

For the reforming Catholic Church, ensuring that the laity adhered to doctrine was paramount, as was curbing unacceptable engagement with the sacred. But this does not mean that Catholic people suffered a wholesale deprivation of sacred encounters. In this thesis, I show that renewed Catholic devotional culture in Venice was predicated upon a heightened sense of sacred immanence and its potential to work in everyday life. Here the ambiguous attitude of the Catholic Church needs to be noted. On one hand, there was the clearly proscribed, but on the other, belief in the role and proximity of the sacred achieved through devotional acts was enhanced during the period of Catholic reform. This thesis argues that this period witnessed a heightening of the sacrality of a range of devotional practices and principles in Venice. My research contributes to work emphasising the role that sacred immanence played in the definition of devotional culture. Scholarship has shown that despite the Church's nervousness of unregulated access to the sacred, belief in the palpable, heavy

³³ Jonathan Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011), pp. 254-255. On the Venetian Holy Office and the prosecution of witchcraft, see also Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice, 1550-1650* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Anna Bennett, 'Bagatelle or Stregamenti: The Spiritual Potential of Material Objects and Spaces in Late Rinascimento Venice, 1580-1630', *Journal of Women's History*, 32.3 (2020), 115-138; Mary O'Neil, 'Sacerdote overo strione: Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in 16th Century Italy', in *Understanding Popular Culture. Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), pp. 53-83

³⁴ Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996). See also Prosperi's earlier article 'Riforma cattolica, crisi religiosa, disciplinamento: un percorso di ricerca', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-germanico in Trento*, 19 (1993), 401-415.

³⁵ Oscar Di Simplicio, 'Confessionalizzazione e identità collettiva: Il caso italiano: Siena 1575-1800', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 88 (1997), 380-411.

weight of the spiritual world and its inhabitants, confronted lay Catholics left and right.

Divine presence was particularly helpful when hearts and minds needed to be turned back to the Catholic Church, as shown by Trevor Johnson's study of Jesuit missionary activities in the eighteenth-century Upper Palatinate, or David Gentilcore's analysis of the 'system of the sacred' in the early modern Terra D'Otranto.³⁶

My approach to the concept of sacred immanence is underpinned by three ideas: the sacred could be experienced in different ways, the intensity of sacred immanence could be changed, and sacred immanence was at the heart of devotional culture in the period of Catholic reform. This thesis will show that sacred immanence, whether transient moments or more permanent manifestations, whether rooted in materiality or intangibility, was experienced in different ways and by different means in Venice. These means were physical, such as shrines, statues, churches, and sacramentals. Yet, experiencing the sacred also occurred in immaterial ways – through history, cultural consciousness, memory, and knowledge. In different ways, these means all brought the Catholic into closer encounter with the sacred. In addition to examining what changed in relation to various devotional practices and principles, central to my approach to sacred immanence is understanding how it was encountered. Where did encounters with the sacred occur in Venice? And how were these encounters facilitated by broader cultural forces?

The intensity of sacred immanence could be altered in particular contexts. The Council of Trent reaffirmed and articulated the doctrine at the heart of a range of Catholic devotional practices, yet these decrees were mainly concerned with affirmation rather than innovation. The act of reaffirmation was important for heightening the sacrality of a range of devotional acts and practices in this period; their ability to bring the Catholic into communion

³⁶ Trevor Johnson, 'Blood, Tears, and Xavier Water: Jesuit Missionaries and Popular Religion in the Eighteenth-Century Upper Palatinate', in *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400-1800*, ed. by Robert Scribner and Trevor Johnson (London: Palgrave, 1996), pp. 183-202; David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d'Otranto* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

with the divine was emphasised. Here I draw upon Walsham's concept of 'resacralisation'. For Walsham, thinking about shifting attitudes towards the sacred in terms of 'desacralisation' and 'resacralisation' depicts the reality of such shifts more accurately than the more linear concepts of 'enchantment' and 'disenchantment'. Walsham defines resacralisation as the process by which confessions exhibit 'a fresh receptiveness to the supernatural and sacred'.³⁷ The devotional principles and practices examined in this thesis were always holy and always offered the Catholic communion with God. By using the term 'resacralisation', I do not suggest that pre-Tridentine piety was 'desacralised' in any sense. Rather, I argue for the encouragement of a 'fresh receptiveness to the sacred' in Tridentine and post-Tridentine Venice predicated upon a heightened sense of the immanence of the sacred.

Finally, this thesis puts forward the argument that shifting attitudes towards and engagement with sacred immanence is key to understanding important changes to Catholic devotional culture in the period of reform. Many factors influenced the choices that a Catholic would make in devotional life. This thesis shows that transformations in devotional culture were predicated upon a heightened sense of sacred immanence and the proximity that the Catholic could achieve to the holy. My research responds to questions in the social and cultural history of the European Reformations seeking to understand how religious change helped to develop new worldviews for Christians. I build upon the findings of Brian Larkin who has argued that patterns of devotional change in Bourbon Mexico City reflected a fundamentally altered understanding of the 'very nature of God'.³⁸ I argue that the emphasis on the immanence of the sacred resulted in the transformation of devotional practices and principles. By studying the question of sacred immanence in a local context, this thesis will

³⁷ Walsham, 'The "Disenchantment of the World" Reassessed', p. 527.

³⁸ Brian Larkin, *The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

account for how the redefined role of the sacred in Tridentine and post-Tridentine Catholicism unfolded in devotional practice. Miracles were emphasised as frequent occurrences, saints became closer to their devotees, touted sacred legends were anointed with provable facts, and the very presence of Christ moved from the sanctuary to the pew.

Devotional encounters

Bringing devotion to the centre of study responds to one of the most vibrant areas of scholarship that seeks to understand how Catholicism changed and was experienced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This vibrancy is in part due to the light that devotion sheds upon the broader issues of Catholic identity, the relationship between lay and clerical people, and shifting Christian worldviews. As Nathan D. Mitchell has argued regarding the rosary, devotional practices were able to ‘absorb the reframings of reform’ and reflect how Catholic people responded to them.³⁹ Historians have thoroughly examined the role of the laity in resisting the reforming efforts of Catholic change, or having their devotional creativity stifled by the conforming mission of Tridentine authoritarianism. Carlo Ginzburg’s influential study of the *Benandanti*, and his examination of the unnervingly heretical and literate miller Menocchio are two well-known examples.⁴⁰ Another important strand of this research is the scholarship on the censorship activities of the Catholic Church in this period. Italian historian Gigliola Fragnito has drawn attention to the consequences of the Church’s ardent efforts to prevent ordinary Catholics from putting vernacular Bibles to use in their devotional lives. For Fragnito, these measures were driven by the institution’s fear that

³⁹ Nathan D. Mitchell, *The Mystery of the Rosary: Marian Devotion and the Reinvention of Catholicism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 3.

⁴⁰ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller*, trans. by John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. by John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983)

ordinary Catholics might reach unacceptable conclusions about doctrine if texts were approached without ecclesiastical guidance.⁴¹ The same concerns which I previously raised about unregulated access to the sacred informed the proscription of specific devotional practices in this period.

The questions that this thesis addresses in relation to devotion coalesce around the matter of encounters: how, where, and when did Catholic people in Venice encounter the sacred in their devotional lives? And how and why did these encounters change over time? As Laven puts it, ‘the focus now is on “religion *vécu*” – religion, as lived and experienced’.⁴² Devotional activities which were unproblematic for the reforming Catholic Church constituted an enormous proportion of everyday religious practices in Venice. The transformation to devotional culture examined here was characterised by expansion rather than diminishment of Venetian Catholics’ access to the sacred. As important as it is to account for the very strenuous measures of the Church to ensure orthodoxy and proper religious observance, we must also seriously examine non-objectionable developments in Catholic devotional culture. To do this, historians must untangle the question of identity. I ask, ‘what did it mean to be a Catholic in Venice during the period of reform?’ – to paraphrase Judith Pollmann’s question on Catholic identity during the Dutch Revolt.⁴³

I consider how shifting attitudes towards the immanence of the sacred, and the emphasised sacrality of devotional practices and principles influenced Catholic identity in

⁴¹ Gigliola Fragnito, *La bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della scrittura (1471-1605)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997). On the censorship of non-biblical devotional books in this period, see also her “Dichino corone e rosarii”: censura ecclesiastica e libri di devozione’, *Cheiron*, 17 (2000), 135-58. On the broader practice of censorship carried out by the Tridentine and post-Tridentine Church, see *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Gigliola Fragnito, trans. by Adrian Belton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴² Mary Laven, ‘Introduction’, in *The Ashgate Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. by Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 8.

⁴³ Judith Pollmann opens her chapter to the cited volume with the question, ‘What did it mean to be a Counter-Reformation Catholic?’. See her, ‘Being a Catholic in Early Modern Europe’, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. by Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 165. See Pollmann’s *Catholic Identity, and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Venice. Again, these questions extend our understanding of how Catholicism in a stable Catholic context changed during the period of reform. Some of the developments to Catholic identity in Venice related to the city itself and the state of being a Venetian Catholic. Others were not rooted in the local context exclusively, but instead shed important light on how Catholic identity developed in this period as a whole. An important aspect of ‘being a Catholic’ in Venice meant having access to a range of new and renewed devotional practices and resources. It was predicated upon a different, closer relationship with the sacred. By examining the relationship between sacred immanence and devotion, I argue that Catholic identity in this period was forged and characterised by an increasingly sacralised worldview which was nurtured by a range of devotional practices. Encountering the sacred in Venice occurred in different ways, places, and contexts. The different strands of identity formation that worked through devotional culture in Venice will be examined throughout.

Studying devotion brings the everyday religious lives of Catholic people front and centre. Broadly speaking, the largest group of ‘Catholic people’ in Venice was the laity. The devotional principles that this thesis examines permeated throughout quotidian Catholic life. As Marc Forster has argued for southwest Germany, religious ‘identity was created from daily experience and was lived out in the everyday world’.⁴⁴ Catholic identity in Venice was also intrinsically bound to everyday devotion. Scholarship has sought to contextualise the laity’s appetite for devotional encounters in the period of Catholic reform. Questions which occupy this research focus on understanding the choices open to the laity in organising their voluntary devotional lives. Mary Laven, Abigail Brundin, and Deborah Howard have recently argued for the importance of the home as a site of devotion in Renaissance Italy. But as the authors note, ‘private piety often goes undocumented’, requiring the historian to consider a range of contexts, sources, and possibilities in reconstructing the devotional

⁴⁴ Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque*, p. 7

landscape of Catholicism.⁴⁵ Attempting to understand the inner devotional lives of laypeople has driven examination of the spiritual resources that they used. Virginia Reinburg has used French Books of Hours to examine the prayer lives of their readers from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, drawing attention to the interior spirituality of their owners.⁴⁶ Moshe Sluhovsky has recently argued that changing patterns of voluntary penitential devotions shaped the interior lives of early modern Catholics. Sluhovsky contends that such shifts in devotional culture allowed these Catholics to ‘experience in new ways their subjecthood as well as their connection with fellow Christians and God’.⁴⁷ On the means to achieve inward spiritual transformation, Lehner has emphasised the influence of ‘normative texts and practices [...] normally prescribed by the clergy’.⁴⁸ Indeed, most devotional tools, sites, resources, and practices were created, monitored, and promoted by the clergy, and the Church had a very clear idea about the kinds of devotions that the Catholic people should most eagerly adopt. I aim to contribute to this body of scholarship seeking to understand the devotional options open to Catholics in this period by arguing that the fundamental issue of sacred immanence had vital consequences for devotional culture.

This thesis addresses the issue of agency in relation to religious change. Crucially, my arguments do not reduce Catholic reform in Venice to straightforward manifestations of the Council of Trent, notwithstanding its importance. Instead, I draw attention to the range of agents responsible for reshaping urban Catholic culture. I therefore bring ‘Catholic people’ to the centre of study. As I have previously raised, this thesis is keenly concerned with

⁴⁵ Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 9. On domestic devotion in Italy and beyond in this period, see Caroline Anderson, ‘The Material Culture of Domestic Religion in Early Modern Florence, c. 1480 to c. 1650’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2007); *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

⁴⁶ Virginia Reinburg, *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, c. 1400-1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁷ Moshe Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self: Practices of Belief in early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Lehner, *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform*, Foreword, x.

understanding the potential consequences that changes to devotional culture in Venice had for the laity. My approach does not, however, focus solely on lay experience, nor on laypeople's contributions or reactions to Catholic reform. While these important things are indeed examined in this study, I emphasise primarily the highly collaborative nature of the redefinition of sacred immanence in Venice. This process needed a range of people. Clerical authors, hagiographers, domestic and foreign clergy, religious orders, and laypeople all played crucial roles in bringing about important changes to devotional culture in Venice. All of the devotional changes examined in this thesis had direct relevance and consequences for major aspects of lay religious life. Yet, understanding the relationship between sacred immanence and devotional change in Venice requires consideration of the relationships between different groups of Catholic people.

Points of sacred encounter were shaped and shared by both lay and clerical Catholics in Venice. Conventual and monastic churches, many of which housed powerful sources of sacred immanence such as prodigious relics, are a case in point. Despite being closely related to the monastic sphere of Catholic life, these spaces served the spiritual needs of laypeople who also worshipped in them. Devotional books permit investigation into the motivations and ideas of their mainly clerical authors, but they also require historians to consider how the ideas promoted through them attempted to shape lay devotional life in specific ways. During the period under study here, Venetian religious life was influenced by encounters with foreign, that is central, Church authorities that had important consequences for the devotional lives of the people living in the lagoon city at the parish level. On the other hand, lay-driven initiatives transformed local devotional culture in relation to sacred immanence in profound and quotidian ways. Sacred immanence in Saint Mark's city was transformed by a collaborative process involving promotion, negotiation, enthusiasm, and encounters.

The sacred city

Bringing Catholic reform, devotional culture, and the city of Venice to the centre of study responds to calls for further thought about the relationship between religious change and the urban context. Specifically, my conceptual approach draws upon Jörg Rüpke and Susanne Rau's recent hypothesis on the reciprocity of urbanity and religion. For them, religion changes urbanity, and urbanity changes religion. In particular relevance for my own approach, Rüpke and Rau argue that

Localisation in the city, the communicative and ritual production of the city, and the appropriation of urban hopes (aspirations) and forms of life have had an enormous influence on religious practices and ideas, and on the formation of religious traditions.⁴⁹

This conceptual framing is particularly important for my treatment of urban religion given my examination of a range of devotional principles and practices. These are, borrowing from Rüpke and Rau, the 'communicative and ritual productions' of Venice in this period. Productions were tangible, such as devotional books that reeled off the presses, sacred shrines that (ideally) drew the faithful crowds, to the altar upon which Christ's presence was made manifest. They were also intangible things, like stories told, and retold, sacred heroes imbued with fresh relevance, and history recalled, and put to practical devotional use. Diversity aside, these channels all served to bring Venetian Catholics closer to the sacred. Communicative and ritual productions fostered a highly immanent and proximate sense of the sacred in Venice that I argue intended to exert considerable influence over the 'religious practices and ideas' of Catholics living and worshipping there. The extent to

⁴⁹ Jörg Rüpke and Susanne Rau, 'Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations', *Religion and Urbanity Online*, ed. by Susanne Rau and Jörg Rüpke (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1515/urbrel.13230336>.

which the European Reformations transformed urban religious life is well-studied, especially in the context of Protestantism.⁵⁰ Donald Leech has recently argued, using the city of Coventry as a case study, that the repurposing of Catholic sacred space for secular purposes resulted in a process of ‘de-sacralisation’ and created a more ‘privatised and secularised’ urban context.⁵¹ This thesis addresses the opposite issue: the resacralisation of Catholic urban culture in the period of reform. In doing so, I aim to contribute to scholarship that asks how religious reform and Catholic devotion was shaped by the environments in which Catholics lived and operated. Although not focussing on the urban context, an important contribution to this discussion is Walsham’s conceptualisation of the Catholic sacralisation of the landscape in post-Reformation Britain. Walsham has reminded historians of Catholicism that we must account for the sites of devotional encounters in which Catholic identity was formed, reimagined, and subjected to change over time.⁵² By applying these questions to Venice, this thesis offers an important counterpoint to the more extensive scholarship that examines how minority Catholics exhibited a renewed focus on delineating contexts of devotion to manage the problem of confessional divide.

In her study of Lyon during the French Wars of Religion, Natalie Zemon Davis foregrounded the role of the city in both creating and reflecting Catholic experience during the protracted religious conflict. Davis argued that examining the urban context offers insights into ‘the ways in which religion formed and gave expression to urban values and

⁵⁰ See Steven Ozment, *The Reformation of the Cities. The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Christopher W. Close, *The Negotiated Reformation: Imperial Cities and the Politics of Urban Reform, 1525-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Christopher J. Burchill, ‘The Urban Reformation and Its Fate: Problems and Perspectives in the Consolidation of the German Protestant Movement’, *The Historical Journal*, 27.4 (1984), 997-1010.

⁵¹ Donald Leech, ‘Enclosures and de-sacralization in Tudor Coventry, and the foundations of modern urban space’, *Urban History*, 50 (2023), 58-75 (p. 58).

⁵² Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

mentality in that period'.⁵³ Indeed, historians have extensively examined how confessional divide or the experience of being a minority Catholic led people to create powerful points of sacred encounter in the cities of their habitation to preserve an effective devotional culture. Recently, Genji Yasuhira has argued that Catholics in Utrecht appropriated urban space to preserve devotional culture following restriction to their religious freedom implemented by the Reformed regime. Yasuhira's argument that 'historians now contend not only that space has shaped human experience, but conversely that human beings have delineated, given meaning to, and appropriated [urban] space' has particular resonance for my approach to Catholic Venice.⁵⁴ I examine the cultural work that lay and clerical Catholics did in this period of reform to foster a stronger sense of sacred immanence in their city, but I do this by examining an urban context of relatively undisputed Catholic hegemony.

Scholars of bi-confessional cities, urban contexts where both Protestants and Catholics worshipped openly, enjoyed specific legal protections, or participated in local governance, have been used to analyse religious difference. From a methodological point of view, Bridget Heal has commented that 'Germany's bi-confessional cities provide a unique opportunity for exploring the day-to-day realities of this *modus vivendi*' of religious co-existence.⁵⁵ Cities like Augsburg, where 'Catholics and Protestants lived next to each other and shared political power' offer excellent contexts to study the bi-confessional urban experience.⁵⁶ This point also rings true for war-torn cities and regions during the European

⁵³ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon', *Past and Present*, 90.1 (1981), 40-70 (p. 41). On Catholic efforts to resacralise the urban landscape during the French Wars of Religion, see Andrew Spicer, '(Re)building the Sacred Landscape: Orleans, 1560-1610', *French History*, 21.3 (2007), 247-268.

⁵⁴ Genji Yasuhira, 'Transforming the Urban Space: Catholic Survival Through Spatial Practices in Post-Reformation Utrecht', *Past and Present*, 255.1 (2022), 39-86 (p. 40). On minority Catholics and the creation of sacred space see also Lisa McClain, 'Without Church, Cathedral, or Shrine: The Search for Religious Space Among Catholics in England, 1559-1625', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33.2 (2002), 381-399.

⁵⁵ Bridget Heal, 'Introduction', in *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy, and People*, ed. by Bridget Heal and Ole Peter Grell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

⁵⁶ Helmut Graser, Mark Häberlein and B. Ann Tlusty, 'Sources and Historiography', in *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Augsburg*, ed. by B. Ann Tlusty and Mark Häberlein (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 3-19 (p. 10).

Reformations. Bi-confessional urban contexts were sites of both co-existence and conflict, as shown by Michele Zelinsky Hanson's study of inter-confessional encounters in early modern Augsburg.⁵⁷ Historians of Iberia have argued that ruptures in the continuity of the Catholic past of urban centres shaped the construction of civic identities to align with Catholicism. For Granada, Katie Harris has argued that Catholic authorities attempted to create 'historical links to a mythical Christian past for a city that had been for centuries a stronghold of Islam' given that the city was only conquered by the Spanish Crown in 1492.⁵⁸ Cécile Vincent-Cassy has argued similar for the Spanish city of Córdoba which, despite being brought into the Catholic fold in 1236, had an illustrious Muslim history as the former capital of the Umayyad caliphate. Vincent-Cassy argued that in practice, dealing with this Muslim past required 'Counter-Reformation' Catholic authorities to prove the continued Christian past of Córdoba through the uncovering of relics associated with early martyrs.⁵⁹

In Venice, significant challenges to Catholic hegemony did not shape everyday religious life during the period of reform. In comparison to the urban contexts outlined above, Venice experienced longstanding social, political, and religious stability both before and during the period examined by this thesis. While by no means religiously homogenous, and notwithstanding the existence of heterodoxy in the city, Venice provided a different context from that of Lyon, Augsburg, or Granada. It was a secure Catholic city with a persuasive and longstanding historical claim to an equally secure Catholic past. Yet, these latter examples highlight the value of studying Catholic reform and identity in a city like Venice. The resacralisation of the urban context through devotional renewal did not have to be driven by

⁵⁷ Michele Zelinsky Hanson, *Religious Identity in an Early Reformation Community: Augsburg, 1517 to 1555* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). See particularly Chapter 6 'Making the Bi-Confessional City: Religious Encounters', pp. 173-216.

⁵⁸ Katie A. Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City's Past in Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

⁵⁹ Cécile Vincent-Cassy, 'The Search for Evidence: The Relics of Martyred Saints and Their Worship in Córdoba after the Council of Trent', in *After Conversion: Iberia and the Emergency of Modernity*, ed. by Mercedes García-Arenal (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 126-152.

the presence of confessional conflict, bi-confessional rivalry, or the perceived absence of the Catholic past. I emphasise the status of the city as a site of spiritual shifts and renewal in relation to the sacred which shaped the devotional lives of Catholic people in an urban context characterised by Catholic hegemony.

Scholars of earlier periods have drawn attention to the intrinsic relationship between sacrality and the city. Gervase Rosser and Jane Garnett have shown that late-medieval Italian urban spaces, specifically neighbourhoods, could be sacralised through the placing of miraculous icons in relevant places. The result was the ‘sanctification of urban neighbourhoods’.⁶⁰ Focussing on public piety and civic identity, Anna Benvenuti has examined more intangible examples of urban religion in late-medieval Italy. For Benvenuti, public devotional practice created a sense of Catholic urban identity arguing that the communes promoted specific aspects of ‘civic religion’ in order to encourage ‘practices associated with the ideal of the ‘common good’.⁶¹ As Helen Hills has argued for Palermo in the seventeenth century, imagined representations of the city were used to ‘secure particular religious and political convictions in the city’.⁶² By studying Venice in the period of reform, this thesis argues for the importance of this phase of Catholicism in strengthening the relationship between the sacred and urban Catholic life in both material and intangible ways. I bring into sharper focus the relationship between devotional culture, the Catholic worldview, and urban religious reform. I argue for the role of clerical and lay Catholics in Venice in sharpening the sacrality of their city, and the role of the city, its history, and culture, in facilitating devotional encounters.

⁶⁰ Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, ‘Miraculous Images and the Sanctification of Urban Neighbourhood in Post-Medieval Italy’, *Urban History*, 32 (2006), 729-740.

⁶¹ Anna Benvenuti, ‘Premessa’, in *Beata civitas: Publica pietà e devozioni private nella Siena del '300*, ed. by Anna Benvenuti and Pierantonio Piatti (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2016), pp. 7-11 (p. 8).

⁶² Helen Hills, ‘Mapping the Early Modern City’, *Urban History*, 23.2 (1996), 145-170 (p. 149)

Venice was always convinced of its sacred origins. That a city, and much less an empire, could spring forth from swampy marshland was proof enough of divine favour. At the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Venice was the Patriarch. In 1451, the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Grado was united with the episcopacy of Venice and thus the Patriarchate of Venice was formed.⁶³ Despite the prominence of Saint Mark's Basilica, the seat of the Patriarch of Venice was the Basilica di San Pietro di Castello.⁶⁴ The *primicerio* was responsible for administering Saint Mark's Basilica and the Patriarchs of Venice played a crucial role in shaping the religious life of their city. In this thesis, I consider the contributions of one in particular: Patriarch (formerly *primicerio*) Giovanni Tiepolo (1570-1631) who made profound contributions to Venetian religious life. By the seventeenth century, the city of Venice was divided into 72 parishes varying significantly in population and size. On the ground, Venetian people played a key role in the formation of the clerical leadership of their parish through their ability to elect their own parish priests.⁶⁵ Venice was also one of the most densely populated cities of the Italian peninsula and the European continent. Drawing upon census data, Daniele Beltrami has estimated that by 1581, the population comprised of around 135,000 people.⁶⁶

Venice presents itself as a valuable context to study Catholic reform and urban devotional life for several reasons. First is Venice's Catholicism. This observation may seem a truism at this point, but, as I have raised, there is clear value in studying Catholic reform in contexts of Catholic hegemony. Previous studies of urban devotion and reform have

⁶³ On the formation and functioning of the Patriarchate of Venice see, Silvio Tramontin, "Dall'episcopato castellano al Patriarcato veneziano", in *La Chiesa di Venezia tra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. by Giovanni Vian (Venice: Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1989), pp. 55-85; Paolo Prodi, "The Structure and Organisation of the Church in Renaissance Venice: Suggestion for Research", in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. by John Hale (London: Hambleton Continuum, 1993), pp. 409-30.

⁶⁴ On the Basilica as the seat of the Patriarchate of Venice, see Gianmario Guidarelli, *I patriarchi di Venezia e l'architettura: La cattedrale di San Pietro di Castello nel Rinascimento* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2015).

⁶⁵ Nicholas S. Davidson, "The Clergy of Venice in the Sixteenth Century", *Bulletin of the Society of Renaissance Studies*, 2 (1984), 19-31 (p. 20)

⁶⁶ Daniele Beltrami, *Storia della popolazione di Venezia dalla fine del secolo XVI alla caduta della Repubblica* (Padua: Antonio Milani, 1954), p. 79.

emphasised how confessional diversity and divide played an important role in shaping the nature of Catholic devotional practice. This thesis does not dispute these conclusions, rather, it argues for the need to analyse these themes in a context of stable Catholic hegemony. I argue that this approach provides an important vantage point for evaluating the consequences of Catholic reform for the lives of Catholic people in the realm of voluntary devotional practice. The density of Venetian Catholicism in this period makes the city an excellent context to study such changes. Venice was cluttered with famous churches, monasteries, relics, and wonder-working shrines that were needled into its urban fabric. By the end of the seventeenth century, the city boasted 72 churches, thirty monasteries, and thirty-five convents.⁶⁷ As Sandra Toffolo has recently shown, the particular palpability of Venetian Catholicism was a frequent point of comment for pilgrims passing through the lagoon city on their way to the Holy Land.⁶⁸ Venice was also co-operative when it came to the matter of publishing the Tridentine decrees in early 1564 as shown by Antonio Niero.⁶⁹ The practical application of reform was not, however, instantaneous and depended upon a range of factors, including quite significantly the religious priorities of different Venetian patriarchs. The richness of Venetian Catholicism offered a huge range of both tangible and intangible points of encounter with the sacred. By bringing these together in the following chapters, this thesis provides a close analysis of devotional culture in a period of profound religious change.

Another reason why Venice was chosen as the site of this study is the value of examining how Catholic reform manifested in a local context. Throughout this thesis, I show that the redefinition of sacred immanence touched on things that were and were not specific

⁶⁷ Alexandra Bamji, 'The Control of Space: Dealing with Diversity in Early Modern Venice', *Italian Studies*, 62.2 (2007), 175-188 (p. 176).

⁶⁸ Sandra Toffolo, *Describing the City, Describing the State: Representations of Venice and the Venetian Terraferma in the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 69-77.

⁶⁹ Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 139. See also Antonio Niero, 'Riforma Cattolica e Concilio di Trento a Venezia', in *Cultura e società nel Rinascimento, tra riforme e manierismi*, ed. by Vittore Branca and Carlo Ossola (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1984), pp. 77-96.

to Venetian religious life; both are valuable, and both allow us to better understand how Catholic reform played out in the urban context. This thesis contributes to broader conversations about urban religious reform and will raise questions that will assist in facilitating comparative studies of other urban and confessional contexts. In terms of those aspects which are specific to Venice, especially devotion related to specific places and people, this thesis will show how shifts in attitude to the sacred helped to forge a local devotional identity. For those aspects where specificity is not the case, I argue for their value in allowing the historian to consider the ‘universal in the particular’ and to consider how a local study of Catholic reform can bring us to important conclusions about the questions that Catholicism asked of itself in this period.

A final reason why Venice was selected as the focus of this study is its status as a major centre of communication and print in the period of Catholic reform. Historians have closely interrogated the role that pious print played in stimulating Catholic devotion. Andrew Pettegree has argued that vernacular works are of particular interest to historians as they ‘offer the most eloquent window into the world of the sixteenth century’s new generation of readers’.⁷⁰ Venice was, of course, at the very centre of the printing world in early modern Europe. A great proportion of the vernacular language religious texts which nourished Catholic readers were printed in the lagoon city.⁷¹ Paul F. Grendler’s work has shown how the climate of Catholic reform, especially through the Roman Inquisition, shaped the print

⁷⁰ Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 5. See also his chapter ‘Catholic Pamphleteering’, in *The Ashgate Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. by Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 109-127. On Italian vernacular print, publishers, and editors, see Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On the development of vernacular religious print and Catholic Reform in Italy, see Massimo Firpo, ‘Riforma religiosa e lingua volgare nell’Italia del ‘500’, *Belfagor*, 57 (2002), 517-539.

⁷¹ See Peter Burke, ‘Early Modern Venice as a Centre of Information and Communication’, in *Venice reconsidered: the history and civilisation of an Italian city-state, 1297-1797*, ed. by John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 389-419; Gert Van der Sman, ‘Print Publishing in Venice in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century’, *Print Quarterly*, 17 (2000), 235-247; Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

culture of the city. By 1560, the production of devotional works had overtaken that of secular vernacular literature and this trend continued into the early seventeenth century.⁷² As Grendler puts it, ‘Italians were more interested in religious matters, and bookmen supplied them with the books’.⁷³ In Venice, the task of prosecuting violation of decency-related print laws was also undertaken by a civil magistracy called the *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia* – ‘Executors against Blasphemy’ – established in 1543.⁷⁴ Edoardo Barbieri nonetheless emphasises that the reforming Catholic Church was not innately inimical to the printed word. Tridentine thinkers, as well as Protestant critics, used the press to promote their idea of right religion. Barbieri notes that the extent of this ‘endeavour to appropriate the presses’ is evidenced by printed religious works rendered in an array of languages.⁷⁵ Rosa Salzberg’s work on ephemeral print in Venice has highlighted the relationship between oral and print culture in the urban context. Salzberg has for example argued that street performers helped to drive the market for cheap religious print and disseminated spiritual messages through performances that were increasingly moderated by the Church.⁷⁶ For Florence, Caroline Anderson has used sixteenth- and seventeenth-century domestic inventories to demonstrate that around two thirds of religious books were kept in the *camera* or bedchamber.⁷⁷ Anderson suggests that this tendency attests to the ‘degree of intimacy’ that owners had with these

⁷² Paul F. Grendler, ‘The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605’, *Journal of Modern History*, 47.1 (1975), 48-65 (p. 55). On the increased volume of religious print produced by Italian presses, see also Ugo Rozzo, *Linee per una storia dell’editoria religiosa in Italia (1465-1600)* (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1993), p. 12.

⁷³ Grendler, ‘The Roman Inquisition’, p. 55. Sara T. Nalle has highlighted a similar trend in the rate of production of religious books by Spanish presses the period 1528-81. See her ‘Printing and Reading Popular Religious Texts in Sixteenth-Century Spain’, in *Culture and the State in Spain: 1550-1850*, ed. by Tom Lewis and Francisco J. Sánchez (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 126-156 (pp. 129-30).

⁷⁴ Gaetano Cozzi, ‘Religione, Moralità e Giustizia a Venezia: Vicende della Magistratura degli Esecutori contro la Bestemmia (Secoli XVI-XVII)’, *Ateneo Veneto*, 29 (1991), 7-95 (p. 22). On the *Esecutori*, see also Stefano Piasentini, ‘Indagine sulla bestemmia a Venezia nel Quattrocento’, *Studi Storici*, 40.2 (1999), 513-549.

⁷⁵ Edoardo Barbieri, ‘Tradition and Change in the Spiritual Literature of the Cinquecento’, in *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Gigliola Fragnito, trans. by Adrian Belton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 111-133.

⁷⁶ Rosa Salzberg, ‘The Word on the Street: Street Performers and Devotional Texts in Italian Renaissance Cities’, *The Italianist*, 34.3 (2014), 336-348. See also her monograph, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

⁷⁷ Anderson, ‘The Material Culture of Domestic Religion’, p. 144.

books, most of which were religious in nature. Print played a crucial role in both capturing and disseminating attitudes towards religious change in the city of Venice. As a print centre, Venice offers a wide range of printed primary sources which can be used to chart important changes to attitudes towards the sacred. The abundance of books in Venice is an important component to one of this thesis' contributions regarding the nature of the sacred in this period. As I will show, sacred immanence is not only a helpful term when it comes to material religion. Instead, I emphasise sacred immanence as a concept that conveys both intangible closeness and proximity through knowledge, recognition, and cultural consciousness in addition to the palpable, physical manifestations of sacrality that gave form to Catholic life.

Sources and scope

This thesis examines early printed books, archival manuscripts, and the work of antiquarians to understand shifting attitudes towards sacred immanence and devotional culture in Venice. Offering a persuasive account of shifts in worldview requires the historian to cast the net wide to appreciate the values, concerns, and ideas that underpin a changing religious culture. While I do not provide an exhaustive treatment of Catholic devotional principles and practices, I have prioritised those which underwent significant transformation in the period under study. The four major aspects of Catholic devotion which I examine – the culture of the miraculous, sacred history and site, the cult of the saints, and the Eucharist – inspired a miscellany of individual and collective devotional practices. Three of the four main chapters of this thesis draw upon early printed books analysing both their content and using them to chart devotional activity in the city. This thesis draws attention to a range of genres of religious print produced in Venice and highlights their value for charting devotional change

by emphasising their distinctiveness. In total, I analyse 21 vernacular volumes published in Venice, bar one, between 1587 and 1693 representing over a century of Catholic print culture in the city. These books can be split into three main categories: miracle collections (5 volumes), shrine books (6 volumes), and hagiographies (10 volumes). The other major collection of source material used here are the copies of confraternity statute books produced by the *Provveditori di Comun*. This Venetian magistracy exercised jurisdiction over the city's numerous devotional confraternities known locally as *scuole piccole*. Specifically, I examine the activities of 15 Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament in Venice between 1555-1686. Given the predominance of printed primary sources in this thesis, I will first address my methodological approach to these in relation to the matter of devotional culture.

The twofold aim of this thesis is to understand what aspects of devotional culture underwent change in Venice, and to ask who was responsible for bringing these changes about. My method involves close analysis of the sample of texts outlined above. Given the scope of this thesis, and the ultimate aim of charting changes to the Catholic worldview in Venice, close study offers the most appropriate approach. Close study of different genres of religious print allows me to draw out their distinctiveness and reach conclusions regarding the potential function of different forms of books in devotional life. This depth of clarity would become more obscure if a larger sample were to be selected. Given that this thesis addresses four distinct, and correspondingly vast aspects of Catholic devotion, the sample size of printed texts examined throughout chapters 1 to 3 allows me to reach both important conclusions on a range of individual genres. This allows me to understand their corresponding devotional relevance, and to articulate how these texts helped to influence ideas about sacred immanence as a whole. Chapter 4 is methodologically distinct through its interrogation of archival material related to the activities of Venetian Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. The evidence selected to develop each of the arguments of the four chapters

reflect the source material that I have judged to best reflect the changes to devotional culture which I argue for throughout and to examine the agency behind each. In the case of Chapter 4, archival material replaces my focus on print due to the access that it offers to the contributions of the laity of Venice in transforming urban devotional culture. It is also the case that manuscript rather than printed sources permits examination of the important, and in my view, most significant shift in Eucharistic piety in Venice that is the focus of Chapter 4. People are at the heart of my questions. While the religious priorities and motivations of confraternity members are discernible through relevant records, access to everyday religious experience is more difficult through printed sources. My treatment of print does not focus on the issue of the reception of texts.⁷⁸ On the whole, we know very little about how Catholic people, especially laypeople, related to the books that they owned. I do, however, argue that we must seriously consider the impact that a range of new and updated devotional texts reeling off Venetian presses could have had on the worldview of their readers. The intentions of authors were made transparently clear in their works. In terms of authorship, all but two of the texts examined throughout Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3 had clerical authors. This fact is important, as it allows us to consider the key role that Venetian clerics – from the Patriarch of Venice to its parish priests – played in producing books designed to ideally reshape the worldview of their Catholic readers. I must, however, be clear that I am approaching books as cultural productions and spiritual resources available to Catholics in Venice.

⁷⁸ For recent overviews on the scholarship of textual reception as well as individual contributions on reception in different early modern contexts, see the edited collections, *Audience and Reception in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by John R. Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives (New York: Routledge, 2021); *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. by Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); *Communities of Print: Books and Their Readers in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Rosamund Oates and Jessica G. Purdy (Leiden: Brill, 2021). On marks of use and signs of engagement with texts, see William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); William W. E. Slights, *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books* (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2001).

My analysis brings to the fore the devotional options open to laypeople, and the messages that they may have received if they engaged with the texts under study. It is, however, not possible to broach the matter of reception due to the limitations of the source material analysed in this thesis. The texts under study here nonetheless offer valuable evidence for how Catholic reform, especially the Tridentine Decrees, were applied to major aspects of devotional life by their authors. The devotional books analysed throughout the first three chapters of this thesis offer insight into how reforming principles were related to major aspects of devotional life to shape them in specific ways. I also emphasise the role of books in reflecting the broader concerns of the Catholic Church in this period of reform. The conclusions that I reach with printed sources therefore concern what authors wanted their readers to think and believe about devotion and the immanence of the sacred, rather than asserting what readers took away from individual texts. Chapter 4 shifts the focus of agency away from primarily clerical authors and onto laypeople through the activities of the Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. The archival records that inform Chapter 4 permit investigation of the role of laypeople in influencing important devotional shifts. To be sure, each chapter closely interrogates the question – ‘what might this change have meant for Catholic devotional culture in Venice’? – but its conclusions go beyond examining only the role of laypeople. Instead, this thesis casts shifting attitudes towards sacred immanence, and the transformation of devotional culture as a highly collaborative process. The sources selected to inform this thesis permit examination of the roles of ranking ecclesiastics, prominent families, confraternities, and foreign Church powers in directing religious change in Venice.

The chronological range that this thesis adopts, 1545-1693, just short of 150 years, reflects the demands of the research questions that I propose. Studying shifting worldview, devotional change, and a range of spiritual principles necessitates examination across the

longue durée. The decrees of the Council of Trent did not transform Catholic devotional culture overnight. Reform took time, innovation, elaboration, and the creativity of a range of lay and clerical Catholic people. In many cases, it took decades to see perceptible manifestations of the concerns enunciated by Trent in the realm of everyday religious life. Dealing with four major aspects of Catholic devotional culture also necessitates a broad chronological framework for examination. Different areas of Catholic belief underwent important changes at different times and at different speeds. The cult of the saints is a case in point. Despite the reaffirmations of sanctity that were enunciated by Trent in 1563, the early seventeenth-century reforms to the cult of saints passed during the papacy of Urban VIII (in office 1623-1644) were considerably influential in driving interest in this aspect of Catholic devotion. By examining religious change in Venice over a 150-year period, this thesis is able to both chart religious changes and account for the values, concerns, and ideas that drove them. I have treated the choice of Venice as the context of this study more extensively in the previous section of this introduction. I wish to reiterate here, however, the consequences that this choice has for the conclusions that this thesis will reach about the nature of Catholicism in this period. Venice was by no means the only 'sacred city' of the Italian peninsula, nor are the shifts in devotional culture which I draw attention to exclusively Venetian phenomena. As with any study dealing with an urban context, there are aspects of religious change that were shaped by local factors and concerns. Indeed, such manifestations will be discussed at relevant points throughout. It is my hope, however, that this thesis will do some work in encouraging scholars of cities and religion to think more closely about how the relationship between humanity and the sacred underpinned questions of reform, and how this relationship manifested in devotional practice.

Thesis structure

This thesis develops these arguments across four main chapters. Each chapter deals with a major aspect of Catholic devotion that underwent transformation in Venice in the period under study. These devotional principles are as follows: the culture of the miraculous, sacred sites and their histories, the cult of the saints, and the Eucharist. These choices are not intended to comprise an exhaustive list of the spiritual principles and practices that underpinned Catholic devotional culture. Indeed, there are areas where a specific devotional act, reading or engaging with sacred objects for example, could relate to any one of the principles listed above. Rather, these choices reflect what to my mind represent the most crucial channels through which the sacred world made itself open to encounter for Catholic devotees. These choices are informed by evidence which indicates that all four of these aspects of Catholic devotional culture underwent significant changes in Venice in the period under study. Moreover, the devotional principles that I focus on also permit examination of broader cultural issues that helped to shape encounter with the sacred in Venice in this period. The four main chapters of this thesis aim to do two things. Firstly, they trace important changes occurring to the devotional principles considering what these meant for how the laity encountered them. Secondly, the chapters consider how devotional change reflected broader cultural and religious developments, such as the proliferation of print, pressing questions that the Catholic Church grappled with, as well as cultural considerations specific to the city of Venice. In adopting this approach, the chapters trace crucial changes and account for their significance for Catholic devotional culture. They also draw attention to important aspects of the nature of Catholic reform itself, the priorities of the reforming Church, and the relationships between Catholic people and institutions.

Chapter 1 investigates the culture of the miraculous in Venice during the period of Catholic reform. Specifically, the chapter argues for the significance of the expansion in the

production of vernacular books dealing with the culture of the miraculous. I do this by examining five new vernacular works, mainly produced by Venetian authors, and all printed by Venetian presses between 1597 and 1623. This chapter argues that texts of this genre encouraged literate Catholic readers to adopt an increasingly sacralised view of the world by inundating them with stories detailing the ordinary invasion of the miraculous in everyday life. In doing so, the chapter argues that these texts encouraged their readers to be more perceptive of the potential immanence of the sacred in their own lives in matters related to health, family, interior spirituality, and Catholic triumphalism. This chapter emphasises the important appropriation of the press by Catholic writers in Venice to communicate new ideas about the sacred. Books worked to engage their readers on a spiritual and emotional level and aimed to create specific spiritual experiences predicated upon the immanence of the miraculous in daily life.

Chapter 2 focuses on the revival of important sacred sites in the city of Venice, especially those that hosted wonder-working shrines, icons, and relics. Here I argue for the importance of printed works, known as ‘shrine books’, in raising the profile of long-established shrines in Venice. I examine six texts printed in Venice between 1590 and 1675. Written with a lay readership in mind, these works were designed to both encourage and facilitate practical devotion in relation to their subjects. In this chapter, I argue for the central role that sacred history played in enhancing the relevance of long-established sites for early modern Catholics. Historical method helped to reassert the sacred identity of key sites and offered clear and persuasive proof of the sacred immanence that worked through them. Here I draw attention to the perceived need to replace unverifiable mythological aspects of site foundation stories with well-researched historical accounts that were available to readers in the vernacular. This chapter examines how the broader attitudes of the Catholic Church to

questions of certainty, proof, and history brought the reader into close proximity to the sacred past in order to shape devotional practice in the present.

Chapter 3 examines important transformations in the cult of the saints in Venice, especially during the seventeenth century. I do this by analysing new printed accounts of saints' lives, and by examining physical changes to sites of sanctity, including the translation of new relics into the city. I draw upon ten volumes printed between 1598 and 1693. This chapter argues for the accentuation of the cults of several saints who had a historic link to the city of Venice, and the renewal of much older, and prominent established cults. I argue that the accentuation of sanctity in Venice resulted in the accentuation of Venice as a sacred city. I do this by examining the relationship between saint and city in relation to 'enfoldment' – the idea that both were indivisibly and intrinsically bound. This chapter shows that hagiographers aimed to instil in their Venetian readers a strong sense of enfoldment of saint and city for which a sequence of new and renewed homegrown cults were proof. This chapter considers how the post-Tridentine emphasis on the cult of the saints had particular consequences for urban devotional life by encouraging the celebration of not only individual saints, but the cities that housed their relics and their hagiographies.

Chapter 4 examines the accentuation of the cult of the Eucharist in Venice. I examine archival manuscripts related to the statute books of Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. This chapter draws attention to the efforts made to ensure that Eucharistic tabernacles, which were used to store consecrated hosts, were relocated to the high altar of parish churches to centralise the presence of Christ. This chapter argues that ordinary Catholic men and women played crucial roles in enhancing the sacrality of their parish churches in the city. I consider the role that the laity, through participation in these confraternities, played in both driving and contributing to important shifts in Eucharistic devotional culture. This chapter also examines how the Venetian laity related to both domestic and foreign ecclesiastical

authorities in relation to changing devotional life. Here I foreground the importance of the collaboration of lay and clerical Catholics in bringing about shifts in sacred immanence during the period of reform. This chapter also considers how the Tridentine decrees concerning the Eucharist were interpreted in a local context, and how subsequent developments were significantly influenced by the agency of laypeople.

At the end of the period under study, devotional culture in Venice had undergone important transformations. Through these four chapters, this thesis draws attention to the consequences of Catholic reform for the devotional lives of Catholics living and worshipping in Venice. It brings into focus the consequences of these changes for the Catholic worldview and foregrounds the importance of reform in encouraging new ideas about and encounters with the sacred. This thesis addresses fundamental questions of Catholic identity, devotional practice, and urban religion in the period of Catholic reform, renewal, and reinvention.

Chapter 1: Miracles, Print, and Faith

Introduction

Tridentine Catholicism had an ambivalent relationship with the miraculous. Clerical and lay Catholics alike cleaved to their wonder stories in spite of Protestant scorn. But at the same time, the Church was well aware of the unhelpful accretions that had accumulated around lay beliefs on miracles. This institutional wariness of the miraculous was articulated by the decrees of the Council of Trent in its twenty-fifth and final session in 1563. In one breath, the Tridentine Church upheld the role of wonder-working relics and sacred images as adjuncts to Catholic worship and devotion. With the other, it ruled that ‘no new miracles are to be acknowledged, or new relics recognised’ without the nod of approval from reforming bishops.⁷⁹ The reforming Church’s aim to curb intemperate acclamations of sacred manifestations notwithstanding, the laity were not deprived of the miracles that shaped fundamental aspects of their voluntary devotional lives. For England, Alexandra Walsham has argued that miracle culture was a key tool in the arsenal of Jesuits seeking to support the faith of persecuted Catholics. According to Walsham, the Society ‘tailored miracle stories to coincide with Tridentine priorities and to deflect the taunts of their Protestant enemies’.⁸⁰ Recent scholarship has centralised the question of encounters with the miraculous: how and where did Catholic people engage with miracles? And what roles did these sacred encounters play in shaping and developing devotional practices and beliefs?⁸¹

⁷⁹ Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p. 215. On the pre-Tridentine conceptual development of miracle culture in Catholicism, see Michael E. Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁸⁰ Alexandra Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England’, *The Historical Journal*, 46.4 (2003), 779-815 (p. 815).

⁸¹ Mary Laven, Deborah Howard, and Abigail Brundin have centralised the domestic sphere as a frequent site of the miraculous in Renaissance Italy. See Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, pp. 249-287. For Spain, Thomas Devaney argues that miracle narratives connected to pilgrimage offer insights into the ‘conditions of everyday life and about the role of religion in daily practice’. See his ‘Everyday Miracles in Seventeenth-Century Spain’, in *Lived Religion and Everyday Life through Early Modern Hagiographic Material*, ed. by Jenni Kuuliala, Päivi Räisänen-Schröder, and Rose-Marie Peake (London: Palgrave Macmillan,

Through a close examination of five vernacular miracle compendia printed in Venice between 1587 and 1624, this chapter examines the relationship between printed miracle collections, Catholic devotion, and assumptions about the sacred. I argue here for the framing of miracle books as points of encounter between the sacred and the reader. These books did not intend only to tell tales about miracles, but to transform their readers' understanding of the miraculous and the role that it could play in their lives. This chapter addresses two questions: what did miracle compendia tell their readers about the potential role of the sacred in their everyday lives? And how did these books attempt to promote a specific Catholic worldview with regard to the miraculous? These books acted as points of encounter between the reader and the culture of the miraculous. This encounter was not tangible, as was the first-hand experience of receiving a miracle, or visiting a shrine, but these books aimed to shape readers' expectations of the miraculous in a specific way.

Of the five books themselves, the earliest is a 1587 reprint in octavo of Florentine Silvano Razzi's *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria nostra signora*. Razzi's collection, first published in Florence in 1576, appeared in several editions throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century by presses in Brescia, Mantua, Florence, and, of course, Venice. There was therefore a potentially high degree of circulation of this particular text given the rate of its reprinting by multiple Italian presses. The other texts examined here were published exclusively in Venice. Although some were undoubtedly exported beyond the city, Venetians were also likely readers. The anonymous 1587 Rosary collection, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria* appeared in two editions in the sixteenth century with the second appearing in 1591. A Eucharistic miracle book, *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, by Niccolò Laghi,

2019), pp. 189-213. Marco Faini has considered the relationship between miracles and common spoken formulae in Italian devotional culture such as spells and prayers see Marco Faini, 'Everyday Miracles and Supernatural Agency in Sixteenth-Century Italy. The Case of the Marche', in *Saints, Miracles and the Image: Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance*, ed. by Sandra Cardarelli and Laura Fenelli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 169-187.

was also published in several editions in Venice throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the 1597 edition in quarto being studied here. Laghi himself was a rector of the parish church of San Michele al Gallo in Milan. The two latest texts examined, the *Historia universale della imagini miracolose della Gran Madre di Dio* of 1624 and the *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* of 1609. In addition to these last two works being published in Venice, the author himself was serving in the city as a priest at the church of San Salvador at the time of writing.⁸² Astolfi's encyclopaedic folio collections of Christological and Marian miracles also stand out for being the largest works in terms of format and volume to be examined in this chapter.

I have selected a sample of texts which permits study of the different approaches that authors took, the varying priorities that they had in producing their works, and ultimately, the wide range of messages about the miraculous that these texts aimed to communicate. The universal nature of the miracles that these books narrate is one of their most significant features. Focussing on wide-ranging spiritual principles – Marian icons, the Cross, or the Rosary, for example – these compendia spoke to fundamental facets of Catholic devotional life. The books selected for examination differ considerably in length and format. This diversity allows me to draw attention to the devotional priorities of texts dealing with a smaller, more focussed collection of miracles, and also emphasise the significance of compendia that collected hundreds of miracles into one volume. Finally, my sample deliberately consists of books published in the post-Tridentine period. This chronological choice permits analysis into how the reforming Catholic Church's stance on the miraculous, officially enunciated in the final session of Trent, was received by clerical Catholics and communicated to their readers. Although individual authors' views on reform were not

⁸² Giovanni Felice Astolfi's work as a Latin to vernacular Italian translator is the focus of an article by Paolo Cherchi. See his 'Giovan Felice Astolfi: Un volgarizzatore da ricordare', *Studi secenteschi*, 45 (2004), 3-27.

always made explicit, their texts offer valuable insight into the ideal role that the miraculous was intended to play in Catholic devotional life during the period of reform. Ultimately, this chapter argues for the significance of these books, available on the city's book market, as spiritual resources that aimed to influence devotional life and shape the Catholic worldview in specific ways.

'To my pious reader': Encountering the sacred through miracle compendia

Miracle-related literature formed a significant part of the burgeoning print culture that nourished the devotional lives of Catholic readers in Venice during the period of reform. 'Miracle book' is, however, an ambiguous category which could embrace a wide range of Catholic devotional literature. Scholars working with miracle-related literature often use the term 'miracle book' to refer to something quite specific, a shrine book for example, or a hagiography. This broad approach to terminology leads to a false sense of homogeneity in books designed to tell the faithful about the miraculous. This chapter draws attention to the need to be more specific when speaking of miracle-related print. The works analysed here are miracle *compendia*. These books have key characteristics that make them different from hagiographies and shrine-related books and offer specific insights into the relationship between miracle culture, print, and lay devotion in Venice.

Miracle compendia were compiled by clerical authors, as is almost always the case for vernacular devotional literature. These books were organised around broad Catholic devotional principles, such as Marian devotion, the cult of images, or the Rosary. The focus of these books were not the lives of specific holy people, as in the case of hagiographies, or particular places, as in the case of shrine books. Of course, these books were part of a broader genre of miracle-related literature and share some characteristics. Silvano Razzi's *Miracoli*

della Vergine Maria of 1587 was technically concerned with a Catholic saint – the Virgin Mary. But Mary’s life was not central to the work – not touched on even briefly – as would be expected for hagiographies. The anonymous *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria* also of 1587 indeed spoke to the value of the Rosary to lay devotional life. Yet, it lacked the history and instruction on the prayer included in devotional manuals like Alberto da Castello’s *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* of 1522, which contained an identical series of miracles.⁸³ Miracle compendia focused entirely on presenting miraculous stories to the faithful and isolated them as a sole focus of devotional reading. The miracles were, so to speak, the main event. Another defining characteristic of these books was their scale and scope. Although these books were printed in Venice, they were not books of Venetian miracles. Instead, miracle compendia collected stories from across the globe into one volume.

In any one of the four compendia examined in this chapter, a reader could find a miracle story that occurred close to home, perhaps even their own city, as easily as they could read of miraculous stirrings occurring in non-European lands, such as those targeted by Catholic missionaries. The scope of the miracle compendium was part of the book’s appeal and a method used to communicate its messages. The point of these texts was to ignite the readers’ faith through the sheer scale of miracles available to read about, and by emphasising the pervasiveness of the miraculous around the globe. This commitment to universality is embodied most clearly in Giovanni Felice Astolfi’s *Historia universale* of 1624 which contained hundreds upon hundreds of Marian miracles within over 800 folio pages. As the title suggests, Astolfi aimed for comprehensiveness in his work. The diversity in locations of the miracles, in addition to the tendency to pile one story after the other, into the hundreds,

⁸³ On Alberto da Castello’s book, see Mary Laven and Irene Galandra Cooper, ‘The Material Culture of Piety in the Italian Renaissance: Re-touching the rosary’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 338-353.

was therefore entirely deliberate on the part of the authors and compilers studied here. Scale and scope emphasised the power of the miraculous across the globe.

The matter of accessibility most sharply differentiated early modern Italian miracle collections from their medieval antecedents.⁸⁴ These books were consciously aimed at faithful Catholics who possessed less than scholarly levels of literacy. Authors and compilers asserted the need to ensure that laypeople had access to printed miracles in a language that they could read. Some even spoke of how their works served different spiritual needs than other genres of devotional print that dealt with the miraculous. These books aimed to do something new: to ensure that anyone that wanted to engage with miracles through print could do so. As Rab Houston sums it up, ‘direct information on reading ability is extremely difficult to come by’ for the early modern period.⁸⁵ He does, however, highlight some general characteristics of lay readers that help us to imagine who the likely consumers of the books analysed in this chapter were. Literate laypeople were more likely to dwell in cities and towns than in rural settings, were more likely to be men rather than women, and, of course, were more likely to have benefitted from education in order to gain reading ability.⁸⁶ For Venice, Grendler has estimated that 33 to 34 percent of male city dwellers and 12 to 13 percent of female city dwellers could read in 1587.⁸⁷ His work on schooling and education in Venice has shown that non-elite Venetian children, mainly boys, could attend ‘vernacular schools’ which, as the name suggests, provided pupils with vernacular literacy. Grendler

⁸⁴ Medieval miracle collections, including hagiographies, shrine books, and *miracula* were often maintained in manuscript form and rendered in Latin. For an excellent recent overview of the medieval miracle writing tradition, see *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, ed. by Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, Jenni Kuuliala, and Iona McCleery (Leiden: Brill, 2021). In this volume, see in particular Louise Elizabeth Wilson’s chapter ‘Writing Miracle Collections’, pp. 15-35. Benedicta Ward has examined the relationship between the event and record of the miraculous in the medieval period. See her *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Aldershot: Wilwood: 1987). For England, see also Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

⁸⁵ Rab Houston, ‘Literacy and Society in the West, 1500-1850’, *Social History*, 8.3 (1983), 269-293 (p. 270).

⁸⁶ Houston, ‘Literacy and Society’, pp. 271-72.

⁸⁷ Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 46.

estimates that there were around 85 of these establishments in the city in 1587 with around 4500-4600 Venetian boys and a handful of girls attending.⁸⁸ Anne Jacobson Schutte has considered the possibilities open to adults in sixteenth-century Venice through the study of ‘do-it-yourself’ manuals which helped those who did not attend school to develop their literacy.⁸⁹ This genre of self-help guide, known as *babuini*, in relation to devotional reading has been further studied by Piero Lucchi.⁹⁰

Miracle compendia printed in Venice reveal much more about their authors than of their readers directly. Notwithstanding this point, authors and compilers emphasised the potential of a spiritual experience occurring upon reading and reflecting upon miracle books. There was, therefore, a moment of hierophany where the reader became more aware and more proximate to the sacred. This chapter, therefore, centralises vernacular miracle compendia as points of encounter between the Catholic and the sacred. I argue especially for the role of these books in encouraging their readers to adopt a heightened sense of the proximity to the sacred in their lives. To do this, I analyse the miracle compendia through four interpretive lenses: the imagined reader, the miraculous and the family, affective devotion, and ‘Counter-Reformation’ miracles. By focussing on these aspects of the miracle compendia, the chapter demonstrates the malleability of the culture of the miraculous to enhance Catholic devotion, promote a sacralised worldview of everyday life, and respond directly to the pressing confessional matters of the day.

The authors and compilers of miracle compendia had quite specific ideas about how reading about the miraculous could work in lay devotional life. Of course, these books were not exclusively marketed to the laity by their authors, but careful attention was paid to

⁸⁸ Paul F. Grendler, ‘What Zuanne Read in School: Vernacular Texts in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Schools’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 13.1 (1982), 41-54 (pp. 42-43).

⁸⁹ Anne Jacobson Schutte, ‘Teaching Adults to Read in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Giovanni Antonio Tagliente’s *Libro Maistrevole*’, *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 17.1 (1986), 3-16 (p. 5)

⁹⁰ Piero Lucchi, ‘La Santacroce, il Salterio e il Babuino: libri per imparare a leggere nel primo secolo della stampa’, *Quaderni Storici*, 38 (1978), 593-630.

accessibility. Authors and compilers wanted to ensure that a wide readership, especially those possessed of only vernacular literacy, might engage with their texts. The miracle stories themselves were the main event when it came to devotional reading, but we must also pay serious attention to the prefatory material in order to understand how these texts were designed to work in lay devotional life. A striking aspect of the prefatory material – the addresses to the readers specifically – was how authors framed the encounter with the sacred that reading about miracles provided. Reading these texts did not just impart knowledge of the miraculous but created a specific religious experience which required the reader to engage their hearts, minds, and souls. If readers approached the texts from the beginning and were engaged enough to spend time reading the author’s address, they were promised that the sacred would manifest in their own spiritual lives in a perceptible way.

These works clearly spoke to the value of reading about miracles for lay Catholics and help historians to understand how they might have been used, at least in ideal devotional contexts. The prefatory address allowed the author to speak directly to their audience and to make a case for how their work would meet their spiritual needs. So, while we do not have access to the reader directly, these works offer excellent insight into the ‘imagined reader’ as authors understood them. In the context of early modern print, Meaghan J. Brown suggests addresses to the reader ‘created intentional disruption to the immersive experience of reading, reminding their audience that they are consuming texts which were consciously constructed’.⁹¹ Addresses can therefore be used to reconstruct how these texts were meant to be used in ideal contexts. These addresses spoke clearly to the value of miracle stories to devotion and aimed to fill readers with the expectation that engaging with these would result in a greater understanding of the sacred. Turning now to the addresses of the texts under

⁹¹ Meaghan J. Brown, ‘Addresses to the reader’, in *Book Parts*, ed. by Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 81-95 (p. 93).

examination, I emphasise that the process of engaging with these texts was intended to be an intellectual, affective, and devotional process serving to instil in lay readers a heightened sense of the proximity of the sacred and its potential to work in their lives.

The usefulness of miracles was of course the main point that the compilers of these compendia sought to communicate through their addresses. The address in the 1587 Rosary-related *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine* appreciated that wonder stories, perhaps more in the detail than in their core truths, might over-extend the credulity of even the most devout Catholics. The author assured the reader that

if in these miracles you find something that does not seem to you right at your wits and that exceeds the ordinary order, then you must conclude that miracles are all the truer [...] finding in these undersigned miracles some things, which to the proud seem basic things, & alien to the common cause, you will conclude from this to be all the truer.⁹²

For the compiler of this book, it was exactly the astonishing nature of the miracle which meant that it ought to be believed, even if it at first jarred with some sceptical sensibilities. Further, those miracles relating to ‘basic things’, the less extraordinary scenarios of daily life also helped to aid belief in the workings of the miraculous. Once clearing up any potential doubts, the author made it clear that the reader would undergo a spiritual transformation after reading about the miracles of the Rosary. The address encouraged readers to ‘read them [the miracles] with faith and humility, that you will feel yourself growing in faith, hope, and charity’.⁹³ The use of the verb *sentire* – ‘to feel’ – in this case is significant. The

⁹² ‘Prudente Lettore, se in questi Miracoli troverai qualcosa che non ti paia che quadri al tuo ingegno, & che eccedino l’ordine ordinario allhor devi concludere esser tanto più vero il miracoli [...] trovando in questi infrascritti miracoli alcune cose che ai superbi pareno cose base, & aliene dal corso commune, tu concluderai da questo esser tanto più vere’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, A2.

⁹³ ‘Leggile con fede, et humilità che ti sentirai à crescer la fede, la speranza, & la carità’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria* A2.

transformation was perceived through feeling by way of both intellectual and affective engagement with miracle narratives.

The sense of spiritual transformation that reflecting on miracle stories could excite featured also in Niccolò Laghi's address to the reader in his *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento* of 1597. Laghi explained that 'the cold of heart will be able to draw the true warmth of devotion' following reading his book.⁹⁴ He further emphasised that 'these most miraculous stories are skilful in moving human hearts in true devotion'.⁹⁵ The framing of spiritual growth in terms of changes in temperature, and the stirrings of the heart especially, are significant in the Catholic context. Susan Karant-Nunn has stated that 'while preachers invoke it [the heart] metaphorically, they simultaneously mean it physically as the seat of sincerity, contrition, and emotion'.⁹⁶ The significance of the heart in miracle narratives is examine more closely later in this chapter. Laghi also made a case for the direct relevance of reading about miracle stories for other forms of voluntary lay devotion. In particular, he wrote that 'children can easily educate themselves in the communion' and 'those who unite in the Confraternities of the Most Sacred Body of Christ will come to better understand their service'.⁹⁷ The reference to confraternal piety, echoing also the one made by the anonymous Rosary-related work, shows how these authors felt that knowing about miracles, and reflecting on them would enhance other areas of their readers' devotional lives. Venetian cleric Giovanni Felice Astolfi's Marian miracle compendium of 1624, *Historia universale delle immagini miracolose della Gran Madre di Dio*, further emphasised the transformative power of miracle narratives. In his address to the reader, Astolfi wrote

⁹⁴ 'i raffreddati cuori quiui potranno cavarne il vero calore della divotione'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, b.

⁹⁵ 'queste historie tãto miracolose siano habile ad intenerire i cuori humani'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 36.

⁹⁶ Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 248.

⁹⁷ 'i putti possono assai commodamente instruersi nella communione [...] così coloro che si uniscono nelle confraternitadi [sic] del Sacratissimo corpo di Christo comprehenderanno quanto bene hanno impiegata la sua servitù'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, b.

As for the fruit, I take it for absolutely certain that it will not be possible to read without some betterment of the soul, because in seeing the prize of the honoured, and the punishment of those contemptuous of Our Lady, it will not be possible that what will follow is not that the man cold in devotion will not warm up, and that the hot will not blaze in the flames of charity.⁹⁸

Again, Astolfi's framing of the benefit of miracle narratives involved a change in spiritual temperature. In this case, the transformation would turn the cold of heart warm and increase the heat of the already devout to fiery proportions. This framing clearly signalled the expectation that an encounter with the sacred occurred while engaging with miracle stories. For Astolfi, it was not just the heart and affections that would be moved by the miracles, but a more fundamental edification was promised at the level of the soul. A final example of these sentiments come through the address to the reader in Silvano Razzi's *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* of 1587. He too told his readers that those who 'voluntarily read will illuminate themselves to greater devotion'.⁹⁹ For Razzi, the benefit derived from miracle narratives was an intuitive and straightforward process that brought readers 'simply to God'.¹⁰⁰ But, how 'simple' were these texts in practice? And how did the authors of the compendia under study here ensure that their works matched the capabilities of a wide Catholic readership?

The intended readers of miracle compendia printed in Venice were pious Catholics capable of vernacular literacy. The choice of the vernacular and the adoption of a simple style was elaborated on by several of these authors and concerns regarding accessibility were central. Niccolò Laghi explained that 'this my composition is not accompanied by that

⁹⁸ 'Quanto al frutto, tengo per certissimo, che non si potrà leggere senza qualche miglioramento dell'anima, perche nel veder il premio de gli honoratori, e'l castigo de' dispreggiatori di N. Signora, non potrà se non seguire, che l'huomo freddo nella divotione, nō si scaldi, & il caldo non avvampi nelle sante fiamme di carità'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, b3.

⁹⁹ 'legge volentieri, per accendersi à maggiore divotione'. Razzi, *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ 'Semplicemente à Dio'. Razzi, *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*, p. 2.

beautiful flow or ornate words that others of quick spirit would have been able to produce'.¹⁰¹ In putting his book together, Laghi favoured a straightforward approach to both language and organisation with a single miracle story rarely occupying more than a one octavo page. The volume of miracles in the 1597 edition of the *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento* totalled almost six hundred pages resulting in a rich selection for readers. Other authors spoke in greater detail as to how and why they ensured that their books were accessible to laypeople with limited literacy. Razzi's ruminations on the matter are a notable case in point. Razzi explained his choice of language and simple style the with the following pondering

And indeed, if scholars and the learned can at their pleasure, in addition to a thousand other things, see these things in the Greek and Latin writers, especially in the lives of the saints and in different histories, then why should poor, naïve people be deprived? Many of those after having worked hard in their exertions, and at domestic needs, have [miracle stories] for supreme spiritual consolation.¹⁰²

To the modern reader, Razzi's framing of the needs of 'poor, naïve people' as opposed to the learned scholars, who could consume miracle stories in multiple classical languages, might seem uncharitable. His intention, however, was benign and his purpose unmistakable: the democratisation of printed miracle stories for a wide lay readership. Razzi wanted to address what he saw as the want of those with limited literacy and emphasises the role that, at least to his mind, miracle compendia could play in allowing devout Catholics to access the spiritual benefits of miracle stories. For Razzi, the vernacular miracle compendium offered much more spiritual fruit for literate Catholics 'than the knowledge and long study' better suited to

¹⁰¹ 'questa mia compositione non sia accompagnata da quella bella facondia, & ornate parole, che altro spirito svelto havrebbe potuto fare'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, b2.

¹⁰² 'Et in vero se i sciētati, e dotti possono a lor piacere, oltre à mille altre cose, vedere questi ne i greci, e latini scrittori; e specialmēte ne' libri delle vite de' Santi, & in diverse historie, perche deono le povere persone idiote, esserne prive? Molto delle quali dopo haver tutto il di faticato nei loro esercitii, e d'intorno alle domestiche bisogno, hanno per somma consolatione spirituale'. Razzi, *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*, p. 3.

scholars.¹⁰³ In terms of form, Razzi's compendium was very similar to Niccolò Laghi's and individual miracle stories were mostly confined to a single octavo page. The 1587 edition of the *Miracoli della Vergine Maria* that informs this chapter totalled 245 pages resulting in a trove of short, enumerated miracle tales easily distinguishable one from the next. Astolfi in his *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* of 1609, likewise distinguished his vernacular tome from lofty Latin works. The democratisation of the miraculous, and the spiritual needs of a vernacular readership were central to his rationale too. Astolfi explained that his ideal readership was

Only those who do not understand the Latin language, but were pious people, and worthy of being consoled, remained deprived of knowledge of the magnitudes of the cross of Christ, which apart from what they heard in preaching, and read in the lives of the saints, found nothing more. It therefore seemed to me that I could remedy this by this rudimentary book of the miracles of the Most Holy Cross, which is the present.¹⁰⁴

Both Razzi and Astolfi differentiated between their new works and others previously available to a Catholic readership. To them, works dealing solely with the miraculous, and written in an accessible language offered something specific and enriching for readers. In addition to the increased volume of miracle books that reeled off Venetian presses, these works did something new in terms of their style and suitability for their readers. As the addresses demonstrate, the authors were convinced of the proximity to the sacred, through both spiritual growth and knowledge, that the reader would achieve through their works. The

¹⁰³ 'che le scienze, e lungo studio ne i letterati, e dotti'. Razzi, *Miracoli della Vergine Maria*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ 'I soli non intendenti della lingua Latina, persone però pie, e degne di essere consolate, restavano privi di cognitione delle grandezze della croce di Christo, che da quello in fuori, che udivano nelle predicationi, e leggevano nelle vite dei santi nulla più trovavano. Ha dunque parso à me di potere rimediare à questo, col ridurre in un libro i miracoli della Croce santissima, che è il presente'. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, a4.

addresses also demonstrate the efforts taken by authors to redress the dearth of books dealing with the miraculous that those possessing only vernacular literacy could actually read. In this sense, these works offered a new point of encounter with the sacred.

The prefatory components of these miracle compendia bring us to important conclusions regarding their intended purpose and function in Catholic devotional life. Firstly, authors made clear that reading about miracles would enhance a devotee's proximity to the sacred. This process worked through devotional transformation, the raising of spiritual temperature, and the attainment of an affective understanding of the miraculous. Miracles were intended to be both felt as well as read. The encounter with the sacred that they offered therefore worked by understanding a narrative and emotional engagement, resulting in an enhanced understanding of miracle culture. Second, despite knowing nothing about readers, we do know who authors imagined their readership to be – literate and devout lay Catholics. Astolfi, Razzi, and Laghi all offered full explanations for their choice of both the Italian vernacular and their simple approaches to formatting their miracle narratives. The common motive for these linguistic and stylistic choices was to widen access to printed miracles to a literate, if not scholarly, lay readership. Authors knew that miracle stories needed to be straightforward, easy to read, and have their spiritual messages communicated with minimal fuss.

Saving (and making) Catholic families

Miracles shaped the most intimate junctures of everyday Catholic life. By their very nature, miraculous stirrings disrupted the natural course of being. But at the same time, miracles were welcomed interventions that laypeople had come to expect to encounter at some point in their lives. One did not need to receive a miracle to engage with miracle culture. In Venice, it would have been quite difficult for a lay Catholic *not* to encounter the miraculous. From the

wonder-working relics that infused parish churches with sacred power, to the wayside street shrines that were needled into the urban fabric, a Catholic did not need to strain to collide with miracles. Recent scholarship has brought the relationship between miracle culture and everyday life to the centre of the study of Catholic devotion. A key contribution in this regard is the collaborative study, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy*. Drawing particularly upon visual evidence offered by ex-votos left at shrines, the authors have centralised the domestic sphere as an important site of the miraculous. Expansion in both visual and printed accounts of the wonders worked through miraculous Italian shrines contributed to this ‘Renaissance of miracles’ and played an important role in ‘relocating religion in the home’.¹⁰⁵ Often, visual sources provided snapshots of intimate moments in family life, many depicting holy dramas that unfolded in the bedchamber as the common site of sickness and recovery.¹⁰⁶ Working on Spain, Thomas Devaney has highlighted the power of the miraculous to infuse everyday life with a focus on Marian shrine books. By focussing on the accounts of miracles received by pilgrims, Devaney argues that shrine books offer insights into the ‘conditions of everyday life and about the role of religion in daily practice’.¹⁰⁷ Specifically, Devaney frames engagement with miracles as an inherently affective practice through which laypeople could mitigate their negative emotions and remove the source of those emotions’ upon receiving divine intervention.¹⁰⁸ A particularly striking and recurring theme in miracle compendia printed in Venice was the role of the miraculous in bringing about the restoration of the Catholic family unit. In this sense, the compendia touched upon ordinary, yet often highly emotive scenarios which most readers could sympathise with if not experience in their own lives. These miracles typically worked in a wide range of ways, but some dominant themes included restoring children who had suffered a premature death to life, restoring the bonds of a

¹⁰⁵ Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, p. 257.

¹⁰⁶ Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, p. 258.

¹⁰⁷ Devaney, ‘Everyday Miracles in Seventeenth-Century Spain’, p. 190.

¹⁰⁸ Devaney, ‘Everyday Miracles in Seventeenth-Century Spain’, p. 205.

strained marriage, or the transformation of a heretical family into a Catholic one. Miracle stories of this genre painted clear pictures of proper inter-family relationships for Catholics and showed that the sacred was ready to intervene to restore these if the appropriate structures had somehow eroded.

Mary Laven has argued that Italian Renaissance miracle stories offer compelling evidence for the deep care parents had for their offspring.¹⁰⁹ Accounts of children being rescued from nasty falls from windows or being cured of apparently terminal illnesses attests to such and has a long history in the Catholic culture of the miraculous.¹¹⁰ The compendia analysed in this chapter made it clear that miracles helped children, and also their parents. To this end, Ruth Chavasse cast the Virgin Mary as something of a ‘social worker’ in her examination of sixteenth-century Italian miracle stories.¹¹¹ The stories of this kind in the compendia under study stand out for the rich and detailed descriptions of the emotional states that accompanied the misfortune of a lost child. I focus here on stories concerning the resuscitation of a dead child. In these examples, authors framed the devotion of parents as something intrinsically entwined with their grief. Prayers were discernible through sobs and screams and, sometimes, pious pleas transformed into demands bordering on the irreverent. These examples differ greatly from the more standard or formulaic orations that laypeople were encouraged to memorise and repeat by devotional manuals. Yet, the efficacy of frantic prayer emphasised by the authors of these books conveyed a clear message regarding the potential proximity of the sacred to the crises of their readers. Further, the recurring theme of

¹⁰⁹ Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*, p. 261

¹¹⁰ On the medieval development of miracle narratives centred on endangered children and childhood illnesses, see Robert Finucane, *The Rescue of Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); Anne E. Bailey, ‘Miracle Children: Medieval Hagiography and Childhood Imperfection’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (2017), 267-285; Eleanora C. Gordon, ‘Child Health in the Middle Ages as Seen in the Miracles of Five English Saints, AD 1150–1250’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 60 (1986), 502–522.

¹¹¹ Ruth Chavasse, ‘The Virgin Mary: consoler, protector and social worker in Quattrocento miracle tales’, in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. by Letizia Panizza (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Routledge, 2000), pp. 138-164.

the resuscitated child permits analysis of the role that justice, conversion and miracles played in the family unit.

The standalone anonymous collection of miracles related to the Rosary, printed in Venice in 1587 offers one such example of a child's death and a parent's grief that occurred in Bohemia. We read of a girl who was laughing and joking with her friends in the river that they had picked as a place to play. At some point, a strong current had overcome the girl and she drowned beneath the waters. The ensuing commotion attracted the attention of the little girl's mother: 'full of anguish, tears and screams, she raced to get the body of the girl out of the water.'¹¹² The author carefully captured the drama of the tragic event, narrating how the grief-stricken mother began to bargain with heaven to reverse her ostensibly hopeless situation:

with querulous voice, and great tears [...] she said "O sweet mother of God is this the care that you have for people that are devoted to you and praise you? You know that my little girl was always devout and said your Rosary devoutly, and yet you have left her to die miserably without confession? I pray to you mother of grace that you console me and return my daughter to me. I know that you can do it, because you are the mother of every grace".¹¹³

Heart-wrenching plea complete, and with a vow to join the local Rosary confraternity thrown in for good measure, the Virgin responded to her devotee and restored the girl to life. The narrative therefore had a happy ending for the mother and daughter who 'thanking God and

¹¹² 'piena di angustie, lagrime, e gridi corse, & fece cavare il corpo della figliuola dell'aqua'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 25^r.

¹¹³ 'O dolcissima madre di Dio, è questa la custodia che tu hai delle persone, che ti son divote, che dicono le laudi tue? Tu sai che la mia figliuola era tutta divota e diceva il tuo Rosario divotamente, e tu l'hai lasciata annegare senza confessione miserabilmente? Ti prego adunque madre di gratia, che ti mi console e mi rendi la mia figliuola. So che lo puoi fare, perche sei madre di ogni gratia'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 56^r.

the glorious Virgin Mary, with celebration and joy, returned home telling everyone about the virtue of the Rosary'.¹¹⁴

What is striking in this grief-stricken prayer is the charge levelled at the Virgin Mary – ‘is this the care that you have for people that are devoted to you?’ – that mingled with the absolute and certain faith in the miracle.¹¹⁵ The devotional and the emotional experience being narrated for the lay reader here compounded the complexity that accompanied sudden bereavement. The faith that the story seemingly regarded as being sure enough to secure a miracle was not tidy devotion. It was gritty, noisy, and appropriate for real life tragedy. Prayers of this sort that accompanied the death of a child feature in other miracle compendia printed in Venice. In Silvano Razzi’s 1587 *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine* we see another anguished prayer bordering on irreverent when the parents of a small boy believed that he had perished in a fire that consumed their home. The destruction of the house paled in comparison to the presumed death of a child as the parents were ‘pained to death at such a great loss but remarking much more at the loss of the child than of the house, and all that they have’.¹¹⁶

In this case, the mother of the child, while sifting through ash and soot cried out

O blessed Virgin, I also commended my son to you with much faith and affection, how can it be that you, who are called the mother of compassion and mercy, and such you are truly, particularly towards those who have faith in you, have not taken care of my little son?¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ ‘Et ringratiando Dio, e la gloriosa Vergine Maria, con festa & allegrezza tornarono a casa narrando a tutti la virtù del Rosario.’ Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 56^r.

¹¹⁵ Gábor Klaniczay has raised the issue of irreverence in the spoken vows made by supplicants in miracle narratives. See his ‘The Power of Words in Miracles, Visions, Incantations, and Bewitchments’, in *The Power of Words: Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. by James Kapaló, Éva Pòcs and William Ryan (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2013), pp. 281-304

¹¹⁶ ‘dolenti à morte di così gran perdita, ma molto piu ramaricandosi del perduto fanciullo, che della casa, e di tutto il loro havere’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 108

¹¹⁷ ‘Ò Beata Vergine, io pur vi raccomandai con molta fede, & affetto il mio piccol figliuolo, come puo esser che voi, la quale siete chiamata madre di pietà, e misericordia, e tale siete veramente, e verso coloro in particolare, che hanno fede in voi, non habbiate havuto cura di esso mio piccol figliuolo?’ Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 108.

Again, the complex fusion of disbelief and absolute faith moved the Mother of God to action as the child was revealed, unharmed, dirty, but alive.

Not all moments of grief were coloured by frustrated prayers volleyed at heaven. Affectivity is, however, a core feature of miracle narratives involving the loss of a child. In Astolfi's *Historia universale* of 1624 we read of a father, mother, and child aged nine travelling by sea to visit the shrine of the Madonna of Monferrato in the Piedmont region of Italy. During the voyage, the child 'playing on the ship, fell [overboard] unnoticed by anyone'.¹¹⁸ Upon realising that their child had been swept away by the sea, Astolfi wrote that the parents almost 'dead with sorrow, had nothing but the name of the Virgin in their mouths'.¹¹⁹ Upon entering the sanctuary that they had set out to visit they 'filled her sacred chapel with tears and lamentation' crying out 'did you know that we will be wretched without our son? Let it be said of us, O Virgin when we return home without him'.¹²⁰ It seemed that the Virgin Mary had already intervened on behalf of the bereft parents as, when they turned, they saw their son had been miraculously plucked from the sea and had made his own way to the shrine of Monferrato. The reunion was joyous as 'he embraced with his father and mother; one could not separate them' as the Catholic family was restored.¹²¹

The stories of the destruction and reconstitution of the family unit through rescue or resuscitation spoke clearly of the power of emotional devotion in attracting sacred intervention. This relationship was more than implicit in some cases. Another in Astolfi's Marian collection featured a girl in Poland who was overcome by strong whirlpools in a lake and drowned. The mother of the child 'let the tears flow when she raised the shout, the eyes, and the hands to the sky, and with a composed prayer, if with broken down acts, she called

¹¹⁸ 'giuocando per la nave, cadè non se s'accorgendo alcuno'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 184.

¹¹⁹ 'morti di dolore, non havevano se non il Verginale nome in bocca'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 185

¹²⁰ 'empirono la sua sacra capella di lagrime, e lamenti, & divevano che sia di noi miseri senza il nostro figlio? Che sia detto di noi O Vergine, quando torneremo a casa senza di lui'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 185

¹²¹ 'il quale abbracciatosi col padre, e con la madre, non si poteva separare a loro'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 185.

the life, which is Maria, to her aid'.¹²² As goes the usual process, the Virgin Mary responded to her devotee and restored the drowned girl to life. For Astolfi, the relationship between affectivity and faith was key to activating the miracle as the girl was resuscitated 'by virtue of the prayer, and by the strength of the tears'.¹²³ In other examples the miracle described the spontaneous physical signs that accompanied a child's resuscitation. A case in Italy in the same collection involved a stillborn child who was taken to the shrine of the Madonna di Chervia by his desperate mother. As the customary prayers began, the baby 'began to colour, took a breath, urinated, and emptied his belly [...] a joyous spectacle to all'.¹²⁴

The restoration of children to the Catholic family was not restricted to infants in post-Tridentine miracle collections. Adult offspring too, might be separated from their parents, much to the distress of the latter. One case collected into Razzi's Marian miracle compendium involved a mother's somewhat unusual attempts to convince the Virgin Mary to restore her only son to her who had been 'put in prison by his enemies with his feet in shackles'.¹²⁵ Again, the story emphasised the emotional distress of the mother without the son whom she 'tenderly loved, being in this life deprived of consolation'.¹²⁶ The mother poured her pain into her devotion and took to 'bitterly crying at night, and commending herself to the Virgin to whom she was very devoted, praying for the liberation of her son'.¹²⁷ Her prayers having gone unanswered, the woman went to her nearest church and pleaded before the Virgin Mary:

¹²² 'lascia correre le lagrime, quando alza il grido, l'occhio, le mani al Cielo, e con oratione composta, se ben con atti scomposti, chiama la Vita cioè Maria, in suo aiuto'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 671.

¹²³ 'virtu del priego, & la forza delle lagrime'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 671.

¹²⁴ 'cominciò colorire, poscia respirò, mandò l'urina, scaricò il ventre [...] spettacolo giocando a tutti'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 817.

¹²⁵ 'da suoi nemici, e posto in prigione, con i piedi ne' ceppi'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 13

¹²⁶ 'teneramente amava essendo in questa vita priva di ogni altra consolatione'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 13

¹²⁷ 'a notte [...] piangere amaramente, e raccomandarsi alla vergine, di cui era molto divota, pregandola per la liberatione di esso suo figliuolo'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 13.

O Blessed Virgin, how many times have I prayed to you for the liberation of my son, and still in no way have you helped me, a poor, disconsolate mother? I invoked you to help for this my son, and I have seen no fruit. But as my son is taken from you, so will I take your son, and put him in safekeeping in the place of mine.¹²⁸

The prayer exhibited the frustration present in previous examples we have seen thus far, but the supplicant in this case took it one step further. As promised, she literally took the Virgin's son away from her by plucking the statue of Jesus fixed to the arms of his mother and brought it home after she left the church. Was the mother seeking to vent her frustrations and grief by sympathetically subjecting the Virgin Mary to the deprivation of her child? Or did the woman's actions betray something closer to faith in the power of images? It is not clear from the story, but according to Razzi, both her prayer and its accompanying action represented acts of 'holy and pure simplicity' rather than anything irreverent.¹²⁹ Either way, the affective prayer and the striking gesture involving the pilfered statute worked to the mother's advantage. The Virgin Mary appeared to the son in captivity and told him to 'return to your mother, child, and tell her to return my son to me, as I return hers to her'.¹³⁰ As was customary, the reunion was underpinned by joy, and it was time to return to church to restore the swiped baby Jesus into the arms of the Virgin Mary – mother and child, both holy and earthly, reunited.

As well as bringing a Catholic family together through the restoration of children, miracle narratives explored how the family unit could be preserved through the administration of divine justice against destabilising members, or the creation of a new

¹²⁸ 'O Beata Vergine, quante volte ti ho pregata, per la liberatione del mio figliuolo, e per ancora in niun modo hai in ciò sovvenuto me, povera sconsolata madre? Io pur invoco l'aiuto tuo, per questo mio figliuolo, e nessun frutto sento: Ma si come a me è stato levato il mio, così io prenderò il tuo figlio, e in luogo del mio lo porrò in custodia'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 13.

¹²⁹ 'O santo e pure semplicità'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 13.

¹³⁰ 'torna figliuolo a tua madre, e dille, che a me restituisca il mio figlio, si come io a lei restituisco il suo'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 13.

Catholic families through conversion. Many of these tales involved children, but I shift the emphasis now to consider what messages these miracle stories conveyed in relation to issues of conversion, justice, and the role of the sacred in creating proper Catholic family units. Beginning with the former, Razzi's collection contains a story involving the Virgin Mary's intercession to vindicate a Catholic mother wrongly accused of infanticide. The father in question was an 'adulterous man of a good wife who devoted to the Virgin Mary [whom] he greatly hated'.¹³¹ The man was unfit to serve as head of a Catholic family, reducing them to poverty through 'the poor governance of this husband'.¹³² The man's wickedness culminated in the casual murder of his infant son as he 'cut the throat of the baby' and left the house in a hurry.¹³³ In an attempt to rid himself of his lawful wife, the man accused her of the crime and she was taken before the judge 'and quickly condemned to death'.¹³⁴ Finding no support amongst her peers, the woman called out to the Virgin Mary to advocate for her. In an instant, the baby in the arms of an unknown woman in the crowds cried out 'let the slain child be brought, and then the woman's answer will be heard'.¹³⁵ The judges could not refuse the supernatural directive from the mouth of a babe and brought the body of the murdered baby, who was quickly resuscitated and 'pointed his finger at his killer' – his wicked father.¹³⁶ The man took his wife's place in front of the judge and was sentenced to be tied to the tail of a horse and dragged until he 'miserably gave up life'.¹³⁷

A family did not need to be Catholic, at least to begin with, to benefit from the culture of the miraculous. Another story in Razzi's collection involving a murderous family member

¹³¹ 'Havendo un'huomo adultero una moglie da bene, e divota di Maria Vergine, l'odiava grandemente'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 114.

¹³² 'mal governo di questo marito'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 114.

¹³³ 'tagliò la gola al detto putto, & partissi'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 114.

¹³⁴ 'brevemente giudicata a morte'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 114.

¹³⁵ 'Sia portate l'ucciso fanciullo, & all hora sarà udita la risposte della Donna'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 114.

¹³⁶ 'fù risuscitato il bambino [...] e dimostrar col dito il suo uccisore'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 114.

¹³⁷ 'fornì miseramente la vita'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 115.

and a desperate need for justice centred on a Jewish woman's traumatic labour and appeal to Catholic sacred powers. 'Having great difficulties in the birth' the Jewish woman was persuaded by her Catholic neighbours to 'commend herself with great affection to Mary'.¹³⁸ As the birthing complications became increasingly dire, the Jewish woman cried out a Catholic prayer:

Virgin Mary, I know well that I am not worthy to pray to you, being of those people that killed your son. Nonetheless, I hear that your mercy also extends to sinners. So, if it is your pleasure to liberate me, I promise to take baptism together with the offspring that will be born of me.¹³⁹

The woman made good on her promise following the birth of a healthy boy and became a Catholic. Upon hearing of his wife's and new-born son's conversion, however, the Jewish man at the head of the family flew into a rage and quickly slew the infant. The man was quickly taken away by the authorities while the mother gathered her babe's body to put her newly-found faith to action at the foot of a statue of the Virgin Mary. The Catholic convert pleaded with Mary to restore her son to life confessing that 'truly I believe that Jesus is your son born without injury to your virginity and him I confess to be God, true and man, that which was written in our law'.¹⁴⁰ The child was restored to life following the convert's prayer, but perhaps the most surprising aspect of the miracle had yet to be revealed to her. While she was in the church, the woman's husband, moved to see the error of his ways, he himself accepted the Sacrament of Baptism. Upon hearing that the child had been restored to

¹³⁸ 'Una Giudea havendo grandissimo difficoltà nel partorire [...] si raccomandò con molto affetto a Maria'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 216.

¹³⁹ 'Maria Vergine, se bene io non son degna di pregarti, essendo in quella gente che uccisero il vostro figliuolo: nondimeno io odio, che la vostra clemenza si estende anche ai peccatori. Se adunque vi piace liberarmi, & io prometto insieme con la prole che di me nascerà prendere il battesimo'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 216

¹⁴⁰ 'veracemente credo, esso Giesu essere di voi nato, senza lesione della vostra virginità: e lui confesso Dio vero, & huomo, quello, che è stato nella legge nostra promesso'. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 216

life by the Virgin Mary, the converted Jew was absolved, and restored with his now Catholic family. In this case, the transformation of the Jewish into a Catholic family began an important new chapter in their history as the boy grew to a man and ‘served devoutly for all of his life the Lord Jesus and our Mother of Mercy’.¹⁴¹

A final example relating to the culture of the miraculous and the Catholic family unit is drawn from Giovanni Felice Astolfi’s *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* of 1609. Again, as was often the case for miracles involving the family, a child played a pivotal role in the narrative. This story touched upon the religious controversies of the day as Astolfi told of a family that lived in England after the Reformation. The family keenly adopted the new faith and acquired a particular aversion to the signs and symbols that, once central to their Catholicism, now represented idolatry. Despite the conversion of the parents, the child of the family remained ‘very Catholic, of the age of eight, for the great devotion that he had to the cross’.¹⁴² The heretical parents berated and beat the staunchly Catholic child, but he remained devoted [...] to the pious and religious custom of adoring the Most Holy Cross’.¹⁴³ The child, fatally ill, used his last breath to beseech his parents to return to the Catholic fold. They were, however, unmoved, refusing to reconvert and abandon their heresies.

The miracle in this case began while the mother of the child preparing his burial clothes after he succumbed to his illness. To her astonishment on ‘the white camise, like the one that the same week had been brought back from the laundry, was found painted a large cross from head to toe’.¹⁴⁴ The woman assumed that the servants had scrawled the icon on the shirt, accused them of being ‘papists’, and demanded that it be scrubbed clean. The flustered

¹⁴¹ ‘servì divotamente tutto il tempo di sua vita al Signor Giesu Christo, & alla nostra Madre di misericordia’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 216

¹⁴² ‘Un fanciullo molto Catolico di età d’otto anni, per la gran divotione c’haveva alla CROCE’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 209.

¹⁴³ ‘devoto [...] al pio e religioso costume di adorare la Croce santissima’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 209

¹⁴⁴ ‘la camiscia bianchissima, come quella che la stessa settimana era stata riportata di bucato, vi fu trovata dentro da capo à piedi dipinta una gran Croce’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 209.

servants tried and failed to acquiesce as ‘it was not possible to do, for no matter how much water and soap that was used, the cross remained more splendid and beautiful [...] formed by the hands of angels’.¹⁴⁵ The parents could no longer resist their child’s dying wish, as their very burial clothes were emblazoned with a truth that could not be washed away. They ‘left their old detestable customs, and returned to the Catholic faith, from that hour they were devout, and feared God’.¹⁴⁶ In this narrative, the good Catholic child was not returned to life, and the restoration of the Catholic family did not include the literal restoration of its members. The miracle however emphasised the role that proper spiritual observance and adherence to the Catholic faith played in ensuring proper family relations. While alive, the child was tormented by his parents for his longsuffering piety, and his death facilitated the wonder that would return his parents to true religion, even if he could not be there to rejoice with them upon their reconversion to Catholicism.

The miracles analysed in this section of the chapter drew an intrinsic relationship between the culture of the miraculous, Catholic religious practice, and the bonds of the Catholic family. Miracles involving the death of Catholic children stand out particularly for the descriptions of vivid emotions and affective pleas to heaven that emanated from bereft parents. These miracle narratives communicated a message to their lay readership which focused on the proximity of the sacred to the disasters that sometimes coloured ordinary life. They emphasised that an emotional connection to one’s faith, and an awareness of the ever-present sacred world could bring a miracle into such situations. The connection with family bonds is also significant in these examples. Miracles were of course extraordinary, and, although many lay readers might not find themselves at the mercy of murderous fathers or sudden shocking loss of children, the stories told them that devotion and good Catholic

¹⁴⁵ ‘non fu possibile di fare, per quant’acqua, & sapone, che vi adoprasse [...] piu splendida e bella la croce rimaneva [...] da mano angelica era formata’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 209

¹⁴⁶ ‘lasciati i vecchi detestabili costumi, e tornati alla fede Catolica, da quell’hora furono divoti, e timorati di Dio’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 209.

family life could not be disentwined. Although most of the miracles here did not occur in the space of the home, they touched on the intimate and complicated matters that pulled families apart and brought them together. The appeal to the readers' affections, by inviting them to share in the pain of a bereaved parent, the anguish of a mistreated wife, or the pious desperation of a Catholic child determined to ensure his parents' salvation, encouraged an emotional investment in miracle stories. In this sense, attaining the understanding of the culture of the miraculous that these stories tried to convey was as much about feeling as it was about believing, and both seem to have mattered much more than thinking.

Nourishing Catholic souls: Spiritual affections in miracle narratives

Miracle stories touched on the trials and tribulations of everyday life and more tragic man-made drama – from children in danger to the punishment of murderous husbands. In these cases, the miracle rectified issues that suddenly disrupted Catholic families and communities. Healing children, liberation miracles, or the power of icons to act for Catholics are some of the most common narratives that feature in Italian miracle collections. Certainly, the priority for the Catholic 'characters' in these stories is the relief of distress. Writing on Spain, Thomas Devaney has argued that Catholic miracle stories told of 'suffering people [who] turned their despair into devotion [...] and were rewarded'.¹⁴⁷ He further notes that 'miracle books' did not necessarily encourage the contemplative spirituality in the same way as the spiritual guides written by figures such as Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) or Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582). For Devaney, printed miracle books were helpful for laypeople seeking sacred solutions for particular problems, but readers were not 'seeking a spiritual connection with God'.¹⁴⁸ Jennifer Hillman has argued that such meditative literature, associated with the

¹⁴⁷ Devaney, 'Everyday Miracles in Seventeenth-Century Spain', p. 193.

¹⁴⁸ Devaney, 'Everyday Miracles in Seventeenth-Century Spain', p. 204.

Jesuits in this case, provided readers with ‘emotional scripts’ that encouraged them to imagine themselves in a range of devotional situations related to holy figures.¹⁴⁹ The question of interior piety has occupied recent important contributions on Catholic reform. Moshe Sluhovsky has argued for an intensification of interior spirituality practiced by a minority of mainly urban and educated early modern Catholics through devotional practices concerning conscience, confession, and meditation.¹⁵⁰ Ulrich Lehner has recently emphasised that the climate of Catholic reform stressed the need for lay Catholics to engage in processes of ‘sanctification’ which involved ‘bringing the inner life back to a state of grace and to strengthen it for daily challenges’.¹⁵¹

The vernacular miracle books under study here were not equivalent to the devotional manuals that encouraged a contemplative spirituality, such as those designed to nourish the souls of lay and clerical men and women examined by Sluhovsky and Lehner. But printed miracles did touch on aspects of Catholic spiritual development through stories that had nothing to do with moments of distress, material need, or illness or injury. Instead, the compendia studied here offer evidence of the spontaneous intervention of the sacred to resolve lapses of faith, lukewarm devotion, or distance from God in a way that brought the state of the Catholic soul to the centre of the narrative. Scholarship dealing with printed miracle-related literature has neglected these stories and their significance for understanding what messages about the miraculous clerical authors wanted to communicate to their readers. Part of this is to do with the ambiguous category of ‘miracle book’. The sources that inform

¹⁴⁹ Jennifer Hillman, ‘Internal Theatre and Emotional Scripts in French Jesuit Meditative Literature’, in *Affective and Emotional Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Andrea Marculescu and Charles-Louis Morand Métivier (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 143-163. Jenni Kuuliala also uses the concept of ‘emotional scripts’ in relation to miracles associated with canonisation processes. See her, ‘Infirmity and Death Wishes in Medieval French and Italian Canonisation Processes’, in *Death and Disease in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, ed. by Lori Jones and Nükhet Varlik (Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2022), pp. 201-220.

¹⁵⁰ Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self*, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ Lehner, *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform*, Preface, ix.

the work of Devaney, are *shrine books* – a specific genre of miracle-related print that, created under specific conditions, offered an equally specific point of view on miracle culture.

The pursuit of a miracle to resolve a pressing problem was a primary motive that led laypeople to visit shrines. It was, therefore, these encounters that came to be recorded in printed shrine books. Miracle *compendia* on the other hand were far more universal in their approach and consequently captured a wider range of stories dealing with lay encounters with the miraculous. Some of these were not restricted to the traditional exchange of vow and miracle that characterised lay engagement with miraculous shrines. Was the relief of distress the only thing that mattered for the recipient of the miracle? On the contrary, most of the individuals that featured in the narratives under analysis in this section were quite happily continuing with their lives, albeit while being distant from God, until the spontaneous intervention of the sacred. Others were in the throes of religious angst. The results of these miracles were not material, nor did the restoration of family bonds, or even the punishment of heretics play a major role. Instead, these stories focussed on more personal encounters with the sacred. The sole result was that the Catholics that featured in them were brought into closer, if somewhat uncomfortable, communion with God. Affectivity was central to these stories. Closely related to issues of spiritual interiority, historians of the European Reformations have carefully examined the important role that the emotions played in processes of religious change. Susan Karant-Nunn's work on the role of emotion in both the Protestant and Catholic Reformations has emphasised the ways in which the clergy 'tried to shape the religious feelings of those in their charge'.¹⁵² Writing on early modern sermons, Stephen Cummins and Max Stille have raised the important role that emotion played in the process of religious communication and experience. Specifically, they argue that emotional language and imagery were not simply used to support or enhance the message of the

¹⁵² Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, p. 3.

preacher. Instead, emotion was used to ‘turn religious feelings personal, tangible, and everyday’ allowing religious figures to become heavily personalised and affectionate’.¹⁵³ The emphasis here on the transformative role of the affective is highly relevant to the miracle compendia under examination here. Adopting this lens helps us to truly understand the role that they may have played in Catholic devotional life in Venice. In short, involving the emotions in the devotional act created a specific religious experience intended to have a tangible spiritual outcome for the reader and make the sacred highly perceptible. I turn now to consider how miracle compendia encouraged readers to engage their emotions in the act of reading. The aim of these stories was to create specific spiritual experience centred on inward spiritual renewal and closer communion with God.

The anonymous Rosary-related compendium, the 1587 *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, printed in octavo in Venice by Bernardo Giunti, offers much evidence in this regard. The book focused on miracles bestowed upon Catholics who were devoted to the Rosary. The work was published in a second edition by the same printer in 1591. In fact, the miracles are identical to those that featured in the popular 1522 devotional manual written by Alberto da Castello. While we know nothing of the author, the decision to publish this collection of Marian miracles as a stand-alone edition is significant. In the first instance, it demonstrates the importance and presumed relevance of works dealing exclusively with the miraculous rather than having miracle tales attached to other genres of print like hagiographies or prayer books. The compendium was deemed relevant enough by the printer to be republished after three years. The full title of the book further spoke of the relevance of these miracles to lay devotional life: ‘Miracles of the Most Sacred Virgin Mary, followed to the benefit of those who were devoted to the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary’. As the

¹⁵³ Stephen Cummins and Max Stille, ‘Religious Emotions and Emotions in Religion: The Case of Sermons’, *Journal of Religious History*, 45.1 (2021) 3-24 (pp. 17-18).

title suggests, many of the miracle narratives dealt with Catholics already members of a Confraternity of the Rosary, or non-members who decided to join one at the prompting of a miracle. Like Niccolò Laghi's reference to the value of his Eucharistic collection for laypeople involved in Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament, the 1587 anonymous collection framed its relevance in relation to confraternal piety, an unavoidable aspect of lay devotional life. As such, many of the narratives in this collection dealt with brushes with the sacred where the sole outcome was the spiritual growth of a Catholic. Late sixteenth-century popularity of the Rosary devotion was aided by the promotion of Pope Pius V who was in office from 1566-1572. Specifically, Pius V attributed the Christian victory over the Ottomans at the 1571 Battle of Lepanto to the intercession of the Virgin Mary secured through the mass praying of the Rosary. For Venice, Richard Mackenney's work on confraternity foundations sheds light on how sixteenth-century Marian piety, including confraternities dedicated to the Rosary, manifested in the city. Mackenney shows that 24 of a total of 64 confraternity foundations between 1550-1600 were Marian in nature.¹⁵⁴ Mackenney's statistical breakdown indicates that two of these Marian foundations were specifically dedicated to the Rosary, one established at the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in 1575, and the other at the church of Sant'Eufemia in 1582.¹⁵⁵ The 1587 Rosary collection expanded on this climate of devotional renewal and articulated to Catholics the myriad ways that the miraculous could transform the state of their souls.

Wayward Catholics being set back on the right path was a key trope. In one case, we read of a mother's hard work in raising her son in piety being scuppered by her untimely death. Upon the loss of his mother, the youth was 'tricked by wicked company, spoiled, and

¹⁵⁴ Richard Mackenney, *Venice as the Polity of Mercy: Guilds, Confraternities, and the Social Order c. 1250-1650* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2019), p. 202.

¹⁵⁵ Mackenney, *Venice as the Polity of Mercy*, pp. 194-195.

became tangled up in carnal lusts'.¹⁵⁶ Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the youth retained his outward devotion to the Virgin Mary, although the spiritual heft behind it was gone. The story goes on to explain that on his way to eat with his companions, the youth stopped at a Marian image to say some of his Rosary. The Virgin Mary responded miraculously through her image and offered her devotee 'a very ugly bowl in which was very delicate food'.¹⁵⁷ The youth approached the food but queried the manner in which it was served: 'Madonna, I would willingly eat it, but this bowl is so ugly that it has entirely taken away my appetite'.¹⁵⁸ To illuminate the meaning of such a curious offering, the Madonna replied: 'My son, you know that those things that you offer to *me* with the Rosary are great, but fetid and filthy is the heart in which you offer them'.¹⁵⁹ Understanding Mary's metaphorical parallel, the youth renounced his sinful life and resumed a pious one seeking to craft a more acceptable vessel for his renewed devotion. The miracle was not a provision narrative in the sense that a material need was met through the miraculous food. Instead, the story spoke of the inefficacy of 'going through the motions' of devotion without the backing of an engaged heart and encouraged readers to assess their own approach in this regard. Not only laypeople needed reminding to attend their outward devotions with inward spiritual commitment. The anonymous compiler told of a nun who 'for a long time prayed the Rosary with great attention'.¹⁶⁰ Similar to the young man in the previous story, the nun's devotion had lapsed over time, slowly, unconsciously, but enough to make her devotions grow cold and

¹⁵⁶ 'Ingannato da cattivi compagnia fu vitiato & intricato nelle lascivie carnali'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria: Seguiti a beneficio di quelli che sono stati devoti della compagnia del Sant. Rosario* (Venice: Bernardo Giunti, 1587), fol. 11^v.

¹⁵⁷ 'una scudella bruttissima nella quale era cibo delicatissimo'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 11^r.

¹⁵⁸ 'Madonna volentieri lo mangiarei: ma la scudella è tanto brutta, che la mi toglie tutto lo appetito'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 11^r.

¹⁵⁹ 'Et Maria disse sappi figliuolo mio che quelle cose, che tu mi offerisci del Rosario sono ottime: ma il tuo cuore è troppo fetido, e puzzolente col quale tu me lo offerisci'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 11^r.

¹⁶⁰ 'lungo tempo orò il Rosario della gloriosa Verg. Maria cō grā atētionē'. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 11^r.

disengaged from whom they were directed. Eventually, she had taken to saying the Rosary ‘with a distracted mind, with a wandering heart, in great rush and hastily’.¹⁶¹ Like the previous miracle, the one which helped to reignite the nun’s devotional passion was not invoked by her. Indeed, she seemed blissfully unaware that her prayers had lost the faith and devotion that made fingering the Rosary beads more than keeping her hands busy while she prayed empty words. The Virgin Mary appeared to the nun and quite simply said ‘you say my Rosary and you don’t do what I tell you, because your heart is not in it, as it used to be’.¹⁶² Upon receiving the disappointing evaluation of her prayer life, the nun reevaluated her devotion, and restored the feeling to her spiritual exercises.

The authors of these miracle compendia promised their readers that the stories would touch their affections and result in spiritual growth. The moment in which a Catholic realised how far their faith had lapsed was often framed in affective terms. In the Rosary collection, we read of a Florentine woman who, following miraculous self-revelation, was converted to the life of a good Catholic. We have no date for the event, but the story focussed on a woman named Madonna Benedetta whose spiritual life was changed by hearing the preaching of Saint Dominic (1170-1221). Benedetta was a spoilt child ‘greatly loved by her parents’ but ‘without any correction she was left to every freedom’.¹⁶³ Benedetta tried to set her life back on course, praying devoutly, and avoiding the sin that caused her to stray from the path of faith. She soon relapsed, and ‘worse than before, she immersed herself in different carnal sins’.¹⁶⁴ Desperately seeking to set her life straight, Benedetta made tearful confession to Saint Dominic whom she had heard preaching and he prescribed a process of contemplative

¹⁶¹ ‘col cuore vagabōdo; & in molto fretta, & festinātemente’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 11^r.

¹⁶² ‘tu dici il mio Rosario, e nō fai quello, che ti dica, imperoche il tuo cuore nō è in te; come soleva essere’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 11^r.

¹⁶³ ‘essendo fanciulla, da suoi parenti fu tanto amata che senza alcuna correptione fu lasciata in ogni sua libertà’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 12^r.

¹⁶⁴ ‘peggio che prima si immerse in diversi peccati carnali’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 13^r.

prayer, warning Benedetta that ‘in these prayers, wholesomely occupy your heart’.¹⁶⁵

Benedetta did as instructed and surely, as soon as her affections were applied to the process of repentance, the Virgin Mary appeared to her wayward daughter. The Virgin spoke clearly to the state of Benedetta’s soul saying, ‘you have committed infinite grave sins, and you have hardly grieved in order to have forgiveness’.¹⁶⁶ Coming face to face with the reality of just how far she had fallen, Benedetta was distraught: ‘these words entered into Benedetta’s heart like lances that passed through’.¹⁶⁷ She was struck silent by the revelation as ‘hearing these things, Benedetta, full of tears, was not able to speak or respond’.¹⁶⁸ The emotional blow was enough to ensure that she didn’t stray from the path of devotion again.

Emotional engagement was central to both true devotion and contrition. Without it, wayward Catholics remained separate from God, even if they thought they continued to perform outward religious actions. This notion framed the story of a woman from Holland told in the same collection. The woman was described as a ‘great sinner’ who ‘was reduced to desperation, in the space of twenty-four years, she had not made confession because she did not believe that she could achieve forgiveness’.¹⁶⁹ She eventually sought resolution for her religious angst by receiving confession from a priest who ‘objected to her desperation’.¹⁷⁰ Instead, he encouraged her to channel her emotion into prayer, the Rosary to be exact. The woman tried and failed to tap into the affective devotion necessary to relieve herself of her

¹⁶⁵ ‘in queste orationi occupassino salubremente il cuor suo’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, 13^r.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Et hai fatto infiniti peccati gravissimi, e quasi niente ti sei afflitta per havere la perdonanza’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 14^r.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Queste parole entrono nel cuore di Benedetta come lancia che passarono’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, fol. 14^r.

¹⁶⁸ ‘udite queste cose Benedetta piena di lagrime non poteva parlare ne rispondere’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 14^r.

¹⁶⁹ ‘gran peccatrice [...] Costei ridotta in disperatione, per spatio di anni 24 non si era confessata, perche non credeva potere cōseguir perdonanza de’suoi gran peccari’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 26^v.

¹⁷⁰ ‘gli opponeva la sua disperatione’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 27^r.

guilt, praying for three days but ‘not feeling any contrition or scruples in herself’.¹⁷¹ Without the affections, the prayers attracted no sympathy from heaven and off again she went to the same priest to report that ‘she found neither consolation nor devotion’ in his spiritual directive.¹⁷² He gave her the same advice and the woman turned herself once again to prayer. This time, the prayer worked, and ‘contrition filled her soul, that it seemed to her as if would break her heart’ and she finally received the forgiveness she so desperately sought.¹⁷³ As with the previous examples, the heart, or more accurately, the affective engagement of the heart in the devotional act, was an essential condition for encounter with the sacred. Once the devotee applied their religious emotions to the situation, spiritual transformation occurred.

Niccolò Laghi’s 1597 *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento* also made a strong case for the connection between affectivity, the miraculous, and Catholic devotion. In fact, he dedicated an entire chapter in the second part of his compendium to miracles involving ‘the great sweetness felt by those devoted to the Host in revering it’. Unlike the cases analysed from the 1587 Rosary collection above, Laghi’s chapter, with the exception of one entry, did not even feature lapses of faith on the part of Catholics that needed sacred intervention. Instead, the chapter focused on short descriptions – two or three sentences in most cases – that captured the moment of miraculous affective connection with the sacred bestowed upon those who were devout to the Most Holy Sacrament. Particularly striking in these stories is how they framed the moment of devotion in terms of embodied emotion that engaged the physical, spiritual, and affective faculties of the recipients. Laghi’s purpose was to capture the moment of sacred encounter to encourage a similar affective engagement with the Holy Sacrament in his readers.

¹⁷¹ ‘non sentendo alcuna contritione, ò compuntione’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 27^r.

¹⁷² ‘non si trovava alcuna consolatione, ne devotione’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 27^r.

¹⁷³ ‘contritione [...] fu ripiena l’anima sua, che gli pareva che il suo cuore si dovesse spezzare’. Anonymous, *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine*, fol. 27^r.

The first case compiled by Laghi focussed on the Blessed John of Alvernia. The description told that upon receiving communion, the Blessed John ‘lost his senses in such a way as if his entire soul for that high mystery liquified’.¹⁷⁴ In another case, Elzèar of Sabran, Count of Ariano and tertiary of the Franciscan Order (1285-1323) took communion and ‘felt in his mouth a perfect sweetness over every other liquor’.¹⁷⁵ In other cases, the miraculous sweetness tasted and felt by communicants overcame the entire body. A case in point is the entry on an unnamed priest who upon receiving the sacrament ‘felt in his mouth, and his entire body an incomparable sweetness’.¹⁷⁶ The encounter was ineffable as ‘he would never be able to express it, nor assess it with the intellect’ as the miracle could only be experienced through affectivity.¹⁷⁷ The miraculous sweetness contented recipients, as in the case of Saint Christina who upon ingesting the host ‘felt great sweet taste, that the body took great strength, and the soul miraculous happiness’.¹⁷⁸ These examples focused on the spirituality of beatified and canonised individuals, but laypeople too featured in the chapter as in the case of a good man led astray who turned to the path of devotion following the miraculous transformation of his soul. This longer example focused on

a soldier named Boaro, a generous man [...] who conversed with bizarre people from whom he had learned many bad manners, he didn’t listen to the preachers but the charlatans [...] and all his practice was with people of bad customs. [...] he took communion and his soul softened in devotion [...] that he tasted an unusual sweetness, of that fact, he burned more to take the most holy communion, which made

¹⁷⁴ ‘che gli mancarono i sensi in modo tale, come se la sua anima in tutto per quello sì alto misterio si liquefacese’. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 220.

¹⁷⁵ ‘si sentiva nella proprio bocca una soavità perfettissima sopra ogn’altro licore’. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 221.

¹⁷⁶ ‘si sentisse in bocca, e’n tutto l’corpo una incomparabile dolcezza’. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 222.

¹⁷⁷ ‘no’l havrebbe potuto mai isprimere, ne col’intelletto stimar’. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 222.

¹⁷⁸ ‘sentiva tanto soave gusto, che’l corpo ne pigliava gran forza, & l’anima mirabil allegrezza’. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 222.

the delicate flavour grow much more, in such a manner that he did not know what to compare such a sweetness.¹⁷⁹

Through these examples, Laghi made a strong case for the entanglement of mind, body, and spiritual affection in relation to the Holy Sacrament. While most Catholic laypeople did not take communion at the same frequency as the beatified and canonised people that most of these short entries focus on, it was a central act of devotion. Miraculous feeling, through sweetness and ineffable happiness served as the proof of the sacrality of the host. In compiling these accounts, Laghi was offering lay readers the opportunity to read about the miraculous transformation that could occur in their own souls upon receiving communion. Laghi imagined that his work would be of practical use to Catholics, especially parents educating their children in the faith and members of Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. These miracles therefore had a clear didactic function and aimed to instil in their readers the importance that an actively engaged heart played in the process of sacramental observance. Laghi's book indeed dealt with the lofty matters related to the Holy Sacrament and salvation, but it was also intended to be a practical work to which Catholic people could put to use in their devotional lives.

The miracles analysed in this section brought the state of the Catholic soul to the fore. Primarily, the 'outcome' of these miracles was the transformation of the devotional life of the recipient. The miracle stories that perhaps most clearly bring the battle to save Catholic souls to the centre of the miracle narrative are, however, concerned with the last moments of life, when either heaven or hell might claim custody of it. Silvano Razzi's 1587 *Miracoli della*

¹⁷⁹ 'un soldato nomato Boaro, huomo generoso [...] conversava con persone bizzare, delle quali n'havea imparate molte male creanze, non udiva i predicatori, mà i ciarlatani [...] & tutta la sua pratica era con persone mal costumate [...] si comunicò, & talmente gl'intenerò l'animo nella divotione [...] che si comunicò senti una dolcezza insolita, del qual fatto tanto piu s'infervorò di frequētar la santissima comunione, il che facendo tanto più crescevale il delicato sapore, di maniera che non sapea a che paragonare una tale soavità'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, pp. 222-23.

gloriosa Vergine featured several such stories in the second part of the collection. In these tales, death, a natural phase in the Catholic lifecycle, is framed in terms of the matter of salvation. Again, devotional and sacramental culture are key to these miracles, as is the affective devotion of the Catholic whose soul is in peril. In these miracles, the body is not often saved, but through spontaneous sacred intervention, Catholics received salvation for their immortal souls. On the whole, the miracle genre analysed in this section of this chapter have received far less attention than those concerned with ‘everyday’ life which, while undoubtedly concerned with devotion, tended to emphasise the relief of earthly pain or suffering. Writing on Giovanni Felice Astolfi’s Marian compendium, also studied in this chapter, David D’Andrea has touched on the relationship between Catholic people, salvation, and miracle culture. D’Andrea comments that stories in that collection focussing on the release of souls from Purgatory spoke to the continued role of the Virgin Mary as mediatrix at a time when her role in the celestial hierarchy was being diminished by Protestant Reformers.¹⁸⁰ To be sure, the salvation-related miracles to be analysed here affirmed key aspects of Catholic soteriology – especially the importance of receiving the necessary sacraments before dying. Apart from this general point, there was little in Razzi’s compilation that was as reactionary as Astolfi’s. Instead, the stories were far more concerned with instilling in Catholic readers an affective understanding of the power of miracles to save their immortal soul. As with the examples above, these also offered straightforward examples of what they needed to bring to the table in a devotional sense if they hoped to benefit from the kind of miracles that they read about towards the end of their own lives.

Salvation miracles often captured the drama accompanying the end of life in various situations. In one, Razzi tells of a thief condemned to die. Despite his disregard for the law,

¹⁸⁰ David D’Andrea, ‘Miracles: An Inconvenient Truth’, in *A Linking of Heaven and Earth: Studies in Religious and Cultural History in Honour of Carlos M.N. Eire*, ed. by Emily Michelson, Scott K. Taylor, and Mary Noll Venables (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 67-82 (pp. 78-79).

the thief maintained a simple devotion to the Virgin Mary which caused her to appear to him the evening before his execution. Mary told her wayward devotee that ‘I have prayed to my son for you until the end that you convert from your sins, and he has given you this grace, that before your death you will be able to say five words, which will free you from your sins’.¹⁸¹ At the moment before his execution, the condemned

gave to God great contrition, and inestimable sorrow and penance for his sins. In that contrition, he said with great devotion, and with much affection of the heart the five words [...] ‘Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori’ (God, be merciful to me, a sinner). For this, he was soon reconciled from God and so, received salvation.¹⁸²

Another example following shortly after focussed on the miraculous salvation of a female sinner. The lukewarm Catholic ‘did no other good in the pace of her life, except that every day she visited [a statue] of the Virgin Mary and made reverence with the Angelic salutation’.¹⁸³ As in the case of the condemned thief, this simple devotion was enough to attract heaven’s gaze when the woman came to the end of her life. She too was overcome by contrition as the Devil’s agents were ready to pluck her soul from her body and conduct it to hell. The woman cried out ‘Lady, Queen, and Our Sweet Mother, still I have done no good, nevertheless I am confident in your mercy, and I commend my spirit to you’.¹⁸⁴ The words were said ‘with the greatest affection, and with much faith’ causing the demons to flee,

¹⁸¹ ‘ho pregato il figliuolo mio per te a fine, che ti converta da tuoi peccati: & egli ti ha fatto questa gratia, che innanzi alla tua morte ti darà potere parlare cinque parole, le quali da i tuoi peccati ti libereanno’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, p. 135.

¹⁸² ‘gli diede il Signore Dio una gran contrition, e dolore inestimabile, e pentimēto de’ suoi peccati. Nella quale contritione, disse con grandissimo divotione, e cō molto affetto di cuore le cinque parole del Publicano Evāgelico, ‘Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori’. Per le quali fu subito riconciliato con Dio, e così salvo’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, p. 136

¹⁸³ ‘laquale niun altro bene fece mai in tutto lo spacio di sua vita, se non che ogni giorno visitava MARIA Vergine, e le faceva riverenza con la salutation Angelica’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, p. 160.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Signora, Reina, e Madre, nostra dolcissima, anchor che io non habbia fatto mai alcun bene, nondimeno molto confiso nella vostra misericordia, e vi raccomando lo spirito mio’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, p. 160.

denied the soul of the sinful woman.¹⁸⁵ In both of the salvation miracles, devotion was not absent in either the lives of the thief or the sinful woman. In fact, it was the glimmer of faith that punctuated consistent patterns of sin that served as the ‘credit’ needed to get the attention of the Virgin Mary. The miracle of salvation, however, could not occur until these devotions became empowered by affection. In both cases, the miraculous intervention only takes place following contrition and the greatest devotion that is not simply performed but felt in the spiritual affections of the Catholic heart. In this sense, the miracle stories dealing with the Catholic soul gave readers clear instructions on how they could achieve the same degree of proximity to the sacred in their own devotional lives.

‘Counter-Reformation’ miracle books? Adapting miracle narratives to the times

A recipient of a miracle usually came off better for their brush with the sacred. But it was equally plausible that one might end up on the receiving end of divine ire too, especially when heresy was involved. We have seen in this chapter that the Virgin Mary was a doting mother, who could gently set her children back on the path of devotion if they were to wander. But she could also be stern, and discipline her children if need be. The ambiguity of the miraculous exhibited by icons that could harm as well as help has been demonstrated by Michael P. Carroll in his aptly-titled study *Madonnas That Maim*.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the trope of the punitive Mother of God was no Tridentine invention and had a long tradition in medieval Catholicism.¹⁸⁷ God too could show patience and mercy if those who had fallen into heresy

¹⁸⁵ ‘e dette queste parole [...] con grandissimo affetto, & con molta fede’. Razzi, *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, p. 160.

¹⁸⁶ Michael P. Carroll, *Madonnas that Maim: Popular Catholicism in Italy since the Fifteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁷ On the pre-Reformation tradition of Marian punitive miracles, see Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 228-242. On punitive miracles more generally, see Gábor

were willing to rectify their errors. Of the authors of the miracle books analysed in this chapter, Niccolò Laghi and Giovanni Felice Astolfi especially, were keenly concerned with contemporary religious controversy. Earlier in this chapter I highlighted the preponderance of miracles stories that dealt with Catholic-Protestant relations, usually resulting in the punishment of the latter. The shift of emphasis relating to iconoclasm was not unique to Venetian or indeed Italian miracle books. Philip Soergel notes that the trope of threatened shrines was adapted to the needs of Catholic authors. Stories which frequently cast Jews as aggressors soon featured Protestants playing similar roles reflecting the emergence of a new enemy of the Catholic faith.¹⁸⁸ The frequency of production of these stories in texts also increased in Bavaria between 1500-1700 in light of the challenges posed by Protestant iconoclasts there.¹⁸⁹ Miracle compendia printed in Venice did not relate to specific shrines, but their clerical authors also shaped their stories to emphasise the threat posed to Catholic people and belief by Protestant heretics. This development helps us to understand the malleability of the culture of the miraculous and how books of this genre could be used to ignite faith in Catholics in the contexts of schism and reform.

The miracle compendia under study here were innovative in form and language, opening up the culture of the miraculous through print to a wider lay readership than before. But how far were they, and miracle-related literature more generally, shaped by contemporary debates about the miraculous stimulated by the Protestant and Catholic reform movements? The other compendia studied here push back against the notion that the culture of the miraculous was primarily used as anti-Protestant polemic in the post-Tridentine era.

Klaniczay, 'Miracoli di punizione e maleficia', in *Miracoli: dai segni alla storia*, ed. by Sofia Boesch Gajano and Marilena Modica (Rome: Viella, 2000), pp. 109-135

¹⁸⁸ Philip Soergel, 'Spiritual Medicine for Heretical Poison: The Propagandistic Uses of Legends in Counter-Reformation Bavaria', *Historical Reflections*, 17.2 (1991), 125-149 (pp. 130-31). On Christian perceptions of Jews as iconoclasts, see Robert C. Stacey, 'From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ', *Jewish History*, 12.1 (1998), 11-27.

¹⁸⁹ Soergel, 'Spiritual Medicine for Heretical Poison', p. 129.

While the cautious accentuation of miracles was indeed enshrined in the decrees of Trent, the authors of miracle books did not rely on the sense of urgency fuelled by inter-confessional conflict to market their texts to readers. Indeed, for Silvano Razzi, author of the *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria* that was first printed in 1576, and the compiler of the anonymous *Miracoli della Sacratissima Vergine Maria* of 1587, the question of heresy is barely raised. Neither the addresses to the reader, nor the dedications, or other prefatory material expressed concern with heterodoxy despite both being published during intense junctures of the Reformation. Instead, Razzi and the anonymous compiler pitched their works in terms of the spiritual benefits that reading about miracles could impart to their Catholic readers irrespective of the confessional context. Even in the miracle stories that both works contained, instances of heresy are minimal, and represent a continuation of ‘traditional’ Catholic enemies – Jews and Muslims especially – rather than being shaped to accommodate the new threat of the Protestant heretic. The absence of direct reference to Protestantism in these particular works is significant as it tells us something broader about the way that the culture of the miraculous was intended to work in Catholic lives. The value of miracles did not depend on their ability to refute Protestant criticism. Rather, miracles could nourish the Catholic soul and help to deepen their voluntary and independent devotional lives. Yet, the challenges posed to Catholicism by the Protestant Reformation also manifested in the miracle compendia printed in Venice.

Indeed, both the reforming Catholic Church and Protestant Reformers made use of the press in their defence of their respective versions of ‘proper Christianity’. For the former, increased production of miracle books corresponded to intense junctures of religious debate and reform. In the cases of some authors, we need not search hard for clear ‘Counter-Reformation’ thinking. By this I mean direct invocations of the Tridentine decrees and engagement with the specific challenges posed by different branches of Protestantism that

might indicate more reactionary methods and motives in printing. Yet, other authors like Silvano Razzi were less explicit in the framing of their works in relation to the pressing questions of the day. As in the case of the anonymous Rosary collection, even the general theme of heresy was not important to narratives, notwithstanding this devotion being promoted in this period at the level of the papacy. The overall concern in those miracles is the state of the Catholic soul. But even in these cases, the compendia studied here reflect at least the ambiguous attitude of the post-Tridentine Church to the culture of the miraculous through the careful attention to citing sound Catholic sources that I raised in the first section of this chapter. Some authors, Niccolò Laghi and Giovanni Felice Astolfi precisely, however, were far more upfront about how contemporary religious controversy shaped their approach to writing about miracles.

Neither Laghi nor Astolfi shied away from the very real threat that Protestantism posed to the Catholic Church and its conception of the sacred. In fact, short of saying it outright, both authors seem to have decided to compile their works as responses to the Protestant Reformation's attack on the Catholic culture of the miraculous. In both his *Historia universale* of 1624 and his earlier *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* of 1609, Venetian cleric Giovanni Felice Astolfi aligned his work with the priorities of the post-Tridentine Church. In the former, the authors' dedication to the Virgin Mary lauded her as the 'Expunger of all infernal protest, Exterminator of all heresies, and most powerful help of Christians [...] and of the Church triumphant'.¹⁹⁰ Astolfi was particularly forthcoming when it came to explaining his motive for writing. In addition to the address to the reader, which emphasised the devotional reasons for writing, he composed in his *Historia universale* a dedication to the General Father of the Church of San Salvatore in Venice, Don Alfonso

¹⁹⁰ 'Espugnatrice di tutte le Protestà Infernali, Esterminatrice di tutte l'Herésie, Ausiliatrice Potentissima de' Christiani [...] & della Trionfante Chiesa'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, a2.

Bavosi. In this dedication, Astolfi outlined his reasons for producing the *Historia universale*. It was primarily the threat of heresy which occupied this elaboration. Astolfi wrote that ‘we live in a time of grace’ where God performed miracles ‘to honour, arm, and validate his Church and to differentiate it from the heretics’.¹⁹¹ Astolfi also directly referenced the ‘Holy Council of Trent’ and its affirmation to the culture of the miraculous as the institutional proof of the relevance of miracles to upholding Catholic culture at this time.¹⁹² As a canon regular of the church of San Salvador in Venice, Astolfi was of course well-positioned to grasp the doctrinal and confessional challenges posed by Protestant reformers.

Astolfi’s ‘reason for writing’ left no doubt that he saw vernacular miracle stories being available for a wide Catholic readership as an important line of defence against heresy. He directly contrasted the Catholic’s access to the sacred through the miraculous with the separation from the holy that was a sure sign of being a heretic. He wrote ‘that if the followers of Luther and Calvin, of the infinite miracles worked by God in grace of Our Lady and of the saints, were to have only one, to be able to support their bad opinions with it, they would claim the most solemn triumph’.¹⁹³ The miracles in his compendium, therefore, were clear marks of difference between the Catholics blessed by the Virgin Mary, and the Protestants unable to present signs of divine favour to uphold their heresy. Astolfi stands out amongst the authors whose compilations are studied in this chapter as the one most engaged with the controversies of the Protestant Reformation, at least as far as their miracle books show. In his earlier compendium of 1609 on the Most Holy Cross, he similarly framed his attention to miracle culture in relation to the threat of Protestantism. In this work Astolfi used

¹⁹¹ ‘Noi [...] viviamo nel tempo della Gratia [...] di honorare, munire, & validare la chiesa sua, & differenziarla de gl’Heretici’. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, b3.

¹⁹² ‘comanda per via del Sacro Concilio di Trento’. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, b3.

¹⁹³ ‘Che se i seguaci di Lutero, & di Calvino, dell’infinito dei Miracoli operati da Dio in gratia di N. Signora, & de’ Santi, potessero haverne, ò caverne un solo, per potere con esso fiancheggiare le maladette opinion loro, pretenderebbono solennissimo trionfo’. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, b3.

the address to highlight the danger to the Catholic faith that Protestants posed in specific places in Europe and further afield. Astolfi warned that

It is true that in some realms and provinces one has to proceed very cautiously [...] in exercising religion. But free for the greater part are Poland, Bohemia, Germany, Flanders, and nearly all of France. All of Italy, and Spain, like the islands and dependent states, live according to the Gospel. So is all of America and Asia for the greater part. Good parts of Egypt left old errors, and a few of them came to the bosom of the Holy Church.¹⁹⁴

In both his *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* of 1609 and his *Historia universale* of 1624, Astolfi demonstrated his awareness that knowing about miracles was an effective way to stimulate piety amongst Catholics in the face of Protestant heresy. Again, Astolfi favoured specificity citing ‘the Lutherans [and] Beza, bannerman of the Calvinists’ as the chief enemies of the faith.¹⁹⁵ He was without doubt the most reactionary writer in terms of how he clearly framed his compendia in relation to contemporary confessional conflict, but Niccolò Laghi also demonstrated keen engagement with these issues in his own work. Laghi’s *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento* dealt with one of the most contested doctrinal issues for both Catholics and Protestants. Before turning to the narratives of miracles that he had compiled Laghi outlined ‘false opinions of the heretics on the Most Holy Sacrament’. Here he summarised in simple terms the erroneous positions that heresiarchs from the prophet Muhammad to Martin Luther. In total, Laghi offered summaries of thirty-six heretical positions. All but two (Martin Luther’s being one) consisted of one or two sentences. The entry on Luther, by contrast, occupied much more of Laghi’s considerations covering one and

¹⁹⁴ ‘E vero, che in alcuni Reami, e Provincie si ha da procedere molto cautamente, [...] nell’essercitio della Religione. Ma liberi per ciò è la maggiore parte della Polonia, Boemia, Germania, Fiandra, e presso che tutto la Francia. Tutta l’Italia, e la Spagna, come le Isole, e Stati dipendenti vivono secondo l’Evangelio. Così tutta l’America, & dell’Asia la maggiore parte. Buona parte dell’Egitto, lasciati i vecchi errori, e venuta pochi di sono, al grembo di Santa Chiesa’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, a4.

¹⁹⁵ ‘i Luterani [...] Beza alfiero de’ Calvinisti’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, a4.

a half quarto pages and, incidentally, being the first heretical position to be dealt with in the list. So, although Laghi was less upfront than Astolfi when it came to his reasons for compiling his work, he was engaged with the Protestant threat, and clearly thought that Holy Sacrament-related miracles were a powerful answer to doctrinal challenge.

Miracles involving the punishment of Protestant heretics starkly contrasted with those that dealt with the protection of Catholics, especially in the case of the family unit. In these cases, we see how the irreverence of particular family members led to the destruction of the family unit as a whole. Niccolò Laghi's *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento* included one such example that unfolded in Gouda, Holland in 1534. The events in Gouda began with an ailing Catholic man who ran afoul of a group of bullying and irreverent Calvinists led by one named Hermano Alburisch. Laghi told that 'a Catholic being gravely ill, certain Calvinist heretics jokingly said, "sooner, more easily, and with less pain he would die if first he saw mass".'¹⁹⁶ Fulfilling their cruel joke, the Calvinists donned the sacerdotal habits and vestments – 'one of the deacon, and the other of the sub-deacon'.¹⁹⁷ The gang then began to sing an irreverent version of the mass including a hurried rendition of the Agnus Dei.¹⁹⁸ Once satisfied with their performance, the heretics returned to their respective homes. The leader of the group Hermano returned home to his wife who had been in the throes of childbirth, but nonetheless abandoned by her husband who preferred to go out and torment the ailing Catholic. Hermano met a friend on his way home who told him that his wife had given birth to two sons. Hermano 'had such a new joy, but immediately on arriving home, he turned sad because he found that both of them were dead, and that his wife was in the pangs of death'.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ 'essendoli gravemente amalato un Catholico, certi heretici calvinisti ischernendolo dissero, piu presto, piu facilmente, & con men dolore morrebbe, se prima vedesse messa'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 349.

¹⁹⁷ 'uno di Diacono, & l'altro di Suddiacono'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 349.

¹⁹⁸ 'incominciarono cantar [...] si dice l'Agnus Dei frettolosamente'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 349.

¹⁹⁹ 'di tal nuova n'ebbe allegrezza, mà subito giunto à casa si rivolse in tristezza, perche trovò che amendue erano morti, oltra che insieme la moglie stava ne pendosi dolori della morte'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 349.

Hermano's delight in having mocked the dying Catholic was therefore sharply reversed with the restoration of the Catholic man's health, and the destruction of his own family unit. The emphasis of the miracle was the direct punishment of heresy through the extirpation of the Protestant family in stark contrast with the role of the miraculous in defending, knitting back together, and even creating the Catholic family unit.

Iconoclasm and abuse of the Catholic sacraments perpetrated by Protestant heretics that set a miracle into motion in many of the cases of those involving divine ire. The sacred objects which were central to Catholic liturgy and devotion were subject to the same vulnerabilities as mundane ones. They could be broken, stolen, burnt, and displaced. As Alexandra Walsham has suggested for England, the waves of iconoclasm that swept England during the Henrician Reformation offered Protestants a 'personal experience of the desacralization of the physical world'.²⁰⁰ Catholic Italy was not subject to the same violence that characterised iconoclasm in England, but the English context does, however, evidence the sheer power that the question of the sacrality of things had to shape inter-confessional Christian relationships. Unsurprisingly therefore, Catholic authors used their works to defend the relationship between the culture of the miraculous and sacred things. In a sense, these stories were textual antidotes to literal threats mounted against Catholic materiality in Europe. Margaret Aston has commented that iconoclasts' enthusiasm for repurposing icons and statues for secular purposes was a powerful symbolic act aimed at 'annihilating supposedly immaculate purity by inversion'.²⁰¹ Of course, in the world of Catholic miracle books, inertia was not an option.

Niccolò Laghi's Holy Sacrament miracle book contained a wealth of examples of God's judgement being meted out to Protestants who disrespected, denied, or outright abused

²⁰⁰ Walsham, 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed', p. 507.

²⁰¹ Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 295.

the Eucharist. Miracles of this genre involved the emphasis of the real presence in the communion species, usually the host.²⁰² In one example in Laghi's collection, a Protestant denies the sacrality of the host by maintaining that 'the sacred host is simply blessed bread and is not otherwise the body of Christ'.²⁰³ In the same moment 'a very ugly spider came down from its web to his pessimal mouth and hastily entered it'.²⁰⁴ Those in attendance viewed the unpleasant intrusion as a sign of divine judgement and proceeded to execute the heretic by burning him at the stake.²⁰⁵ In another example that occurred in Gelderland, Laghi's collection told of a Calvinist heretic who quite literally choked on his words, or at least his breakfast, following a heretical quip regarding the Holy Sacrament. In this case, the Calvinist witnessed the parish priest 'bringing the Most Holy Sacrament to an old, sick man in the square'.²⁰⁶ While eating breakfast in a guesthouse, he joked that he was more likely to swallow the egg in front of him whole than the host was to do anything for the ailing Catholic man. His supposition was put to the test when the whole egg leaped into his mouth and became lodged in his throat. Choking, 'he didn't know what remedy to use, he scrambled for a candlestick 'to try to give rise to the egg'.²⁰⁷ His attempts were useless as he 'turned entirely black, turned his eyes' and died a miserable death as punishment for his heresy.²⁰⁸

Astolfi recounted one such tale that unfolded in Erfurt involving 'a Lutheran preacher, by the name of Giovanni Cusalmero, thinking to deceive the plebians and pointing with his

²⁰² See Steven Justice, 'Eucharistic Miracle and Eucharistic Doubt', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 42.2 (2012), 307-332; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christ: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 108-129.

²⁰³ 'che l'Hostia sacra fosse un semplice pane benedetto, & non fosse altrimenti il corpo di Christo', Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 347.

²⁰⁴ 'à punto una brutissima ragnera scese per diritto filo alla sua pessimale bocca, che dentro frettosamente vi entrò'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 347.

²⁰⁵ 'ciascuno veggendo il risentimento divino [...] fosse abbruciato'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 347.

²⁰⁶ 'portando il Parocchiano [...] il Santissimo Sacramento ad una Vecchio inferma nella piazza'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 351.

²⁰⁷ 'vide una candela [...] con pensiero di far dar luogo all'ovo'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 351.

²⁰⁸ 'divenne tutto nero, rivolse gli occhi'. Laghi, *miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*, p. 351.

finger at the miraculous statute of the Blessed Virgin that was in the church'.²⁰⁹ Seeking to rid the church of Catholic idolatry, the Lutheran vowed that he 'would not go to bed until I have cast that idol out of this church'.²¹⁰ His iconoclastic plan was immediately halted by a visible and terrible miracle worked by God in the presence of the congregation as 'holy fire entered with awe into that finger of his hand, that pointed at the image, and that same night he passed to a terrible death into eternal ardours'.²¹¹ Statues that bled upon receiving iconoclastic blows served as a sign of the sacrality of things, and the bloody splatter that covered the aggressor was usually deemed as fair warning enough. In another story featuring a German Lutheran heretic, the man attacked an image of the Virgin Mary with a sword. While exhibiting the usual sign of blood, the miracle was taken even further to demonstrate the presence of the sacred. In this case, the blood resulting from the attack was used to heal 'the blind, the deaf, the lame and the infirm of every kind'.²¹²

Confronting Protestant heretics was but one way that authors used the culture of the miraculous to engage with the priorities of the Tridentine Church. Giovanni Felice Astolfi stands out amongst the authors whose works are studied in this chapter through his careful consideration of miracles that helped to either facilitate or legitimise Catholic expansion into non-European lands. These miracles cast the Tridentine Church as the 'Church Triumphant' over both Protestant heresy and the infidels and many focussed on the lands targeted by missionaries of new religious orders like the Jesuits.²¹³ One miracle narrated by Astolfi

²⁰⁹ 'In Esordia sucesse [...]. Raggionando un Predicatore Luterano, per nome Giovanni Cusalmero, all'ingannata plebe, & mostrando col dito la statua miracolosa della Beata Vergine, ch'era in chiesa'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 555.

²¹⁰ 'nè anderò à letto, fino ch'io non habbia gittato fuori di questa chiesa quell'idolo'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 555.

²¹¹ 'il fuoco sacro in quel dito della mano, che mostrò l'immagine, & quella stessa notte passò con atroce morte à gli ardori sempiterni'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 555.

²¹² 'ciechi, sordi, zoppi, & infermi di ogni sorte'. Astolfi, *Historia universale*, p. 554.

²¹³ On the reception of Catholic miracles by indigenous people in New Mexico, see Edward W. Osowski, *Indigenous Miracles: Nahua Authority in Colonial Mexico* (Tucson: Arizona, 2010); William B. Taylor, 'Trouble with Miracles: An Episode in the Culture and Politics of Wonder in Colonial Mexico', in *Politics and Reformations: Histories and Reformations*, ed. by Christopher Ocker, Michael Printy, Peter Starenko, and Peter Wallace (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 441-458. On the proselyting and missionary tactics of the Jesuit Order, see

involved the resistance from local religious figures that the Jesuits faced during their attempts to convert the population of Japan to Christianity. In his *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* of 1607 Astolfi told that

In the year 1558 in an island of Japan, an idolatrous priest, which they call “Bonzi” [Buddhist monk] moved by extreme hate of the Christian religion, that was newly born in those lands, greatly laboured to promote sedition against us so that they were the first cut to pieces by the people.²¹⁴

During the attacks on Christian missionaries, a high wooden cross placed in the middle of a churchyard was dashed to the ground. In this case, God’s wrath was tempered by mercy. Those responsible for the destruction of the cross were spared because ‘it did not please the Lord God to punish those idolators with heavenly fire, with thunderbolts, or with other plagues’.²¹⁵ Instead, it pleased God to create an apparition of the Holy Cross in the sky for all to see which Astolfi reasoned allowed that ‘the poor might realise their error in wanting to annihilate that sign, which Heaven and Earth honours’.²¹⁶ In another case, the Catholic culture of the miraculous provided a direct answer to the spiritual resistance posed to Jesuit missionaries by local deities. Again, this miracle unfolded in Japan and featured the same Japanese Buddhist monks who were cast as the aggressors in the previous example. Astolfi described local religious deities as ‘demons in various forms’ who encouraged local people ‘to kill themselves in sacrifice to their idols who were themselves demons’.²¹⁷ The

Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²¹⁴ ‘L’anno 1558, in un’Isola del Giapone, mosso un sacerdote idolatra, di quei che chiamono Bonzi, da stremo odio verso la Religione Christiana, che novellamente in quei Reami nasceva; faticò molto permovere à seditione i Gentili contro di noi, affinche fossero puei primi religiosi tagliati à furore di popolo à pezzi’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 207.

²¹⁵ ‘Non piacque nè anco al Signor Iddio di punire quegl’Idolatri con fiamme celesti, con fulmini, ò con altre piaghe’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 207.

²¹⁶ ‘i miseri s’accogessero del lor errore in voler annihilare quel segno, che il Cielo, e la Terra honora’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 207.

²¹⁷ ‘Fra l’altre cose mettevano lor’ in cuore amazzare se stessi in sacrificio a lor idoli ch’erano i Demonii stessi’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 116.

missionaries answered local religion by planting crosses wherever they went. The result was that the local deities, framed by the Catholics as demons, ‘fell silent’ and became unable to continue to mislead the indigenous people who revered them.

Miracles that served as signs to disprove either heresy or ignorance were not restricted to non-European lands. Some of which unfolded in Europe in jurisdictions that had turned away from Catholicism. Astolfi included one such case that unfolded in Protestant England. In a second case, Astolfi wrote about the miraculous apparitions of the cross which appeared in the skies over England in 1591. In the short recounting, he wrote that ‘three circles appeared in the sky, one great one in the middle and two minor ones at the side’.²¹⁸ Within these circles, resplendent apparitions of the Holy Cross appeared. Although Astolfi’s recounting of the English apparition is very brief, the date he gives as the date of its occurrence is significant. Indeed, the 1580s and 1590s witnessed a hardening in royal policy against the Jesuits in England. Several months after the apparition of the Holy Cross was believed to have occurred, the 1591 royal proclamation denouncing Jesuit seminary priests was promulgated. Anti-Jesuit sentiments in England had been enshrined in law by the English Parliament through the Jesuit Act of 1584.²¹⁹ In the same way that a sacred statue could respond to assault with miraculous blood, the miraculous apparition of the Holy Cross was a sign of the validity of the Catholic worldview in lands where its fundamental doctrines had been replaced by a new version of Christianity.

²¹⁸ ‘sono apparsi nel Cielo tre circoli, l’uno più grande nel mezzo, e due minori dai i lati’. Astolfi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, p. 206.

²¹⁹ On anti-Jesuit legislation in England and the 1591 proclamation specifically see, Victor Houlston, ‘The Lord Treasurer and the Jesuit: Robert Person’s Satirical Responsio to the 1591 Proclamation’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32.2 (2002), 383-401.

Conclusions

Despite the hesitancy exhibited by the reforming Catholic Church, especially during the Council of Trent, this chapter has examined the crucial role that print played in facilitating, encouraging, and shaping Catholic readers' encounters with the miraculous in Venice. Although Trent called for closer regulation of the miraculous, miracles were intended to ignite the devotion of Catholics in this period, and new and updated printed collections widened their access to them. Miracle stories were of course not new to the period of reform. This chapter has drawn attention, however, to important changes in how they could be communicated to Catholics in Venice. As a key centre of print and communication, the Venetian print industry has offered a fruitful lens of analysis through which to understand how religious questions and the priorities of Catholic writers in this period manifested in the options for reading open to the laity.

This chapter has drawn particular attention to the crucial matter of accessing the miraculous through print. I have argued that the culture of the miraculous became more accessible for Catholics in Venice through the production of new and updated miracle compendia. Authors were keen that all interested Catholics, not just those who could read Greek or Latin, could incorporate printed miracles into their devotional lives. The result was accessible and straightforward texts which catered for a literate if not scholarly Catholic reader. Another important theme which I have analysed in this chapter is encounter through print. Reading about miracles provided an encounter with the sacred which involved both the engaged mind and heart. For authors and compilers, the latter was particularly important. While I have not focussed on matters of reception, my analysis of the addresses to the readers, has nonetheless helped to reconstruct the 'imagined reader' in the mind of the author. Authors encouraged readers to take an affective approach to consuming miracle stories, and to expect their inward spiritual lives to be changed in a tangible way as a result.

Miracle compendia offer compelling evidence for how the potential of the sacred to work in Catholic life was conceptualised and promoted in this period of reform. The geographical scope of these books, in addition to the wide range of themes that individual volumes dealt with, were deliberate choices that emphasised the pervasiveness and power of the miraculous. Miracle stories combined everyday life with sudden distress and disruption with a miraculous resolution to emphasise how keenly heaven's eye was fixed upon Catholic life. These matters dealt with intimate portrayals of the breakdown and restoration of family, the administration of divine justice, and the defence of the Catholic faith against those who would do it harm. In this sense, I have shown how miracle stories could be shaped to reflect the concerns of the time, and often reflected the personalities and priorities of their authors and compilers.

Contemporary concerns regarding heresy particularly mattered to some authors and compilers printing their works in Venice. These concerns were not obsolete in the lagoon city despite its ongoing Catholic hegemony. This chapter has, however, called for closer thought about the role that miracles played in nourishing Catholic souls and has considered how these particular tales might have encouraged lay Catholic readers to reevaluate their own spiritual lives. In some cases, such as the 1587 anonymous Rosary miracle collection, publications coincided with broader religious agendas, in this case, Pope Pius V's emphasis on the power of the Rosary in Catholic life following the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 that brought the importance of this devotion to the fore. The focus of the 1587 collection, however, was exclusively the nourishment of the Catholic soul through the Rosary. Scholarship has emphasised that the relief of suffering, often related to everyday issues of health, family strife, material provision, or physical protection, were the primary consequences of a Catholic's encounter with the miraculous. By drawing attention to intangible, spontaneous miracles that dealt with rectifying a Catholic's lukewarm prayer life, securing the salvation of

their souls, or reversing a life of sin, I have emphasised that miracles could encourage a Catholic reader to ponder upon their own interior spiritual life. These miracles dealt with meeting the needs of the soul rather than the body and emphasised the ability of the miraculous to change Catholic life in non-tangible ways.

Miracles were always important to Catholic life in Venice, but these books offered new and accessible points of encounter between the Catholic and the culture of the miraculous. The encounter with the sacred which I speak of did not necessarily mean that the reader had to experience either the strife or miraculous help associated with specific stories. Instead, these books emphasised the transformative power that knowing about miracles had in raising the readers' expectation that the sacred may also work in their own lives. The power of knowing, and the application of the devotional heart into the act of reading, was posited to the reader as a powerful medium to both better understand the role of the miraculous, to develop in their faith, and to become more aware of the ongoing presence of the sacred in their own lives. In sixteenth and seventeenth-century Venice, miracles, books, and faith worked together to transform the Catholic worldview which emphasised the proximity of the sacred world to the everyday.

Chapter 2: Site, History, and Persuasion

Introduction

In 1608 the chaplain to the English ambassador to Venice, William Bedell, complained that he could not move in the lagoon city without colliding with Catholic clutter. At every turn he encountered ‘a multitude of idolatrous statues, pictures, reliques in every corner’ that were placed ‘not of their churches onely, but houses, chambers, shopps, yea the very streets’.²²⁰ But Bedell had to concede that ‘one thing certainly they goe beyond us in: and that is their liberality and cost in the solemn setting forth of their service and adorneing their churches’.²²¹ Bedell’s observation testified to the palpable sense of sacrality that inhered in places that stimulated devotional life in Venice. For Catholics, space and stuff defined everyday religious experience and practice. The city of Venice was a treasure trove of holy relics and miraculous icons that served as the sacral focal points of shrines great and small. Shrines that were humbler in form or origin were no less central to Catholic life in Venice. Indeed, the sacred things that Bedell described as being woven into the very streets of Venice’s urban landscape regularly served the spiritual needs of the laity, as shown by Edward Muir’s evaluation of Venetian *capitelli*.²²² Deborah Walberg has found evidence of 42 miraculous images being venerated in Venice by the first half of the seventeenth century, thirty of which were Marian.²²³ Cities across the Italian peninsular were peppered with shrines which offered

²²⁰ ‘Letter of William Bedell, chaplain to the English Ambassador in Venice, to Adam Newton, Dean of Durham, 1 January 1608’, cited in *Venice: A Documentary History 1450-1630*, ed. by David Chambers and Brian Pullan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 195-196 (p.196).

²²¹ ‘Letter of William Bedell’, p. 196.

²²² Edward Muir, ‘The Virgin on the Street Corner: The Place of the Sacred in Italian Cities’, in *The Renaissance: Italy and Abroad*, ed. by John Jeffries Martin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 279-296; *I capitelli e la società religiosa veneta*, ed. by Lazzaretto Zanolo and A. E. Reato (Vicenza: Istituto per le ricerche di storia sociale e di storia religiosa, 1979).

²²³ Deborah Walberg, ‘The Pastoral Writings and Sacred Artistic Patronage of Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo (1619-1631): A Preliminary Investigation’, *Studi Veneziani*, 64 (2011), 193-224 (p. 213).

Catholic people encounter with the sacred.²²⁴ Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser have further emphasised the power that such simple image-based shrines had in forging devotional identity at the neighbourhood level in Italian cities.²²⁵ Whether great or small, the shrine provided access to a palpable expression of the sacred. As Iain Fenlon puts it, ‘it was there that intercession took place and pardon was received, that good reigned and evil was exorcised’.²²⁶ One need not search far for evidence of the laity’s enthusiasm for shrines in this period. The material offerings, known as ‘ex-votos’, deposited by grateful Catholics formed what Mary Laven has termed an ‘archive of miracles’ that documented everyday encounters with the sacred at shrines.²²⁷ Elizabeth Tingle has emphasised the devotional commitment that gruelling long-distance pilgrimages demanded from the laity, while Charles Zika has recently drawn attention to the affective dimension of early modern pilgrimage shrines.²²⁸ But, long-distance travel was not essential. Local pilgrimage – to a Madonna in the parish church, a saintly relic in a cathedral, or simply to a different part of the city home to a ‘Virgin on the street corner’ was an intrinsic aspect of urban Catholic life.²²⁹ These places had histories, and their histories were key to their role in devotional life in the present.

²²⁴ For an overview of these sites, see Alessandro Vinciotti, *I mille santuari mariani d’Italia illustrate* (Rome: Associazione Santuari Mariani, 1960).

²²⁵ Garnett and Rosser, ‘Miraculous Images and the Sanctification of Urban Neighbourhood’, 729-740. See also Jane Garnett, and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy, from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013). On the relationship between miraculous shrines and Catholic communal identity, see Craig Harline, *Miracles at the Jesus Oak: Histories of the Supernatural in Reformation Europe* (New York and London: Random House, 2003). On the experience of the miraculous icon, see Richard Trexler, ‘Florentine religious experience: the sacred image’, *Studies in the Renaissance*, 19 (1972), 7-41.

²²⁶ Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory, and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale, 2007).

²²⁷ Mary Laven, ‘Recording Miracles in Renaissance Italy’, *Past and Present*, 230.11 (2016), 191-212 (p. 196). On the significance of ex-voto objects in relation to Catholic devotion in this period, see also Megan Holmes, ‘Ex-votos: Materiality, Memory, and Cult’, in *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, ed. by Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 165-188.

²²⁸ Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Sacred Journeys in the Counter-Reformation: Long Distance Pilgrimage in Northwest Europe* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2020); Charles Zika, ‘The Emotional Economy of Early Modern Pilgrimage Shrines: The Case of San Mariazell’, *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 1.1 (2017), 1-28.

²²⁹ On local pilgrimage see James Bugslag, ‘Local Pilgrimages and Their Shrines in Pre-Modern Europe’, *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 2.1 (2005), 1-27.

This chapter examines the renewal of shrines in Venice through an analysis of six printed vernacular ‘shrine books’ published in the city between 1590 and 1675. Four of these books were written by members of the Venetian clergy, one was published by a prominent Venetian confraternity, and one by an author of elusive identity. This chapter addresses two questions: how did Venetian writers attempt to use history to renew shrines and their corresponding relics in Venice? And what might these attempts have meant for how these sites were encountered in everyday devotional life? This chapter argues for the central role that engaging with the past to influence devotional culture in the present played in this process of renewal. In all but one of the cases considered in this chapter, this process of renewal did not feature the physical renovation of shrines. My focus here is on understanding the role that printed histories of these shrines played in securing their role in Venetian devotional consciousness. By examining how the Catholic Church’s broader concern with sacred history in this period manifested in the works of Venetian authors, this chapter examines how these works contributed towards urban devotional renewal by reiterating the sacred authority and devotional relevance of shrines.

I draw attention to the importance that authors placed upon their readerships’ knowledge of specific shrines, their histories, and devotional distinctiveness. I also argue for the perceived need to persuade Catholic people to engage with them through historical argumentation. I show that from the late sixteenth century, Venetian authors exhibited a keen awareness of the role of history in stimulating devotion in the city. These works aimed to both convince the laity to accept the sacred histories of specific sites, and to incorporate them into their voluntary devotional lives in very practical ways. A key concept that this chapter draws upon in relation to these themes is that of the ‘immanent past’ borrowed from cultural anthropology. Anthropologist Kevin Birth has explained that the past can become immanent in the present in a society or culture when memory and perception are applied to a specific

subject. Birth argues that remembering should not be analysed as ‘a means of representing the past, but as a response to the presence of the past’.²³⁰ As such, the process of recollection – textual, oral, individual, or material – create ‘a phenomenological presence of the past’ in the present.²³¹ I explore how the sacred, through the application of history, became immanent in the present of post-Tridentine Venice and heightened the sacrality of important holy sites in the city.

Past and present: The practical uses of history after the Council of Trent

Appealing to history played a central role in the formation of early modern Christian identity on both sides of the confessional divide.²³² Scholars of early modern historiography have emphasised the transformation of practices of research, source evaluation, and writing history in this period. The developments in historical scholarship resulting from the work of Italian Renaissance humanists like Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), Flavio Biondo (1392-1463), and Lorenzo Valla (1405-1457) influenced the approaches of Church historians to the Catholic past.²³³ A vital contribution of humanist thinkers was their call for greater criticism of the sources used to develop interpretations of the past. Lorenzo Valla’s exposure of the Donation

²³⁰ Kevin Birth, ‘The Immanent Past: Culture and Psyche at the Juncture of Memory and History’, *Ethos*, 32.2 (2006), 169-191 (p. 181).

²³¹ Birth, ‘The immanent Past’, p. 181.

²³² Irene D. Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378-1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Stefan Bauer, ‘The uses of history in religious controversies from Erasmus to Baronio’, *Renaissance Studies*, 35.1 (2019), 10-23; Mark A. Lotito, *The Reformation of Historical Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). On post-Tridentine Catholicism’s reckoning with doctrinal certainty and truth, see Stefania Tutino, *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth in Post-Reformation Catholic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²³³ On humanism and the humanist contributions to developing methods of historical research and writing, see Gary Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Donald J. Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin’s Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

of Constantine in 1439 using this critical method is the exemplar par excellence of this new concern with the reliability of written history.²³⁴ History was a powerful tool for the Venetian Republic that had long been used to establish its sacred status – free from Rome, Christian through and through, and, of course, favoured by God.²³⁵ The work of Marin Sanudo (1466-1536), his *Diaries* of 1496-1533 is perhaps the most prominent example of Venetian historical writing. Sanudo's observations recorded both daily life and extraordinary events in the vernacular. The Venetian authors, mostly clerics, studied in this chapter also closely interrogated the past in their works, but their priorities were quite different to humanist writers.

The Catholic Church's own use of history was distinctive, especially during the period following the Council of Trent. Anthony Grafton refutes the prevailing assumption that the early modern Catholic Church 'ignored or rejected' the methodological innovations of Renaissance humanists in its own approach to history.²³⁶ Instead, he shows that what the Church was trying to accomplish with history was fundamentally different. Unlike humanists who emphasised new discovery, history writing after the Council of Trent was about 'proving' pre-existing theses on Catholic governance, doctrine and, above all, continuity. As Grafton puts it, their 'task was not to recreate the past as it really was, but to create a confessional identity' meaning that Catholic writers 'did not want to apply the full range of

²³⁴ On Valla's exposure of the *Donation of Constantine* and its implications for the development of humanist historical methods, see Riccardo Fubini, 'Humanism and Truth: Valla Writes against the Donation of Constantine', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57 (1996), 79-86.

²³⁵ On the Venetian historiographical tradition and uses of the past, see *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*, ed. by Agostino Pertusi (Florence, L.S Olschki, 1970); Lester J. Libby, 'Venetian History and Political Thought after 1509', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 20 (1973), 7-45; Thomas E. A. Dale, 'Inventing a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice ca. 1000-1300', *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 48 (1994), 53-104; Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Monique O'Connell, 'Memorialising Conspiracy and Unrest: Venetian Historical Writing at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century', in *Popular Politics in an Aristocratic Republic: Political Conflict and Social Contestation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Venice*, ed. by Maartje van Gelder and Claire Judde de Larivière (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 45-68.

²³⁶ Anthony Grafton, 'Church History in Early Modern Europe: Tradition and Innovation', in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. by Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 3-26 (p. 5).

new scholarly tools that the humanists had forged'.²³⁷ Indeed, Giuseppe Antonio Guazzelli has analysed Cardinal Cesare Baronio's (1538-1607) use of history writing to emphasise that history had 'direct relevance to the church-building programme of the Counter-Reformation Church'.²³⁸ He nonetheless shows that Baronio made references to contemporary schemes of chronology only when 'it directly served his narrative of early Church history'.²³⁹

Key to the revival of shrines through print in Venice was the Catholic conviction that engaging with the past could shape devotion in the present. Simon Ditchfield has shown that sacred history was not solely concerned with equipping the Catholic Church with the answers to Protestant criticisms via assertions of unbroken continuity from the Apostolic age. Instead, Ditchfield emphasises the role that history played in bringing about Catholic renewal. Like Grafton, Ditchfield argues that despite Catholic historians' 'historical, philological, numismatic, and archaeological bravura when examining both manuscript and material evidence', they did not claim a detachment from their subjects of study.²⁴⁰ Indeed, Ditchfield credits post-Tridentine Catholic authors with 'carrying out a quiet revolution in historical scholarship' resulting in 'a comprehensive census of the sacred'.²⁴¹ Expressions of post-Tridentine history writing, including the shrine books I examine here, were essentially concerned with providing persuasive historical arguments for things that were already believed. In this sense, Ditchfield argued for the 'practical uses' to which this approach to

²³⁷ Grafton, 'Church History in Early Modern Europe', p. 7.

²³⁸ Giuseppe Antonio Guazzelli, 'Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church', in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. by Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 52-71 (p. 64).

²³⁹ Guazzelli, 'Cesare Baronio', p. 64. On Baronio's adoption of humanist methods see also Riccardo Fubini, 'Baronio e la tradizione umanistica. Note sul un libro recente', *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 20 (1990), 147-159. On the issue of authenticity in relation to Baronio's scholarship see Katrina B. Olds, *Forging the Past: Invented Histories in Counter-Reformation Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) and her 'The "False Chronicles," Cardinal Baronio, and Sacred History in Counter-Reformation Spain', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 100.1 (2014), 1-26; Stefan Bauer, *The Invention of Papal History: Onofrio Panvinio between Renaissance and Catholic Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²⁴⁰ Simon Ditchfield, 'What Was Sacred History? (Mostly Roman) Catholic Uses of the Christian Past After Trent', in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. by Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 72-100 (p. 86).

²⁴¹ Simon Ditchfield, 'Giving Tridentine Worship Back its History', *Studies in Church History*, 35 (1999), 199-226 (p. 202).

history was put after Trent to bring about Catholic renewal.²⁴² These uses ranged from using records from the past to ensure proper diocesan governance to ambitious efforts taken by non-Roman Catholic writers to preserve the ‘particulars’ of local devotion through historical research.²⁴³ Ditchfield’s emphasis on the power of the past to enact Catholic renewal, mainly relating to issues of ecclesiastical governance, is an important contribution to the issue of sacred history. This chapter, however, draws closer attention to the consequences that the reforming Catholic Church’s emphasis on history had for everyday devotional life.

Shrine books were immensely practical works designed to stimulate devotion to specific, and often local, sites. Broadly speaking, authors produced these works for two reasons. The first aim was to establish the identity of a newly-founded shrine by fixing it in local devotional culture through print. The second purpose was to breathe new life into older sites deprived of their ideal importance for reasons ranging from iconoclasm to simple loss of local interest. Shrine books were usually produced by clerical writers who often had a vested interest in the site in question. The overwhelming tendency to render these works in the vernacular indicates that the intended readership was a literate if not scholarly layperson. Post-Tridentine shrine books pertaining to new foundations increasingly provided their readers with assurance that sites adhered to the stringent standards of proof required by the Council of Trent.²⁴⁴ Often, such assurances would assert that the correct process of episcopal ratification of a given shrine and its miracles had been duly followed meaning that devotion

²⁴² Ditchfield, ‘What Was Sacred History?’, p. 85.

²⁴³ I refer to Ditchfield’s treatment of the career of Pietro Maria Campi of Piacenza (1569-1649) and his efforts to preserve the liturgical distinctiveness of Piacenza analysed in *Liturgy, Sanctity, and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²⁴⁴ The Council of Trent’s 1563 ruling on the miraculous stipulated that no new miracles, including those emanating from shrines, could be recognised without episcopal investigation and approval. On post-Tridentine processes of ratification, see, Carroll, *Veiled Threats*, pp. 61-64. Celeste McNamara has examined a case of episcopal investigation of a miraculous shrine in rural Padua which resulted in the site and its miracles being declared illegitimate. See her ‘Challenges to Episcopal Authority in Seventeenth-Century Padua’, in *Episcopal Reform and Politics in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Jennifer Mara DeSilva (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2012), pp. 173-193.

to it was blessed with Tridentine orthodoxy. Their appeal to the lettered but not erudite reader and greater availability as printed works distinguished early modern shrine books from their medieval antecedents. Typically, these registers of miracles were physically and intellectually inaccessible for lay Catholics. Maintained in Latin, these manuscripts stayed put at the shrine to which they pertained under the care of the clerics.²⁴⁵ These medieval manuscript sources were nonetheless essential bases early modern printed innovations.

The Venetian shrine books analysed in this chapter conformed to the basic elements highlighted above, with some minor divergences. They all related to long-established shrines, some of which existed in some form in Venice since the early thirteenth century. The purpose of these works was not therefore to integrate new sites into local devotional consciousness. Nor was there any Catholic concern – Venetian or otherwise – about the orthodoxy or authenticity of the sites under study here.²⁴⁶ These were well-established shrines, not subject to the post-Tridentine rigour of episcopal inquisition that sometimes resulted in new sites being prohibited. On the contrary, these authors wanted to breathe new life into Venetian shrines to reverse what they saw as their waning in urban devotional culture or to prevent this from happening in the future. These texts were all rendered in the vernacular and printed in the city. The ideal reader was a devout Venetian interested in understanding their city's sacred history. Most but not all of the six texts analysed here were written by Venetian clerics, although, as I will explore later, some exhibited clear evidence of collaboration with

²⁴⁵ On medieval miracle collections specific to shrines, see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*; Steven D. Sargent, 'Miracle Books and Pilgrimage Shrines in Late Medieval Bavaria', *Historical Reflections*, 13.3 (1986), 455-471; Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*.

²⁴⁶ A notable example of the official prohibition of an unauthorised shrine in Venice is the tomb of the fourteenth-century Contessa Tagliapietra. Deborah Walberg has shown that the Apostolic Visitors in 1581 ordered the suppression of unauthorised devotional activity at her shrine. She also notes that Patriarch Matteo Zane in 1604 banned the transference of her relics to a more lavish tomb because her beatitude has not officially been bestowed by Rome. See her 'Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo and the Search for Venetian Religious Identity in the Waning of the Renaissance', *Celebrazione e autocritica. La Serenissima e la ricerca dell'identità veneziana nel tardo Cinquecento*, ed. by Benjamin Paul (Rome: Viella, 2014), pp. 233-252 (pp. 249-50).

local Venetian laypeople. But what can Venetian shrine books tell us about the broader relationship between history and Catholic devotion in this period?

While scholarship has emphasised the indispensable role that history played in the context of confessional conflict, this chapter foregrounds more subtle uses of the past in the age of Catholic reform.²⁴⁷ These books, part history, part persuasion, and part practical guides, were consciously aimed towards nourishing Catholic urban culture rather than with answering the challenges of heretics. By studying the relationship between printed books, history, and the revival of shrines in Venice, this chapter emphasises the role that relating to the past played in stimulating Catholic renewal in this period without the impetus of confessional conflict. Instead, the writers whose works are analysed in this chapter were mainly concerned with helping lay Catholics better understand how their faith could be activated at shrines in the city. This is not to say that Venetian writers did not exhibit a sense of urgency when it came to the need to renew the sites in question, but this had nothing or little to do with Protestantism directly. For these writers, something, or several things, had gone wrong to be sure. They feared that hallowed shrines had fallen off the devotional radar of the city's Catholic devout or were at immanent risk of doing so. To halt and reverse this decline, these writers turned to history, persuasion, and print.

Decline, loss, and recovery of the shrine's sacred past

Shrines and the objects that imbued them with meaning were always central to Catholic devotional life in Venice. Much more than stone, stuff, and decoration, shrines were places

²⁴⁷ For France, Virginia Reinburg has argued that history was used in relation to shrines to 'repair the ruptures – material and epistemological that the religious wars created'. See her *Storied Places: Pilgrim Shrines, Nature, and History in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Philip Soergel draws attention to the polemical concerns that fuelled that Catholic concern with rehabilitating shrines in confessionally-divided Bavaria in his, 'Spiritual Medicine for Heretical Poison: The Propagandistic Uses of Legends in Counter-Reformation Bavaria', *Historical Reflections*, 17.2 (1991), 125-149. See also Soergel's broader study, *Wondrous in his Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

where sacred immanence was both asserted and encountered. Venice was never subjected to the same iconoclastic assaults that violently deprived other European cities of their sacred shrines. This point notwithstanding, several Venetian writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries identified two problems: a sense of decline that had already happened and needed to be reversed, and the prospect of decline occurring in the future if interventions were not made. This concern about actual or possible decline led them to publish works that aimed to integrate these places more firmly into Venetian devotional consciousness. A sense of foregone or potential loss was cited as the chief motive for producing new histories of shrines in Venice. This framing often foregrounded the spiritual depravation of the laity that was the unhappy consequence of sacred sites somehow losing their prominence. In some cases, writers did not indicate that decline had already happened, but sought to prevent the possibility through their scholarly interventions. Writers saw thoroughly researched history writing as the remedy to forgetfulness that threatened to deprive key holy sites in Venice of their sacred history and contemporary devotional relevance. The works examined here demonstrate that relating to the past played a crucial role in reasserting the sacrality of holy sites in Venice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The fear of the potential of loss and decline manifested D.S.R.'s *Cronichetta* of 1664 which focussed on the history of the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli.²⁴⁸ In this sense, D.S.R.'s book aimed to prevent decline by enhancing the existing position of the miraculous rather than offer a response to decline which had already befallen it. For this writer, the conservation of source material was central to this aim. In the dedication to Suor Maria Prospera Pozzo, Abbess of the Convent of the Madonna dei Miracoli, the author explained that part of his reason for producing his work was his dissatisfaction with the existing records

²⁴⁸ On the history of the Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, see *Santa Maria dei Miracoli a Venezia: la storia, la fabbrica, i restauri*, ed. by Maria Piana and Wolfgang Wolters (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, 2003); Ralph Lieberman, *The Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Venice* (New York: Garland, 1986).

of the church, and the need to produce a new one that could more easily stir up devotion. D.S.R. exhorted the abbess to have his work ‘conserved among the records of the convent, for it to be something worthy to be preserved’.²⁴⁹ The author expressed a clear dissatisfaction with the existing records of the Madonna dei Miracoli church and convent. In describing his source material, D.S.R. wrote of the ‘confused and torn ancient writings that accidentally fell into my hands, which I have reduced here in this form’.²⁵⁰ These old, partial, and damaged sources were deemed an insufficient record by the author who sought to use his printed history to augment devotion to the church and its miraculous Madonna. In his address to the abbess, D.S.R. cited the desire to ‘increase devotion and charity of the faithful towards this church’ as one of his chief motives for writing his work.²⁵¹ The accidental acquisition of an early manuscript history of the site seems, however, to have been the instigating moment for D.S.R.’s project to renew the Madonna dei Miracoli. In describing these circumstances, this author articulated his sense of the value of history in shaping Catholic devotion, and the duty of those in possession of historical sources to share them for the benefit of the faithful.

Having come into my hands a manuscript book, which for two hundred years contained the origin, and foundation of the famous church of the Madonna dei Miracoli with the infinite graces made by that Glorious Virgin in those times, was the cause of augmenting my devotion that I have always had towards that image [...] nor wishing that it to be more secret or hidden, but exposed to the light of the world for universal benefit, & for my devotion, I reduced it in the form that follows to excite all the faithful to frequent and to visit that church of great devotion.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ ‘la facci conservare frà le scritte del Monasterio, per esser cosa degna da esser conservata’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, unpaginated.

²⁵⁰ ‘certe scritte antiche assai confuse, & lacerate, che casualmente sono capitate alle mie mani, quali hò ridotto in questa forma’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, unpaginated.

²⁵¹ ‘l’accrescimento di devotione, & Carità de fedeli verso questa Chiesa’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, unpaginated.

²⁵² ‘E però essendomi venuto alle mani un libro manoscritto, che haverà ducento anni contenente l’origine, e fondatione della celebre Chiesa, della Madonna de Miacoli con le gratie infinite fatte da quella Gloriosa Vergine in quei tempi, qual è stata causa d’augmentarmi la devotione, che hò sempre havuto à quella Santa Immagine, ne volendo, che stia più segreto, & occulto; ma esposto alla luce del mondo à beneficio universale, & per mia

In this case, therefore, the sudden availability of primary source material, and the author's assessment of its inability to properly excite devotion, were the key motivators for his new historical endeavour. The author here expressed a concern that the miraculous icon enshrined in the church could remain 'secret or hidden' if its history was not expounded upon and made available in a new and accessible form. In the same part of the book, D.S.R. spoke of his duty as he understood it to ensure that the history of Madonna dei Miracoli was properly preserved and promoted amongst the people of Venice. For him, history writing was as much an act of devotion as it was of erudition and, perhaps more importantly, something which he saw as his spiritual duty as a good Catholic. On this, D.S.R. wrote that 'Evil do those who have in their secret good things to offer themselves to the glory of God, & useful to their neighbour, & nevertheless keep them secret, and concealed, depriving God of that debt, which is suitable for him, & the neighbour of charity'.²⁵³ It was the fear of cultural loss that shaped D.S.R.'s understanding of the duty of the sacred historian. For him, it was a travesty that those in possession of historical knowledge or sources, such as the manuscript which he came to acquire, might not share them. Not sharing the knowledge which one possessed could lead to cultural loss as 'because alone in them was the secret, which dies with their death'.²⁵⁴ On the other hand, D.S.R. spoke with certainty of the good service of those 'who leave behind those secret virtues which they have received from God or by fortune [...] to posterity'.²⁵⁵ D.S.R. clearly feared that the church to which he was particularly devoted might fall into irrelevance if its history was not properly conserved and promoted. Some authors, however, produced works to redress perceived cultural, devotional, and material loss that had already occurred.

devotione l'ho ridotto nella forma, che segue per eccitare tutti li fideli à essere frequenti à visitar quella Chiesa di grandissimo divotione'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 1

²⁵³ 'Male fanno quelli, che havendo nel lor segreto cose buone da propalarsi à gloria di Dio, & utile del prossimo, & non dimeno le tengono segrete, & celate, privando Iddio di quel debito, che gli si conviene, & il prossimo di carità'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 1

²⁵⁴ 'perchè in loro soli sia stato quel segreto, qual muore con la di lor morte'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 1.

²⁵⁵ 'che lasciano quelle virtu segrete che da Dio, ò per fortuna hanno havuto [...] alla posterità'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 1.

A distinct sense of devotional decline drove efforts of revival at the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, one of Venice's major confraternal organisations, and custodians of a precious Christological relic.²⁵⁶

In 1590 the confraternity published a short vernacular work narrating the miracles worked through the relic of the True Cross which had been in their custodianship since 1369.²⁵⁷ In the address to the reader, Giacomo de Mezi, Guardiano Grande of the Scuola spoke of the clear sense of decline that he feared had befallen the relic in the confraternity's possession. In his address to the reader, de Mezi spoke of the many great miracles that have been worked through different True Cross relics through the ages. He also referenced the monumental cycle of narrative paintings that were commissioned by the confraternity. These narrative paintings hung in the main meeting hall of the confraternity, and depicted some of the most prestigious miracles worked by the cross.²⁵⁸ Giacomo de Mezi lamented, however, that the spiritual significance of these paintings and the miracles that they depicted had gone into steady decline and that there was 'no doubt that from day to day the oldest of them come

²⁵⁶ The *scuole grandi* were six major confraternities in Venice administered by the *cittadini originari*. In the period of this study, the *cittadini* were a demographic that represented around 5% of Venetian people. *Cittadini* ranked below the elite patriciate, a group to which around 4% of Venetians belonged, and above the *popolani*, who accounted for around 90% of the city. The *scuole grandi* played important roles in civic devotion, especially through their charitable activities. On the *scuole grandi*, see Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999); William B. Wurthmann, 'The Council of Ten and the *Scuole Grandi* in Early Renaissance Venice', *Studi Veneziani*, 18 (1989), 15-66. On Venice's highly stratified social structure, see Dennis Romano, *Patricians and Popolani: The Social Foundations of the Venetian Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

²⁵⁷ On the history of the cult of the True Cross in Western Christianity, see Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Stephen Borgenhammer, *How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend* (Stockholm: Bibliotheca Theologiae, 1995); Joe Nickell, *Relics of the Christ* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007); Richard Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts, from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁵⁸ The narrative paintings were completed by various prominent Venetian artists between 1494-1510. On the miracle painting cycle, see John Bernasconi, 'The Dating of the Cycle of the Miracles of the Cross from the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, Venice', *Arte Veneta*, 35 (1981), 198-202; Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 282-86. On the archival patrimony of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, including the relic of the True Cross, see Laura Levantino, *La Scuola grande di San Giovanni Evangelista di Venezia: Inventario dell'archivio antico* (Padua: Marsilio, 2011).

to be wiped out and almost being lost to memory'.²⁵⁹ In this case, the author perceived a clear loss of devotional relevance in the paintings and felt that they no longer served as effective vessels of the True Cross relic's sacred past. This, and Giacomo de Mezi's clear plan to recover the historical and devotional relevance of the miracles in his own time were articulated in the address to the reader:

Nonetheless, the length of time, which consumes all things born resulted that many at the present find themselves not understanding their meaning, nor do they gain sense or interpretation from those [paintings], so that I deem that the only path to excite anew, and to conserve in the minds of men, to contemplation of the mercy of the Divine Majesty, that with such vigorous ways, which seem impossible to human imbecility, has shown his infinite omnipotence with these stupendous miracles [is to] publish them by means of the press.²⁶⁰

Particularly important in Giacomo de Mezi's reasoning here is his sombre assessment of the declining ability of the painting cycle that narrated the history of the relic of the True Cross to stimulate devotion in Venice. The concern with bringing this sacred history back to the fore of the 'minds of men' and integrating them more firmly in local devotional consciousness was the author's primary goal. Moreover, the author's acknowledgement of the power of print in helping to bring about the revival that he desired demonstrates his awareness of the need to engage with new media in order to renew the history of the True Cross relic. Like D.S.R., Giacomo de Mezi was dissatisfied with existing records of his confraternity's sacred history and thus aimed to produce a new and accessible one that

²⁵⁹ 'non è però dubio che di giorno in giorno delli più antichi se ne va annichilando, et perdendo quasi la memoria'. de Mezi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, unpaginated.

²⁶⁰ 'nondimeno la longhezza del tempo, dal quale si consummano tutte le cose parturisse che molti, & infiniti al presente si ritrovano, che non intendono il loro significato, nè sanno da quelli ritrazerne verso senso & interpretatione, così che io repute che la sola strada di eccitar da nuovo, & conserver nelle mente delli huomini, la contemplatione della misericordia della Maestà Divina, che con vie così gagliarde, & che pareno impossibili alla humana imbecillità, si è degnato mostrar la infinita sua omnipotenza con questi stupendissimi miracoli sui il publicarne con il mezzo della stampa'. de Mezi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, unpaginated.

would help to integrate the True Cross's sacred history more firmly into Venetian devotional consciousness. Indeed, assessing the value or otherwise of existing source material was a common practice of these authors. Almost invariably, the result of the assessment was the need to produce updated accounts of the sacred past. In the case of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, the 1590 publication was intended to redress the loss of an earlier, most likely manuscript collection of miracles worked through the True Cross relic.²⁶¹ In this case, the history known to de Mezi was incomplete 'since all have not been written, and even the greater part of those known about remain lost, since by diabolical instigation a book of such memories was already stolen from the Scuola'.²⁶² Despite dealing with incompleteness in his source base, Giacomo de Mezi saw the production of an updated printed history of the True Cross relic as a devotional act. The author explained that, although he could not produce a full account of the miracles and their histories,

for the honor & glory of His Majesty, & greater devotion, & exaltation of said Holy Cross, finding myself for this year in the custody of said Scuola I have resolved to have them printed, so that in this way, by spreading them throughout the city & outside, remains all the more praised, glorified, & sanctified our Lord God, from whom all good comes & proceeds.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Giacomo de Mezi was likely referring to a manuscript register of miracles worked by the True Cross relic. Patricia Fortini Brown has shown that the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista produced an incunabulum of the miracles of the True Cross that possibly served as a prototype for the 1590 edition of *I miracoli della Croce Santissima*. Fortini Brown agrees that the stolen miracle collection referred to by de Mezi in the 1590 publication was likely a manuscript rather than the incunabulum. See her, 'An Incunabulum of the Miracles of the True Cross of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista', *Bollettino dei civici musei veneziani d'arte e di storia*, 27.1 (1982), 5-9

²⁶² 'tutti non sono stati scritti, & la maggiore parte anco di quelli di che ne su fatto nota, resta smarrita, sendo che per instigation diabolica fu già di scuola rubato un libro pieno di cosi fatte memorie'. de Mezi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima*, unpaginated.

²⁶³ 'Però à honor & gloria di sua Maestà, & maggiore devotione, & exaltation di detta Santissima Croce, ritrovandomi per quest'anno [1590] alla custodia di detta scuola ho deliberato di farli stampare, perche in questo modo spargendosi nella città, & fuori, resti tanto più laudato, glorificato, & santificato il nostro signor Dio, dal quale deriva, & prociede ogni bene'. de Mezi, *Miracoli della Croce Santissima* unpaginated.

Like D.S.R., Giacomo de Mezi was dealing with less-than-ideal source material in addition to the absence of original sources due to the theft to which he made vague reference in his work. In the above extract, we see more evidence of the act of history writing being perceived as an act of devotion as well as scholarship. For de Mezi, his new printed history of the miracles of the True Cross both remedied the unsatisfactory state of existing source material by immortalizing the history ‘by way of the press’ and played a key role in disseminating the history of the relic throughout the city of Venice. As with D.S.R.’s account of the Madonna dei Miracoli church, de Mezi’s reasoning demonstrates the practical role that understanding of a site or relic’s sacred history had in facilitating devotion.

Historical obscurity was seen as an impediment to devotional engagement. This notion was articulated clearly by Giovanni Tiepolo in his printed work of 1618 that dealt with a miraculous Marian icon conserved in Saint Mark’s Basilica. The icon, which later came to be known as the Nicopeia, was brought to Venice in the early thirteenth century and was raised to prominence in the seventeenth century when the decision was made to erect a new altar dedicated to it. At the time of writing, Giovanni Tiepolo was not yet Patriarch of Venice. Instead, he held the senior clerical role of *primicerio* of San Marco.²⁶⁴ Tiepolo produced his *Trattato dell’immagine della gloriosa Vergine* on the icon to accompany the physical renewal worked through the new altar. In it, the *primicerio* spoke of the obscurity to which the icon had fallen over time and the consequences of this for Catholic devotion. Tiepolo explained that

²⁶⁴ On the office of the *primicerio* of San Marco see Manlio Miele, *Il primiceriato Marciano: al tramonto della Repubblica di Venezia* (Padua: CEDAM, 2008); Maria Francesca Tiepolo, ‘Presenze e testimonianze dell’archivio primiceriale nell’Archivio di Stato di Venezia’, in *San Marco: Aspetti storici e agiografici*, ed. by Antonio Niero (Venice: Marsilio, 1996), pp. 123-141; Gaetano Cozzi, ‘Giuspatronato del doge e prerogative del primicerio sulla cappella ducale di San Marco: controversie con i procuratori di San Marco “de supra” e i patriarchi di Venezia’, in *Atti dell’Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere, ed arti* (1992-93), pp. 1-69. On Tiepolo’s career as *primicerio* and patriarch see Gaetano Cozzi, ‘Note su Giovanni Tiepolo, primicerio di San Marco e Patriarca di Venezia: l’unità ideale della chiesa veneta’, in *Chiesa, società e stato a Venezia*, ed. by Bruno Bertoli, (Venice: Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1994), pp. 121-50.

We are seeking to remove that obscurity from such a devout image, that from the dust of forgetfulness, and ignorance that has been left to fall upon it [...] we are required to keep it, venerate it, seeking ancient memories, and penetrating them so as to arouse [...] souls, no less than minds to the true cult and devotion of the Queen of Heaven.²⁶⁵

Tiepolo's assessment of the icon's diminished status in Venetian devotional life identifies incremental neglect as the cause. In this extract, he spoke also of the power of 'ancient memories' in helping to renew devotion to the icon in his present. The dual power of the act of remembering is highlighted by him too – 'souls, no less than minds' would be directed towards devotion to the Virgin Mary because of Tiepolo's work on the history of the icon. The *Trattato*, as with the works of D.S.R. and Giacomo de Mezi, emphasised the impediment to devotion that forgetfulness caused in relation to the Marian icon. Tiepolo summarised his aim as follows:

to lift from such a holy image that veil, that over it has long been woven oblivion and ignorance, which has in some part prevented that full knowledge of such rich joy that the Lord has willed, that it be preserved in the sacred treasures which he has so liberally enriched and gifted to this city.²⁶⁶

Tiepolo's reference to knowledge here is significant. Not only did the Marian icon benefit from physical renewal through its new altar, but it benefited also from epistemological rehabilitation through the removal of the 'oblivion and ignorance' that prevented full understanding of its spiritual significance. Tiepolo, in a similar strain to Giacomo de Mezi

²⁶⁵ 'andiamo cercando di togliere da così divota figura quell'oscuro, che dalla polvere della dimenticanza, & ell'inscizia, sopra vi si è lasciato cadere [...] quanto siamo tenuti à ben custodirlo, & venerarlo, cercando l'antiche memorie, & entrando ne penetrarli di quelle, così per destare non pure, ma confermer ancor non meno gli animi, che le menti al vero culto, & divotione della Regina de Cieli'. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ 'solo il levare da così santa imagine quel velo, che di sopra via le hà gran tempo tessuto l'oblivione, & l'ignorantia, per cui si è in qualche parte impedito quel pieno conoscimento di così ricca gioia, che hà voluto il Signore, che si conserve ne' sacri tesori de quali così liberalmente ne hà arricchita & donate questa città'. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 3

understood the central role of understanding the past as an adjunct to Catholic devotion in the present. In both the cases of the relic of the True Cross and the Marian icon at Saint Mark's Basilica, the custodians of these relics perceived sense of decline that had already happened and sought to rectify this with their works. It was not enough to simply see an image or an icon. Instead, these authors understood the need to present an established sacred history for their respective relics and to make these available to the faithful. In the case of Tiepolo's *Trattato*, he saw the process of restoring the icon to Venetian consciousness as a fulfilment of the will of God.

Engaging with the past served as an essential way by which revival could be achieved in the present. The need to redress loss or prevent its occurrence was the guiding principle of the authors looked at thus far. This concern also motivated Giovanni Maria Zilotti to produce his 1666 history of the Holy Nail relic conserved in the Franciscan convent of Santa Chiara. In terms of the loss being addressed, the situation was similar to that being dealt with by the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista. Zilotti sought to restore the history to the convent following the destruction of their archive in a devastating fire of 1574. The authoritative documents which detailed the donation of the Holy Nail relic to the nuns of Santa Chiara in the late thirteenth century were destroyed. How Zilotti engaged with this lack of original source material will be explored shortly. Now, I highlight Zilotti's conception of the role of the historian in the process of restoring sacred history. It is significant that Zilotti was writing over a hundred years after the initial event which led to the destruction of the convent's archival documents. Zilotti's decision to turn to the history of this convent and to redress the damage caused by a fire almost a century prior reflects the contemporary desire to recover the sacred past in his own time, even if the author was chronologically detached from the events which led to the loss. In his

dedication to Suor Geronima Borichio, Abbess of the Convent of Santa Chiara, Zilotti

wrote that

it seemed to be reasonable to seek to repair the damage, where the ruins are irreparable, that were incinerated by an old fire the clear certificates of an authentic diploma affirming the certain donation of that Holy Nail made to you by the munificent Holy King that for centuries you have fortunately possessed and conserved with religious decency.²⁶⁷

Like D.S.R. and Giacomo de Mezi, it was the question of source material that occupied Zilotti's mind and motivated him to produce his history. In this case all three writers imagined that their works would address a lack in authentic documentation relating to their holy sites, be this through incompleteness, inaccessibility, or in the case of Zilotti, destruction. In explaining his decision to produce his work, Zilotti spoke of the importance that a reliable history played in facilitating proper Catholic devotion to the Holy Nail relic of Santa Chiara. Zilotti asserted that

Trying to describe a historical fact without the support of those foundations, on the basis of which a writer can only promise himself the structure of a true story (there is no doubt), to everyone who possesses human reason, [is] extraordinarily audacious and reckless. [...] although with the solidity of well-founded authorities, with inherent good conjectures, and with the evidence of historical demonstrations, many ancient and modern historiographers have managed to give truthful words to the world, and openly manifest the truth of their discourses.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ 'parmi ragionevole il procurarsi di rifarcire il danno, ove si refero irreparabili le ruine, che però inceneriti da un'antico fuoco i chiari attestati, che con veraci caratteri d'autentico Diploma asserivano la certa donazione fatta à voi medesime dalla munificenza, d'un Rè Santissimo di quel pretioso Chiodo, che per più secoli fortunatamente possedete, e con religiosa decenza conservate'. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, b2.

²⁶⁸ 'Lo cimentarsi à descrivere un fatto storico senza l'appoggio di quei fondamenti, sopra la base de quali può solo prometttersi uno scrittore la statura d'un verace racconto (non v'ha dubio) ad ogn'uno, che possiede humana ragione, audacia straordinariamente temeraria [...] quantunque con la sodezza di ben fondate autorità, con l'inherenza di buone congetture, e con l'evidenza d'historiche dimostrazioni habbino molti Historiografi antichi, e moderni procurato di render veridichi al Mondo i suoi detti, e manifestare aperta la verità de' suoi discorsi'. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 1.

Here Zilotti differentiated his work from those that asserted rather than explained or offered evidence for religious truths. The author signalled to his reader that his examination would indeed invite them to engage with facts and argument regarding the Holy Nail rather than demand quiet uncritical passivity.

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venetian writers attempted to reverse or prevent processes of decline in relation to important sacred sites in the city. Although printed histories were not new in the period, this section has demonstrated a renewed interest in recovering the sacred past in Venice in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Decline took various forms: perceived loss of interest, theft, damage, or simple forgetfulness. However it manifested, the authors whose works are analysed here were responding to both decline which has already happened, and sought to also prevent future decline if interventions were not made. Authors understood history writing to be both a scholarly and devotional endeavour. In the extracts of their works analysed, D.S.R., Giacomo de Mezi, Giovanni Tiepolo, and Giovanni Maria Zilotti all expressed the expectation that producing new, updated, and accessible histories would help to bring about the renewal of the sites and relics to which they pertained. Now having established why these authors felt compelled to relate to the sacred past with such rigour, I turn to consider their methods— how did these writers approach the past in practical terms? And what methods did they use to persuade their readers of the historical and devotional foundations of their subjects?

Searching for certainty: legend, history, and persuasion

The purpose of shrine books was not to establish whether a site was *really* holy, or if the story of its origin was *really* true. For their authors, these questions were not up for debate. Shrine books were not judicial. At no point do any of the authors of the texts examined

here bring into question the validity of a given site or the relics at their centre. Yet, authors were aware of the need to persuade the laity to accept these foregone conclusions. It was readers' faith that needed to be ignited through these works. A key aspect of this involved explaining to their readers why these particular stories were reliable and ought to be believed. In short, authors needed to persuade their readers with a certainty that went beyond repeated assertions in the affirmative. Moments when the sacred manifested inscribed holy places with spiritual meaning. Often, these moments featured the intervention of the supernatural to reveal, create, or endorse a particular sacred object or place and to prove its sacrality. These moments, known as 'foundation stories', provided Catholics with the historical justification for devotion to specific sites and the objects contained within them. The foundation stories of the sacred sites and relics analysed in this chapter were sometimes entwined with complex historical contexts, such as Venetian plunder of holy relics during the crusades, or even tales that stretched back to apostolic times making direct claims to connections with chief people in Christianity.

Whatever way a shrine, church, or other holy site came to exist, it was important to be able to chart its holy foundations historically to validate its ongoing role in devotional life. As Reinburg puts it, foundation stories 'preserved the lore that connected a place to a divine revelation, a signal that God authorised the cult celebrated there'.²⁶⁹ Foundation stories were therefore essential not only for establishing the identity of a sacred site, but for ensuring its ongoing place in Catholic devotional culture. Venetian writers were aware of the importance of providing persuasive accounts of the foundation of the shrines, churches, and relics that enriched their city. These sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers did not create foundation stories. Rather, they strove to add historical authenticity to existing legends through scholarly method. As I have shown, the writers of these

²⁶⁹ Reinburg, *Storied Places*, p. 197.

histories believed that the sites with which they were concerned had suffered decline, either having fallen or being at risk of falling out of Venetian devotional consciousness. In many cases, the author saw their works as necessary tools in the revival of places whose histories were conserved in less-than-ideal source material.

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers in Venice saw the need to redress unsatisfactory or incomplete source material with historical method. This process included scrutinising existing records detailing the foundation of specific sites and attempting to make these accounts more persuasive through the use of history. Judith Pollmann has emphasised the role that history played in ensuring the ability of myths and legends to retain importance in early modern culture. Pollmann argued that captivating or appealing stories were not guarantees of believability. Rather, ‘these stories continued to thrive only when they were framed historically and/or supported by material evidence’.²⁷⁰ I argue here that Venetian authors no longer expected readers to simply accept age-old stories regarding the foundations of different sites. Instead, they used both primary and secondary sources to persuade their readers that the fantastical stories of site foundations, some of which existed only in oral form, were indeed rooted in historical fact. In this sense, these writers believed that ‘myth’ alone was not enough to persuade Catholics of the sacred origins of key sites in Venice. Yet, in cases where specific icons or shrines were bound up with more complex historical contexts, greater attention needed to be paid to the framing of foundation legends and often required closer scrutiny of available source material. Many Venetian writers made unoptimistic evaluations of the state of the existing source material relating to the sacred sites that interested them. In the case of D.S.R., his work on

²⁷⁰ Judith Pollmann, ‘Of Living Legends and Authentic Tales: How to Get Remembered in Early Modern Europe’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 23 (2013), 103-125 (p. 106). On broader questions of certainty and knowledge acquisition in this period, see also the collection of essays *The Quest for Certainty in Early Modern Europe: From Inquisition to Inquiry, 1550-1700* ed. by Barbara Fuchs and Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

the Madonna dei Miracoli church was designed to condense existing manuscripts into an accessible form. He was not an innovator in the sense that he added anything of his own to the foundation story. Giovanni Maria Zilotti's 1666 treatment of the Holy Nail relic offers evidence of a Venetian writer not only conserving manuscript sources in printed form but transforming them into historically sound accounts.

Zilotti enhanced foundation stories with the weight of historical authority attained by original research. In this case, the author was aware that existing source material relating to the Holy Nail relic in Venice was insufficient in its ability of providing persuasive proof of the circumstances surrounding the relic's donation and preservation at the church of Santa Chiara. As Zilotti raised, the primary motive for writing his account of the Holy Nail relic was a fire which destroyed the church and half of the Franciscan convent of Santa Chiara. Zilotti indicated that the date for this fire was uncertain but occurred around a century before the time of writing around 1570, and Flaminio Corner dates the fire more precisely to 1574.²⁷¹ Chief amongst the losses of the fire were the thirteenth-century documents relating to the prized relic of Santa Chiara: one of the nails that pierced Christ at the crucifixion. The legend goes that the Holy Nail relic was donated to the nuns of Santa Chiara by King Louis IX of France (1214-1270), one of several Christological relics that he received from the Emperor of Constantinople. Although the relic itself survived the blaze, the documents that confirmed both its authenticity and its donation to Santa Chiara by King Louis were lost. These documents were among several which the nuns of Santa Chiara diligently conserved in their convent. Zilotti tells us that the entirety of the nuns' archive 'could not escape at the time of the voracious flames of a sudden fire, which burned, along with the church, more than half of the convent'.²⁷² Zilotti

²⁷¹ Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia, e di Torcello, tratte dalle chiese Veneziane, e Torcellane* (Padua: Giovanni Manfrè, 1758), p. 402.

²⁷² 'non puotero isfuggire as un tempo le fiamme voraci d'un fuoco improvviso, ch'abbrugiò con la chiesa più della metà del Convento'. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 2.

described the lost documents as ‘clear certificate affirming the certain donation of that precious Holy Nail made to you by the munificence of a most Holy King’.²⁷³ Despite the significant evidence lost to the fire of 1574, the nuns of Santa Chiara attempted to ensure the memory of the donation of the Holy Nail by creating a new document in which they described the legend as they knew it to be true. Zilotti explained that

those devout nuns that remained after the terrible flames ceased, did not cease to keep in their breast a heart ardent with charity and devotion towards such a precious treasure. So that no memories would remain buried, they decided to leave them to future memory in a clear page that described this memorable register which is still kept in the convent. I swear that I have seen it, and read it, and here it is in its own mother tongue, native language [...] with all truth transcribed by me below.²⁷⁴

This document referenced by Zilotti was undated but was produced by Abbess Maria Felice who, according to Corner, held office in 1592.²⁷⁵ In terms of content, the document narrated the essential aspects of the legend of the donation of the Holy Nail to the nuns of Santa Chiara. The new account was the product of oral tradition in the convent as the abbess explained that ‘I, Sister Maria Felice remember that which I have heard to tell the truth from our old Mothers of the convent of the Most Holy Nail. That is, that Saint Louis King of France brought it himself to the convent’.²⁷⁶ The account, ratified by the other nuns of Santa Chiara through their signatures, affirmed the narrative of the Holy Nail’s

²⁷³ ‘autentico Diploma asserivano la certa donatione fatta à voi medesime dalla munificenza, d’un Rè Santissimo di quel pretioso Chiodo’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, unpaginated.

²⁷⁴ ‘Quelle divote suore, che rimasero doppo sì misero incendio, cessate le fiamme, non cessarono di conservare nel seno un cuore ardente di carità e divotione verso sì pretioso Tesoro: onde perche affatto non ne restassero le memorie sepolte, stabilirono di lasciare *ad futuram rei memoriam* in un chiaro foglio descritto questo memorando registro, quale ancora si conserva nel Monastero; & io giuro haverlo veduto, e letto: ed eccolo nella stessa sua materna lingua, e nativo idioma, come stà e giace, con tutta fedeltà da me qui sotto trascritto’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 3

²⁷⁵ Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 402.

²⁷⁶ ‘Io Suor Maria Felice della Vecchia faccio memoria de quello ch’io hò sentito à dir de verità dalle nostre Madre vecchie del Monasterio, del Santissimo Chiodo, cioè, che San Lodovico Rè di Francia il portò lui in persona al Monasterio, qual Santissimo Chiodo’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, pp. 3-4.

donation which went as follows. The Holy Nail was donated to the convent by King Louis in the guise of an anonymous pilgrim. The pilgrim asked the nuns to take care of the relic which was enclosed in a small box. They did so for many years until the box began to exhibit miraculous rays of light. Upon opening the box, the nuns found inside ‘the aforementioned Most Holy Nail with much money, that is French gold, and other relics with some writing which narrated how King Louis himself brought that present with him by his own hand, which was the true Holy Nail’.²⁷⁷ Once the relic and the nature of its donation by the holy King of France became clear, it became the prized possession of the nuns of Santa Chiara and produced many miracles. Records of these miracles, along with the original documents discovered in the box, were conserved by the nuns in their archive until the fire of 1574. After that, the only documentary evidence affirming the authenticity of the Holy Nail relic and its attribution to King Louis IX was the new document of 1592. In the absence of the original source material, the foundation story of the Holy Nail relic was only supported by a written consolidation of an oral tradition dictated some three-hundred years after the donation was believed to have taken place. For Zilotti, the loss of the original documents and attempts of the sixteenth-century nuns to address this with a replacement account would not do. How could the faithful be sure of the historicity of the foundation story considering such compromised source material?

Zilotti’s book attempted to address this crucial question by persuading his readers through further historical research of the truth underpinning the central aspects of the foundation story of the Holy Nail at Santa Chiara. On his evaluation of the 1592 account, Zilotti wrote that

²⁷⁷ ‘dentro il sopranominato Santissimo Chiodo con molti danari, cioè ori Francesi, & altre Reliquie con una scrittura, che narrava, come il Rè Lodovico gl’haveva portato di sua man quel presente, qual era il Santo Chiodo vero’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 6.

It is true that it is not possible with *a priori* reason to show the clarity of this truth [...]. Nevertheless, to clear away every shadow of difficulty from doubtful and undevoted minds, we will not fail with ever more exact diligence, through divine help, to adduce as proof all those particularities [...] in order to better understand the clarity of the true in the false.²⁷⁸

Zilotti's evaluation is striking in that it did not expect the faithful to uncritically accept the story of the Holy Nail with *a priori* reasoning based on the unsatisfactory existing source material. Instead, he raised the need to 'prove all those particularities' in order for the account to be persuasive. Doing so required Zilotti to persuade his readers of two main things: the authenticity of the Holy Nail relic and the donation of the relic to the Santa Chiara nuns. This task required additional evidence to ground the legend with the weight of historical authority.

Zilotti turned first to reaffirm the validity of Catholic devotion to relics associated with the crucifixion of Christ including the nails that affixed him to the cross. In part, Zilotti positioned his affirmations in relation to the doubt fuelled by Protestant heresiarchs, particularly Calvin. Zilotti raised the challenge posed by Calvin about the multiple claims made by Catholics around the world regarding the possession of a particular relic, including the nails of the crucifixion. Zilotti needed to deal with the awkward fact that there were more places in the Catholic world claiming to possess holy nail relics than there were nails themselves. The cleric was precise in his argumentation. Firstly, he established that 'the opinion more common, probable, and secure [is] that the feet of Christ were pierced by a single nail' bringing the total in existence to three, one of which

²⁷⁸ 'Vero è, che con ragione a priori non è possibile manifestare la chiarezza di questa verità, perche ne pur in tal guise possono addursi ragioni per render certi dogmi della nostra Catolica Fede: nulladimeno per isgombrare ogn'ombra di difficoltà dalle menti dubbiose, & indevotte, non lasceremo on ogni più esatta diligenza, mediante il Divino aiuto, d'addurre in prova tutte quelle particolarità [...] per far maggiormente conoscere la chiarezza del vero nel falso'. Zilotti, *La miniera del calvario*, p. 9.

resided at the Santa Chiara convent in Venice.²⁷⁹ Zilotti emphasised that his treatment of this conundrum was in response to the criticisms of John Calvin and Theodore Beza, ‘two infamous and excommunicated heresiarchs’, who used the multiple claims of possession of the finite nails as proof of Catholic folly.²⁸⁰ In answering this challenge, Zilotti argued for the possibility of particles of the nails that pierced Christ being affixed to ‘other nails of iron’.²⁸¹ Relevant citations of the works by the aforementioned Danielle Mallonio and the Belgian theologian Lawrence Beyerlinck (1578-1627) who supported this position. Zilotti also forwarded the argument that more than three nails may be venerated as true relics if they were those used to attach to the cross the platform upon which Christ’s feet rested. Despite not piercing Christ’s body, these nails were anointed with his blood and therefore held the status of relics of Christ’s Passion. To support this argument, Zilotti drew upon the work of none other than Giovanni Tiepolo, Patriarch of Venice, who published in 1618 a substantial theological treatise on the Passion of Christ.²⁸² Zilotti left no stone unturned in his attempt to provide historical proof of the possibility that the relic in Santa Chiara could plausibly be a nail of the crucifixion. Reaching a sound, and hopefully persuasive, conclusion required Zilotti to draw upon ancient and contemporary writers. These authors affirmed the validity of Passion relics in Catholic devotion and presented arguments which helped to dispel the practical criticisms emanating from Protestant thinkers. Once satisfied that he had provided a convincing argument for the fundamental role of Holy Nail relics in Catholic devotion, Zilotti needed to persuade his readers of the historical basis of the foundation story of the Holy Nail at Santa Chiara.

²⁷⁹ ‘più commune, più probabile, e più sicura, che i piedi di Christo da un solo Chiodo siano stati traffiti’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 53.

²⁸⁰ ‘due infami, e scomunicati Heresiarchi Giovanni Calvino [...] e Beza’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 96.

²⁸¹ ‘certe particelle, le quali congiunte ad altri chiodi di ferro’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 97.

²⁸² ‘Così ancora l’Illustrissimo Giovanni Thiepolo Patriarcha di Venetia [nelle Considerationi della Passione di Christo, tratt. 13.]’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 99.

Zilotti asked, ‘What reason persuades us to believe that the Holy King Louis gave this Most Holy Nail as a gift to the nuns of Santa Chiara?’ The legend itself was not enough to persuade the Catholic faithful to accept the key aspects of the story. Zilotti could not provide alternative evidence proving beyond all doubt that the donation occurred as described by the nuns of Santa Chiara. He could, however, use historical method and argumentation supported by relevant primary and secondary sources to instil certainty in his Venetian readers. Zilotti focused on using biographical research on the figure of King Louis to demonstrate that such a donation was not only plausible but probable. Zilotti first demonstrated that King Louis was particularly devoted to holy relics citing works by the thirteenth-century writer Luca Vuadingo, Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1542-1621), and Bishop Pietro Mattei (fl. 1469) to support this premise. Next, Zilotti provided evidence of King Louis’ acquisition of several relics, including the Holy Nail, from the Emperor of Constantinople. Zilotti drew upon the transcription of a certificate of this exchange cited from a French hagiography of King Louis IX. Zilotti’s argument regarding King Louis moved from most general to more specific points first demonstrating that he indeed had such relics in his possession in the first place, then moving to show why it ought to be believed that he would have given one of these to the Venetian nuns of Santa Chiara. Zilotti’s method of persuasion here was to argue for King Louis’ long-standing affinity to the Franciscan Order, especially the orders for women religious to which the Venetian convent of Santa Chiara belonged.

Zilotti first provided evidence of King Louis’ passion for pilgrimage including sacred journeys that took him ‘outside of the confines of his kingdom, especially in Italy’.²⁸³ It stood to reason that Venice, ‘a city [...] whose religion and piety is praised in

²⁸³ ‘fuori de’ confine del suo Regno, mà specialmente in Italia’. Zilotti, *La miniera del calvario*, 123.

full voice by the whole world’, would have been included on this trajectory.²⁸⁴ Persuading his readers of the donation to the Santa Chiara convent was accomplished by Zilotti through bibliographical research. Firstly, Zilotti forwarded the fact that King Louis exhibited a lifelong affinity for Franciscan spirituality being both affiliated with the Third Order of Saint Francis in life and being buried in the associated habit after death.²⁸⁵ Zilotti assured his readers that King Louis’ association with the Third Order of Saint Francis ‘did not lack secure attestation by approved writers that advantageously prove this truth’ citing the works of Milanese theologian Bernardino de’ Bustis (1450-1513) and the Portuguese Franciscan historian Mark of Lisbon (fl. 1622).²⁸⁶ Second, Zilotti strengthened the case of King Louis’ generous gift to the nuns of Santa Chiara by arguing for his affection towards the female Franciscan orders. This, he explained, was due to the status of both his mother Bianca and his sister Isabella as members of the Third Order of St Francis. Again, Zilotti provided numerous references to support his position. These factors considered, Zilotti concluded that ‘without doubt, it would be easy to believe, and it would be likely that our most holy pilgrim would decide to enrich the religious city of Venice with such a precious gift’.²⁸⁷

Persuading the faithful of the true connection between contemporary shrines, relics, and images with key figures and events in Christian history was essential for emphasising their sacrality and relevance to Catholic devotion. It was these moments that gave such objects and places meaning and imbued with sacrality. The past became ‘immanent’, as did the sacrality of the people associated with it. In some cases, the claims made of such

²⁸⁴ ‘una Città di Venetia, la cui Religione, e pietà è decantata à piena voce da tutto il Mondo’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 128.

²⁸⁵ Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, pp. 140-141.

²⁸⁶ Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, pp. 141-142.

²⁸⁷ ‘senza dubbio sarà facile da credersi, & havrà del verisimile, che, risolvendosi il nostro Santissimo Pellegrino d’arricchire questa Religiosa Città di Venetia di sì pretioso dono d’un Chiodo di Christo’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, pp. 147-148.

connections involved central figures that connected relics in Venice with apostolic times as with the case of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary celebrated by the 1618 publication of Giovanni Tiepolo. The icon, later known as the Nicopeia, was a particularly prestigious prize for two reasons. In the first instance, the miracle-working icon was believed to have been painted by the hands of Luke the Evangelist himself. In the second, the legend emphasised that Saint Luke painted the icon from life, providing an incredible sense of closeness with the Virgin Mary. This attribution which central figures in Christianity is what made this icon so precious to the Venetians offering a material connection with the apostolic past. Persuading Venetians of the truth behind the conditions of the icon's creation and its attribution to Saint Luke the Evangelist was a key aim of his *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine* of 1618. The question of the evidence needed to persuade Venetian Catholics of the sacred nature of the icon was directly addressed by Tiepolo. The same concern was raised by Zilotti in his argument in favour of the validity of Holy Nail relics. In the case of the Nicopeia, the tradition surrounding its link with the sacred past were less central to Christian history. Why should the faithful accept that the icon captured the Virgin Mary's likeness from life by the hands of Saint Luke?

Tiepolo addressed this issue directly:

Let us fix our eyes and discourse unto this, that now becomes a common object to the sight and minds of everyone who lives in this city. So that we don't believe in little, weak proof of authenticity and venerability, let us examine whether the Virgin Mary consented to be painted, who the painter was, whether this image was formed by his hand, and how to prove her identity.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ 'fissiamo gli occhi, e'l discorso in quest'una, che hora si fà oggetto commune alla vista, & alle menti di ciascuno, che habita in questa città, & perche non si creda poca, debole essere la prova dell'autentichezza, & venerabilità sua, Andiamo essaminando se Maria Vergine acconsenti d'esser dipinta, chi ne fosse il pittore, se quest'immagine dalla di lui mano ne hebbe à formarsi, come provi l'identità sua'. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, pp. 4-5.

In this instance, Tiepolo was not wrestling with the challenges posed by inadequate source material as Zilotti was in relation to the Holy Nail of Santa Chiara. Instead, the ranking ecclesiastic needed to craft a convincing argument for the sacred circumstances of the icon's creation stretching back to the apostolic age. In the passage above, the challenge posed by the lack of 'proof of authenticity and venerability' was at the fore of his mind. Lending historical authority to what hitherto had been little more than asserted tradition was the *primicerio's* ultimate objective with his work. Tiepolo's emphasis on the consequences of these questions of authenticity and belief for 'everyone who lives in this city' is also striking. As we saw, Tiepolo's 1618 publication accompanied the construction of a new altar for the Nicopeia icon that remedied the obscurity of its previous place in Saint Mark's Basilica. These efforts of renewal were responsible for bringing the icon to the fore of the 'sight and minds' of Venetians. Here, Tiepolo emphasised the crucial role that proof through historical argumentation played in ensuring that Venetians accepted and understood the factual foundations of the sacrality of the icon. Tradition, asserted and reasserted throughout the centuries, was not enough. Instead, Tiepolo created a work that aimed to persuade Venetians to accept legendary aspects of the icon's creation and arrival in Venice that were previously asserted, but not explained.

First, would the Virgin Mary have consented to sitting for a portrait? Tiepolo drew upon writers stretching from antiquity to the present day to argue in the affirmative. Tiepolo's argument rested upon the ancient tradition which emphasised the value of glimpsing sight of the Virgin Mary's face along with the role of painting in capturing her likeness for future devotion. The author drew upon examples from antiquity through the writings of third-century Dionysius the Great and second-century Ignatius of Antioch to demonstrate an ancient desire to see the Virgin Mary. Tiepolo wrote that 'The ancient fathers of the new spouse of Christ, Dionysus and Ignatius longed to see Mary [...] here is the reason for

painting, and here is the reason for agreeing to it'.²⁸⁹ Tiepolo went on to explain why agreeing to sit for a portrait did not conflict with the prodigious humility of the Virgin Mary arguing that 'true humility consists of the execution of and adherence to the will of God, knowing Mary as such, how could she oppose them?'²⁹⁰ A condition of being the Mother of God was to be the subject of universal adoration. Understanding this, and seeking to adhere to the will of God, the Virgin Mary 'let herself be painted to then be adored'.²⁹¹ Tiepolo could not provide concrete proof that the Virgin Mary consented to be painted. There was no document, certificate, or other primary source that answered the question of authenticity directly. He could, however, use well-reasoned arguments, supported by his authority as a member of the Venetian upper clergy, to persuade the faithful that there was every reason to believe that this was the case. Next, the *primicerio* turned to argue for the attribution of the Nicopeia icon to Saint Luke the Evangelist.

Casting Saint Luke as an artist as well as a writer has a tradition stretching back to the tenth century.²⁹² Yet, just as Giovanni Maria Zilotti did not expect his readers to uncritically accept legendary aspects of the life and devotion of King Louis IX, Tiepolo provided his readers with argument rather than assertion when it came to the artistic endeavours of Saint Luke. In the first instance, Tiepolo argued for the close relationship between the Virgin Mary and Saint Luke that was established either before or shortly after Christ's ascension to

²⁸⁹ 'Li antichi padri della novella Sposa di Christo, Dionigio [Dionysius the Great], & Egnatio [Ignatius of Antioch] bramarono di veder Maria [...] ecco la ragione della pittura, & ecco la cagione dell'asentirvi'. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 4.

²⁹⁰ 'l'humilità vera consiste nell'esequire, & adherire alla volonta di Dio, & conoscendo Maria tale esser quella, come dovea contrariarle?' Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 6

²⁹¹ 'che si lasciò pipingere per esser poi adorata'. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 6.

²⁹² The most comprehensive treatment of Saint Luke as a painter in the Christian tradition is Michele Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a San Luca* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998). See also Marilyn E. Heldman, 'St. Luke as Painter: Post-Byzantine Icons in Early Sixteenth-Century Ethiopia', *GESTA*, 44.2 (2005), 125-148; Rebecca Elizabeth Raynor, 'In the Image of Saint Luke: The Artist in Early Byzantium' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2012); 'The shaping of an icon: St Luke, the artist, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 39.2 (2015), 161-172; Hans Betling, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. by Edmun Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 47-73.

Heaven following his resurrection. Tiepolo suggested that the attribution of the icon to Saint Luke was ‘plausible to anyone who [knows] how he was of the household and a family member of Mary’.²⁹³ However, Tiepolo was aware of different interpretations regarding the conversion of Saint Luke. Either version, however, plausibly allowed for Saint Luke’s close familiarity with the Virgin Mary necessary to attribute the icon of Saint Mark’s Basilica to him:

If Luke was one of the two disciples who accompanied themselves to Christ on his way to Emmaus, it is very clear that he served the Virgin before the son of God ascended to Heaven. But if, as others believe, his conversion took place in Thebes by the preaching of Saint Paul [...] two years after Christ’s ascent, here again we still have to prove and make it believable [*far credere*] that he served Mary.²⁹⁴

Tiepolo’s reasoning answered the uncertainty regarding Saint Luke’s conversion. It was very probable that Saint Luke was acquainted with the Virgin Mary if he was in Christ’s company before the ascension. If, however, the Evangelist did in fact convert after the ascension, then Tiepolo had an answer for this too. The author used his interpretation of the greatest sacred history – the gospels – to persuade his Venetian readers that no matter when Saint Luke converted, he was familiar enough with the Virgin Mary to paint her from life. Specifically, Tiepolo emphasised that ‘everyone can clearly see that Luke was intrinsic to the Virgin in his Gospel, which [contains] the most secret mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word, of the Annunciation of the Angel, of the Song of Mary, that many say she herself revealed’.²⁹⁵ The

²⁹³ ‘verisimile à chi attende come egli di Maria fosse domestico, & familiare’. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell’immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 7.

²⁹⁴ ‘Se Luca fù uno de due Discepoli, che si accompagnarono à Christo andando in Emaus, ben è chiaro, che servi alla Vergine prima, che il figlio di Dio salise al Cielo, ma se come altri tengono avvenne la conversione di lui in Tebe per le predicationi dell’Apostolo Paolo [...] due anni doppo la salita di Christo: anco qui ci resta à provare, & far credere, che servisse à Maria’. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell’immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 7.

²⁹⁵ ‘E ben aveder si può ciascuno, che Luca alla Vergine intrinseco fosse de’ l’Evangelio suo, nel quale [...] de’ più secreti misterio dell’Incarnazione del Vero, dell’Annonciatione dell’Angelo, il Cantico di Maria, che molti dicono ella stessa haverle palesati’. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell’immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 8.

careful argumentation by which Tiepolo sought to persuade Venetians that the icon in question was indeed painted by Saint Luke and did indeed capture the Virgin Mary from life were crucial for upholding the immanence of the sacred which it bestowed upon the city. Both the personages involved in the creation of the icon were intrinsically linked to Christ through motherhood or discipleship. In painting the Virgin, Tiepolo argued that Saint Luke ‘employed not only both his hands, but his eyes, and all his spirit and because finding himself so highly enraptured in the form of the work, it becomes holy’.²⁹⁶ The icon created a link that not only captured the likeness of the Virgin Mary from the most intimate possible reference – from life – but bestowed upon seventeenth-century Venice a direct link with the apostolic past. To this end, Tiepolo reasoned that the process of creation was in itself holy and imbibed the icon with sacrality.

The efforts of Giovanni Maria Zilotti and Giovanni Tiepolo to innovate long-standing traditions that underpinned the foundation stories of prize relics in the city of Venice brings us to two important conclusions. Firstly, the printed works of these Venetian clerics emphasises a shift in attitudes towards what was considered acceptable evidence for an object’s sacred past that justified its role in Catholic devotional life in its present. Both Zilotti and Tiepolo understood that tradition, legend, and myth were not enough to arouse devotion towards the Holy Nail of Santa Chiara and the Nicopeia icon of Saint Mark’s Basilica. Indeed, both writers made it clear that they did not expect their readers to accept existing traditions regarding the sacrality of the holy objects at the centre of their respective texts. Instead, both clerics used careful historical research along with reason and argumentation to persuade the faithful in Venice of the historical basis of foundation stories. Second, these works demonstrate the role that understanding played in the devotional engagement with holy

²⁹⁶ ‘che nel ritrarla vi impiegase non solo ambe le sue mani, ma gli occhi, & tutto lo spirito suo perche trovandosi cosi altamente rapito nel forma opera si divina’. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell’immagine della gloriosa Vergine*, p. 8.

things and places. As I raised earlier in this chapter, these writers considered the preservation or innovation of sacred history to be a holy task. The process had consequences for the Venetian laity too. Both Zilotti and Tiepolo emphasised that fact led to belief, and belief led to enhanced devotion to the Holy Nail and Nicopeia icon. History not only provided certainty of authenticity, but it provided the laity with a new understanding of how holy things and places provided a link with the sacred past that could shape devotional life in the present. It is the question of how the authors of these books sought to use their books to shape and encourage practical devotional engagement with the shrines and their corresponding relics that this chapter now turns.

The shrine book in action: shaping devotional engagement

Shrines were points of encounter with the sacred. The relief of suffering was clear motive for Catholics to seek recourse to places where holy power was heavily perceptible. The miracles and indulgences associated with shrines encouraged the faithful to invest significant devotional energy into them. The innumerable ex-voto objects, which Mary Laven has argued formed ‘archives of miracles’ at sacred sites, offer material evidence for lay encounters with the sacred there.²⁹⁷ Seeking a miracle was not a prerequisite for devotion to a particular shrine or relic. Indeed, engaging with shrines for prayer or contemplation could form an important aspect of voluntary Catholic devotion. What is certain, however, is that shrines were indispensable sources of sacred immanence that offered the devotee direct encounters with the holy. In his *Trattato delle sante peregrinationi* printed in Venice in 1575, Jesuit theologian Gaspar Loarte (1498-1578) offered advice to devotees on how to best

²⁹⁷ Laven, ‘Recording Miracles’, p. 191. On Italian ex-votos in this period, see also Fredrika H. Jacobs, *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Megan Holmes, ‘Ex-votos: Materiality, Memory, and Cult’, in *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, ed. by Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 165-188.

prepare themselves for this moment of direct encounter with the sacred at these sites. His instructions nonetheless demonstrate that, beyond the immediate hope of practical supernatural assistance, the shrine offered the devotee a spiritually transformative encounter:

Here one can meditate a little upon what a soul will feel when it arrives at the end of its spiritual pilgrimage: that joyfulness and consolation that it will have and take with it throughout the course of its life, and it will finish it in grace and friendship with God. With that faith it will appear in the presence of the divine: the jubilation that it will feel when it sees that blessed face that delights and blesses the heavenly court and with that reverence and affection you will adore it.²⁹⁸

Loarte was describing an ideal devotional context that reflected his perspective as a Jesuit cleric. His suggestions nonetheless emphasised the proximity to the sacred that the shrine offered the devout Catholic. This chapter has shown that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers in Venice expressed concern with the decline in local devotion to important shrines and the relics that they housed. Establishing historical certainty played a vital role in the revival of the shrines and associated relics that were the subjects of publications. Although not every book analysed here fits comfortably into the ‘shrine book’ category, they did exhibit the hybridity characteristic of this genre. The authors of these texts made a case for a site’s sacred history and this task often occupied most of the work in question in terms of volume. But, once the case for historical certainty had been made, how could these authors then encourage practical devotion to the sites in question? This chapter turns now to the efforts of these authors to instigate renewal of sacred sites by

²⁹⁸ ‘Qui ancora si potria un poco meditare, che cosa sentirà un’anima, quando sarà arrivata al fine della sua spirituale peregrinatione: che allegrezza, & cōsolatione haverà quella, che si sarà portata bene per tutto il corso della vita sua, & l’haverà finito in gratia, & amicitia di Dio: cō che fiducia cōparirà nel cōspetto divino: che giubilo sentirà, quādo vedrà quella beata faccia, che rallegra, & beatifica tutta la corte celestiale; cō che riverēza l’adorerà; cō che affetto’. Gaspar Loarte, *Trattato delle sante peregrinationi doue si insegna il modo di farle con molto frutto spirituale, si tratta ancora delle stationi indulgenze, che nelle peregrinationi si sogliono guardare* (Venice: Domenico & Gio. Battista Guerra, 1575), pp. 97-8.

persuading readers of their immediate relevance to everyday devotional practice.

Moreover, authors attempted to provide readers with practical suggestions for engaging with shrines in Venice and drew upon their own experiences of these sites to instigate renewal.

The circumstances by which a sacred site came into existence often influenced the role that it would go on to play in devotional culture. Some, like the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, were integrated closely in the realm of everyday devotion and continued access to the Marian icon enshrined in the church was crucial to its function. Others, such as those icons which were brought back from Constantinople by prominent Venetian historical figures, like the Nicopeia icon enshrined in Saint Mark's Basilica, were reserved for devotional activities at the level of the state. The framing of foundation stories mattered – proof mattered. How these stories framed the origin of an icon, or a sacred site established expectations as to the role that they would play in devotional life. The icon enshrined at the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli is a case in point. In his framing of the foundation story of the church, therefore, D.S.R. emphasised the role that everyday devotion played in its earliest development to renew its role in daily devotional life in the seventeenth century. Demonstrating that the Madonna dei Miracoli cult began as an expression of lay devotion and emphasising the icon's role in shaping everyday Catholic lives in the past were the tools that D.S.R. used to persuade his seventeenth-century readers to extend devotion to the icon. The Madonna dei Miracoli icon began life as a *capitello*, of the kind which were particularly prevalent in the Veneto region and usually consisted of icons of the Virgin Mary placed upon various perches in urban and rural environments. This particular *capitello* was a beautiful painting of the Virgin Mary commissioned by Francesco Amati in 1408. Amati decided to display the painting on an

exterior wall of his home to ‘excite the same devotion in others’.²⁹⁹ D.S.R. emphasised the local devotion that accumulated around the icon despite no miracles being worked through it. Instead, ‘passers were content in themselves only with honouring it, without having to recourse to it for their own needs and necessities’.³⁰⁰ The *capitello* continued to attract sustained devotion at the local level for the next seventy years. The moment which transformed the *capitello* into a site of miracles occurred on 23 August 1481. This miraculous stirring served as the foundation story of the Madonna dei Miracoli cult and closely integrated the icon within the realm of everyday and personal devotion.

In 1481, the local significance of the *capitello* gained traction following miraculous blessings that poured into the parish through the Marian image. The inaugural wonder occurred on 23 August 1481 and involved a violent attack perpetrated by a German from the Fondaco dei Tedeschi upon his sister-in-law.³⁰¹ The assailant stalked his victim to a street which he knew she needed to take to return home that so happened to be near the *capitello* of the Amati Madonna. Once his victim was in sight, the attacker struck. Grievously wounded, yet catching sight of the Amati image, the woman cried in desperation ‘Glorious Virgin defend me in your infinite mercy!’³⁰² Her groans of pious anguish attracted the attention of nearby neighbours who ‘found the poor woman on the ground as if dead’.³⁰³ The Virgin was moved by her plea and, upon closer inspection, neither the woman’s body nor her garments exhibited any sign consistent with a violent attack. The morning after her assault and miraculous survival ‘the woman took all of the

²⁹⁹ ‘per eccitar la medesima divotione in altri’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 5.

³⁰⁰ ‘contentandosi solo li passeggeri d’honorarla, senza haver ricorso à quella ne’ propria bisogni, & necessità’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 5.

³⁰¹ Established in 1228, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi was the headquarters and lodging of the German merchants who resided in Venice. During the Reformation, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi became increasingly important as a space to segregate German Lutherans in the Venice.

³⁰² ‘vedendo subito in cuore di raccomandarsi a quell’immagine, converso affetto girdò ad alta voce, Gloriosa Vergine defendetemi per vostra infinita misericordia’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio e fondatione*, p. 31.

³⁰³ ‘come morta la povera donna’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 31.

garments that she had worn the previous day and presented them to that holy image from which she received such great favour' – her garments were her ex-voto.³⁰⁴ By the time the woman had completed this pious act of thanks, 'there was already a great concourse of people' present including all of the neighbours who attended to her the night before.³⁰⁵ The woman related to this crowd the story of the sacred intercession she had received from the now-miraculous Marian image. The miracle launched an impressive building program that began in 1481 and ended in 1489. The initial phase of construction (1481-1485) was headed by Venetian architect Pietro Lombardo and his workshop and later additions to the site included a convent that housed twelve Poor Clare nuns. The Patriarch of Venice in December 1489 then enclosed the nuns in their new monastery and consecrated the church; as he did so the Patriarch read the papal bulls that permitted the initial construction of the church and ordered for the establishment of a monastery.³⁰⁶ The result was a truly special site, both architecturally and spiritually, that enshrined the wonder-working Madonna in pride of place upon the church's high altar. The foundation story of the Madonna dei Miracoli helped to encourage fervent lay devotion to the Marian icon as ordinary people flocked to the image with the expectation that they too could benefit from the miracles worked through it.

D.S.R. attempted to persuade his seventeenth-century readers to extend devotion to the Madonna dei Miracoli icon by providing evidence of its ability to transform Catholic lives through tangible miracles. D.S.R. did not make use of copious amounts of scholarship in his history to establish the historicity of the icon and church like Giovanni

³⁰⁴ 'la mattina per tempo la donna portò tutti quei abiti, che haveva indosso il giorno antecedente, e gli present a questa Santa Immagine, dalla quale havea hauta così gran gratia'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 31.

³⁰⁵ 'essendovi già concorso molto popolo, con tutti quei Vicini, confessò il Miracolo che haveva ottenuto da questa Santa Immagine'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 31.

³⁰⁶ 'poi monsignor Benedì quel luogo, spargendo dell'acqua Benedetta [...] & fece legger le Bolle Papali; la prima che conteneva, che quell'Immagine della Gloriosa Vergine, era de Ca d'Amati. La seconda conteneva la licenza di far il Monasterio'. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell'origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 29

Maria Zilotti or Giovanni Tiepolo. Instead, local evidence of miracles worked through the icon served as his chief source base. These stories were recorded in the archival manuscript on which he based his narrative account. D.S.R. emphasised the close involvement of the icon in relieving human suffering in Venice through his organisation of the miracles. The author explained that he would not do so chronologically but would ‘begin at man’s head and end at the feet’.³⁰⁷ By this, he referred to his intention to organise the miracle stories according to the part of the body that was freed from infirmity by virtue of the Madonna dei Miracoli. Drawing upon the manuscript records in his possession, D.S.R. recounted short descriptions of 171 miracles worked by the icon on behalf of Venetian people between 1481-85. Of these miracles 133 were concerned with physical healings including miraculous intervention during difficult childbirths. The rest were concerned mainly with divine rescue of individuals from near-fatal accidents and the liberation miracles.

D.S.R.’s book focused on making sense of the existing manuscript and condensing it down for publication – he was a conservator not an innovator. In part, I suggest that D.S.R.’s focus on the immediate source material was due to the essentially local context of the Madonna dei Miracoli shrine and the circumstances surrounding its creation. This is not to say that D.S.R. did not use evidence to persuade his seventeenth-century readers of the site’s sacred origins. In terms of standards of proof, however, the author relied upon the accounts of miracles bestowed to local people in the fifteenth century as a way of encouraging renewal in his own time. Framing the foundation story of the Madonna dei Miracoli church as something intrinsically bound to lay devotion and providing copious evidence of the miracles worked through it was proof enough in this context. Moreover,

³⁰⁷ ‘mà si bene si commincerà dalla testa dell’huomo, & si anderà fino ai piedi’. D.S.R., *Cronichetta dell’origine, principio, e fondatione*, p. 30.

for a miraculous icon that primarily served the needs of ordinary people, the miracle accounts in the manuscript sources were the most appropriate and persuasive pieces of evidence that D.S.R. could call upon to achieve this end. Indeed, the development of the Madonna dei Miracoli church had a fairly straightforward trajectory – from *capitello*, to miraculous shrine, to church. Proving the historical circumstances surrounding the development of the church was not the primary focus of D.S.R.’s history. Instead, the author’s use of the past focussed on emphasising the devotional relevance of the Madonna dei Miracoli icon. D.S.R. therefore had little need of other works to establish the facts surrounding the development of Madonna dei Miracoli. Indeed, whether the narrative of events that led to the development of the Santa Maria dei Miracoli cult were true or believable was not brought into question in his book. Instead, his focus was on drawing upon the fifteenth-century accounts of the icons miracles to renew devotion to the site in the seventeenth century.

Giovanni Maria Zilotti also used evidence of ongoing sacrality, also evidenced through numerous miracles, to encourage devotional engagement with the Holy Nail of Santa Chiara. Zilotti summarised these as

Many other infinite miracles could be told of this precious Nail [...] the healing of the faithful that were sick and moribund, the liberation of sailors from desperate shipwrecks, the protection of wards and widows in the greatest need, the protection of virgins from unbridled treachery, the defence of the innocent from false accusations, protection of fields from storms, the assistance of women in labour, and bestowing new hope upon the barren.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ ‘Molti altri infiniti miracoli potriansi narrare di questo pretioso Chiodo [...] fedeli risanati, gl’infermi da’ morbi incurabili [...] liberate i naviganti da disperati navfragi, protetti i pupilli, e le vedove ne’ casi più bisognosi, custodite le vergini da sfrenate infidie, diffesi gl’innocenti da mendaci accuse, riparati i campi da nocive tempeste, facilitato il parto à molte infelici parturienti, e prestata alle sterili una lieta secondità’. Zilotti, *La miniera del calvario*, pp. 169-170.

The miracles worked through the Holy nail served as an important point of encounter between the laity and the conventual church of Santa Chiara. In particular, the nuns of the church supplied the faithful with quantities of water in which the relic had been submerged. Zilotti wrote of the ‘inveterate frequency of the faithful of every sex and condition that gather daily [...] at the convent to receive from these good Mothers a bottle of this precious water’.³⁰⁹ Zilotti had a first-hand experience of the sacrality of the Holy Nail shortly before the publication of his *La minera del calvario* indicating that personal devotion in part motivated his efforts to encourage his readership to embrace the relic in their own devotional lives. It is crucial to ask, however, how far specific sources of sacred immanence, such as the Holy Nail of Santa Chiara, were accessible to different groups of Catholic people in Venice.

As I previously raised, Santa Chiara was a conventual church, but the laity of Venice indeed worshipped in it and interacted with the Franciscan nuns. The holy water which the nuns diligently provided was a primary source of interaction between them and the Catholic laity in Venice. In addition to this, the regular exposure of the relic, which occurred primarily during Holy Week, provided access to the Holy Nail. In addition to Good Friday, the relic was exposed for veneration by the laity on five further days: the three festivities of the resurrection of Christ, during the day of the Invention (*inventio*) of the True Cross (3 March), and on the day of Saint Andrew the Apostle (30 November).³¹⁰ During these periods of enhanced veneration, there was an emphasis on light, visibility, and the valorisation of the relic as the nuns arranged the Holy Nail upon the high altar of the Santa Chiara church ‘amongst many torches and other sacred decorations’.³¹¹ Zilotti tells us that Good Friday

³⁰⁹ ‘l’inveterata frequenza de’ fedeli d’ogni sesso, e conditione, che quotidianamente concorrono [...] al Monastero per riveverne da queste buone Madri un’ampolla di quest’acqua pretiosa’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 175.

³¹⁰ ‘cinque solenni, e festivi giorni; cioè nelle tre Festività della resurrezione di Nostro Signore; nel giorno dell’Invention della Croce 3. Maggio; e di Sant’Andrea Apostolo 30. Novembre’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 185.

³¹¹ ‘frà molti lumi, e sacri ornamenti’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 186.

which commemorated the crucifixion of Christ, the Holy Nail was exposed for continuous adoration above the altar in the church of Santa Chiara.³¹² During this commemoration, Zilotti explained that the laity had come to expect the annual miracle associated with the relic during which the dried blood on the cross ‘regained its lost colour and appeared alive and fresh’.³¹³ The miracle brought the history of Christ’s sacrificial act into the present through his liquified blood and the first-hand experience of this was a formative moment for Zilotti. He asserted that

Here it is not necessary for me to tire myself in searching, perhaps in vain, for the writers’ affirmation that relate this clear and manifest truth since there is no need for other witnesses when I myself affirm that in the same year 1664 on the 11th of April, upon which Good Friday fell. I was grateful to see it, to handle it, adore it, and contemplate it in the way described above with a great feeling of devotion, internal tenderness of the heart, and constancy of spirit.³¹⁴

This retelling of his first-hand experience of the miracle of liquification is important for understanding Zilotti’s approach for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the importance that specific and local devotion had for motivating the author to compile his account. Zilotti was clearly keen to accentuate the cultural importance of the Holy Nail relic in Venice and for a Venetian readership in an effort to change local devotional culture. Second, Zilotti’s assessment of the limitation of written sources on the issue of the miracle demonstrates that faith mattered just as much as fact when it came to revival. Here, Zilotti’s approach exhibited the fusion of erudition and devotion that characterised post-Tridentine history writing which

³¹² ‘Ogn’anno nel giorno del Venerdì Santo ad una continua adorazione [...] sopra l’Altare’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 182.

³¹³ ‘riacquistando il suo smarrito colore, si mirano vive, e fresche’. Zilotti, *La minera del calvario*, p. 183.

³¹⁴ ‘Qui non occorre, ch’io m’affatichi in cercare (forse indarno) l’allegationi de’ Scrittori ch’afferiscano questa sì chiara, e patente verità, non essendo bisogno d’altri testimonij, quando [...] io medesimo affermo [...] che nell’anno 1664 il giorno 11. d’Aprile, in cui cadde appūto il Venerdì Santo, fui gratiato di vederlo, maneggiarlo, adorarlo, e contemplarlo nel modo di sopra descritto con gran sentimento di devotione, interna tenerezza di cuore, e contentezza di spirito’. Zilotti, *La minera del malvario*, pp. 182-83.

was more about proving foregone conclusions than bringing longstanding beliefs into question. A good historical argument was central to Zilotti's approach, of course. But, if the reader needed any more persuading to extend devotion to the Holy Nail, then they could rely upon the cleric's first-hand experience of the relic's miraculous assertion of sacral authority made clear through the liquification of Christ's blood. The extract is also important for what it tells us about standards of evidence in shrine books, and in devotional matters more generally. Zilotti was clearly devoted to historical method, yet he had no qualms about speaking of the inferior authority that writings had in relation to religious experience.

Books also helped to facilitate the devotional experience of the sacred site in a more hands-on manner. This function of the shrine book is clearly demonstrated by a later publication by Zilotti in 1675, *Il tempio della pace*. This publication pertained to the miraculous Marian image known as the Madonna della Pace which, like the subject of Tiepolo's work, was also attributed to Saint Luke. The icon was enshrined in the Basilica di Santi Giovanni e Paolo in the fourteenth century after being sent to Venice from Constantinople in 1348 by the patrician Paolo Morosini. The icon was entrusted to the Dominican friars of Santi Giovanni e Paolo. Zilotti's address to his readers shows how the author thought that the miraculous icon might operate in Catholic lives. Zilotti reminded his readership that such blessings were unusually abundant in Venice – 'this illustrious city and metropolis of the Venetian Dominion' that boasted particular favour from the Virgin.³¹⁵ He emphasised that the city's Marian favour materialised in the 'many rich chapels, grandiose altars, many devout companies [confraternities] that are founded here under the fortunate auspices of the Most Serene Queen of the Universe'.³¹⁶ It was appropriate, therefore, that the

³¹⁵ 'questa inclita Città, Serenissima dominante, e Metropoli del Veneto Dominio'. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, p. 18

³¹⁶ 'tante ricche Capelle, tanti Altari pomposi, tante Compagnie devote, che quiui trovansi erette sotto gli auspice fortunati d'essa Serenissima Monarchessa dell'Universo'. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, p. 25

faithful should hasten themselves to the chapel where the icon was housed where ‘one will find refuge from the dangers of infirmity, security in the winds of temptation’.³¹⁷

Zilotti’s publication evidences the relationship between book, past, and ideal devotion to sacred site. This becomes clearer when we move away from focussing solely upon the book’s text and instead think about it as an object. As Paul Grendler has argued in relation to Italian ‘popular’ books in the Renaissance, ‘form and function are closely connected in books’.³¹⁸ Scholars of early modern books and reading practices have attempted to use choice regarding the form and format of texts to understand how they may have been put to practice in daily life. Working on English language-learning manuals, John Gallagher has drawn attention to the gradual standardisation of books of this genre. For Gallagher, the preference for smaller books, in octavo or duodecimo, had consequences for how, where, and when a book might be engaged with. Gallagher writes that ‘a small text would be more easily consulted in an idle moment, the book’s utility enhanced by its form’.³¹⁹ Ceri Sullivan, working on English religious print, has emphasised that the ‘easily portable duodecimo text’ likely meant that ‘devotional works may have also come more readily at hand [...] than larger formats’.³²⁰ Produced in duodecimo and containing 107 pages, *Il tempio della pace* was on the smaller side of devotional literature and also appropriate for ‘in the moment’ consultation when prayer was the main priority. The choice of duodecimo suggests that the book was intended to be portable and suitable for the possibility of reading in action. Of course, the Capella della Pace in Santi Giovanni e Paolo was the obvious place for a lay reader to take their copy of *Il tempio della pace*.

³¹⁷ ‘troverai ne’ pericoli dell’infermità l’asilo; ne’ venti delle tentationi la sicurezza’. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, p. 19.

³¹⁸ Paul F. Grendler, ‘Form and Function in Italian Renaissance Popular Books’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46.3 (1993), 451-485 (p. 451).

³¹⁹ John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 74.

³²⁰ Ceri Sullivan, *Shakespeare and the Play Scripts of Private Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 25.

Zilotti crafted his book to shape a lay devotee's experience of the shrine by providing his readers with a rich selection of madrigals, prayers, and hymns to use there. The first of these, a 'devout soliloquy' written by the author himself, demonstrates this intention:

to recite in front of the miraculous image of Santa Maria della Pace; to implore her assistance and to achieve safety in life and a Christian death [...]. At your holy feet O blessed Maria della Pace, is my miserable soul prostrated [...] defend me most clement Mother; protect me sacred Mary while now I bow in front of this your singular and most miraculous image.³²¹

The entanglement of place, prayer, and book is emphasised by the soliloquy's focus on the supplicant's physical proximity to the sacred image. It was expected, therefore, that the devotee – possibly with book in hand – be in situ to extend devotion to the Virgin Mary. Zilotti advised that this 'recitation is frequently made by the members of the respectable company; and by every other pious person that visits this prodigious image'.³²² Despite the relatively small size of the pages produced in duodecimo format, the soliloquy is lengthy, occupying just over five whole pages. Although this may have been the case for confraternity members, Zilotti did not suggest that the devotee commit the prayer to memory. Zilotti's recommendations indicate that the book was taken to the shrine by its owner so they could read the proper prayers when they went there to put their faith to work. This sense of the active role of the book in shaping lay experience of the shrine is further hinted at through a catalogue of the relics that surrounded the image's altar collected at the end of *Il tempio della pace*. The list of fourteen relics would have enabled the devotee to quickly make sense of the

³²¹ 'Soliloquio divoto dell' Autore. Da recitarsi avanti la Miracolosa immagine di Santa Maria dell PACE; per implorare la sua assistenza, e conseguire da lei il modo sicuro di vivere, e morire Christianamente [...] A' piedi vostri Santissimi, ò benedetta madre di PACE, s'inchina prostrata questa misera anima mia [...] difendetemi, clementissima Madre; protegetemi, sacratissima MARIA, mentre hora genuflesso dinanzi à questa vostra singularissima Immagine'. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, pp. 76-80.

³²² 'E tale divota recitatione è solita frequente praticarsi dalli Confratelli di questa spettabile Compagnia; e da ogn'altra pia persona, che spesso visitando questa Effigie, prodigiosissima'. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, pp. 80-81.

holy hoard that infused the church with a palpable sense of sacred immanence. It seems that detail mattered to the owner of the copy of *Il tempio della pace* under study here. In the right-hand margin next to the entry '[relic] of the arm of San Tomaso', the word 'Apostolo' [Apostle] was scribbled in the right-hand margin to disambiguate the entry and its corresponding relic.³²³ To the owner of this book, specificity, and a proper understanding of the holy people to which the relics at the shrine pertained mattered.

When it came to persuading the laity to engage with the Madonna della Pace, Zilotti also had some very specific methods of doing so in mind. Zilotti encouraged his reader to

Enter, yes, yes, O devout of Mary in this Sacred Temple of Peace, nor leave if I do not know you to be wrapped up under the insignia of such a peaceful mother, with the request to be enrolled in her most devout Confraternity. [...] join with the other brothers and sisters beneath the shadow of her protection in such a devoted confraternity.³²⁴

Zilotti's texts included specific suggestions on how a devotee could engage with the miraculous icon at Santi Giovanni e Paolo and integrate it into their devotional lives. How many of his readers acted on his advice, including his enthusiastic promotion of the confraternity is of course impossible to determine. His exhortations are however important in demonstrating the role that these authors imagined their works might have had in renewing lay devotion to sites in Venice, from raising their profile in a general sense, to encouraging readers to make specific investment in confraternal organisations. Zilotti's enthusiasm for the confraternity in question in turn raised the matter of lay involvement in

³²³ https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Il_tempio_della_pace_inalzato_alle_glori/QhJSAAAACAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=il+tempio+della+pace+zilotti&pg=PT1&printsec=frontcover. This link provides access to the edition of *Il tempio della pace* under study here. The mark of use I refer to can be seen on p. 102.

³²⁴ 'Entra sì sì, O divoto di Maria, in questo suo sacro Tempio di Pace; nè ti partire, se non ti conosco arrollato sotto l'insegna di così PACIFERA MADRE, con chiedere d'esser ascritto alla sua divotissima Confraternità. [...] d'aggregarti con gl'altri Confratelli, e Consorelle sotto l'ombra della sua protezione in così divota Compagnia'. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, pp. 21-22.

the production of site-related works. Of course, we have seen that the production of books celebrating shrines in Venice could be an entirely lay-driven endeavour as evidenced by the work of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista. In the case of *Il tempio della pace*, Zilotti briefly underlined that his work was commissioned by the confraternity, but the members permitted the cleric full creative liberty in how he developed his work. The work itself does not exhibit the involvement of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pace, nor did the confraternity members refer to the commission in their statutes. There is one exception to this. At the end of the work, Zilotti explained that ‘Here at the request of the members of the Confraternity della Pace, we will briefly place some Miracles worked by the Lord in the Most Holy Images of Mary, so as to encourage his faithful devout to the veneration of these Images’.³²⁵ The miracles narrated were not related to the Madonna della Pace as Zilotti’s use of the plural ‘images’ suggests. Nonetheless, the request of the confraternity demonstrates that efforts of devotional persuasion in Venice were not restricted to clerical authors.

Conclusions

Venetian authors used the past to shape devotional engagement to a range of shrines and holy relics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This chapter has examined the approach taken to the renewal of key shrines through print and the influence that these processes may have had on how these sites were engaged with in Venice. Analysis of these sources has

³²⁵ ‘Qui appresso à richiesta de’ divoti Confratelli della Compagnia della PACE porremo succintamente alcuni Miracoli oprati dal Signore nell’Immagini Santissime di Maria, si per incoraggiare alla veneratione d’esse Immagini i suoi divoti fedeli’. Zilotti, *Il tempio della pace*, p. 82. The role of early modern confraternities as custodians of miraculous images is yet to be fully studied by scholars of Catholicism. Barbara Wisch has analysed the efforts of Roman confraternities to promote icons under their care in her chapter ‘Keys to Success: Propriety and Promotion of Miraculous Images by Roman Confraternities’, in *The Miraculous Image and the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed by Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, 2004), pp. 161-185.

drawn attention to the important role that the search for certainty played in post-Tridentine Catholicism. Catholic writers made robust use of the past in order to shape religious culture in the present to a variety of ends. Proving the continuity of the Church from the Apostolic Age was a key motivator of Church historians in this period. Broad questions about certainty occupied Catholic minds and had an impact on devotional life in Venice. The authenticity of the shrines and relics that empowered them were not brought into question by Catholic authorities in Venice in the same way that post-Tridentine examples were. The authors of these books were not attempting to prove something that was already a foregone conclusion. Rather, relating to the past was motivated by concerns related to loss, decline, and needs for preservation for posterity.

The books examined in this chapter concerned mighty Marian icons that had gathered dust, sacred stories that had been reduced to unverifiable myth, valuable historical documents lost in tragic circumstances, and sites at risk of falling into decline if interventions were not made. In some cases, such as D.S.R.'s approach to the Madonna dei Miracoli icon, it was the fear of future decline rather than something that had already occurred that motivated his engagement with the past. It is important to emphasise that authors believed that decline, actual or forebodingly expected, could be remedied and halted by the application of historical method, and scholarly certainty. Many authors were aware that their readership needed more than repeated assertions as to the historicity of a specific shrine or relic. Instead, they strove to provide historical truth, and to persuade their readers to accept the foundation legends, stories of translation, and accounts of miracles that made sites worthy of devotion in an age where the questions of certainty, authenticity and proof were posed to many aspects of Catholicism. This chapter has drawn attention to how these questions related to a central aspect of Catholic devotional life in Venice.

Relating to the past made sacred moments immanent in the present. I have used the term ‘the immanent past’ to unpack how history related to encounter with the sacred in Venice. Except for the Eucharist, shrines were the sources of sacred immanence *par excellence*, and their revival played important and varied roles in the renewal of Catholicism across Catholic Europe and beyond in the period of reform. This chapter has drawn attention to how the sacred could be immanent in a non-tangible way: through knowing, remembering, and through history. Authors made it clear that knowing and accepting the sacred stories that made shrines holy in the first place directly enhanced their devotional relevance in the present. Reading a shrine book, and accepting its history, allowed the faithful to be brought into closer encounter with key people and moments in both local and salvific history. This included key sacred people, such as Saint Luke and the Virgin Mary and of course, the person of Christ whose blood still stained the nail treasured by the nuns of Santa Chiara. Knowledge was key to facilitating the direct encounter with the sacred that these icons, relics, and shrines provided. Writers forged a clear connection between knowledge and perceiving the sacrality of a place. For them, being in possession of a historical understanding of a site’s origin not only offered ‘proof’ of their sacrality but could enhance the Catholic faithful’s engagement with these places and lead to augmented devotion. Without being persuaded through history, authors were aware that their readership could not come to fully understand or experience the sacrality that infused these object or spaces. History was a vital tool used to close the gap between belief and reason, and to replace asserted narratives with historical surety.

Print was an indispensable tool used to renew devotion to shrines in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venice. Shrine books were accessible, vernacular texts which were designed to both influence and be used in devotional lives. As I have shown, some included instructions, prayers, and elaborations designed to complement or facilitate practical

devotional acts at a particular site. This chapter has drawn attention to the involvement of the laity in the process of appropriating print. Most of the authors whose works have been examined in this chapter were clerical, including members of the Venetian upper clergy. This chapter has nonetheless drawn attention to important evidence of both the laity's usage of the press to promote devotion, and their own concern with matters of history, certainty, and renewal in relation to sacred shrines. The efforts taken by the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista being the most prominent example, while the collaboration between the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pace and Giovanni Maria Zilotti point to the potential co-operation of lay and clerical Catholics in the task of renewing sacred sites through print. Shrine books helped to restore the cultural and devotional identity of hallowed sites in Venice and aimed to bring Catholics in the city into closer encounter with the sacred that inhered within.

Chapter 3: Covered with the Bones of Saints

Introduction

If Venice's miraculous urban fabric was supported by wooden poles driven into the seabed, then its spiritual edifice was propped up by the bones of saints.³²⁶ Saint Mark's Square houses two imposing granite pillars that to this day support reliefs of the lion of Saint Mark and Saint Theodore of Amasea. Although the winged lion of Saint Mark was ubiquitous throughout the Venetian Republic, the Evangelist was not Venice's first saintly protector. Rather, Greek warrior Saint Theodore served as Venice's original patron saint and what we know today as Saint Mark's Basilica was initially a chapel dedicated to him. Despite the shift in civic devotion, the iconography of this civic space captured Venetian surety of its special standing with God through the saints. This relationship between saints and the city was articulated by Giovanni Tiepolo in a 1616 pamphlet celebrating the discovery of two important relics in Saint Mark's Basilica. The soon-to-be Patriarch of Venice took the opportunity to reflect upon the holiness of his Venetian homeland in this work, writing 'my homeland, I say, seeing you so full indeed in every part adorned and, so to speak, covered with the bones and relics of the saints'.³²⁷ In an earlier publication on the cult of the saints, Tiepolo explained that 'not only particular humans but also Christian cities have their holy

³²⁶ On the concept of sanctity and key developments in the period dealt with by this thesis see, Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints & Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). For an overview of the primary cults venerated in Venice and the Veneto region in this period, see *Culto dei santi a Venezia*, ed. by Silvio Tramontin (Venice: Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1965). In this volume, see in particular Antonio Niero's chapter, 'I santi patroni', pp. 75-99. See also *Il culto dei santi e le feste popolari nella Terraferma veneta: L'inchiesta del Senato veneziano*, ed. by Simonetta Marin (Vicenza: Angelo Colla Editore, 2007). In this volume, see the introductory essay, again by Antonio Niero, pp. 1-27.

³²⁷ 'Patria mia, il vederti dico tanto ripiena anzi in ogni tua parte ornate, & per così dire coperta dell'ossa, & reliquie de Santi'. Giovanni Tiepolo, *Trattato delle santissima reliquie ultimamente ritrovate nel Santuario della Chiesa di San Marco* (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, 1617), p. 7.

protector'.³²⁸ For Tiepolo, sanctity and cities – including his own – were intrinsically entwined. On one hand, urban bastions of Catholicism served as custodians of relics that in turn anointed them with tangible sacrality.³²⁹ On the other, patron saints had a continued and direct hand in caring for their cities by advocating for them in the court of Heaven.

This chapter investigates the relationship between the cult of the saints and the holiness of the city of Venice in the period following the Council of Trent. It argues that holy people, especially local figures born in or closely related to Venice, were used to emphasise the sacrality of the city itself. Here I show that the revival of important local cults through new and updated printed hagiographies, the physical renovation of shrines, and the translation of new relics into the city, enhanced both the figurative and tangible sacrality of the city of Venice. This chapter shows that the process of promoting these cults was highly collaborative and involved individuals and institutions from the top of the Venetian ecclesiastical hierarchy to the level of individual families and devotees. A key argument in this regard is that the Tridentine decrees and subsequent emphasis on the cult of the saints had particularly important consequences for Catholic urban life. Saints and cities were inextricably linked in this period. Patron saints had a direct relationship with the fortune of their cities, but this was not the only way that a saint could become bound to a particular urban context. Translation of relics, a process that asserted God's approval that one place should house them, emphasised the worthiness of the (often) city in question. In the case of local saints – holy people connected to a specific city by birth or association – an appropriately sacred homeland helped in the framing of their sanctity. Celebrating saints almost inevitably resulted in a celebration also of the holiness of a place, many of which were

³²⁸ 'Non solo gli uomini particolare, mà anco le città Christiane hanno il loro santo Protettore'. Giovanni Tiepolo, *Trattato dell'invocatione et veneratione de Santi. Nel quale si dimostra con l'autorità di molti Santi, e Dottori della Chiesa, quanto meritano, d'essere honorati, & venerati li Santi, Et la riverenza, che da noi si deve alle Imagini & memorie loro* (Venice: Andrea Baba, 1613), p. 120.

³²⁹ For an overview of the role of relics in Catholic devotion, see Charles Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe* (Padstow: TJ International, 2011).

cities. Of course, urban centres were not the only loci of sanctity in early modern Catholicism, nor did the decrees of Trent or post-Tridentine accentuation of sanctity refer solely to the patronal context. Yet, the intensely urban nature of sanctity meant that the renewal of cults, old or new, inevitably drew attention to the cities with which they were associated. Indeed, multiple cities might be closely bound to a single saint if, for example, a relevant relic was split and dispersed amongst them. Here I address two questions. How did the cults of holy people change in Venice throughout the seventeenth century? And what consequences did these changes have for the figurative and tangible status of Venice as a holy city?

I approach these questions by examining printed hagiographies along with evidence for the development of sacred spaces related to a range of both beatified and canonised holy people. I turn first to consider the framing of the sanctity of local holy people in printed hagiographies to understand how promotion of their individual sanctity resulted in the accentuation of the idea of Venice as a sacred city. I then move to examine more tangible examples of the revival of sanctity in Venice evidenced through the renovation of saints' shrines and the translation of major relics into the city. This chapter considers the various strands of promotion that worked to revive the cult of the saints in Venice and finally turns to evaluate evidence of the laity's engagement with key cults. Some of these figures were Catholic giants – Saint Mark the Evangelist, Saint Anthony of Padua and Saint Candida – whilst others were closely situated within the Venetian devotional context. Amongst these included figures who played prominent roles in both civic and religious life in the city of Venice such as Saint Leon Bembo (1112-1188), Saint Gerardo Sagredo (986-1046), and Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani (1381-1456). Others stand out for their contribution to local religious life, such as the parish priest Blessed Giovanni Piovano (fl. 1325), the Benedictine abbess Blessed Giuliana di Collalto (1186-1262) and Saint Girolamo Miani (1486-1537).

Conversely, Blessed Giacomo Salomone (1231-1314) was born in Venice, but the main events associated with his holiness occurred in Forlì, a city of the Emilia-Romagna region of northern Italy. These figures are unified by their *venezianità* – the quality of ‘being Venetian’ – and for their potential to communicate specific messages about their holy homeland to post-Tridentine Catholics in Venice.

Sanctity, community, and urbanity

Saints were at the heart of communal Catholic devotional life before and after Trent, but sanctity was not a straightforward matter for the reforming Church. On one hand, saints were indispensable bearers of confessional identity and the miracles worked through their intercession upheld the sacralised Catholic worldview. On the other, the Church knew that abuses had crept in, and it worked hard to rectify them. A well-known observation on the part of Peter Burke is the ‘crisis of canonization’ stretching from 1523 to 1588. During this considerable hiatus in saint-making, the Church made no new canonisations and thus avoided providing polemical ammunition to Protestant reformers. As Burke notes, the revival of canonisation by the Catholic Church was symptomatic of broader efforts to assert central control of the official process of interpreting holiness in people. The reforms to the cult of the saints which emanated from papal Rome had important consequences for Catholic devotion throughout Europe and Venice. This included the organisation of the Congregation of Sacred Rites and Ceremonies in 1588 responsible, among other things, for overseeing canonisation processes. Sharp distinction was made between the categories of ‘full saints’ and lesser-ranking holy people known as ‘blesseds’. Through reforms passed in 1625 and 1634 by Pope Urban VIII (in office 1623-1644), bestowing beatification was made a prerogative of the

Holy See.³³⁰ Stefania Tutino has noted that despite these measures, the papacy did not want to curb enthusiasm for saints as a whole. As such, cults that were deemed to have existed from time immemorial could be the subject of devotion, even if they had not been formally approved by Rome.³³¹

The Catholic Church did not abandon its holy heroes. On the contrary, the Council of Trent reaffirmed the validity of the cult of the saints and their adjoining relics during its twenty-fifth session in 1563. It ruled only that any superstition or abuses be removed and thus re-asserted the place of sanctity in Catholic culture.³³² Once the ‘crisis of canonisation’ was over and the Church had regained its nerve, saints played an indispensable role in the revivals and reinventions which characterised post-Tridentine Catholic devotion, especially in the first half of the seventeenth century. As Burke has shown, new canonisations were most enthusiastically bestowed upon individuals whose lives captured the values and aspirations of the post-Tridentine Church. The close of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century was therefore a formative time for the transformation of institutional attitudes towards sanctity. This process influenced the expansion in the production and consumption of hagiographies in Venice from the seventeenth century onwards, a trend noticed by scholars of Catholic devotion in other regions.³³³ Italian urban centres were crucial promoters of the cult

³³⁰ Burke, ‘How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint’, p. 50. On Urban VIII’s influence on processes of beatification and canonisation, see Simon Ditchfield, ‘How Not to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint: The Attempted Canonisation of Gregory X, 1622-45’, *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 60 (1992), 379-422.

³³¹ Stefania Tutino, *A Fake Saint and the True Church: The Story of a Forgery in Seventeenth-Century Naples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 37.

³³² Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p. 215.

³³³ Scholars of other regions have connected the closure of the Council of Trent and subsequent institutional developments on the interpretation of sanctity to the renewed interest in the cult of the saints and expansion in hagiographies in the seventeenth century. See Salvador Ryan, ‘Steadfast Saints or Malleable Models? Seventeenth-Century Irish Hagiography Revisited’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 91.2 (2005), 251-277; Elizabeth Ferguson, ‘Veneration, Translation and Reform: The Lives of Saints and the English Catholic Community, c. 1600-1642’, *British Catholic History*, 32.1 (2014), 37-65; Helen Hills, ‘The face is a mirror of the soul: Frontispieces and the production of sanctity in post-Tridentine Naples’, in *Art and Architecture in Naples, 1266-1713*, ed. by Cordelia Warr and Janis Elliott (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 125-151; Olds, *Forging the Past*, pp. 163-200; Jean-Marie Le Gall, ‘The Lives of Saints in the French Renaissance c.1500-c.1650’, in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. by Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), pp. 209-230.

of the saints through their print industries. The Universal Short Title Catalogue offers a sense of how this production was dispersed across Italian print centres. The USTC database cannot offer a comprehensive view of print production. Currently its chronological scope for Italian works only extends to 1650 which excludes almost 50 years of the seventeenth century covered by this thesis. My search focussed on texts containing the words ‘vita’ and ‘miracoli’ in their titles. These are extremely standard terms for Italian hagiographical works, but the results of my search may inevitably exclude hagiographical works that have non-standard phrasing in their titles. I present the following figures, therefore, as an indication of the rate of production in different Italian urban centres rather than as a definitive picture of book production. This search shows the production of 351 editions produced in Italy between the years 1550 and 1650. The data indicates that Venetian presses led the way in production (72 editions), followed by Rome (42 editions), then Naples (39 editions). Given the chronological restrictions of the data, I hesitate to speak of a ‘spike’ in production, but I will highlight that the available figures indicate that most of the books shown up by this search were produced between 1620 and 1630. These figures indicate that Venetian presses were responsible for producing most of the hagiographical works in the period covered by this search.

The particularities in the cult of the saints allow us to understand how Catholic reform manifested in different contexts in this period. My own approach is centred on understanding how the significance of well-established cults changed over time and how these can be used to communicate specific messages about the cities in which they pertain. I draw upon Simon Ditchfield’s concept of ‘thinking with saints’. As Ditchfield contends, we must ‘pay attention to the way in which saints and sanctity were constructed, imagined, represented, and used’. I focus on how saints’ cults in Venice were used to shape the experience of urban Catholic

life.³³⁴ Thomas Worcester reminds us that saints' cults were extremely malleable and their importance, or perhaps more accurately their relevance, could change over time. Worcester uses the seventeenth-century revival of the French cult of King-Saint Louis in after the Wars of Religion to demonstrate this point. Worcester notes that despite being canonised in the thirteenth century, the cult of Saint Louis 'became noteworthy only in the seventeenth century' corresponding with the need of Bourbon monarchs to promote the holiness of the French crown.³³⁵ Key to both Ditchfield's and Worcester's contributions to the conceptual use of saints to investigate post-Tridentine Catholicism is the idea that sanctity can be 'placed' – literally through relics or figuratively through hagiographical expansion – in various areas of Catholic life at different times in order to influence it in specific ways. This chapter thinks about how the cults of holy people including blessed, saints, and soon-to-be saints, were revived in post-Tridentine Venice. Hagiographical expansion in print combined with the expansion of the city's already impressive hoard of relics helped to cultivate a collective sense of Venice's unusual holiness, past and present.

The particularities that differentiated holy people meant that they and their relics were at the heart of processes of Catholic identity formation in diverse contexts. Serving as the devotional focus of voluntary confraternities, as the titular patrons of parish churches, or as the mighty protectors of entire cities, saints had an incredible capacity to bring Catholics together. Historians of Catholic exile and minority have made valuable contributions to our understanding of the power of saints and their relics to bind together Catholic communities in this period. Alexandra Walsham has emphasised the importance of saints' relics to the English Catholic recusant community arguing that they were used to 'recover the Christian

³³⁴ Simon Ditchfield, 'Thinking with Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early modern World', *Critical Inquiry*, 35.3 (2009), 552-583 (p. 559).

³³⁵ Thomas Worcester, 'Saints as Cultural History', in *Exploring Cultural History*, ed. by Melissa Calaresu, Filippo de Vivo, and Joan-Pau Rubiés (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 191-206 (p. 192).

past [...] to shape the present and future in the image of its primitive purity'.³³⁶ Liesbeth Corens has argued that relics were key to allowing English Catholic expatriates to preserve 'their own distinct and coherent community while remaining administratively and geographically within the universal Catholic church'.³³⁷ In places like Venice where Catholic hegemony dominated, the cult of the saints played no less an important role in forging Catholic community, a sentiment that manifested perhaps most clearly in the urban context. Historians of urban religion have demonstrated the intrinsic relationship between saints and the city. Using the city of Cologne and its palpable devotion to Saint Ursula as a case study, Steven Pfaff has argued that deeply-rooted devotion to saints in urban centres 'lessened the odds that Protestantism would displace Catholicism in sixteenth-century German cities'.³³⁸

In Venice, Protestantism did not pose the same threat to Catholic hegemony in cities so saints' cults were not 'deployed' in the same militaristic sense that they might have been in confessionally-divided or bi-confessional cities. Notwithstanding this point, saints helped to forge Catholic identity in Italian cities. Scholars of medieval Italy in particular have demonstrated the importance that the cult of the saints played in cultivating civic identity during the development of the Italian Communes.³³⁹ Anna Benvenuti has argued that the cult of local patron saints played indispensable roles in the development of civic identity in fourteenth-century Florence. On the value of studying saints' cults to understand urban religion, Benvenuti reminds us that 'cults, as with all genres of symbols of civic identity, are subjected to constant semantic updating that modifies their function over time. [...] they

³³⁶ Alexandra Walsham, 'Relics, Writing, and Memory in the English Counter-Reformation: Thomas Maxfield and his afterlives', *British Catholic History*, 34.1 (2018), 77-109 (p. 80).

³³⁷ Liesbeth Corens, 'Saints beyond borders: Relics and the Expatriate English Catholic Community', in *Exile and Religious Identity, 1500-1800*, ed. by Jesse Spohnholz and Gary K. Waite (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 25-39 (p. 26).

³³⁸ Steven Pfaff, 'The true citizens of the city of God: the cult of saints, the Catholic social order, and the urban Reformation in Germany', *Theory and Society*, 42 (2018), 189-218 (p. 190).

³³⁹ See Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125-1325* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Paolo Golinelli, *Città e culto dei santi nel medioevo italiano* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1996); *I santi patroni senesi*, ed. by Franca Ela Consolino (Siena: Academia Senese degli Intronati, 1991); Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-States* (London: I.B Tauris, 1996).

constitute an important key to the story of communal consciousness and, in the long term, of citizen identity'.³⁴⁰ Helen Hills has noted that, while vibrant scholarship has enthusiastically explored the 'mapping' of early modern cities and sanctity distinctly, there is far less consideration of how the two are interrelated for this period.³⁴¹ There is no shortage of scholarship dealing with urban cults, or sanctity more broadly. This chapter, however, aims offers a response to Hills' call for greater thought about the interconnection of sanctity and cities for the early modern period by analysing these matters in relation to sacred immanence and the urban context. Working on Baroque Naples, Hills encourages historians of Catholicism to question 'how the city *as a whole* was conceived and visualised through its saints'.³⁴² For her, 'saints did not simply make places sacred [...], place – whether a particular locality or a major city – was reformulated'.³⁴³ In my examination of Venetian sanctity and urbanity, I draw upon Hills' concept of 'enfoldment' – the idea that saint and city were not distinct, but indivisible. This chapter contributes to this scholarship on urban sanctity by investigating the ways in which the city of Venice was 'reformulated' through its relationship with saints in the post-Tridentine period. Here I show that the sacrality of the city of Venice, physical and figurative, was magnified in this period by its changing relationship with the cult of the saints.

³⁴⁰ Anna Benvenuti, 'I culti patronali tra memoria ecclesiastica e costruzione dell'identità civica: l'esempio di Firenze', in *La religion civique à l'èpoque médiévale moderne (Chrétientè et Islam)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1995), pp. 99-118 (p. 117).

³⁴¹ Helen Hills, 'Dislocating Holiness: City, Saint and the Production of Flesh', *Open Arts Journal*, 6.2 (2018), 39-65 (p. 41); On Hills' contribution to mapping and sanctity for Naples, see her 'Mapping the Early Modern City', 145-170.

³⁴² Hills, 'Dislocating Holiness', p. 41.

³⁴³ Hills, 'Dislocating Holiness', p. 42.

'Wonderful for its site': Saint, city, and hagiography in Venice

The seventeenth century was a decisive time for the revival of the cults of important Venetian holy people, many of which were contemporary to the medieval period. Karen McCluskey has recently referred to these holy people as 'citizen saints' emphasising their links with the city of Venice. In her research on the visual culture related to these cults, McCluskey emphasises that 'between 1200 and 1500, the veneration of local holy men and women remained comparatively subdued in Venice...written, physical, and artistic evidence is seriously lacking'.³⁴⁴ The situation in post-Tridentine Venice, especially from the beginning of the seventeenth century was drastically different. New and updated hagiographies, produced on a scale not seen before, promoted the lives of a rollcall of Venetian blessed, saints, and holy people. Deborah Walberg has foregrounded the role that Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo played in the promotion of homegrown holy people. She points to the patriarch's 1622 commissioning of twenty-eight portraits of Venetian holy people, some beatified, some canonised, some having no official recognition at all, for the Morosini chapel in the church of the Madonna dell'Orto. The portraits were designed to act as a visual companion to the manuscript catalogue of saints which Tiepolo had produced before he became Patriarch of Venice.³⁴⁵ While Tiepolo's effort demonstrates a clear perceived need to revive the cult of Venetian holy people in a collective sense, his work represents one aspect of a broader process of hagiographical expansion in seventeenth-century Venice. Not all the figures to be explored throughout this chapter were formally canonised, and some did not remain in the city of Venice for their entire lives. Nonetheless, these hagiographies made powerful cases for the enfoldment of saint and city. This enfoldment manifested in two ways. In the first

³⁴⁴ Karen E. McCluskey, *New Saints in Late-Medieval Venice, 1200-1500* (New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 22.

³⁴⁵ Walberg, 'Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo and the Search for Venetian Religious Identity', pp. 233-252. See also her 'The Pastoral Writings and Sacred Artistic Patronage of Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo (1619-1631): A Preliminary Investigation', *Studi Veneziani*, 62 (2011), 193-224.

instance, these hagiographies cast the city of Venice as having agency to produce holy people through its own exceptional holiness. And in the second, homegrown holy people went on to enhance the sacrality of the city of Venice through their lives, work, and deaths. I explore these issues through examination of printed hagiographies that narrated the lives of Saint Leon Bembo, Saint Gerardo Sagredo, Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani, and Saint Girolamo Miani. These works aimed to remind their readers that ‘being Venetian’ meant belonging to an illustrious sacred history populated by prestigious holy people. In turn, these works asserted the sacrality of their Venice for which a multiplicity of holy figures served as proof.

A wide range of Venetian holy people, whether formally approved by Rome or not, occupied the attention of seventeenth-century hagiographers in Venice. The 1645 hagiography of Saint Leon Bembo written by Paolino Fiamma, a cleric of the Order of the Crociferi, is a case in point.³⁴⁶ Bembo’s cult was one of those promoted by Patriarch Tiepolo at the Madonna dell’Orto. Like many of the figures pictured there, Bembo lacked formal recognition by Rome yet was a fixture in Venetian hagiographical tradition. Fiamma’s hagiography began by setting out his birth in the eleventh century to a prominent Venetian family. As was common, Bembo adopted both spiritual fervour and love of his homeland from an early age. After accompanying Doge Domenico Michiel in the 1122 defence of the Holy Land, Bembo eventually assumed contemplative life at a Benedictine monastery near the church of San Lorenzo and it was not until his death in 1188 that he acquired a significant devotional following. The miracle which secured Bembo’s sacred status occurred in 1207 at the site of his tomb in the Benedictine church of San Lorenzo. Fiamma wrote that ‘the sacristans many times saw a circle of stars in the sky from which came such splendour that

³⁴⁶ Paolino Fiamma was a possible descendant of Gabriele Fiamma (1533-1585) who was Bishop of Chioggia from 1584 to his death. Like Paolino Fiamma, Gabriele Fiamma authored several works published in Venice which celebrated the cult of the saints.

seemed like a hand'.³⁴⁷ This miracle, Bembo's *apparitio* (miraculous appearance), identified his tomb and was interpreted as a divine directive to 'lift him from amongst the body of the sinners where he lay'.³⁴⁸ Upon removing the body of Bembo 'they found it intact as it were the day it was placed'.³⁴⁹ The Bishop of Castello reopened the investigation into Bembo's miracles and, following the discovery of his incorrupt corpse, had his tomb moved to above the altar in the *chiesuola* (small church) of San Sebastiano accompanied by a great procession.³⁵⁰

Fiamma enthusiastically framed Bembo's holiness in relation to the holiness of Venice itself.

Saint Leon born in the City of Venice, wonderful for its site, for its greatness, for its riches, for its nobility that is held strong not by walls, but by flowing waters, and rich, not by its own territory, but for the enjoyment of all the kingdoms, noble, not by having become so over time, but for having been born from the nobility of the most ancient Republics of the world.³⁵¹

Fiamma linked Bembo's origins with some of the fundamental facets of Venetian urban and cultural uniqueness. The unlikely (or miraculous) site of the city, its unusual, aquatic topography, wealth, and imperial aspirations, along with its Rome-free origins were highlighted by the author. Specifically, Bembo's links to the early Cornelio family noted for

³⁴⁷ 'le sacristane più volte videro un cerchio di stelle in Cielo; dalle quali usciva tale splendore, che sembrava una mano'. Paolino Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del glorioso San Leon Bembo il cui corpo integro si riposa nell'antichissima chiesa sacrata à San Sebastiano Martire offitiata dalle M.R.R Madri di San Lorenzo di Venetia* (Venice: Antonio Giuliani, 1645), p. 7.

³⁴⁸ 'che trà cadaveri de peccatori all'hora giaceva di là fosse levata'. Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del gloriosa San Leon Bembo.*, p. 7.

³⁴⁹ 'ritrovarono intatto, come se il giorno inanti vi fosse stato riposto'. Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del gloriosa San Leon Bembo* p. 8

³⁵⁰ Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del gloriosa San Leon Bembo*, p. 8.

³⁵¹ 'Nacque San Leone nella Città di Venetia, meravigliosa per lo sito, per la grandezza, per la ricchezza, per la nobilità che in si rittiene forte non per maraglie, mà per flusibili acque, e ricca non per Territorio proprio, mà per godere de Territori de tutti gli altri Regni, nobile non per essersi resa tale con il tempo, mà per esser nata dalla nobilità delle più antiche Republiche del Mondo'. Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del glorioso San Leon Bembo*, pp. 3-4.

its ‘splendour, magnificence, amiableness, and charity’.³⁵² In the framing of Bembo’s sanctity, the city of Venice is indispensable. Bembo’s life of unusual holiness reflected the unsurpassed holiness of the city itself. Fiamma made it clear that Bembo was descended from a long line of exceptional figures central to key Venetian political and religious institutions through the centuries. Of these, Fiamma highlighted Doge Ottone Orseolo (992-1032) whose daughter Felicita married Nicolò Bembo. From their union came Pasquale who served as the Procurator of Saint Mark until his death in 1089. Helena, along with her son Doge Domenico Michiel, Bembo’s nephew whom he accompanied to the Holy Land, are counted among his illustrious family members. Fiamma was framing Bembo’s sanctity closely in relation to the aspects of Venice’s religious and political infrastructure which made it unique amongst its Italian counterparts. Specifically, the office of the doge who served as sacral head of the Venetian Republic is directly linked with the holiness of Bembo, as is the office of the Procurator of Saint Mark, a position at the heart of civic religion.³⁵³ The choice to accentuate these aspects of Bembo’s lineage sharply situated the saint’s holiness in the specific cultural, political, and religious context of Venetian society to which he belonged. In turn the holiness of Bembo, who was descended from such figures, upheld, and validated the sacrality of these offices.

Paolino Fiamma strove to establish the life and holiness of Bembo within the landscape of Venetian sanctity and nobility. Fiamma used the remaining few pages of his hagiography to emphasise the illustrious lineage of Bembo which he referred to earlier in his work. He assured his readers that all had historical foundation ‘in the ancient histories, in the

³⁵² ‘per lo splendore, & magnificenza, piacevolezza, & carità’. Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del gloriosa San Leon Bembo*, p. 4.

³⁵³ The office of the procurator of Saint Mark originated in the ninth century and was one of few lifetime appointments that existed in the Venetian government. Procurators held responsibility for the upkeep of Saint Mark’s Basilica along with other custodial and fiduciary functions. For more on the procurators of Saint Mark and the development of this role, see David Chambers, ‘Merit and Money: The Procurators of St Mark and Their *Commissioni*, 1443-1605’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 80 (1997), 23-88.

memories of marble [monuments] and in public writings or genealogical manuscripts [which] evidence the clearness of his blood'.³⁵⁴ In addition to the aforementioned ancestors, Fiamma closed his work by demonstrating that sacrality saturated the Bembo bloodline which boasted the Doge Domenico Michiele, the Blessed Anna Michiele, and the Blessed Antonio Bembo. The latter two joined their ancestor Bembo in the Madonna dell'Orto through the portraits commissioned by Patriarch Tiepolo in 1622. Through his hagiography, Paolino Fiamma provided his seventeenth-century readership with a strikingly thorough model of sanctity which stretched back to the earliest development of Venice. For him, Bembo's homeland, along with his ancestral connection to central religious and political institutions were key to understanding his holiness. The presence of Saint Leon Bembo, both in life and in death, amongst these institutions reaffirmed their sacrality and emphasised that the authority which underpinned them was directly mandated by God.

The close framing of holiness in relation to the Venetian state and its leading families was also key to the approach of Guido Casoni who wrote a hagiography of Saint Gerardo Sagredo. Like Saint Leon Bembo, Sagredo was another medieval figure whose life attracted the attention of seventeenth-century hagiographers in Venice. Casoni produced a hagiography of Saint Gerardo Sagredo in 1598 which was reprinted in Venice again in 1612. Sagredo was born in Venice in 986 and became a monk of the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore.³⁵⁵ The monk decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land but was prevented by a storm. Instead, Sagredo visited Hungary where he was 'dearly embraced by Holy King Stephen' who made him bishop of the newly established diocese of Csanàd. Sagredo played an important role in establishing Catholic authority in the diocese and is noteworthy for

³⁵⁴ 'nelle Historie antiche, nelle memorie in marmi, ed in scritte pubbliche, e genealogie manuscritte, [...] di prove nella chiarezza del suo sangue'. Fiamma, *Vita et miracoli del glorioso San Leon Bembo*, p. 11

³⁵⁵ 'Nacque il Santo huomo nell'anno nuoveceto ottantasei [...] ed'habito Monacale nello stesso Monasterio vestito'. Guido Casoni, *Vita del glorioso Santo Gerardo Sagredo nobile venetiano* (Venice: Li Sessa, 1612), unpaginated.

being the first Venetian martyr following his 1046 death at the hands of rebel pagans who ‘destroyed the temples, killed Christ’s faithful, [and] tormented priests’.³⁵⁶ Following his martyrdom, Sagredo’s body was repatriated and interred in the Church of San Donato at Murano where it became a site of local pilgrimage and miracles.³⁵⁷

Like Fiamma, Casoni argued for the influence that Sagredo’s Venetian heritage had in fostering his holiness. In Casoni’s account, however, there is a more explicit and deliberate attempt to situate the sanctity of Sagredo in the context of the Venetian patriciate

Saint Gerardo had a distinguished homeland, most noble ancestors, and a clear father. Venice, that in its site, in its majesty, and in its government makes nature seem like an artifice, art as a marvel, and a prudence as a miracle, was the *patria* of many most celebrated men. The Sagredo family, with a long and clear line of senators, fathers in the government, and sons with love for such an excellent Republic, was the root from which he rose high.³⁵⁸

In the cases of Bembo’s and Sagredo’s hagiographies, both being born in Venice and belonging to its foremost families were facilitators of their sanctity. The holiness of these people was directly linked to the holiness of the city itself. This exact sentiment of enfoldment was expressed by Venetian humanist Bartolomeo Spatafora in his *Quattro orationi* of 1554. The work served as a funeral oration for the recently deceased Doge Marc’Antonio Trevisan and in it Spatafora took the opportunity to celebrate the holy foundations of his homeland. Evoking the Old Testament metaphor of the Israelites’ exodus from their oppression in Egypt, he wrote that ‘similarly were the Venetians freed from the

³⁵⁶ ‘distruggessero i Tempij, uccidessero i fedeli di Christo, tormentassero i Sacerdoti’. Casoni, *Vita del glorioso Santo Gerardo Sagredo*, unpaginated.

³⁵⁷ ‘fù dipoi condotto à Venetia, ove hora nella Chiesa di San Donato à Murano piamente riposa’. Casoni, *Vita del glorioso Santo Gerardo Sagredo*, unpaginated.

³⁵⁸ ‘Hebbe Gerardo Santo Patria augusta, antenati Nobilissimi, & Padre chiarissimo. Venetia, che nel sito, nella Maestà, & nel governo fa parere la Natura artificio, l’Arte maraviglia, & la Prudenza miracolo, fù di tant’uomo celebratissima patria. La Famiglia Sagreda, chiara per lunga serie di tanti Senatori, Padri nel governo, & Figliuoli nell’amore di così Eccelsa Republica, fu la radice, da cui egli altamente risorge’. Casoni, *Vita del glorioso Santo Gerardo Sagredo*, unpaginated.

rage of the greedy and covetous Barbarians [and God] miraculously caused this city to be born under Christ'.³⁵⁹ The hostile environment too was mitigated by God's intervention who caused 'these lowly and difficult waters with divine virtue and blessing to become a source of living water [that] will spring forth eternally'.³⁶⁰ As Spatafora reasoned, it was little wonder that 'many [people] for holiness of life and for clear and illustrious miracles [...] this sanctified city has produced.³⁶¹ Here the city of Venice is endowed with a sacred agency allowing it to both nurture holy people and serve as a worthy homeland for their lives. Yet, the enfoldment of city and saint did not simply involve the former producing the latter. In the hagiographies of Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani (1381-1456) and Saint Girolamo Miani (1486-1537), we see that the authors emphasised not the role of the 'sanctified city' in producing saints, but saints' role in directly enhancing the sacrality of Venice through their lives, work, and deaths.

Lorenzo Giustiniani served as the first Patriarch of Venice following the unification of the Diocese of Castello with the Patriarchate of Grado in 1451. In Federico Malipiero's 1638 hagiography of Giustiniani, the author foregrounded the valuable contributions that Lorenzo and his family made to Venice. Malipiero wrote that 'the purest waters of this family [...] have been food for the city of Venice, and precious food, which has [...] fed their homeland'.³⁶² The association of the subject of the hagiography with their illustrious family was a standard way of framing individual holiness. In Malipiero's work, however, we get a

³⁵⁹ 'Somigliantemente ancora liberati i Venetiani dalla rabbia di quegli ingordi, & bramosi Barbari [...] questa città fece miracolosamente sotto CRISTO nascere'. Bartolomeo Spathaphora, *Quattro orationi di M Bartolomeo Spathaphora di Moncata, Gentil' Uomo Venetiano. L'una in morte del Serenissimo Marc'Antonio Trivisano. L'altra nella creatione del serenissimo Francesco Veniero Principe di Venetia, Et una in difesa della servitù. L'altra in difesa della Discordia*, p. 17.

³⁶⁰ 'queste acque basse, & gravose con la divina virtu, & beneditione divenute fonte di acque vive [...] sagliente, farle eternalmente scaturire'. Spatafora, *Quattro orationi*, p. 17.

³⁶¹ 'molti huomini per santità di vita, & per miracoli chiari, & illustri [...] questa città santificata prodotti, possiamo apertamente vederlo'. Spatafora, *Quattro orationi*, p. 18.

³⁶² 'Le purissime acque di questa Famiglia [...] sono state vivande nella Città di Venezia, e cibi preziosi, se cui [...] s'e alimentata là Patria'. Federico Malipiero, *La vita del beato Lorenzo Giustiniano. Primo patriarca di Venezia* (Venice: Salvadori, 1638), A2.

clear sense that Lorenzo Giustiniani played a key role in transforming the sacred status of Venice. In this case, the moment of Giustiniani's death was intimately bound with the future of the Venetian Republic and its standing with God. Malipiero carefully described the prophetic prayer that the holy man cried out at the moment before his death. Crucially, Giustiniani died in a state of sanctifying grace objecting to the grief of his nephew, Bernardo. Malipiero wrote that

The Blessed Lorenzo fixed his eyes onto his nephew and said to him: "Bernardo, why are you crying? And what for? Give me your hand". And he took his hand and said, "Stay strong, do not fear, oh son trust in the Lord, who will not abandon me".³⁶³

In this moment that Giustiniani exhibited this profound sign of sanctity, and surrounded by Venetian officials from the doge to members of the Senate he

extended his hand so to bless those around him [...] "May God make you blessed and shower his mercy upon you Most Serene Prince [doge] and august Senate and thus upon all of you people and citizens of this free Republic to whom our Lord deigns to grant Peace, and Happiness for all the ages".³⁶⁴

This passage captured the transformative power of the enfoldment of the saint and the city. In the manner of his death, and in the focus of his final prayer, Giustiniani was able to change the sacred standing of his homeland. Specifically, Malipiero wrote that 'The happy Republic consoled itself in having acquired a protector before the Tribunal of God's

³⁶³ 'Il Beato Lorenzo affisò gli'occhi suoi nel Nipote e dissegli. Bernardo tù piangi? & perchè? Dammi la tua destra, & presa la sua mano disse. Stà d'animo forte, non temere ò figliuolo confidati nel Signore, che da me non sarai abbandnato'. Malipiero, *La vita del beato Lorenzo*, p. 32

³⁶⁴ 'il Beato Lorenzo stendendo là destra così benedisse li circostanti. [...] "Iddio vi rendi Benedetti & piovi sopra voi là sua misericordia ò Prencipe serenissimo & Seneto Augusto & cosi sopra voi tutti popoli, & Cittadini di questa libera Republica a la cui Nostro Signore si degni concedere Pace, & Felicità in tutti i secoli'. Malipiero, *La vita del beato Lorenzo*, p. 34.

Justice, who will pray for in [times] of common emergency'.³⁶⁵ In the case of Giustiniani's hagiography, we see the other side of saint-city enfoldment which resulted in the saint's life directly enhancing the sacrality of the city. Lorenzo Giustiniani's holiness and commending of his homeland to God changed the position of Venice in the court of heaven, for with his death, it gained a new mighty intercessor.

In the 1605 hagiography of Saint Girolamo Miani, Andrea Stella demonstrated that the enfoldment of saint and city did not depend upon their perpetual physical presence in their homeland. Miani is best known for his charitable work and for being a founder of the Somascan Fathers. In Venice, Miani conducted extensive charitable work, especially through the establishment of orphanages, and played a key role in dispensing aid during the plague outbreak of 1528.³⁶⁶ Again, Venice – the 'singular ornament of the world, and great miracle of the universe' – was important in Stella's framing of Miani's holiness, but a significant amount of Miani's charitable work took place outside of the city itself. In fact, some of Miani's most significant contributions to Catholic society took place once he 'left from Venice, *patria*, and passed through many cities of the Signoria, [when] first he arrived at Bergamo, then Padua, Vicenza, and Verona'.³⁶⁷ Miani's presence in key cities of the Venetian *terraferma* (mainland empire) allowed the holiness of the city of Venice to extend outwards. Stella explained that, despite leaving his *patria*, Miani's Venetian identity remained crucial to his work that encompassed establishing orphanages, converting heretics, and bringing sinful women back to the faith. Of his work in the *terraferma*, Stella wrote that 'it was a beautiful thing to see in those dissolute times, a

³⁶⁵ 'La Republica lieta si consolava d'haversi acquistato un protettore avanti il Tribunale della Giustizia di Dio, il quale faccia, a faccia havrebbe pregato per lei nelle urgenze comuni'. Malipiero, *La vita del beato Lorenzo*, p. 35

³⁶⁶ Andrea Stella, *Vita del venerabile servo d'Iddio il padre Girolamo Miani nobile venetiano* (Venice: Li Sessa, 1605), p. 11.

³⁶⁷ 'che partendosi da Venetia, patria, e passando per tante Città & luoghi della Signoria, prima, che arrivasse à Bergamo, come Padova, Vicenza, Verona'. Stella, *Vita del venerabile servo d'Iddio*, fol. 14^v.

Venetian man, in a rustic habit, in the company of many beggars [...] and noble gentlemen dressed in thick black clothes with the cap in the costume of Venice'.³⁶⁸ Here Miani's Venetian heritage, and the visual markers of 'being Venetian' in the costume of his followers were a source of pride for Stella as they served to emphasise the sacred status of the city of Venice for which the work of Miani in the *terraferma* was the living proof.

The relationship between the mobility of holy people and their ultimate value for understanding the holiness of their native cities is also evident in Giovanni Tiepolo's hagiography of Blessed Giacomo Salomone (1231-1314). Salomone was a Dominican priest who, despite being born Venetian, is most closely associated with the city of Forlì in the Italian Emilia-Romagna region where he worked and died. In his 1618 hagiography, Tiepolo identified Salomone as the 'protector of the city of Forlì' emphasising the patronal role the Venetian occupied in his adopted city.³⁶⁹ Despite spending most of his life outside of Venice and apparently not having a significant cult following there, Tiepolo emphasised the ongoing importance of the saint for understanding the sacrality of the city of Venice. Moreover, Tiepolo, more than any of the hagiographers looked at here, clearly enunciated the reasons why the enfoldment of saint and city was important for seventeenth-century Catholic devotional life. Tiepolo raised the question of the value of speaking of the homeland of any saint. For this, the answer was clear:

Many receive the light to walk in the way of the Lord, those people who see resplendent in their eyes [...] of one of their citizens. The soul that is already disposed to serve God is greatly awakened when amongst

³⁶⁸ 'Era bella cosa da vedere in quelli tempi dissoluti un Gentil'huomo Venetiano, in habito rustico, in compagnia de molti mendichi, anzi (per dir meglio) Christiani riformati, e Gentil'huomini nobilissimi vestiti de panni grossi neri con la beretta al costume di Venetia'. Stella, *Vita del venerabile servo d'Iddio*, fol. 19^r.

³⁶⁹ Giovanni Tiepolo, *La vita del B. Giacomo Salomone. Frate dell'Ordine di S. Domenico, nobile venetiano et protettore della città di Forlì* (Venice: Domenico Lovisa, 1618).

other things, it finds itself provoked to do so by the nobility of the country and worthy condition of its own.³⁷⁰

For Tiepolo, the ability to relate to a particular saint relevant to one's homeland inspired the soul of the devotee and ultimately brought them closer to God. It did not matter that Salomone passed most of his life outside of the urban context of Venice, nor that the miracles which signalled his blessed status enriched another city. Simply being Venetian was enough reason to expect devotion to Salomone in Venice. What is more, Tiepolo clearly articulated the nature of enfoldment between saint and their native city emphasising the ongoing relevance that saints had to earthly cities, despite having been promoted to heavenly citizens of God's city after their deaths.

Any large and magnificent city does not merit comparison with the very homeland and city of the Lord. Natural light does not tolerate the competition of artificial light, it denies and obscures it. It is not so in the lives of the saints [...] the lights of their homelands and the splendour of their birthplaces [...] increases in no small way the praise and esteem for the city and the family that produced them in the world.³⁷¹

In this passage Tiepolo captured the principle at the heart of the enfoldment of saint and city in seventeenth-century hagiography: that neither could be divided from the other. Celebrating the holiness of a saint also would mean, and certainly ought to mean celebrating the holiness of the cities to which they pertained. By foregrounding this

³⁷⁰ 'Molto riceve di lume per caminare nella via del Signore, quel popolo che vede splendersi ne gli occhi [...] d'alcun suo cittadino. Molto si risveglia quell'animo che hà già disposto servire à Dio, quando trà l'altre cose si trova à ciò provocato dalla nobiltà della patria, & dalla degna conditione dei suoi'. Tiepolo, *La vita del B. Giacomo Salomone*, p. 9.

³⁷¹ 'Non merita qual si voglia ampia, & magnifica cittade paragonarsi con quella che è la stessa Patria & città del Signore. Il lume naturale non compatisce il concorso dell'artificiale, lo ammacca, & offusca. Non è così nelle vite de Santi [...] il chiaro delle lor patrie, & lo splendore dei lor natali [...] accresce non poco di lode, & di stima alla Città, & alla famiglia che l'hanno prodotto nel mondo'. Tiepolo, *La vita del B. Giacomo Salomone*, pp. 9-10.

enfoldment, seventeenth-century hagiographers made powerful arguments for the sacrality of the city of Venice for which so many holy people served as proof. These hagiographies not only dazzled their readers with stories about local Catholic heroes, but they also made powerful arguments for the sacrality of their city that produced them.

'To enrich that glorious city': Enhancing the tangible sanctity of Venice

Catholic sanctity has an explicitly material dimension. Above all it was holiness embodied in bodies. After death, relics allowed saintly presence to be perpetually reasserted in specific places. Indeed, the bones of one saint, Mark the Evangelist, were the foundation upon which Venice built its divine status at a city worthy of housing the relics of a chief figure of Christianity. The medieval period was crucial for Venice's collection of relics. John Osborne has traced important phases of relic translation in Venice to the ninth century by examining the influx of those gifted by Byzantium to maintain Venetian allegiance following its gaining independence from the Byzantine Empire.³⁷² David M. Perry has drawn attention to the importance of the Fourth Crusade, especially the Sack of Constantinople in 1204, in the history of Venice's acquisition of relics.³⁷³ These relics made Venice a treasure trove of sacrality and an essential destination of pilgrimage. In this sense, Ana Munk has analysed the significance of Venetian relic cults in attracting pilgrims arguing that by 1380 Venice had 'monopolised pilgrim transportation to the Levant'.³⁷⁴ Sandra Toffolo has recently examined

³⁷² John Osborne, 'Politics, diplomacy and the cult of the relics in Venice and the northern Adriatic in the first half of the ninth century', *Early Medieval Europe*, 8.3 (2002) 369-384 (p. 369).

³⁷³ David M. Perry, *Sacred Plunder: Venice and the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2015).

³⁷⁴ Ana Munk, 'The Art of Relics Cults in Trecento Venice: *Corpi Sancti* as a Pictorial Motif and Artistic Motivation', *Radovi Instituta za Povijest Umjetnosti*, 30 (2006), 81-92 (p. 81). On Venice as a centre of pilgrimage, see also Robert C. Davis, 'Pilgrim-Tourism in Late Medieval Venice', in *Beyond Florence: The Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Paula Findlen, Michelle M. Fontaine, Duane J. Osheim (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 119-32.

pilgrims' accounts of their stays in Venice on their way to the Holy Land emphasising their reverence for the relics in the city.³⁷⁵ All considered, Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo's seventeenth-century metaphorical assertion that Venice was 'covered with the bones and relics of the saints' certainly reflected a material reality. Hagiographers in seventeenth-century Venice used their holy people to emphasise the figurative sacrality of their city and its central institutions. This chapter now turns to examine more tangible ways that the city of Venice became enfolded with the cult of the saints through the renovation of saintly shrines, the valorisation of their relics, and the translation of new ones into Venice. I examine how the status of existing saints' relics were elevated in the post-Tridentine period, and how the city was enriched by the translations of new ones into the city. I chart changes to the shrines of Saint Leon Bembo and the Blessed Giovanni Piovano which corresponded to new printed accounts of their lives. I also turn to the late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century revival of the shrine of Blessed Giuliana Collalto at the church of Santi Biagio e Cataldo which attracted significant devotional attention in Venice. Finally, I consider the substantial expansion of the cult of Saint Anthony of Padua in Venice through the translation of his relics to the city in 1652, a process which engaged the whole city. I turn first to consider the relationship between the textual promotion of the cult of Saint Leon Bembo previously analysed here, and the enhancements to his shrine at the church of San Lorenzo.

The Benedictine church of San Lorenzo along with the adjacent *chiesuola* ('little church') of San Sebastiano, both situated in the *sestiere* of Castello, served as the resting place for the relics of two Venetians: Saint Leon Bembo and Blessed Giovanni Piovano. Both were the subject of hagiographical promotion in this period. Bembo and Piovano were included in the 1622 portraits commissioned by Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo and earlier in this

³⁷⁵ Sandra Toffolo, *Describing the City: Describing the State: Representations of Venice and the Venetian Terraferma in the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 60-69.

chapter, I drew attention to the 1645 hagiography of Bembo by Paolino Fiamma. In fact, this book contained two separate hagiographies, Bembo's, and that of Piovano. Fiamma clearly had an interest in the San Lorenzo and the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano as demonstrated by another of his works that explored the history of both churches and the sacred treasures which they contained.³⁷⁶ Both the churches of San Lorenzo and the *chiesuola* San Sebastiano underwent renovation in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. San Lorenzo was a conventual church, but Flaminio Corner tells us that the laity frequently worshipped there. In part, lay devotion to the church of San Lorenzo was the result of the plenary indulgences associated it.³⁷⁷ Despite intense lay devotion to the church of San Lorenzo, it was subjected to the ravages of both time and neglect to the point of ruin.³⁷⁸ In this account, Corner showed how two miracles worked through the relics of Saint Candida, got the process of renovating the church off to a supernatural start in 1592. During the first, the vault of the chapel of Saint Candida collapsed suddenly with four men standing just above, none of whom were harmed. The second involved the discovery of precious gold coins while the ground around the chapel was being dug out. The consensus was that these were part of a gift made by the doges of the Michiel family, Vitale I Michiel (in office 1095-1102) and/or Vitale II Michiel (in office 1156-1172), to a nun of the same family at the church.³⁷⁹ The two miracles which accompanied the building work were followed by the *apparitio* of Santa Candida meaning that her lost relics were miraculously rediscovered. Corner wrote that the workers attempting to 'hollow out a pillar with hammers, broke into it, that being [a pillar] of the same chapel of Saint Candida, and in an instant, they saw a great splendour, that frightened those workers,

³⁷⁶ Paolino Fiamma, *La vera origine delle chiese de gloriosi martiri San Lorenzo, et San Sebastiano nelle isole dette Gemine, & Gemelle, & Zimole* (Venice: Gio. Antonio Giuliani, 1645).

³⁷⁷ 'Frequente era a que' tempi il concorso del popolo a questa Chiesa, per le molte Indulgenze a lei concesse'. Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e i Torcello* (Padua: Giovanni Manfrè, 1758), p. 137

³⁷⁸ Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 137

³⁷⁹ 'É opinione di molti, che questa sieno state ricchezze de' Dogi Michieli, date in salvo alla sorelle Monaca in questo Monasterio'. Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 137.

and so was rediscovered the body of the saint within the pillar'.³⁸⁰ The 1592 *apparitio* of Saint Candida was a significant moment in the life of the church of San Lorenzo, one which brought active sanctity to the centre of its subsequent development and that of the cults based there under the steer of the Benedictines.

Both the church of San Lorenzo, to which a Benedictine convent was attached, and the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano, which was connected to this convent, were cultic centres for both Saint Leon Bembo and Blessed Giovanni Piovano. Paolino Fiamma's hagiographies of both (published in the same volume) of these figures tells us that the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano housed their respective relics. What Fiamma is less clear about, however, is the temporary removal of the relics of both Bembo and Piovano from the *chiesuola* to the adjacent church of San Lorenzo. The body of Bembo was indeed transferred to the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano in 1207. Venetian antiquarian Emmanuele Cicogna's scholarship highlighted a later movement of Bembo's relics to the church of San Lorenzo in 1629 on account of the need to renovate the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano.³⁸¹ Bembo's relics were placed above the altar of the *Assunta* in San Lorenzo. The relics were returned to San Sebastiano in 1632 and the move was officially recognised by the patriarchate on 9 August of the same year. Cicogna further tells us that the same bishop ordered the erasure of the previous inscription which identified Bembo's relics with a new one: CORPVS. SERVI. DEI. LEONIS. BEMBO.³⁸² The printed renewal through Fiamma's hagiography therefore followed a process of physical renovation which drew attention to a new phase in the cult of Saint Leon Bembo. Bembo's bones were disturbed once more in 1643 when they were placed in an altar dedicated to San Francesco in the same church. There he remained until the

³⁸⁰ 'Li operati [...] in un pilastro col batter de' martello il vacuo, ruppero quello, il quale era dell'istessa Cappella di Santa Candida, e in un subito si vide un splendore grandissimo che spaventò quelli operari, e così fu ritrovato entro il plastron il corpo della Santa'. Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 138.

³⁸¹ Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane raccolte, II* (Venice: Giuseppe Picotti, 1818), p. 411.

³⁸² Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, p. 411.

Napoleonic suppression when his relics were conducted to the church of Saint Blaise, Istria.³⁸³ For Blessed Giovanni Piovano, an almost identical process occurred. Although, his relics were returned later to the *chiesuola* and conserved in the altar of San Lorenzo in a 1644 process overseen by Patriarch Giovanni Francesco Morosini.³⁸⁴

The printing context of Paolino Fiamma's 1645 hagiography needs more thought when we consider these earlier renovations. The renovation work on the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano is important for understanding both the impetus for producing the written hagiography and for considering how textual promotion of holy people was also accompanied by tangible enhancement to the sites of their sanctity. This process of renovation, including the temporary removal of Bembo and Piovano's relics, raised the profile of these two cults in Venice. Both visibly, through moving their relics to new, more prominent altars, and the provision of new identifying inscriptions enhanced the status of the holy people. In the case of the 1632 inscription ordered by Francesco Priori, and the erasure of the previous one, we get the sense of the inauguration of a new phase in the cult of Saint Leon Bembo in seventeenth-century Venice which is evidenced further by the aforementioned effort made by Patriarch Tiepolo to celebrate Bembo through his 1622 portrait cycle in the Madonna dell'Orto. The renovations to the shrine of both Saint Leon Bembo and Blessed Giovanni Piovano attempted to draw attention to the tangible sacrality that their relics provided. Turning now to the cult of the Blessed Giuliana Collalto, I continue to examine how textual renewal through printed hagiographies was accompanied by physical changes to important sites of sanctity in Venice.

The Blessed Giuliana, contessa di Collalto (1186-1262) was one of those honoured by Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo in 1622 through her portrait in the Madonna dell'Orto church. As

³⁸³ Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, pp. 411-2.

³⁸⁴ Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, p. 413.

with several others, Tiepolo's visual promotion of Collalto was in part, an effort to ratify her cult. Although this was not to be in his lifetime, Collalto was elevated to 'Blessed' status in 1743.³⁸⁵ What is clear, however, is that this cult underwent revival in late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century Venice and was an important fixture in local devotional life. We also know that the lay devotional activity which accumulated around Collalto and her shrine site at Santi Biagio e Cataldo on the Giudecca was crucial for attaining this beatification. The Venetian laity's relationship with Collalto in the period under study will be examined more closely later in this chapter. Now, continuing to think about tangible sanctity, I turn to examine the renovation of Collalto's shrine at the church of Santi Biagio e Cataldo. Like other Venetian holy people considered thus far, Collalto was the subject of new and updated printed accounts of her life, death, and post-mortem miracles. This included the 1693 hagiography by Antonio Arcoleo. Curiously, Arcoleo, a Venetian writer, sent his work to Viennese printer Wanterlingh for publication rather than choosing a local Venetian press for reasons which will be considered later. Despite its publishing context, Arcoleo's *Ristretto* drew upon historic and first-hand accounts of Collalto's cult and its locus on the Giudecca and how this changed in the period under study.

Blessed Giuliana Collalto was responsible for significant contributions to local religious life. Born in 1186 to the noble family of the Conti di Collalto, she was taken at the age of ten to the Benedictine Convent of Santa Margherita in Salarola near Padua.³⁸⁶ She passed thirty years there before settling in Venice to establish a Benedictine convent connected to the (now demolished) church of Santi Biagio e Cataldo on the Giudecca.³⁸⁷ Her

³⁸⁵ Blessed Giuliana di Collalto was formally beatified by Pope Benedict XIV in 1743.

³⁸⁶ 'L'anno 1186 dalla Famiglia nobilissima del'ill. Conti di Collalto [...] naque la Beata Giuliana. [...] L'anno 1196 à porla nel Convento di Santa Margherita in Salarola [...] preso ai confine di Padova'. Antonio Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana contessa di Collalto fondatrice del venerabile monastero de Santi Biagio, e Cataldo in Venetia* (Vienna: Wanterlingh, 1693), pp. 11-12.

³⁸⁷ 'passò in Venetia [...] ed hora punta della Giudecca volgarmente chiamata, col consenso del Veneto Senato, così persuaso da Procuratori di S. Marco [...] piantò un Convento di Monache, nel luogo appunto dove si vedeva eretto un Tempio al culto de SS. Biagio, e Cataldo'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 14.

death in 1262 sparked devotional activity amongst local lay people who gathered to venerate the body with the expectation that miracles would follow.³⁸⁸ The people were not disappointed. Miracles continued to bless devotees for 35 years following Collalto's death. Eventually, devotional fervour became unwieldy and the nuns of Santi Biagio e Cataldo decided to exhume the grave in which Collalto was buried to move her to a more manageable place.³⁸⁹ Upon opening the casket, they found her body to be incorrupt and intact. As with Saint Leon Bembo, the miracle of preservation consolidated local devotion to Collalto, and her body was reinterred in an elaborate tomb embellished with crystal and gold above an altar in the church.³⁹⁰

Despite living and working in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Collalto's cult retained its importance in Venice during the period of this study. Arcoleo's research on the cult of Collalto draws attention to significant post-Tridentine changes to her Giudecca shrine. One of the earliest works he referenced was a small book (*libretto*) conserved in the Convent of Santi Biagio e Cataldo dating up to 1502. Using this work, Arcoleo established that the altar above which Collalto was interred was consecrated in 1552.³⁹¹ This altar's consistent maintenance was confirmed by the 'worthy deposition' of Suor Bernarda Delfino in the year 1664. Here Delfino, 'oldest of the nuns [and] healthy of both mind and body affirmed by her conscience that she had always seen [Collalto's] body and the altar of Giuliana exactly as it was from then and had always in the church heard the masses [celebrated over the altar]'.³⁹² Arcoleo drew upon authors not related to the convent to further demonstrate the perpetual

³⁸⁸ 'i popoli à schiere per adorare quel venerabile corpo, e con il desiderio di vedere quei vivi miracoli'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 21.

³⁸⁹ Giuliana di Collalto's decorated coffin was moved to the Chiesa Sant'Eufemia following demolition of SS. Biagio e Cataldo's roof in 1822. It is now held by the Museo Correr, Venice.

³⁹⁰ 'ornata di cristalli, & abbellita con oro nella Chiesa, sovra d'un Altare'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 22.

³⁹¹ 'l'Altare alla medesima consacrato l'anno 1552'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 24.

³⁹² 'la degna deposizione della Madre suor Bernarda Delfino nell'anno 1664 la più vecchia frà tutte le Monache [...] la quale sana di mente è di corpo in sua coscienza affermava haver sempre veduto il corpo, e l'Altare di Giuliana come appunto era all'hora, & haver sempre nella Chiesa udite le Mese della medesima'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, pp. 24-5.

presence of Collalto's relics in this altar drawing attention to the importance of the site. All told, Arcoleo was aware of and drew upon eleven testimonies, archival records, or published works dealing with the authenticity of Collalto's holiness from 1502 right up to his own *Ristretto* of 1693. Turning to later printed accounts of her life, we get a greater sense of where Antonio Arcoleo's 1693 *Ristretto* sits within the broader context of Blessed Giuliana di Collalto's cult and the revival of her shrine as an important site of sanctity in Venice. As with the case of Saint Leon Bembo, the renovation of Collalto's shrine indicated departure with patterns of medieval devotion and the inauguration of a new phase of post-Tridentine renewal in her cult.

Blessed Giuliana Collalto's miraculous shrine underwent important physical development in post-Tridentine Venice which corresponded with the printed revival of her cult through new and updated hagiographies. Giuseppe Trojani's 1756 account of Collalto's life draws attention to how such measures signalled a new phase in her cult. Specifically, Trojani tells us that Angiola Morosini, abbess of the convent, commissioned a new altarpiece in 1590 to adorn Collalto's shrine.³⁹³ This was the finishing touch to a broader program of restoration of the original shrine site and its altar at Santi Bagio e Cataldo. Trojani suggested that the old altar, despite being preserved as an essential piece of material evidence of the cult's perpetuity, did not serve to 'stir up devotion in these cultured times'.³⁹⁴ This physical valorisation of Collalto's cult is significant, particularly Trojani's framing of this as a moment of transition. In the removal of the medieval piece and replacing it with a contemporary one, there is a distinct sense of the effort to inaugurate a new phase in Collalto's cult in Venice. For Trojani, certainly, the medieval piece no longer inspired the devotional passion necessary for the times. We know that the cult held a special place in

³⁹³ Giuseppe Trojani, *Notizie storiche sulla vita del B. Giuliana Collalto* (Venice: Marceria all'Insegna dell'Europa, 1756), p. 21.

³⁹⁴ 'tanto più che la rozza Pittura antica non era molto propria in tempi più colti a fomentare la Divozione'. Trojani, *Notizie storiche*, p. 21.

Venetian devotional life from the fourteenth century, but we have evidence here of a key moment of revival in the post-Tridentine period. Trojani was not contemporary to the 1590 restoration of Collalto's altar and altarpiece, but his observation gives us a clear sense of a distinct moment of post-Tridentine revival rather than quiet continuity of medieval patterns of devotion.

Arcoleo's *Ristretto* alone does not prove that the seventeenth century was a decisive moment in devotion to Collalto and the status of her cult. After all, we know that the cult was established in Venice during the thirteenth century. Despite the efforts to accentuate her cult on the part of Tiepolo, we must consider that another decisive attempt – through the restoration of her altar in 1590 by commission of Angiola Morosini – evidence earlier attempts at renewal. The post-Tridentine emphasis on the proper use and status of sacred space is important here. Following restoration works to the church in 1519, the new building was consecrated in 1589. The restoration works continued until 1603 and the altar of Blessed Giuliana di Collalto retained its original position although, as Zuleika Murat points out, the relic of Collalto's intact body was placed in a marble coffin with a crystal front to permit devotees sight of the holy woman.³⁹⁵ Murat sees this move as an expression of the norms established in 1592 by Antonio Grimani, Bishop of Torcello who made directives concerning the display of relics in churches. In the case of intact bodies, like Collalto's, the bishop wrote that such relics were to be 'conserved in well-made arches of marble or stone and placed in a visible place'.³⁹⁶ In this context, we see how the work on Collalto's shrine, along with the portrait commissioned by Tiepolo in 1622 played an important role in enhancing the status of Collalto in Venice. As I will examine more closely later in this chapter, the physical

³⁹⁵ Zuleika Murat, 'Performing Objects: la cassa reliquiario della beata Giuliana di Collalto nel contesto veneziano e nord-adriatico', in *La Serenissima via mare: Arte e cultura tra Venezia e il Quarnaro*, ed. by Valentina Baradel and Cristina Guarnieri (Padua: Padua University Press, 2019), pp. 17-38 (p. 22).

³⁹⁶ Murat, 'Performing Objects', p. 22.

enhancements to Collalto's shrine preceded a period of sustained lay engagement with it in the seventeenth century.

A particularly spectacular enhancement of the sacrality of the city of Venice occurred by the 1652 translation of a portion of Saint Anthony's relics from nearby Padua. The cult was already well established in Venice, despite its main site of pilgrimage being in Padua and the man himself being Portuguese. In the mid seventeenth century, we see a significant surge in Antonian devotion in Venice. The Venetian government was clear about the need to reassert the city's relationship with the sacred by obtaining a portion of Saint Anthony's relics. This process was driven by very specific concerns regarding hostilities with the Turks that had resumed in the Fifth Ottoman-Venetian War (1645-1669). The first half of the seventeenth century was a difficult time for the Republic with particularly traumatic periods, such as the plague epidemic of 1630-1, compelling the Republic to reinforce its relationship with God. At the same time Venice had become involved in a series of northern Italian conflicts like the Mantuan War of Succession (1628-31). Despite the victory at Lepanto in the previous Ottoman-Venetian war of 1570-1573, the loss of Cyprus in 1573 was a heavy blow which left Crete or 'Candia' as the last major overseas possession for the Republic. It is within this context that the Republic decided to bolster its already dense collection of relics in the city. The process was documented by Orsato Sertorio who published his account *Le grandezze di S. Antonio* in Padua in 1653. In the context of the ongoing Ottoman-Venetian conflict, Sertorio reminded his readers of Venice's favoured status with God highlighting that 'the Venetians had fortune to bring from Alexandria to Venice the body of the Most Glorious Evangelist St Mark [...] and it [the Republic] will always prevail with God's protection against the enemies of his name'.³⁹⁷ It seemed that the moment had come for Venice to

³⁹⁷ 'i Veneziani ebbero fortuna di portar d'Alessandria à Venezia il Corpo del gloriosissimo Evangelista S. Marco [...] e vincerà sempre con la protezione di Dio I Nemici del suo nome'. Orsato Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova osservate nel trasporto della sua reliquia data da quella città al serenissimo prencipe di Venetia* (Padua: Frambotto, 1653), p. 2.

augment its sacred status further. The Senate decided to ‘enrich that glorious city with some portion of great treasure and receive from the distinguished city of Padua a relic of that saint’.³⁹⁸

In 1652, the Senate made the formal request to the city of Padua asking for a portion of the relic detailing the plan to place it in ‘an altar in the new basilica of Santa Maria della Salute, to be dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua’.³⁹⁹ The choice of this church was particularly significant in relation to the concerns which drove the translations of Saint Anthony’s relic. The church of Santa Maria della Salute was commissioned by the Senate in 1630 in an effort to entreat the Virgin Mary’s help in ridding Venice of the plague which ran rampant through the city. Andrew Hopkins has raised that the commission followed an outpouring of state-sponsored devotional activities such as processions, the exposition of the Holy Sacrament in important churches, and collective recourse to the Madonna Nicopeia icon examined in the previous chapter.⁴⁰⁰ The votive church was completed in 1687 and was consecrated by Patriarch Alvise Sagredo in the same year. At the time of the translation of Saint Anthony’s relics, therefore, the Salute was still a work in progress. Nonetheless, the church’s strong association with the wellbeing of Venice, as demonstrated by cessation of the plague in 1631, made it the perfect home of the relic designed to effect Venetian victory over the Ottomans. The translation of the relic from Padua to Venice in 1652 was an event full of ceremony and pomp. It was decided that the relic would enter into the city through the ceremonial waterway just off the Piazzetta. Sertorio described the moment in detail: ‘innumerable gondolas full of Venetian nobility of every sex and age that all wanted to bring

³⁹⁸ ‘arricchita quella Inclita Città con qualche porzione di così gran Tesoro, onde per ricevere dalla Città di Padova alcuna insigne Reliquia di detto Santo’. Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 12.

³⁹⁹ ‘un altare nella nova Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute, per esser dedicato al glorioso Santo Antonio di Padova’. Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁰ Andrew Hopkins, ‘Plans and Planning for S. Maria della Salute, Venice’, *Art Bulletin*, 3 (1997), 441-465 (pp. 441-442). See also Hopkins’ more comprehensive study of this church, *Santa Maria della Salute: Architecture and Ceremony in Baroque Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

those senators to revere the Holy Relic that will make new objects of joy and devotion'.⁴⁰¹

The final phase in the translation of the relic was accompanied by intense devotional outpouring in Venice that was full of noise, movement, and affectivity which defied the author's power of description: 'in sum, as it is impossible to make the light dark, so it is vain to try to explain the demonstrations, the tenderness, the joy, that with tears, that with adorations, all of that vast concourse expressed together'.⁴⁰² Above all, this devotion was framed around the saint's role as protector of the Catholic Republic embroiled again in conflict with the Turks: 'under the auspices of Saint Anthony, from whom the Devil flees, illness ceases, death to withdraw, errors destroyed, calamity dispersed, the sick healed, the seas calm, chains broken, lost things found, perils moved aside, and needs end'.⁴⁰³ The new Antonian altar became a focus for the annual ceremonial visit for the doge of Venice.

The 1652 translation of Saint Anthony's relics is important for two reasons. Firstly, the episode demonstrates that the Republic of Venice saw saintly patronage as a key component to its national identity and survival. As we have seen above, Sertorio reiterated the ongoing patronage of Saint Mark which was framed specifically in terms of his role as a holy protector. The uncertainty surrounding the Fifth Ottoman Venetian War, which ultimately resulted in Venice's surrender of Cyprus, prompted the Venetian government to reevaluate the city's relationship with the cult of the saints. In this case, it involved a literal expansion of tangible saintly presence in Venice through the translation of Saint Anthony's relic. Second, the 1652 translation was a moment in which the sacrality of the city of Venice

⁴⁰¹ 'Innumerabili gondole piene di Nobilità Veneta d'ogni sesso, & età, che tutte volvano à portare quei Senatori i per riverir la S. Reliquia apportarono nuovi oggetti di giubilo, e divozione...'. Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 63.

⁴⁰² 'In somma come è impossibile render tenebrosa la luce, altrettanto è vano il tentar di spiegare le dimostrazioni, le tenerezze, il giubilo, che con le lagrime, con le adorazioni tutto quel numerosissimo concorso, concordemente esprimeva'. Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 65.

⁴⁰³ 'sotto gli'auspicii di S. Antonio, à di qui cenni fugge il Demonio, cede il male, s'allontana la Morte, si distruggono gli Errori, di disperdono le calamità, si risanano gli'infermi, si tranquillano i Mari, si rompono le catene, si ricuperano le cose perdute, si scostano i pericoli, e cessano le necessità.' Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, pp. 64-65.

was bolstered by the presence of this new mighty relic. This process both involved and had consequences for the Venetian laity. While Antonian devotion existed in Venice long before the seventeenth century, his importance to civic devotion, and the consequences this might have had for the laity, was transformed following the 1652 translation. As Patriarch Tiepolo wrote in his 1613 treatise on the cult of the saints, ‘Not only particular humans but also the Christian cities have their holy protector’.⁴⁰⁴ The 1652 translation elevated Saint Anthony to the status of principal protector of the city. This transformation in part occurred during the physical process of translation and drew upon the important spaces of Venetian civic religion to inscribe a new spiritual meaning upon Saint Anthony’s bones which were primarily associated with the city of Padua.

The final resting place for Saint Anthony’s relic and the site chosen to house his holy presence in Venice was the Salute. This basilica, commissioned to commemorate the divine liberation of the city from plague two decades prior, was a suitable place for a new manifestation of Venice’s reaffirmed status as a sanctified city. But the relic of Saint Anthony was not immediately taken to the Salute. Rather, it first needed to be inscribed with a distinct sense of Venetian spirituality. Naturally, Saint Mark’s Basilica played an important role. Sertorio described this process in detail. As we know, the relics were conducted from Padua and into Venice via the Piazzetta peopled by a vast concourse of Venetian patricians and state officials. Next, the procession moved to the sixteenth-century votive church of the Redentore described by Sertorio as ‘a great testimony, not least to the health of Venetian piety’.⁴⁰⁵ Sertorio referred to the history of the Redentore church which was commissioned in 1577 to thank God for the cessation of a particularly devastating plague outbreak of 1575-77. The relic was then conducted to Saint Mark’s Basilica, a space which was arguably the clearest

⁴⁰⁴ ‘Non solo gli huomini particolari, mà anco le città Christiane hanno il loro santo Protettore’. Tiepolo, *Trattato dell’invocatione et veneratione de santi*, p. 120.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Testimonio ben grande, non men di quello della salute, della Veneziana pietà’, Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 66.

expression of the city of Venice's close relationship with the sacred. The relics were placed upon a sumptuous altar where they remained until the final phase in the translation. The procession was led by the officials most closely related to Saint Mark's Basilica: the clergy of Saint Mark, the *primicerio*, the procurators, and the canons.⁴⁰⁶ This penultimate lap in the relic's journey, before being installed upon its new altar in the Salute, was described by Sertorio. 'The relic of the most glorious Saint was put in the ducal treasury' where it rested for two days. On 13 June 1652, Saint Anthony's feast day, the relic was taken in public procession which included the city's six *scuole grandi*, followed by the clergy, nuns and friars of various religious orders and musicians of Saint Mark's Basilica.⁴⁰⁷ The procession also included important government officials who took the place of the indisposed doge, along with the Apostolic Nuncio and the French ambassador. The laity then followed: 'a number of countless people, men, women [...] who always kneeled on the ground with their hands on their chests that nobody could remember having such great religion and piety'.⁴⁰⁸ Sertorio emphasised the reverential conduct of the lay participants at this sacred moment saying 'it was taken as a miracle that in such immense quantity of people, there was not the slightest appearance of scandal'.⁴⁰⁹ The relic was then placed upon an altar with a pedestal of silver above.

The 1652 translation of the relics of Saint Anthony from Padua to Venice was a significant shift in the landscape of sanctity in the latter city. On one hand, the episode represents a clear expansion of the civic cult raising Saint Anthony, associated more strongly with the city of Padua, to the role of protector of Venice and its empire. As such, a relic of

⁴⁰⁶ Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 68

⁴⁰⁷ Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, pp. 72-4.

⁴⁰⁸ 'un numero innumerabile di persone, huomini, donne [...] sempre le genocchia in terra, & le mani al petto che niuno si raccorda haver veduta più mai così gran religione, & pietà'. Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 74

⁴⁰⁹ 'Fù anco notato per miracolo, che in tanta immense quantità di gente non vi succedesse pur una minima apparenza di scandalo'. Sertorio, *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padova*, p. 75.

Saint Anthony, as a permanent embodiment of his presence, needed to be physically present in Venice. The materiality of this hagiographical expansion is crucial. In fact, the successful integration of Saint Anthony more closely into the realms of civic religion required the relic to be anointed with the holiness of several chief sacred sites in Venice. The processional visits to the churches of the Redentore and the Salute played a key role in communicating the purpose of this translation for onlookers. For sure, many of the lay participants in the procession would have remembered the early building phases of the then in progress Salute church which was the final destination of the relic. Although not being beseeched to liberate the city from plague, the processional visits to these two churches clearly communicated that the purpose of the translation was to bolster the sacred immanence of the city in order to secure Venice's future. What is more, the centrality of Saint Mark's Basilica in this procession is significant. Of course, the Basilica and the eponymous Square was a key centre of ceremonial activity in the city. But allowing the relic of Saint Anthony to rest there before being taken to its intended shrine at the Salute was crucial for inscribing it with a sense of *venezianità* and for enfolding a saint more closely related to Padua firmly within the Venetian urban devotional landscape. Saint Anthony's shrine at the Salute, therefore, is not just an example of one of many sites of sanctity which were transformed in this century. Rather, it was an embodiment of the tangible enfoldment of saint and city. The new site of sanctity, along with the processional activity accompanying it, served to remind Venetians from all levels of society of God's ongoing favour over their holy city.

Patronage, promotion, and power: Shaping the landscape of sanctity

Who was responsible for reshaping the cult of the saints in Venice? The question of promotion is crucial for understanding why the transformations to the landscape of sanctity examined up to now occurred. It also allows us to discern the individual but often interrelated

influences of families, patrons, political and social institutions responsible for emphasising the sacrality of the city of Venice through the cult of the saints. Individual families played important roles in reviving and disseminating important cults in Venice. Karen McCluskey, writing of the late medieval period, notes that the cults of Venetian ‘citizen saints’ and blessed do not seem to have been promoted as actively at the family level in comparison to other Italian cities.⁴¹⁰ I earlier showed that hagiographers in Venice keenly enunciated the illustrious familial roots of the holy people which they focussed on. The authors of these works attempted to make a clear connection between the holy person at the subject of study and their contemporary ancestors by dedicating their book to prominent members of the relevant family. Arcoleo’s *Ristretto* on the life of Blessed Giuliana di Collalto was dedicated to the Conte Vinciguerra di Collalto and the 1756 account of Trojani was dedicated to Fulvio Antonio Conte di Collalto. The family’s continued interest in the cult of Blessed Giuliana is again demonstrated through the dedication of this later work. The same is true of the Casoni hagiography of Saint Gerardo Sagredo which was dedicated to a nun of the Sagredo family at the convent of San Mauro, Burano. While not unusual, the dedications in these works demonstrate the importance of connecting a historical holy person with the present and the continued (preferably unbroken) presence of their respective families in the city of Venice or its mainland holdings. How far the dedicatees participated or were moved by these dedications is unclear. Certainly, books could be dedicated to individuals without their prior knowledge.

A copy of the 1612 reprint of Gerardo Sagredo’s hagiography by Guido Casoni, however, offers some evidence of the direct involvement of the Sagredo family in the dissemination of his cult. The 1612 edition under study here bears a mark of ownership

⁴¹⁰ McCluskey, *New Saints in Late Medieval Venice*, p. 27.

placing it in the possession of a Slavio Sale by 1671.⁴¹¹ The owner indicated that the book was donated to him by Alvisè Sagredo: ‘mi fu donati [questo] libro dall’Ill.mo et Ecc. Sig. Cavalier Alvisè Sagredo’. The Alvisè Sagredo (1617-1688) referred to here was elected Patriarch of Venice in 1678. At the time of making the note, Sale was in Bassano in the province of Vicenza. The donation was likely due to a personal connection between the Alvisè Sagredo and Slavio Sale, although the nature of their relationship is not clear. The mark of ownership offers evidence for a prominent member of this family helping to disseminate the cult of his ancestor saint by making a gift of the Casoni hagiography. Placing the donation of the book within the broader context of the Sagredo family’s patronage and promotion activities in the seventeenth century sheds greater light on their role in disseminating the cult of their ancestor-saint in their city and beyond.

Flaminio Corner tells us that the Sagredo family was responsible for erecting the church of Santissima Trinità, known also as Santa Ternità.⁴¹² Corner does not indicate when the church was built, but Giuseppe Tassini indicates that it was some time in the eleventh century.⁴¹³ Corner is nonetheless clear on the relics of Gerardo Sagredo being housed in the family chapel in this church. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the Sagredo family took possession of a new chapel in the church of San Francesco della Vigna. Using art guides, William L. Barcham estimates that the family purchased the chapel at some point between 1663-1674 and dedicated it to their family saint Gerardo Sagredo.⁴¹⁴ The chapel was further decorated with images of the saint by Pellegrini and Cominelli. Barcham argues that the Sagredo family’s political standing in Venice during the seventeenth century is linked to

⁴¹¹ This link provided access to the edition under study here containing the mark of Slavio Sale’s ownership. https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Vita_del_glorioso_Santo_Gerardo_Sagredo/AlZpAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=vita+glorioso+sagredo&pg=PP13&printsec=frontcover.

⁴¹² Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 34.

⁴¹³ Giuseppe Tassini, *Curiosità veneziane ovvero origini delle denominazioni stradali di Venezia* (Venice: Stab. Tip. Grimaldo, 1872), p. 636.

⁴¹⁴ William L. Barcham, ‘The Cappella Sagredo in San Francesco della Vigna’, *Artibus et Historiae*, 4.7 (1983), 101-124 (p. 110).

their acquisition of the chapel at San Francesco della Vigna and their promotion of Saint Gerardo Sagredo there. The 1671 donation of the *Vita* of Gerardo Sagredo therefore coincides with a period when the Sagredo family were accentuating their connection with the saint through the chapel at San Francesco della Vigna. What is more, the donation was made by Alvisè Sagredo who went on to take a leading role in ecclesiastical life in Venice through his role as patriarch (in office 1678-88). It is impossible to determine whether the donation represented a deliberate effort to disseminate the cult of Saint Gerardo Sagredo. However, placing Alvisè Sagredo's donation of the hagiography in this context helps us to understand the broader strategies taken by patrician families in Venice to promote the saints to whom they (supposedly) shared a bloodline. In this case, I suggest that the 1671 donation of the book is one, albeit small, example of the efforts taken by the Sagredo family to promote the cult of their family saint. What is more, the recipient Slavio Sale's reported location of Bassano demonstrates the material mobility of printed hagiographies. This is not remarkable, but it is important when we think in terms of the potential mobility of the cults to which these books correspond. Whether or not it was Alvisè Sagredo's intention, the donation to Sale helped to mobilise the work and its spiritual significance beyond the city of its publication and beyond the locus of its immediate devotional relevance.

The interest of patrician families in promoting and disseminating the cults of their ancestral saints also shaped the publication context of Antonio Arcoleo's 1693 hagiography of Blessed Giuliana Collalto. The author who lived in Venice sent his work to the Wenterlingh press Vienna to be printed. The choice of a Viennese printer for a work about a holy figure whose cult was centred in Venice, especially given the multiplicity of local printers to choose from, is perplexing. Indeed, the choice of printer has important consequences when we think about the potential for Venetian cults to be disseminated outside

of the city through print. The Austrian context becomes clearer, however, when we delve deeper into the Collalto family and their connections outside of Venice.

An important figure in forging the connection between the Collalto family and the Holy Roman Empire, Austria, was Rambaldo XIII of Collalto (1575-1630). Following disagreements with the Venetian Republic, he left his homeland for Germany and eventually joined the Austrian military, earning in 1610 the title of Count of the Holy Roman Empire. This episode ‘gave life to the Austrian branch of the [Collalto] family’.⁴¹⁵ From then, the Collalto family continued to forge dynastic links with leading noble families of the Holy Roman Empire with a strong presence in the Austrian capital of Vienna. Returning to the 1693 *Ristretto* of Arcoleo, we see how the Collalto family’s political activities and their mobility in Europe influenced the dissemination of Giuliana Collalto’s cult through print. Without the Collalto connection to Austria, it seems unlikely that an Austrian printer would have been privileged over a Venetian one. It would be even more unusual for this work to be published in Vienna without the involvement of the family, although the degree of their involvement in driving its publication is unclear from the text alone. As with my suggestions regarding the 1671 donation of the hagiography of Saint Gerardo Sagredo, the Collalto family’s patrician status was important for generating interest in the cult of Blessed Giuliana Collalto. Although indirect, the 1693 *Ristretto* shows how a leading Venetian family’s political activities and mobility could help to disseminate cults to which they were connected beyond their centres in Venice.

In her recent work on the typology of Venetian sanctity, Karen McCluskey argues for the central role that some religious orders played in the promotion of Venetian cults – especially Venetian blessed. In particular, she raises the efforts taken by the Benedictine

⁴¹⁵ Gioacchino Quadri di Cardano, ‘I Collalto e la consulta araldica’, *Notiziario dell’associazione nobilare regionale veneta: Revista di studi storici*, 7 (2015), p. 156.

nuns in driving the establishment of important cults. As McCluskey emphasises, the enclosed, contemplative nature of Benedictine monastic life meant that ‘few strong personality cults were established around nuns or monks’.⁴¹⁶ Saints and blesseds related to the mendicant orders, such as the Dominicans or the Franciscans, did not seem to gain much traction, despite other examples of enthusiastic lay interaction with these orders and their work in other aspects of religious life. Fourteenth-century blesseds, such as Maria Sturion or Francesco Querini, did not attract the attention of hagiographers, although Sturion was the subject of a fifteenth-century hagiography written by the Sienese writer Tommaso da Siena.⁴¹⁷ Querini was also honoured by Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo in his visual catalogue of Venetian saints and blesseds in the Morosini Chapel at the Madonna dell’Orto. Nevertheless, there was no Tridentine revival of the Venetian holy people related to the mendicant orders comparable to that of the Benedictines. The exception to this is the cult of Giacomo Salomone, a Dominican priest, who was the subject of both a hagiography and an altar dedication in Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The cults of Benedictine monks, nuns, or individuals related to the order flourished in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed hagiographies undoubtedly owing to the medieval cultivation of these cults. But innovation accompanied this continuity and these cults enjoyed revival in the seventeenth century with an emphasis on their devotional relevance for the laity.

We have seen that the Church of San Lorenzo and the adjacent *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano underwent revival in the seventeenth century. Both churches thus became part of an important site of sanctity in Venice for the cults of Saint Candida, Saint Leon Bembo, and Blessed Giovanni Piovano. We know that this process included impressive renovation of both churches and the reorientation of the relics pertaining to the aforementioned cults. Here I

⁴¹⁶ McCluskey, *New Saints*, p. 98.

⁴¹⁷ On the hagiography, see Fernanda Sorelli, *La santità imitabile. Leggenda di Maria da Venezia di Tommaso da Siena* (Venice: Deputazione Editrice, 1984).

want to focus more on understanding the role that the Benedictines of San Lorenzo, particularly a series of seventeenth-century abbesses, played in driving this process which raised the profile of these saints and blessed. Flaminio Corner tells us that Abbess Paola Priuli was a prominent figure in the seventeenth-century life of the Church of San Lorenzo. Corner tells us that the ‘by the work of the diligent Abbess Priuli, the magnificent new church was completed in its entirety in the space of ten years after which Priuli died in 1602.’⁴¹⁸ Priuli was in office during the development of the church of San Lorenzo which resulted in the *apparitio* of Saint Candida. Subsequent abbesses continued to develop the church in this century including Maria Cornaro, who erected an altar dedicated to San Barbaro Martire, and Andriana Contarini, who erected a particularly magnificent marble altar to house the holy sacrament. Corner does not give precise dates for these developments but is clear that they occurred within the first three decades of the seventeenth century.⁴¹⁹ Following the completion of the church of San Lorenzo, the attention of the Benedictine nuns turned to the adjacent *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano Martire.

Emmanuele Cicogna offers further clarity on the life of both the church of San Lorenzo and the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano. For the latter, he makes us aware of a context of clerical competition which may help us to better situate the final stages in the valorisation of Bembo and Piovano’s relics, as well as understand the role and motives of the Benedictine nuns in promoting their cults as a whole. Of the *chiesuola*, Cicogna writes that ‘from its beginnings this little church was often frequented; but a large part of the devotion of the people was taken to the greater church erected in another part of the city in honour of the same San Sebastiano’.⁴²⁰ Cicogna referred to the sixteenth-century church of San Sebastiano

⁴¹⁸ ‘Per opera dunque della diligente Abbadessa Priuli il nuovo magnifico Tempio fu ridotto nello spazio d’un decennio all’intero suo compimento; dopo di che la benemerita Superiora [...] pasò al godimento eterno della Chiesa trionfante nell’ anno di Christo 1602’. Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 138.

⁴¹⁹ Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 138

⁴²⁰ Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, p. 403.

officiated by the Gerolimine fathers. In fact, Cicogna states that the fathers of the new church attempted to obtain a patriarchal decree to be known as *the* church of San Sebastiano and have the *chiesuola* demoted to the status of oratory or chapel at some point between 1642 and 1644.⁴²¹ The final movements of Bembo and Giovanni's relics likely therefore coincided with a moment in which the Benedictine nuns were dealing with and attempting to resist the reality of their *chiesuola* being relegated in favour of the larger and more architecturally striking sixteenth-century church of San Sebastiano. It is uncertain how far the Benedictines utilised the relics of the latter two in the final stages to resist the relegation of their beloved *chiesuola*. After all, the renovation work to San Sebastiano had begun more than a decade prior. Nonetheless, through a mixture of miracles and architectural renovation, the efforts of the abbess to restore the *chiesuola* raised the profile of the cults in question. Although there is no direct correlation between these events and Paolino Fiamma's 1645 hagiography of Bembo and Piovano, his publication arrived at something of a culmination of the epistemological and physical renewal of both figures. The evidence for the former comes through Patriarch Tiepolo's 1622 commissioning of the Madonna dell'Orto portraits. These served to integrate a range of holy figures firmly in Venetian religious consciousness. For the second, we have the efforts taken to restore and valorise the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano along with the Church of San Lorenzo. The revival of these cults was the result of an interconnected but distinct process of institutional, monastic, and literary promotion which resulted in them becoming more visible and accessible for lay devotees by the middle of the seventeenth century.

On the Giudecca, we recall the Benedictine Abbess Angiola Morosini was a driving force behind the renovations to the shrine of Blessed Giuliana Collalto. As I suggested, this physical valorisation along with the increase in printed accounts of her life played a key role

⁴²¹ Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, p. 403.

in obtaining the 1659 decree from the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome which confirmed the historicity of her cult. Again, the Benedictine context of Santi Biagio e Cataldo shows how the active leadership of a Benedictine abbess in relation to the relics in their charge helped to instigate new phases of several important local cults in the city of Venice. The Benedictine Order in Venice, particularly those attached to the church of San Lorenzo, the *chiesuola* of San Sebastiano, and the church of Santi Biagio e Cataldo stands out for its contributions to the renewal of the cults which their churches and monasteries served as centres.

The Devotional experience of sanctity in Venice

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the cult of the saints and blessed in Venice had undergone important changes. But how important were these cults in the practical devotional lives of ordinary Catholic people? Until now, I have made only brief mention of the cult of Saint Mark, despite his central role in Venetian religious and political life. In the seventeenth century however, Venice's patron saint was subjected to hagiographical expansion through the work of Giovanni Stringa, Canon of Saint Mark. Stringa was responsible for compiling a translation of the life of Saint Mark which appeared in two editions within a decade, the first in 1601 and the second in 1610. The 1610 amplified edition of this hagiography will be the focus here. Stringa's *Vita di San Marco* articulated a holy legend etched into Venetian cultural consciousness. His decision to amplify his publication with a fourth book detailing miracles worked by the saint on behalf of lay devotees – both Venetian and foreign – however, warrants closer thought. For the laity, Venice's principal patrons served as the devotional focal point for several confraternities including the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni and, of course, the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Despite serving as patron of this prominent confraternity, and Saint Mark's pervasiveness throughout Venice more generally,

scholars have tended to minimise the Evangelist's role in Venetian devotional life. Edward Muir has suggested that by the fourteenth century, Saint Mark had become so closely related to the state that his role was 'limited to silent servant at the centre of the state cult'.⁴²²

Margaret Morse's research suggests that Muir's assertion is supported by the absence of Marcian iconography in sixteenth-century Venetian homes. This 'curious absence of Saint Mark', as Morse puts it, was because in Venice, 'the Evangelist lay outside of the personal realm; devotion to Saint Mark was equivalent to devotion to the state'.⁴²³ Despite these points, neither of which I contest, I suggest that Stringa's 1610 *Vita di San Marco* represents important expansion in Saint Mark's hagiographical tradition. Specifically, the enfoldment of the saint and the city of Venice was developed by closer integration of Saint Mark's role in everyday Catholic life.

In 1610 the Canon of Saint Mark decided to amplify his earlier work with a fourth book narrating the miracles worked through the intercession of Venice's patron saint. Stringa explained to his readership that 'many miracles [...] which, because they were no longer sent to the press, we wanted here'.⁴²⁴ The author relied upon a manuscript record of miracles conserved in Saint Mark's Basilica. At the time of writing, Stringa reckoned that his body of sources was around five-hundred years old. Stringa's willingness to talk about his sources and appeal to their antiquity helped him to infuse his account with authority. As the author made clear, he felt that it was important that the contents of this manuscript, which had apparently all but disappeared in printed versions, be made available in the vernacular for a Catholic readership at this particular moment in time. Stringa promised his readership that 'by reading them you would be transported all the more in your devotion and reverence

⁴²² Muir, 'The Virgin on the Street Corner', p. 32.

⁴²³ Margaret Morse, 'The Arts of Domestic Devotion in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Venice', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Maryland, 2006), p. 360.

⁴²⁴ 'Molti miracoli [...] i quali perche stati più non sono alla stampa mandate, habbiamo hora voluto quelli da un'antichissimo Libro manoscritto, che nella sua Chiesa si conserva'. Stringa, *Vita di San Marco*, fol. 80^r.

towards this saint'.⁴²⁵ The miracles associated with the key moments in the Marcian legend such as the *translatio*, clearly articulated the special relationship between Saint Mark and Venice; in the case of the miracles narrated by Stringa, however, the focus was upon Saint Mark and ordinary devotees. The miracles worked by Saint Mark in Stringa's hagiography were overwhelmingly concerned with moments where personal devotion, normally the part of a lay Catholic devotee, took centre stage. Of the seventeen short miracles stories included in the section, seven were concerned with supernatural healing. Eight can be categorised as either liberation or salvation miracles. Only two of the miracles, one concerning the rapture of Doge Vitale Faliero (in office 1084-1095) and another concerning a feast-day procession in Puglia, touched on the Evangelist's intercession in the realm of civic devotion. Rather, ordinary Italians and their relationships with Saint Mark take centre stage in these miracle tales.

In one example, we read of a Venetian father's desperate effort to find a cure for his son's cancer. 'With sure faith', the father conducted his son to Saint Mark's Basilica where the saint's body was enshrined. Following the customary appeal, the young boy was cured of his cancer and restored to full health. The story captured the emotional dimension of the event which I previously argued characterised miracle narratives in this period. The story described that the father and son 'could not contain their tears due to the happiness and tenderness which they felt'.⁴²⁶ Other miracles which focussed on Saint Mark's intercession in everyday life included rescuing devotees from falls, curing long-term disabilities and illnesses, providing comfort to the dying, the healing of those tormented by demons, and rescuing devotees from peril at sea. Another important aspect of these miracles is the nationalities of the recipients. The majority (ten) were foreigners, which includes non-

⁴²⁵ 'voi benigni Lettori trasportarli; accioche leggendoli tanto più in voi la devotione, & la riverenza verso questo Santo'. Stringa, *Vita di San Marco*, fol. 80^v.

⁴²⁶ 'nō si potevano p[er] l'allegrezza, & tenerezza grāde, che sentivano'. Stringa, *Vita di San Marco*, fol. 81^v.

Venetian Italians. Three recipients were described as living in a holding of the Venetian Empire, and only three were identified as residents of Venice. This detail is important as it sheds light upon how the cult of Saint Mark in Italy and his shrine were perceived by Catholics before the post-Tridentine revival of interest in the cult of the saints. The miracle stories reflect the conclusions of scholars who have struggled to find substantive evidence for the incorporation of Saint Mark into the daily devotional life of ordinary Venetian people. The stories collected by Stringa indicate that Saint Mark's Basilica attracted pilgrims from across Italy but featured few Venetians. This perhaps reflects the reality that most devotees who embraced Saint Mark into their devotional life were non-Venetian-Italians. Stringa's decision to revise his hagiography with the fourth book of miracles may therefore be interpreted as an effort to remind Venetian readers of the potential role of their patron saint in devotional life.

For Stringa, the spiritual relevance of these miracle stories is clear: to direct the devotional passions of an educated, though perhaps not scholarly readership in relation to Saint Mark. Stringa's status as Canon of Saint Mark is significant. The hagiography and choice of hagiographical expansion through the inclusion of the miracle stories came from an official at the heart of civic devotion in Venice. The Canons of Saint Mark were experts on the civic liturgy, playing an important role in the musical culture of the Basilica and in the broader religious life of the city. Stringa's amplified work therefore related to this context of Venetian civic religion. Stringa is clear that he intended a wider readership for his work. Attached to Stringa's hagiography is a description of Saint Mark's Basilica which he had published separately previously but chose to include in his new publication. Although he refers specifically to this description here, rather than the hagiography as a whole, he clearly signalled his intention for both a local and foreign readership: 'I wanted to give this

description before the eyes of everyone, foreigners as well as neighbours [*vicini*].⁴²⁷ One of the Canon's aims was to invigorate devotion to Saint Mark on behalf in the city of Venice itself, as well as abroad. What is more, Stringa had a clear sense about how knowledge of Saint Mark could affect a layperson's experience of the eponymous Basilica. His hagiography in fact includes a separate but related work describing the Basilica and the holy treasures contained within. Stringa had a clear sense as to how his hagiography might interact with the reader's experience of the Basilica. He advised the reader to 'read first the previous books of mine of the Vita, Translation, Apparition, and of the miracles of this Most Glorious Evangelist: after reading those, you will be more inflamed to read also this description'.⁴²⁸

Stringa's book narrated a familiar holy legend. Although this was a new publication with the first edition arriving in 1601, there was nothing in the work which deviated from previous hagiographical renderings of the life of Saint Mark and his pivotal role in steering the course of Venetian destiny. The decision to amplify this work nine years later with a book of Saint Mark's miracles is, however, an important and deliberate moment of hagiographical expansion. The Canon felt it was important to include these miracles in his work since they seemed to have become vague as time went by and, by his own admission, had all but ceased to exist in printed form. Miracle stories provided the laity with proof of the active and personal role that the sacred could play in their daily lives. The miracles of Saint Mark in Stringa's hagiography attempted to bring Venetian Catholics into encounter with a closer, more personal literary representation of their city's patron saint. Despite little evidence that ordinary lay Venetians embraced Saint Mark in their personal devotional lives, Stringa's hagiography, specifically the fourth book, cast the Evangelist as both the protector of the

⁴²⁷ 'hò voluto rappresentare con tal descrizione avanti gli occhi di ciascuno, & massime de' Forestieri così di vicini'. Stringa, *Vita di San Marco*, fol. 2^r.

⁴²⁸ 'prima gli antecedent miei Libri leggere della Vita, Traslazione, Apparitione, & Miracoli di questo Gloriosissimo Evangelista: poiche letti quelli, tanto più s'infiammerà à legger anco questa descrizione'. Stringa, *Vita di San Marco*, fol. 2^v.

Republic as well as an attentive and active intercessor for Catholic people. For a Venetian reader, this work may have prompted a reevaluation of the role that their city's patron might play in the less lofty matters of home, health, and everyday life.

Miracles left physical and documentary traces which can help the historian understand how ordinary Catholics interacted with specific cults in the period under study here. The miracles associated with the intervention of Blessed Giuliana Collalto evidence the ongoing interaction of seventeenth-century Venetians with her cult. Lay Catholics in Venice played a crucial role in documenting Collalto's cult through the *ex-votos* which captured numerous examples of her holy intercession. Arcoleo wrote 'there would be no lack of testimonies of many other miracles' although these were apparently not committed to a written register.⁴²⁹ Rather, they were documented 'solely [through] *tavolette* of silver and of wood affixed to her tomb which narrate the prodigious acts of the Lord through the prayers and intercessions of Giuliana'.⁴³⁰ The *ex-voto* tablets which cluttered Collalto's Giudecca shrine offer insights into how her holy presence was experienced in everyday devotional life. As one might expect, several miracles were bestowed upon the Benedictine nuns of Santi Biagio e Cataldo who had particular devotion for their historic abbess. The sacred immanence offered by Collalto's shrine, however, often moved outwards from the convent and shaped lay life in Venice.

In one case from 1645, a boy named Gieremio from the parish of Sant'Agnese fell into a tub of water mixed with sulphur to make soap.⁴³¹ Pancratio, Gieremio's father, was able to recover him from the tub, but the boy was seemingly dead, and physicians had given

⁴²⁹ 'Non mancherebbero però Testimonianze maggiore in molti altri miracoli [...] non si è per lo passato curata di far il catalogo'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 29

⁴³⁰ 'solamente alcune Tavolette d'argento, e di legno affisse al suo sepolcro narrano i prodigi fatti dal Signore per le preghiere, ed intercessioni di Giuliana'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, pp. 29-30.

⁴³¹ 'L'anno 1645. Gieremio figlio di Pancratio della famiglia Brana nella Parocchia di S. Agnese cadde entro una Botte piena d'acqua di Zolfo [...] per formare il sapone'. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 30.

up hope for his recovery. Finally, the desperate father ‘invoked the Blessed Giuliana [and] against the opinion of all Gieremio recovered both his sight and his life’.⁴³² In a less dramatic healing example from 15 June 1690, the wife of Signor Pasqualin Fantin Piater of Santo Stefano at Murano was cured of an incessant headache.⁴³³ In 1655, a patrician of the Contarini family placed a *tavoletta* at Collalto’s shrine in gratitude for dislodging a seed which had fallen into his ear and rendered him totally deaf.⁴³⁴ Headaches were Collalto’s speciality, reflecting the circumstances of her own death following a head-related illness. In 1660, a priest by the name Pietro Saladino was cured of such an ailment that had plagued him for five months. The same grace was bestowed upon a Carlo Marchese in 1665, a Muranese woman named Maria Madalena in 1670, and an Andrea Palvo of San Nicolò in 1673.⁴³⁵

Of the fourteen miracles referenced by Arcoleo, ten were related to the healing of headaches, one to the healing of a severe head injury, and three were concerned with the healing of non-head related injuries. In terms of chronology, the miracles documented in the *Ristretto* drew upon *tavolette* dating from 1645-1690. By now we know that this does not mean that Collalto’s cult was not important in Venice prior to the seventeenth century. *Tavolette* were not always permanent fixtures. Many were subjected to the ravages of time and older ex-votos were sometimes moved to make way for new ones. Arcoleo’s choice of miracles therefore likely reflects the *tavolette* which were most visible at Collalto’s shrine. Patriarch Tiepolo made a concerted effort to accentuate the cult of Collalto (and others) in the early 1600s. I do not suggest a direct correlation between the commissioning of the Madonna dell’Orto portrait, Arcoleo’s *Ristretto*, and the devotional activity described above. I am,

⁴³² ‘invocata Giuliana, Gieremia contro l’opinione di tutti, ricuperò la vista, e la vita’. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 30

⁴³³ ‘L’anno 1690. li. 15. Zungo. La Signora Pasqua Consorte del Signor Pasqualin Fantin Piater, habita in Contrada di San Stefano a Muran, essendo aggravate da grave doglia di testa [...] per intercession della Beata fù liberata’. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 33.

⁴³⁴ ‘nell’orecchio un certo seme durissimo di maniera, che divenne totalmente sordo’. Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, p. 31.

⁴³⁵ Arcoleo, *Ristretto della vita della beata Giuliana*, pp. 31-32.

however, emphasising that the 1693 account offers insight into how Venetian laypeople interacted with this cult in their voluntary devotional lives in a way that thinking solely about the patriarch's promotion cannot. The miracles associated with Collalto paint a picture of a cult well-integrated into the realm of everyday life and spirituality. Arcoleo also demonstrated that this cult was diffused through Venice's highly stratified social structure. Nuns, priests, merchants, members of the patrician Contarini family, along with ordinary people busy making soap were counted amongst its devotees.

In a post-beatification hagiography of the Collalto, this time a nineteenth-century hagiography by an anonymous author, we get a sense of the crucial role of the devotional activity analysed above in securing her 'blessed' status 1747. This nineteenth-century account emphasises the importance of devotional activity in the late seventeenth century (as noted by Arcoleo) for pushing forward the case for beatification with the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome. The author notes the lack of documentary sources related to Collalto's life, but like Arcoleo, points to the evidence from the seventeenth-century miracles analysed earlier in this chapter. What is important here is the benefit of historical hindsight which the nineteenth-century account can provide. Here, the author stated that the seventeenth-century miracles 'greatly contributed to her authenticity and to obtaining from the Apostolic See the confirmation of Giuliana's celestial honours'.⁴³⁶

The power of miracles to affirm the sanctity of a holy person also contributed towards the canonisation of Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani. In 1690, Jesuit Giovanni Pietro Maffei translated an earlier Latin hagiography of Lorenzo Giustiniani into Italian.⁴³⁷ The purpose of this updated text was the celebration of Lorenzo's canonisation on the 16th of October 1690.

⁴³⁶ 'che contribuì moltissimo per la sua autenticità a procurare dalla Sede Apostolica la confermazione a Giuliana degli onori celesti'. Anonymous, *Vita della beata Giuliana vergine dei Conti di Collalto monaca dell'Ordine di S. Benedetto fondatrice ed abbadessa dell'insigne monastero de' SS. Biagio e Cataldo in Venezia nell'isola Giudecca* (Venice: Tipografia Lauro Merlo di G. B., 1867), p. 34.

⁴³⁷ P. Gio. Battista Maffei, *Vita di S. Lorenzo Giustiniano Prima Patriarca di Venetia* (Rome: R.C.A., 1690).

The 1638 hagiography written by Federico Malipiero demonstrated the close framing of Lorenzo Giustiniani with the sacred destiny of Venice. The 1690 edition to which I now turn offers important evidence of devotional activity in Venice related to the cult of Lorenzo Giustiniani, especially regarding the miracles that he bestowed upon Venetian people. As I raised with the case of Blessed Giuliana Collalto, these miracles help us to understand how far the cults which were undergoing textual and material renewal were experienced and encountered in everyday life in the city. In the case of San Lorenzo, the evidence helps us to construct a cult that was both closely related to the civic sphere, and active in the everyday lives of Venetian people. The 1690 hagiography included twenty-three miracles worked by the intervention of Lorenzo Giustiniani, although the author dates only two of these – one related to a noble girl of the Gritti family, and another detailing Giustiniani's role in abating the plague of 1630, to the seventeenth century. The author's treatment of the miracles of Saint Lorenzo is somewhat cursory. He provides no date for 21 of the 23 wonders that were included. Other evidence, an anonymous printed text concerning the Sacred Congregation of Rites' dealing with Giustiniani's *causis sanctorum* offer much more detail on the saint's role in shaping the lives of Venetian people in the seventeenth century. Saint Lorenzo was an efficient healer, and many of the miracles that contributed to his case for canonisation featured such miracles being bestowed upon Venetian people.

The 1690 hagiography includes a summary of one such healing bestowed upon a Venetian man by the name of Dominico Maffei in 1610. The published account of Lorenzo Giustiniani's canonisation process provides access to this man's perspective on the saint, through his testimony. This miracle in particular offers evidence of the role that Lorenzo Giustiniani played in the realm of domestic devotion in a tender scene of sudden illness, desperate devotion, and miraculous recovery. Maffei recounted the following regarding his encounter with Saint (then Blessed) Lorenzo Giustiniani:

With continual fever, which then followed with headache and loss of appetite, which lasted for 20 continuous days [...] the doctors took me for gone [...] and said in my home to my wife, called Bastiana da Curzolo, that I could not heal from that infirmity. I made confession and took communion in bed [...] seeing my wife and children, and my household crying, I judged that it was a sign of the desperation of my health [...]. I resolved by inspiration to commend myself to the Blessed Lorenzo Giustiniani, that for his goodness, and mercy, would leave me to govern my children, since I have six at home.⁴³⁸

Maffei responded to his sudden illness with spontaneous prayer indicating both his awareness of and faith in the power of Lorenzo Giustiniani:

Ah saint, listen to me by your mercy, please free me from so many pains, that I may govern my poor children! So, I turned on my side, and with my heart, and with my mouth, I promised to keep him always in my devotion, and have a Mass said, and always have his image in my home.⁴³⁹

The man reported that his recovery, which took place over the course of eight days, was down to Lorenzo Giustiniani's sympathy to his death-bed prayer. When interrogated, Maffei spoke of his understanding of the encounter with the saint in no uncertain terms: 'I believe, and firmly hold, that the recovery of my health must be attributed to a miracle, and to a special grace granted by God through the intercession of Blessed Lorenzo Giustiniani'.⁴⁴⁰ In

⁴³⁸ '[...] con febre continua, che mi seguì poi sempre, & doglia di testa, & perdita d'appetito, il quale male mi durò per vinti giorni continui, & li Medici mi diedero per ispedito [...] disse in casa à mia Madonna, chiamata Bastiana da Curzola, che non potevo guarire da quella infirmità. Mi confessai, & comunicai in letto. [...] vedendo io la mia Moglie, e Figliuoli, & la mia gente di casa a piangere, giudicai, che fosse segno di desperatione della mia sanità [...]. Io mi risolsi per inspiratione di raccomandarmi al Beato Lorenzo Giustiniani, che per sua bontà, & misericordia mi lasciasse a governare le mie Creature, havendo io sei Figlioli in casa.' Anonymous, *Sac. rituum congregatione eminentissimo, ac reverendiss. domino card. De Alteriis Veneta canonizationis b. Laurentii Iustiniani protopatriarchæ Venetiarum. Positio super dubio. An, & de quibus Miraculis constet, post indultam dicto. Beato à Sede Apostolica Venerationem* (Rome: Reverendæ Cameræ Apostolicæ, 1690), p. 57.

⁴³⁹ 'Ah Santo ascolteme per vostra misericordia, deh liberemi da tanti dolori, che possa governare le mie povere Creature, & così mi voltai in banda, & con cuor, & con la bocca gli promessi di tenermelo sempre per mio devoto, & farli dire una Messa, & haver sempre la sua Imagine in Casa'. Anonymous, *Sac. rituum congregatione eminentissimo*, pp. 57-8.

⁴⁴⁰ 'Io credo, e tengo fermamente, che la recuperatione della mia sanità habbi da essere attribuita à Miracolo, & à gratia speciale concessami dal Signore Iddio, per intercession del Beato Lorenzo Giustiniano'. *Sac. rituum congregatione eminentissimo*, p. 58.

the cases of Blessed Giuliana Collalto and Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani, the miracle narratives offer evidence of deeply personal cults which underwent expansion in the seventeenth century. When it came to Saint Mark, we see a hagiographer's effort to use the culture of the miraculous to bring the mighty patron down to the realm of everyday devotion.

Conclusions

The ten cults examined in this chapter were already established in the lagoon city in the period of Catholic reform, yet I have argued for their accentuation in the post-Tridentine period, especially the seventeenth century. Above all, this chapter has argued that the revival of specific cults was used to emphasise the sacrality of the city of Venice itself. The enfoldment of saint and city meant that celebrating the former inevitably resulted in generating discussion about the sacrality of the latter. Certainly, several of the hagiographers whose works have been examined here formed clear, and eloquent arguments regarding the sacred status of the city of Venice. For them, it was a foregone conclusion that such a sacred homeland would be the *patria* of a legion of holy heroes. The holiness of local people was reflected by the holiness of Venice and its mainland empire. While relics and shrines served as material sources of sacrality, the arguments formed in Venetian hagiographies encouraged their readership to adopt a sense immanence of the sacred in relation to their civic identity. This was of course intangible, but hagiographies made powerful cases for the connection between being Venetian and belonging to an unusually sacred homeland for which a roll call of holy people served as proof.

The post-Tridentine accentuation of the cult of the saints had particular consequences in Catholic urban centres like Venice. The close sense of urban locality which characterised

devotion to cults in this period resulted in the celebration not only of saints, but of the cities which housed their relics or produced different holy people. The ‘cultural work’ that these saints and holy people did therefore, returning to Ditchfield’s concept, was to help to reassert the sacred nature of the city of Venice and its history, and how this related to being a Venetian Catholic. Notwithstanding the importance of intangible sacrality, these arguments were accompanied by material developments related to specific cults. Renovation of shrines, new identifying inscriptions, and even the translation of prominent relics to Venice helped to bolster the already rich culture of saintly materiality of the city. As I argued in relation to the respective renovations of the shrines of Saint Leon Bembo and Blessed Giuliana Collalto, concerns with visibility and identification signalled new phases in the lives of these cults connected with the post-Tridentine emphasis on the cult of the saints. A key aspect of devotion that this chapter has considered therefore is access. Saints became more accessible to Catholics living and worshipping in the city. Be it new and updated hagiographies, the physical renovations of shrines, or the expansion of the city’s already impressive holy hoard through translation, the renewal of sanctity in Venice provided Catholics with more points of encounter with the saints.

How were the saints and blessed analysed in this chapter experienced by Catholics in Venice? Evidence from the ex-votos and canonisation processes demonstrates the engagement of both lay and clerical Catholics in some of the cults under study in this chapter. With the case of Saint Mark, I have suggested that the addition of miracles worked on behalf of Catholic devotees to his seventeenth-century hagiography aimed to bring the patron saint closer to the realm of everyday devotion. Finally, the specificities that characterise the cult of the saints, and the many aspects of Catholic life where individual cults had resonance make them an excellent lens through which to study the process of Catholic reform in Venice. This chapter in particular has drawn attention to the various strands of promotion of the cult of the

saints in Venice that included the upper clergy, religious orders, hagiographers, and individual families. Renewing holy people was intrinsically linked to the reassertion of the sacrality of the city of Venice itself, as well as being a creative process driven by the Catholics living and worshipping in it. While the city of Venice was always ‘covered with the bones of saints’, to borrow Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo’s metaphor, this chapter has argued that the post-Tridentine period was a decisive time for the relationship between sanctity and the city.

Chapter 4: The Body of Christ in the Parish

Introduction

Caroline Walker Bynum describes the Eucharist as ‘the most important manifestation of the holy in the European Middle Ages’.⁴⁴¹ It was, quite literally, ‘the revelation of God in food’.⁴⁴² Breaking bread and (sometimes) sharing wine was a unifying practice for Western Christians that fixed the devotional gaze upon the sacrifice of Christ. Debates regarding the nature of this ritual, however, proved to be an unresolvable source of confessional conflict during the European Reformations. For Catholics, the words of consecration turned the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ despite their outward characteristics being unaltered. For Protestants, the idea of transubstantiation was unacceptable. Martin Luther favoured the notion that Christ’s presence existed with but not within the bread and wine, while Ulrich Zwingli upheld an entirely symbolic view of the Eucharist as a purely commemorative act. The fundamental elements of the Eucharist that Bynum emphasises in the medieval context, those of primacy, materiality, and divinity, were reasserted by the Church at the Council of Trent. On this issue, Trent proceeded cautiously. Lee Palmer Wandel notes that the Eucharist was treated differently than the other sacraments in that relevant deliberations occurred over all three meetings of the Council.⁴⁴³ The result was that the final decrees on the Eucharist were ‘piecemeal’ with some key issues such as transubstantiation being settled decades before others.⁴⁴⁴ On this issue, Robert J. Daly has noted that the final Tridentine decrees on the Eucharist, enunciated during its third session

⁴⁴¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, ‘The Sacrality of Things: An Inquiry into Divine Materiality in the Christian Middle Ages’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 78.1 (2012), 3-18 (p. 3). See also Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998); Rubin, *Corpus Christi*.

⁴⁴² Bynum, ‘The Sacrality of Things’, p. 18.

⁴⁴³ Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 215.

⁴⁴⁴ Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation*, p. 221.

held between 1562-63, reflect the Catholic Church's acceptance that Protestants were not going to return to the fold.⁴⁴⁵ The Tridentine decrees did nothing more than articulate existing doctrine on the Eucharist. This point notwithstanding, the post-Tridentine period witnessed a revival in devotion to the body of Christ that had important consequences for Catholic people.

This chapter investigates how these reaffirmations influenced Catholic devotional practice in relation to the Eucharist in the city of Venice. Specifically, I examine the role that Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament (hereafter 'Sacrament confraternities') played in enhancing the status of the Eucharist in parish churches and ultimately enhancing the sense of sacred immanence in these places. These voluntary lay associations were responsible for maintaining altars in their parish churches where the Eucharistic tabernacles were kept. These elaborate boxes stored consecrated hosts (communion bread) which, to the Catholic mind, contained the literal presence of Christ. Alison Wright describes these sacrament tabernacles as 'liturgical ornaments of the highest significance in the *Quattrocento* church'.⁴⁴⁶ During and after the Council of Trent, there were significant efforts made in Venice by lay and clerical Catholics alike to ensure that such tabernacles were moved from side altars and placed upon the high altar of parish churches – the physical, spiritual, and ritual focal point.

Venetian Sacrament confraternities played central roles in these processes of transference and in turn, helped to reshape the nature of Eucharistic devotion in their city. This chapter addresses two questions: What motivated the transference of the tabernacle in Venetian parish churches? And what role did Sacrament confraternities play in these processes? Here I will show that the centralisation of the Eucharist enhanced the sacrality of these church spaces. I examine processes of tabernacle transference to understand how lay

⁴⁴⁵ Robert J. Daly, 'The Council of Trent', in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. by Lee Palmer Wandel (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 159-182 (p. 166).

⁴⁴⁶ Alison Wright, *Frame Work: Honour and Ornament in Italian Renaissance Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 240.

organisations related to the climate of Catholic reform and to ecclesiastical authority in this period of religious change. The activities of Sacrament confraternities are a crucial aspect of a broader effort in post-Tridentine Italy to bring Christ and his sacrifice to the centre of Catholic devotion. Following the affirmations of the Council of Trent, we also see an accentuation of Eucharist-related piety in parish churches through the transference of the tabernacle to the high altar. It also shows that the process of tabernacle transference, detailed in confraternity statute books, sheds important light on how these lay organisations related to the Tridentine decrees and their ecclesiastical interpreters. In doing so, I will demonstrate the ability of the laity in Venice to support a vibrant Catholic culture centred on the valorisation of the Holy Sacrament in their parish churches underpinned by a heightened sense of sacred immanence.

This analysis will be based on case studies of Sacrament confraternities that met in parish churches across the city of Venice.⁴⁴⁷ In total, I have analysed the statute books of 15 Sacrament confraternities to understand their functions and roles in supporting a vibrant culture of Catholic reform in the city's parishes. Of this sample, I have examined eight cases of tabernacle transference occurring between the years of 1554 and 1610. My analysis does not provide an exhaustive study of the transference of Eucharistic tabernacles in Venice. These samples have been selected to provide chronological range and geographical variety within the city and to highlight various aspects of the issues which may surround the transference of a tabernacle. Exhaustive study of this phenomenon is difficult. It is often hard to ascertain whether a Sacrament confraternity was always located on the high altar of their

⁴⁴⁷ By *sestiere*, these parish churches are as follows: Santi Apostoli (Cannaregio), San Giovanni Cristostomo (Cannaregio), San Marziale (Cannaregio), San Felice (Cannaregio), Santa Fosca (Cannaregio), Santa Lucia (Cannaregio), San Lio (Castello), Santa Maria Formosa (Castello), San Provolo (Castello), San Biagio (Castello), San Luca (San Marco), Santa Maria Zobenigo (San Marco), San Giacomo dall'Orto (Santa Croce), San Eustachio (Santa Croce), San Cassiano (San Polo).

church since early statutes rarely make reference to the specific chapel that they occupied.⁴⁴⁸ Some churches, especially monastic ones, maintained the Eucharistic tabernacle upon the high altar as a matter of standard practice. The samples here, however, relate to a movement from another chapel in the church to the high altar. This analysis centralises the power of the laity to influence the sense of sacred immanence in their churches through their interaction with the Eucharist. The activities of the Sacrament confraternities are one, albeit crucial, aspect of a broader emphasis on Christocentric piety in post-Tridentine Italy that sought to bring both Christ's sacrifice to the centre of Catholic devotion.

Confraternities, their churches, and Catholic reform

This period witnessed an expansion in Eucharistic piety in many forms, but the emphasis on the primacy of Christ manifested particularly in the parish church. Andrew Spicer has emphasised that the European Reformations exerted significant influence on the parish church on both sides of the confessional divide. For Catholicism, reform 'led to the assertion of the parish church' with an emphasis on the care of souls.⁴⁴⁹ In particular, Spicer draws attention to the reforming Church's concern regarding Catholic sacramental observance and the places where this happened. As Spicer has put it, 'the decisions taken by the Council of Trent also emphasised the place of the parish church for the administration of the sacraments and the teaching of Catholic dogma'.⁴⁵⁰ Elizabeth Tingle has argued that Catholic reform put fresh emphasis on the parish church. Tingle argues that confessional debates resulted in 'new

⁴⁴⁸ Benjamin Paul has suggested that, while monastic churches usually reserved the sacrament above the high altar in Venice, altars of the Holy Sacrament in Venice were often positioned in chapels at the liturgical north of the high altar. See Benjamin Paul, *Nuns and Reform Art in Early Modern Venice: The Architecture of Santi Cosma e Damiano and its Decoration from Tintoretto to Tiepolo* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 175, note 22.

⁴⁴⁹ Andrew Spicer, 'Introduction', in *Parish Churches in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Andrew Spicer (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-30 (p. 4).

⁴⁵⁰ Spicer, 'Introduction', p. 5.

perceptions of the sacred, which [...] led to the redesign and reconfiguration of churches'.⁴⁵¹ These spaces offered the Catholic immediate access to the most important and tangible expression of God's presence. It was there that the Mass was performed, and the Eucharist resided for extra-liturgical devotion. On the matter of visibility, Marcia B. Hall has shown that rood screens, designed to separate the congregation from the high altar 'are to be found exclusively in monastic' rather than parish churches in Italy, although these were eventually removed in the spirit of reform and visual access to the liturgy.⁴⁵² Spicer has further noted that the Council of Trent's emphasis on the laity's ability to participate in the Mass, visually and spiritually influenced the shape that newly-built churches took. Spicer argues that architectural choices 'reflected these new priorities through ensuring the visibility of the high altar'.⁴⁵³ Spicer's thesis manifests clearly in the Venetian church of the Redentore, which was completed in 1592. Lydia Hamlett argues that the church 'most accurately embodies the ideals of Counter-Reformation ecclesiastical building'.⁴⁵⁴ In particular, she notes that the 'architecture is articulated to focus on one goal: the visibility of the mass on the raised altar'.⁴⁵⁵ Of course, the Redentore was not a parish church, and the churches studied in this chapter existed in Venice long before the Council of Trent. While the focus on newly built churches indeed sheds valuable light on the relationship between Catholic reform and the Eucharist, I argue that we must account for how long-established churches were also transformed in this period. Parish churches were sites of religious practice closely tied to the

⁴⁵¹ Elizabeth C. Tingle, 'The Counter-Reformation and the Parish Church in Western Brittany (France) 1500-1700', in *Parish Churches in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Andrew Spicer (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 77-102 (p. 77).

⁴⁵² Marcia B. Hall, 'The Tramezzo in the Italian Renaissance, Revisited', in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. by Sharon E.J. Gerstel (Cambridge, MA: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2006), pp. 215-233 (p. 215).

⁴⁵³ Andrew Spicer, 'Sites of the Eucharist', in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. by Lee Palmer Wandel (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 323-362 (p. 358).

⁴⁵⁴ Lydia Hamlett, 'The Twin Sacristy Arrangement in Palladio's Venice: Origins and Adaptations', in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and its Territories, 1450-1750*, ed. by Nebahat Avcioglu and Emma Jones (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 105-126 (p.120).

⁴⁵⁵ Hamlett, 'The Twin Sacristy Arrangement in Palladio's Venice', p. 120.

realm of everyday devotion. The processes of transferring Eucharistic tabernacles to the high altar in Venetian parish churches transformed the sacred layout of these spaces, and it was lay Catholics, through membership to Sacrament confraternities, that shaped these changes.

The Sacrament confraternities of Venice operated within a broader structure of lay-clerical co-operation and parochial church authority. These associations were highly valued by parish and diocesan clergy due to their enthusiasm in enhancing the interiors of their host churches and for the devotional functions that they fulfilled. In the period under study here, Venice had 72 parishes and therefore the same number of parish churches. Jonathan Glixon has emphasised that most of these were collegiate parish churches meaning that they were led by a chapter (*capitolo*) that comprised the parish priest (*piovano*) and between two and three titular priests.⁴⁵⁶ Of the Sacrament confraternities studied in this chapter, 12 were associated with collegiate churches, while 3 – San Severo, San Provolo, and Santa Lucia – were associated with conventual churches that were shared with the laity. In Venice, the parish priest was elected by the property owners of the parish. The maintenance of the physical fabric of the parish church was one of the shared responsibilities of both the Sacrament confraternities and the church chapter. Nicholas Terpstra has emphasised the necessity for co-operation between lay confraternities and church leadership. Terpstra refers to confraternities in the early modern period as the ‘lay faces’ of the parish churches, but nonetheless emphasises these associations ‘relied on clerics for assistance in fulfilling their goals’.⁴⁵⁷ The Venetian Sacrament confraternities often worked hard with the clergy of their host churches to achieve their goals in relation to the valorisation of the Eucharist. In many cases, the records point to amiable relationships based on shared goals and enthusiasm.

⁴⁵⁶ Jonathan Glixon, ‘Music at Parish, Monastic, and Nunnery Churches and at Confraternities’, in *A Companion to Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice*, ed. by Katelijne Schiltz (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 45-78 (p. 46).

⁴⁵⁷ Nicholas Terpstra, ‘Boundaries of Brotherhood: Laity and Clergy in the Social Spaces of Religion’, in *Faith’s Boundaries: Laity and Clergy and in Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. by Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prospero, and Stefania Pastore (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 7-32 (p. 7).

As John Bossy has argued, the Eucharist was both a symbol and a practice that emphasised unity of Catholic people.⁴⁵⁸ The ability of the Eucharist to bring Catholic people together was epitomised by Sacrament confraternities. The pre-Tridentine roots of these associations have been emphasised by both Giuseppe Barbiero and Maurice E. Cope.⁴⁵⁹ Scholars of early modern Catholicism have more recently turned to understanding the lives of these confraternities and what belonging to one meant for the laity. A key question which occupies this scholarship is that of continuity or change: how far were Eucharistic confraternities shaped by the European Reformations? For Italy, Christopher Black estimates that Eucharistic confraternities date back to the twelfth century, but we see a 'major impetus' for them at the close of the fifteenth century. Black highlights the important Roman Archconfraternity at Santa Maria Sopra Minerva and Pope Paul III's endorsement of it in 1539 for providing a model for Eucharistic confraternities and their devotional practices.⁴⁶⁰ Focussing on Lombardy and Milan, Danilo Zardin has found Eucharistic confraternities documented from the fourteenth century.⁴⁶¹

Richard Mackenney has accounted for the proliferation of Eucharistic confraternities in sixteenth-century Venice. Like Zardin's findings for Milan, Mackenney suggested that the earliest confraternity dedicated to the Eucharist in Venice was founded in the fourteenth century at the conventual church of Corpus Domini in 1395.⁴⁶² A striking shift occurred in the sixteenth century when most of Venice's Sacrament confraternities were founded. Despite the clear resonances, there is no straightforward relationship between the

⁴⁵⁸ See John Bossy's 'The Mass as a Social Institution 1200-1700', *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), 29-61.

⁴⁵⁹ Giuseppe Barbiero, *Le confraternite del Santissimo Sacramento prima del 1539* (Treviso: Vedelago, 1944); Maurice E. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Garland, 1979).

⁴⁶⁰ Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 30. On confraternities as vehicles of reform, see also Robert R. Harding, 'The Mobilization of Confraternities against the Reformation in France', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 11.2 (1980), 85-107.

⁴⁶¹ Danilo Zardin, 'A Single Body: Eucharistic Piety and Confraternities of the Body of Christ in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Texts, Images, and Devotion', in *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 109-32 (p. 111).

⁴⁶² Mackenney, *Venice as the Polity of Mercy*, p. 201.

proliferation of Eucharistic confraternities and Catholic reform in the city. Mackenney emphasises the substantial development of Sacrament confraternities in Venice before the Council of Trent estimating that there were seventy-one Eucharistic foundations in Venice between 1451 and 1763.⁴⁶³ He shows that that there were sixty-six Eucharistic confraternities founded in the entire sixteenth century.⁴⁶⁴ Fifty-six of these were founded before the Council of Trent and only eleven were founded in the latter half of the sixteenth century.⁴⁶⁵ He further specifies that of the fifty-six pre-Tridentine foundations, forty-two existed by 1525.⁴⁶⁶ In short, there is no direct correlation between the proliferation of Sacrament confraternities in Venice and the climate of Tridentine and post-Tridentine reform. Notwithstanding this point, it is crucial to consider how the activities of Sacrament confraternities changed in the period during and after Trent, regardless of when a particular branch was founded.

The changing status and activities of Sacrament confraternities examined in this chapter aligned with the doctrinal priorities of Catholic reform. Black has drawn attention to the role of reform in encouraging confraternal piety at the parish level, such as those dedicated to the Eucharist.⁴⁶⁷ He suggests that ‘certain lay confraternities were in the forefront of the campaign to encourage the laity to respect and adore the Sacrament of the Eucharist, receive the Bread as flesh, and to understand better thereby Christ’s sacrifice’.⁴⁶⁸ These confraternities were not new to post-Tridentine Catholicism, but they played a role in bringing about important changes to the nature of Eucharistic piety. Danilo Zardin situates

⁴⁶³ Richard Mackenney, ‘The Scuole Piccole of Venice: Formations and Transformations’, in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 172-189 (p. 179).

⁴⁶⁴ Mackenney, *Venice as the Polity of Mercy*, p. 202.

⁴⁶⁵ Mackenney, *Venice as the Polity of Mercy*, p. 202.

⁴⁶⁶ Mackenney, *Venice as the Polity of Mercy*, p. 202.

⁴⁶⁷ Christopher Black, ‘The Public Face of Post-Tridentine Italian Confraternities’, *Journal of Religious History*, 28.1 (2004), 87-101 (p. 88). On the relationship between confraternities and the parish in this period see also his ‘Confraternities and the Parish in the Context of Italian Catholic Reform’, in *Confraternities and Catholic Reform in Italy, France and Spain*, ed. by John Patrick Donnelly and Michael W. Maher, (Kirkville: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1998), pp. 1-27.

⁴⁶⁸ Black, *Italian Confraternities*, p. 95.

the development of Eucharistic confraternities within the broader context of Christocentric devotion in this period. Zardin has shown that Eucharistic confraternities incorporated ideas about the devotion in print.⁴⁶⁹ In particular, Zardin argues for a shift in visual culture in Lombardy away from scenes of Christ's passion towards those of the Last Supper. The shift in emphasis decentralised the 'memorial' aspect of the Eucharist, based on remembering Christ's sacrifice, and instead foregrounded the literal, material, and sacramental nature of the consecrated bread and wine.⁴⁷⁰ The gradual shift away from the name 'The Most Sacred Body of Our Lord Christ' to the less elaborate confraternity 'of the Most Holy Sacrament' is interpreted by Zardin as a conscious shift in emphasis away from the symbolic 'to the veneration of a material object' of the host.⁴⁷¹

Historians have identified processes of tabernacle transference in studies of the broader activities of Sacrament confraternities in Venice. Yet, these treatments have neither addressed the significance of tabernacle transference in relation to the post-Tridentine redefinition of Eucharistic piety, nor have they considered what it meant for devotion to Christ in the parish. In his study of the patronage activities of sixteenth-century Venetian Sacrament confraternities, Paul Hills has shown that post-Tridentine commissions for artwork mainly consisted of lateral paintings designed to embellish the side walls of the chapel rather than altarpieces to adorn its main altar. The post-Tridentine preference to reserve the sacrament on the high altar in a lavish tabernacle made altarpieces redundant on such altars – 'replacing Illusion, one might say, by Real Presence'.⁴⁷² Richard Mackenney in his study of the charitable work of Sacrament confraternities in Venice has raised the issue of potential

⁴⁶⁹ Danilo Zardin, 'I miracoli del corpo di Cristo. Note intorno alla miscellanea devota di Niccolò Laghi (fine XVI-XVII secolo)', in *Lo scandalo del corpo. Studi di un altro teatro per Claudio Bernardi*, ed. by Carla Bino, Giulia Innocenti Malini, and Laura Peja (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2019), pp. 137-146.

⁴⁷⁰ Zardin, 'A Single Body', p. 128.

⁴⁷¹ Zardin, 'A Single Body', p. 127.

⁴⁷² Paul Hills, 'Piety and Patronage in Cinquecento Venice: Tintoretto and the Scuole del Sacramento', *Art History*, 6.1 (1983), 30-43 (p. 40). On the artistic patronage activities of these confraternities in Venice, see also Thomas Worthen, 'Tintoretto's Paintings for the Banco del Sacramento in S. Margherita', *The Art Bulletin*, 78.4 (1996) 707-732.

confusion between the foundation date of a particular Sacrament confraternity and the date that their tabernacle was transferred to the high altar in their host church.⁴⁷³ For him, this issue has led to the incorrect assumption that the climate of reform resulted in the numerical expansion of these confraternities in Venice. While post-Tridentine tabernacle transference was not the focus of these studies, closer examination of this development is required to understand the changing nature of Eucharistic piety in post-Tridentine Catholic culture. This chapter argues for the role of the laity, through their membership to Sacrament confraternities, in transforming devotion to the body of Christ at parish level.

It is crucial to underline the distinctiveness of tabernacle transference in relation to other new or renewed manifestations of Eucharistic piety in this period. The transference of the Eucharistic tabernacle resulted in a fundamental intensification of sacrality in Venetian parish churches by bringing the ‘Real Presence’ to the liturgical, visual, and physical centre. Tabernacle transference referred to moving Eucharistic tabernacles from a side altar, most commonly a Chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament, and installing it instead upon the high altar of the church in the *cappella maggiore* (main chapel) at the heart of the church. In many cases, the process of transference was a celebrated event. The broader process of transference could include processions of the Eucharist around the parish, solemn masses and concerts, and could directly involve members of the Venetian upper clergy, including the patriarch himself.

Sacrament confraternities involved in this process cited the double goal of rendering greater devotion to Christ and extending his presence outwards for the wider parish in their records of the event. The transference resulted in a permanent physical and spiritual reordering of the parish church. These churches were central devotional spaces around which

⁴⁷³ Richard Mackenney, ‘Continuity and change in the scuole piccole of Venice, c. 1250-c. 1600’, *Renaissance Studies*, 8.4 (1994) 388-402 (pp. 398-99).

Catholics in Venice organised their religious lives at the parish level. Yet, the process of erecting, decorating, and maintaining tabernacles on the high altar came at no little cost and effort. Consequently, the records of the Venetian Sacrament confraternities analysed here dedicated significant space to recording the process and broader context of transference. To them, transference was a major, and often exciting event for their confraternity. By focussing on this development, this chapter analyses how lay members of Venetian Sacrament confraternities related to the Tridentine decrees regarding the Eucharist and their key interpreters.

The visibility of Sacrament confraternities in parish life

Understanding the significance of both Eucharistic tabernacles and their transference requires consideration of the visibility of Sacrament confraternities in wider parish life. While membership to such a confraternity was encouraged, by no means was every layperson in the parish a member of their local branch. Nonetheless, Sacrament confraternities played crucial roles in shaping the devotional lives of non-members in the wider parish. The sources that shed light upon the Sacrament confraternities in Venice are the eighteenth-century copies of their statute books made by the *Provveditori di Comun*. This government magistracy had jurisdiction over the city's lay devotional confraternities, known in Venice as *scuole piccole*. The records produced by this magistracy are rich and comprehensive but represent just one manifestation of the Venetian Republic's unusual commitment to producing and storing documents relating to a wide range of political, religious, and social institutions. Filippo De Vivo attributes this commitment to documentary organisation in part to Venice's republican status characterised by a concern with checks and balances.⁴⁷⁴ This unusual archival context

⁴⁷⁴ Filippo De Vivo, 'Ordering the archive in early modern Venice (1400-1650)', *Archival Science*, 10 (2010), 231-248 (p. 234).

is particularly valuable to the historian of confraternal piety in Venice given the fact that many of the original statute books, known as *mariegole*, are no longer extant. The records produced by the *Provveditori di Comun* provide faithful reproductions of these key sources. The statutes contain the list of regulations each confraternity member had to adhere to, records of the various elections conducted by the confraternity and important expenditures made, and accounts of other important developments. These records were living documents, regularly being updated to make a note of both everyday and extraordinary events. Overall, devotional matters were not discussed at length, but the issue of tabernacle transference often merited extensive entries. This exception in record-keeping indicates that transference was considered a major event in the history of a particular confraternity. The regulations of the Sacrament confraternities are ideals, but they nonetheless allow us to examine important aspects of their devotional functions.

By the end of the sixteenth century, each of Venice's 72 parishes had its own branch of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament. These confraternities were legally categorised as *scuole piccole*.⁴⁷⁵ In Venice, the term 'scuole' could refer to lay devotional confraternities. The importance of the *scuole* to late-medieval piety in Venice has been examined by Francesca Ortalli who has emphasised the diverse membership of these organisations.⁴⁷⁶ In the period of this study, the *scuole piccole* continued to be engaged in dispensing charity amongst their members and wider communities. Many met in churches, where they might maintain an altar, and were dedicated to holy people, like saints, or to devotional principles, like the rosary. Scholarship has drawn attention to the role of Venice's *scuole piccole*, including the Sacrament confraternities, as patrons of art which enhanced the churches where

⁴⁷⁵ Jonathan Glixon, 'Two Confraternity Statutes from Venice: The Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità (c. 1300) and the Scuola Piccola del Santissimo Sacramento in San Felice (1541)', *Confraternitas*, 22:1 (2011), 4-8 (p. 6).

⁴⁷⁶ Francesca Ortalli, "*Per salute delle anime e delli corpi*": *Scuole piccole a Venezia nel tardo Medioevo* (Venice: Marsilio, 2001).

most of them met.⁴⁷⁷ Richard Mackenney and Peter Humfrey, have emphasised the ‘supra-parochial’ nature of the Venetian *scuole piccole* meaning that members could be drawn from residents across the city.⁴⁷⁸ This was one aspect where Sacrament confraternities differed from other *scuole piccole* in Venice. Rather than embracing members from across the city, membership to a Sacrament confraternity required belonging to the parish with which it was associated. More generally, *scuole piccole*, also differed from the six *scuole grandi* in several important ways. A key difference was that *scuole piccole* operated a more inclusive membership and leadership policy than the *scuole grandi* where positions of authority were restricted to the *cittadini*. Another main difference between the *scuole piccole* and the *scuole grandi* was that the former was almost exclusively concerned with devotional rather than charitable activities. As Humfrey puts it, *scuole piccole* placed ‘much greater emphasis [on] acts and objects of devotion than of acts of practical charity’.⁴⁷⁹ The activities of Venice’s Sacrament confraternities adhere to Humfrey’s assessment, but their contributions to devotional life allowed them to influence the spiritual culture of the parish in important ways.

The Sacrament confraternity at the church of San Giacomo dall’Orio in the Santa Croce district of the city was founded in 1507. The second rule of the confraternity addressed this inclusive attitude to membership under the heading ‘The everyone in the parish, great and small, is able to enter this confraternity’.⁴⁸⁰ The rule went on to stipulate that the confraternity was ‘to accept in this our blessed fraternity all those people that want to enter

⁴⁷⁷ On the *scuole piccole* and patronage generally, see Annalisa Perissa, *Scuole di arti mestieri e divozione a Venezia* (Venice: Arsenale Cooperativa Editrice, 1981); Peter Humfrey, ‘Competitive Devotions: The *Scuole Piccole* as Donors of Altarpieces in the Years around 1500’, *The Art Bulletin*, 70.3 (1988), 401-423. See also Stefania Mason Rinaldi, ‘Un percorso nella religiosità veneziana del Cinquecento attraverso le immagini eucaristiche’, in *La chiesa di Venezia tra Riforma protestante e Riforma cattolica*, ed. by Giuseppe Gullino (Venice: Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1990), pp. 183-94.

⁴⁷⁸ Humfrey, ‘Competitive Devotions’, p. 402; Richard Mackenney, ‘Devotional Confraternities in Renaissance Venice’, *Church History*, 23 (1986), 85-96 (p. 90).

⁴⁷⁹ Humfrey, ‘Competitive Devotions’, p. 403.

⁴⁸⁰ ‘Che ciascun della contra possino intrar in questa scola pizzoli, e grandi’. Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Provveditori di Comun (hereafter PC), Matricole Scuole, Registri (hereafter Reg.), Reg. R, Matricola della Scuola del Venerabile in S. Giacomo dall’Orio, fol. 2^r.

for devotion'.⁴⁸¹ The members of the Sacrament confraternity at San Giacomo dall'Orio therefore consisted of 'brothers and sisters of every age, men and women'.⁴⁸² The statutes of the confraternity associated with the church of San Felice in the Cannaregio district similarly emphasised its inclusive approach to lay involvement. It did, however, emphasise the parish-based nature of the confraternity and what this meant in terms of membership. In the third regulation, it was made clear that 'it is not permitted to deny entrance to the confraternity to anybody, that is those who are of the parish [of San Felice]'.⁴⁸³ The regulations of the San Provolo branch in the Castello district of Venice had further stipulations. In their twelfth regulation, it was ruled that while anybody in the parish was free to seek membership, their suitability demonstrated through good conduct needed to be confirmed by the elected leader known as the *gastaldo*.⁴⁸⁴ These lay institutions therefore had a strong sense of locality in the city, were strongly tied to the parish, the people within it and, of course, the parish church where the Sacrament confraternities met. The sense of inclusivity I have highlighted in these examples was not unique to Venice. Elizabeth Tingle has raised a similar point for the French Diocese of Rennes during the seventeenth century. She notes that it was 'wide membership' which made Sacrament confraternities distinct from others and many branches had either no or very low entry fees in order to encourage participation in the parish.⁴⁸⁵ Keith Luria's study of religious change in seventeenth-century Grenoble has shown that participation in Sacrament confraternities were equally inclusive with the 'social distinctions amongst members [being] hidden by the hoods and robes they wore during the ceremonies'.⁴⁸⁶ Luria

⁴⁸¹ 'acceptar in questa nostra benedetta scola, e Fraternità tutte quelle perzone, che voranno intrar per sua devotion'. PC Reg. R, S. Giacomo dall'Orio, fol. 2^r.

⁴⁸² 'fradelli, e sorelle, d'ogni età maschi, e feme'. PC Reg. R, S. Giacomo dall'Orio, fol. 2^r.

⁴⁸³ 'non possono negar ad alcuna persona le intrar in detta scuola cioè à quelli della contra'. PC Reg. O, San Felice, fol. 194^r.

⁴⁸⁴ 'Ordinando, che ciascuna persona, che vorrà intrar questa benedetta scuola debbia esser ricevuda con volontà del gastaldo, e delli compagnia, se li parerà boni, e sufficienti'. PC Reg. Q (Castello), San Provolo, fol. 250^r.

⁴⁸⁵ Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany 1480-1720* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 204.

⁴⁸⁶ Keith P. Luria, *Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), p. 37.

also emphasises the potential didactic function of Holy Sacrament confraternities in Grenoble serving as examples of piety for the wider parish.⁴⁸⁷ For Milan, Paolo Bossi has argued that Sacrament confraternities were regarded by ecclesiastical authorities as the ‘ideal instruments’ to promote Eucharistic piety in the wider diocese.⁴⁸⁸

The primary purpose of Sacrament confraternities in Venice was to facilitate Eucharistic devotion. This task involved maintenance of the chapels which housed the Eucharistic tabernacles. The visibility of the tabernacle or consecrated host exposed for adoration was an issue that was always raised in the statutes of Sacrament confraternities in Venice. The members who met in the church of Santa Fosca in Cannaregio for example ruled that on Sundays and during principal feast days six lit candle sticks were to be placed above their altar.⁴⁸⁹ The provision of illumination appears in the statutes of the church of Sant’Eustachio, also known locally as ‘San Stae’. The Sacrament confraternity there ruled in their sixteenth regulation that they were to ‘maintain a lit lamp before our altar of the Sacrament’ at all times rather than just on liturgically significant days.⁴⁹⁰ Of course, the constant provision of wax and oil to illuminate the host or Eucharistic tabernacle was a regular and substantial expense. As with other *scuole piccole*, the financial status and size of the Sacrament confraternities in Venice varied from parish to parish. The standard way that these organisations raised money for their activities was by gathering alms offered by faithful laypeople of the parish. The branch at Santa Maria del Giglio, known also as ‘Santa Maria Zobenigo’, also in the *sestiere* of San Marco, took a systematic approach to alms gathering. The sixth regulation of this Sacrament confraternity stipulated ‘that three or four members of the *banca* (elected committee) were required to traverse the houses of the parish on a monthly

⁴⁸⁷ Luria, *Territories of Grace*, p. 38.

⁴⁸⁸ Paolo Bossi, ‘Il ruolo della committenza nelle vicende della fabbrica di Santa Maria Nuova: la confraternità del Santissimo Sacramento’, *Arte Lombarda*, 131.1 (2001), 81-83 (p. 81).

⁴⁸⁹ ‘sopra l’Altare del Santissimo Sacramento sieno messi sei candelotti’. PC Reg. O, fol. 52^r.

⁴⁹⁰ ‘mantenire se debbia uno cesendello impiado davanti l’Altar nostro del Sagramento’. PC Reg. R (Cannaregio), San Eustachio, fol. 80^v.

basis seeking donations ‘to buy candles and candlesticks to illuminate the Holy Sacrament’.⁴⁹¹

While Sacrament confraternities relied on the alms of the faithful to function, they reciprocated by facilitating Eucharistic devotion on the parish level. Some of these duties were entwined with intimate junctures of the Catholic lifecycle. One key role that these confraternities might fulfil in this regard was the provision of the Holy Sacrament to the dying, a practice known as *viaticum*. Of course, these confraternity statutes represent ideals, and we do not know for certain how zealous the Sacrament confraternities were when it came to the practice of *viaticum*. Their potential involvement in facilitating devotion at the end of a parishioner’s life nonetheless emphasises the wider importance of Sacrament confraternities in parish devotional life. We have some evidence that the *viaticum* was performed in the period of this study. In 1699, Giovanni Sonzogno, head of the Sacrament confraternity at San Felice paid at his own expense for a new *ombrello* (covering) of white damask to be used ‘in accompanying the Holy Sacrament to the sick’.⁴⁹² Sonzogno’s purchase of the *ombrello* indicates at least the willingness of the San Felice confraternity to accompany the Holy Sacrament to the sick. The need for a new one also indicates the possession of an older, no longer appropriate covering which was used for *viaticum*. The practice of *viaticum* demonstrates the potential of the Sacrament confraternities to play central roles in devotional life in their parishes, even at the end of the Catholic lifecycle.

The bright and well-maintained chapels of the Sacrament confraternities in parish churches signalled their important roles in shaping Eucharistic piety in Venice.⁴⁹³ Yet, it is

⁴⁹¹ ‘tre overo quattro de nostri fratelli della banca siano obligati andar [...] una volta al mese cercando limosina per la case della contrà per comprar candele e candelotti’. PC Reg. T fol. 441^v.

⁴⁹² ‘Novembre 1699 [...] facevo fare per divozione, et del proprio danaro di damasco bianco [...] al servire a maggiore honore di sua divinita Maestà nel accompagnare il Santissimo Sacramento agli infermi’. PC Reg. O, fol. 215^v.

⁴⁹³ Artist Jacopo Tintoretto (c. 1518-1594) notably received many commissions made by various branches of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in Venice. See Hills, ‘Piety and Patronage in Cinquecento Venice’; Thomas Worthen, ‘Tintoretto’s Paintings for the Banco del Sacramento in S. Margherita’, *The Art Bulletin*, 78.4 (1996) 707-732.

difficult to evaluate how parishioners who were not members related to these confraternities. The statute records help in this respect by evidencing the pious bequests made to these organisations by laypeople in the parish. These last testament transcriptions evidence the laity's broader awareness of and engagement with Sacrament confraternities in Venice. The 1617 bequest of Franceschina Alberghetti is a case in point. In her will, Alberghetti stipulated that she wished to be buried in the church of Santi Apostoli and that 50 masses would be said for her soul, '25 at Santi Apostoli and 25 at Corpus Domini'.⁴⁹⁴ Amongst the monetary donations made by Alberghetti was a bequest of twelve ducats 'to the Reverend Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament' in the church where she was buried.⁴⁹⁵ The will of a Maria Samaritane, made in 1593, had a more generous bequest to the confraternity at Santa Maria Formosa. The laywoman wished to be laid to rest in the church of San Francesco della Vigna but stipulated that 'I wish that my dowry [is given to] the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of the church of Santa Maria Formosa'.⁴⁹⁶ Samaritane also requested that this donation be used to 'marry one maiden each year' – that is, to provide a trust for their own dowries.⁴⁹⁷ Like Maria Samaritane, Francesco Michieli made a bequest to his local Holy Sacrament confraternity designed to facilitate their devotional work for some time after his death. Michieli bequeathed to the confraternity at San Eustachio (San Stae) a yearly and perpetual donation of one ducat to buy oil to fuel their lamps.⁴⁹⁸ A particularly large bequest was made by Isabetta Vendramin, wife of patrician Girolamo Zane, to the Sacrament confraternity at the church of Santa Fosca. The bequest, made in 1666, consisted of a package of land. Isabetta, 'Betta', stipulated that 'I leave to the Venerable Confraternity of the Holy

⁴⁹⁴ '25 à Santi Apostoli e 25 al Corpus Domini'. PC Reg. N, fol. 520^r.

⁴⁹⁵ 'Lasso alla Revd. Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento – ducati 12'. PC Reg. N, fol. 521^r

⁴⁹⁶ 'Voglio che della mia dote [...] Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento della Chiesa de Santa Maria Formosa'. PC Reg. P fol. 171^r.

⁴⁹⁷ 'con l'obbligo di maritar ogni anno una donzella'. PC Reg. P, fol. 171^r.

⁴⁹⁸ 'ogn'anno in perpetuo al Santissimo Sacramento della chiesa de San Stae per comprar oglio ducato una all'anno'. PC Reg. R, fol. 85^r.

Sacrament of Santa Fosca around three fields with a house with covered walls [...] in the Villa di Rovaga worked at present by Mengo Michieletto at the rent of twenty-six ducats a year'.⁴⁹⁹ Records of pious bequests made by parishioners offer evidence of the integrated role of the Sacrament confraternities in parish devotional life, and their importance to the people that lived in them. Pious bequests recorded in the statute books demonstrate that Venetian laypeople were likely highly aware of their local Sacrament confraternity and their work in the parish community.

The basic principles and devotional functions of Sacrament confraternities in Venice did not change with the advent of the European Reformations. But the reforming Catholic Church's emphasis on the primacy of Christ led to important innovations in how the host was engaged with outside of the Mass. A key issue emerged: where should the tabernacle of the Eucharist and the presence of Christ within be located in the church? The Council of Trent did nothing more than reiterate the long-standing tradition that tabernacles be kept in an honoured, sacred place, but its affirmation laid the foundation for further development. In 1551 the Council of Trent affirmed that '[Christ] is truly, really, and substantially contained in the august sacrament of the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of those sensible things'.⁵⁰⁰ The Church made clear that Christ was present in the sacrament despite the 'accidents' – the bread and the wine – retaining their physical form. In terms of devotion to the Holy Sacrament, Trent ruled that it was indeed worthy of the 'worship of latria, which is due to the true God.'⁵⁰¹ Latria being the worship appropriate for God alone, Eucharistic devotion represents something quite distinct to the other forms of devotion looked at throughout this thesis. Miracles, icons, shrines, and saintly bodies indeed brought heaven to

⁴⁹⁹ 'lasso alla Veneranda Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento di Santa Fosca campi no. 3 in circa con una casa de muro coperta [...] in Villa di Rovaga lavovata al presente da Mengho Michieletto pasa d'affitto annualmente ducati venti sei'. PC Reg. O, fol. 58^v.

⁵⁰⁰ Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p. 76.

⁵⁰¹ Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p. 76.

earth for Catholic laypeople, but they did not bring the Real Presence of Christ substantially into the mundane world like the Eucharist did. In the same decree, Trent affirmed the devotional activities organised around the Eucharist like ‘special veneration every year on a fixed festival day’.⁵⁰² On the matter of reservation, Trent made one simple ruling: ‘the custom of reserving the Holy Eucharist in a sacred place is so ancient that even the period of the Nicene Council recognised that usage’.⁵⁰³ The Council did nothing more than reiterate a longstanding tradition, but affirmation laid the foundation for further development. A key figure in this regard is Carlo Borromeo, Bishop of Milan (1538-84). His influential treatise on church architecture, space, and stuff took the question of the sacrament reserved even further.

Borromeo’s instructions on the reservation of the Holy Sacrament expanded upon the simpler decrees of Trent. While his work was written in the Milanese context, Borromeo’s ideas and episcopal activities directly influenced the practice of the reservation of the Host in Venice.⁵⁰⁴ In dealing with the tabernacle of the Holy Sacrament, Borromeo decided that ‘it is proper that some instruction be given here on the subject of the tabernacle, since a provincial decree has made it obligatory to put the tabernacle on the high altar’.⁵⁰⁵ Again, this decree applied to the Milanese context. The Tridentine decrees did not require the tabernacle to be placed upon the high altar, just a sacred place. Borromeo’s preference of the high altar was his own elaboration. This state of reservation was therefore neither a Tridentine nor a Borromean invention. Evelyn Voelker emphasises that the Bishop of Verona, Matteo Giberti (1495-1543) made pre-Tridentine rulings on the exclusive reservation of the Eucharist upon the high altar in his *Constitutiones* of 1542.⁵⁰⁶ In this sense, Voelker interprets Borromeo as a

⁵⁰² Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p. 76.

⁵⁰³ Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p. 77.

⁵⁰⁴ On Borromeo’s work to reform his own diocese of Milan, see Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁵⁰⁵ Carlo Borromeo, *Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, Book 1*, trans. by Evelyn Voelker (1577), p. 35.

⁵⁰⁶ Borromeo, *Instructiones*, p. 37.

‘compiler of established customs [who] recommended new practices in the light of reform measures’.⁵⁰⁷ Despite the Milanese context of the ruling, Borromeo’s ideas about the proper reservation of the Holy Sacrament extended beyond his archdiocese enough to influence the practice of Eucharistic reservation in Venice.

The Apostolic Visitation of 1581 was an important encounter between Venice and the reforming Church. At its heart, the point of several ranking ecclesiastics paying a formal visit to the city of Venice was to ensure adherence to the decrees of the Council of Trent. This visit involved ranking bishops close to the papacy – including Bishop Carlo Borromeo – visiting Venetian parish churches and evaluating the state of local devotional life. Silvio Tramontin’s analysis of the event demonstrates that Borromeo was in fact influential in securing the Apostolic Visitation of Venice. The hard-line reformer settled on the necessity of a visitation during a visit to Venice in 1580 having already participated in a visitation of the diocese of Bergamo in 1575.⁵⁰⁸ Despite some resistance from Venice, ever protective of its religious independence, the Apostolic Visitation went ahead a year later. The parish churches around which laypeople organised their devotional lives were subjected to the scrutiny of the central reforming Church. Unsurprising given Borromeo’s opinions on the matter, the position of Eucharistic tabernacles was sharp on the radar of the Apostolic Visitors. Anticipating the awkwardness that this might cause in the city, Patriarch of Venice Giovanni Trevisan (1503-1590) penned a note to Antonio Milledonne, Secretary of the Collegio (the principal organ of the Venetian government) in 1581 warning that

The opinion of Cardinal Borromeo, amongst others, is that the Holy Sacrament should be kept above the high altar as it is the most honoured place, and it is true that the high altar, for being in the centre of churches, is the most honoured, and for which in the churches of the friars and nuns the Holy Sacrament

⁵⁰⁷ Borromeo, *Instructiones*, p. 37.

⁵⁰⁸ Silvio Tramontin, ‘La visita apostolica del 1581 a Venezia’, *Studi Veneziani*, 9 (1967) 453-533 (pp. 454-456).

is kept above the high altar, but in the parishes it is not so because they have the Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. They have beautiful altars, honoured, well-kept and revered, and have not only made these altars, but have adorned the churches as one can see throughout the whole city. If one took the Sacrament from those altars made with great expense, one runs the risk of cooling the souls of these good and devout people who would then not make those expenses that make for the reverence of the Divine cult.⁵⁰⁹

By 1581, Venice was confronted with a situation that could change the nature of Eucharistic piety that was pushed for by the central reforming Church in the form of the Apostolic Visitation. This evaluation of religious life in Venice differed from the less controversial pastoral visitations conducted by the Patriarch of Venice. A notable aspect of this visitation was the nervousness which it prompted in Venice. Paola Modesti has emphasised that the visitation was only agreed upon following ‘long and difficult negotiations’ involving senior officials, like Patriarch Trevisan, and the Papal Nuncio Alberto Bolognetti.⁵¹⁰ Modesti has emphasised that part of this nervousness was the Venetian government’s fear that the Apostolic Visitors would not understand the particularities of Venetian religious life. It did, however, go ahead and the Visitors paid close attention to the state and functionality of parish churches, including their tabernacles.⁵¹¹ Notwithstanding the importance of the Visitation of 1581, Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament in Venice were already actively engaging with the question of the tabernacle.

⁵⁰⁹ ‘l’opinion del Cardinal Borromeo fra le altre è [...] che il santissimo sacramento sia tenuto sopra l’altare grande, come il loco più honorato, et è vero che l’altare grande, per esser in mezzo le chiese è il più honorato, et per ciò nelle chiese de frati et Monache il santissimo sacramento si tien sopra l’altar grande, ma nelle parochie non è così, per che hanno le scole del sacramento li sui altari bellissimi, honorati, ben tenuti, et riveriti, et non solamente hanno fatto questi altari, ma adornate le chiese come si può veder per tutta la città, che quando si levasse il sagramento da quelli sui altari fatti con tanta spesa, si corriera pericolo, che si intiepidischi l’animo di queste done, et devote persone, onde non facessero poi quelle spese, che fanno per riverentia del culto Divino’. ‘Correspondence between Patriarch Giovanni Trevisan and Antonio Milledonne, 1581’, cited in Tramontin, ‘La visita apostolica’, pp. 523-24

⁵¹⁰ Paola Modesti, ‘I cori nelle chiese veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581. Il “barco” di Santa Maria della Carità’, *Arte Veneta*, 59 (2002), 38-65 (p. 39).

⁵¹¹ Modesti, ‘I cori nelle chiese veneziane’, p. 39.

'Because it was a very holy thing': Lay-driven tabernacle transference

The activities of the Sacrament confraternity at the church of Santi Apostoli facilitated a devotional shift that engaged the whole parish working together with clergy. The confraternity was established in 1511 and a decade later was given use of the chapel to the right of the high altar where it constructed the altar to the Holy Sacrament.⁵¹² The church of Santi Apostoli was one of eight believed to have been commissioned by seventh-century Italian Saint Magnus of Oderzo. Its prominence was augmented in the period under study here by its association with the patrician Cornaro family, including Queen Caterina Cornaro of Cyprus (1454-1510) who was initially entombed in Santi Apostoli before being moved to the church of San Salvador in the 1580s.⁵¹³ Stringa's 1604 updated edition of Francesco Sansovino's encyclopaedic *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare* of 1581 indicated that the church of Santi Apostoli served the spiritual needs of a parish of 3222 souls.⁵¹⁴ In March 1567, the Sacrament confraternity at this church gained new prominence after being given the administration of the high altar and the responsibility of installing a tabernacle there.

The decision to move the tabernacle to the high altar occupies several folio pages in the statute book of the confraternity representing the lengthiest account of tabernacle transference considered in this chapter. The records indicate that the transference emerged from the interactions between Nicolò Giustinian, procurator (lay benefactor) of the church of

⁵¹² 'L'Anno 1522. 16 di Octobre il Reverendo Piovan di Santi Apostoli [...] concesse alla Confraternita del Santissimo Sacramento di detta Chiesa l'altare à mano destra della cappella grande'. PC Reg. N, fol. 505^r.

⁵¹³ Holly Hurlburt, 'Body of Empire: Caterina Corner in Venetian History and Iconography', *Early Modern Women*, 4 (2009), 61-99 (pp. 74-75).

⁵¹⁴ 'Et le anime finalmente sotto questa cura sono 3222'. Francesco Sansovino and Giovanni Stringa, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare. Descritta già in XIII. Libri da M. Francesco Sansovino: Et hora con molta diligenza corretta, emendate, e più d'un terzo di cose nuove ampliata dal M. R. D. Giovanni Stringa, Canonico della Chiesa Ducale di S. Marco. Nella quale si contengono tutte le cose, così Antiche, come Moderne, che nell'ottava faccitata di questo foglio si leggono* (Venice: Altobello Salicato, 1604), fol. 142^r. Further references in this chapter to the population of different parishes are derived from this edition and represent the figure at the time of writing.

Santi Apostoli, and Piero Pagani, a member of the *banca* of the Sacrament confraternity, with the Lenten preacher Elijeo Capis.⁵¹⁵ The former two approached the preacher to ask him to ‘heartily strive so that the Holy Sacrament is placed on the high chapel of that church attaching many reasons’.⁵¹⁶ Of these reasons, the duo cited the honour of God, the satisfaction of the parish, and the need to take a stance against the ‘injuries that are made to the Holy Sacrament by the heretics’.⁵¹⁷

The three aims encapsulated some of the key priorities of the Tridentine church: to worship God, to encourage parochial sacramental observance, and to speak to the doctrinal challenges posed by Protestant heretics. It is significant that these people, lay and clerical alike, felt that all three might be achieved by changing the position of the tabernacle in the parish church. It is also worth noting that the latter half of the sixteenth century witnessed an intense juncture in the prosecution of Protestantism in the city through the work of the recently established Venetian Holy Office.⁵¹⁸ The sense of urgency to combat heresy exhibited in the rationale for the transfer is therefore likely connected to this broader concern in the city at this time. The context at Santi Apostoli aligns with Danilo Zardin’s energetic resistance to a top-down interpretation of accentuated Eucharistic piety. For him, post-Tridentine developments were the product of ‘an extensive circulation of ideas [...] and intense interchange between high and low, centre and periphery, clerical and secular worlds’.⁵¹⁹ Zardin’s crucial reminder that we must account for the interaction between lay and clerical culture when it comes to understanding post-Tridentine piety is particularly

⁵¹⁵ Alison Sherman has shown that taking on the role of lay procurator could allow laypeople to obtain status and influence in their parishes. See her, “Soli Deo Honor et Gloria”? Cittadino Lay Procurator Patronage and the Art of Identity Formation in Renaissance Venice’, in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and its Territories, 1450-1750*, ed. by Nebahat Avcioglu and Emma Jones (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 15-32.

⁵¹⁶ ‘adoparsi caldamente acciochè il Santissimo Sacramento fusse posto alla capella maggiore de ditta Chiesa allegano molte ragioni’. PC Reg. N, fol. 500^r.

⁵¹⁷ ‘per l’honor d’Dio come per satifazione di tutta questa parrochia [...] delle presenti ingiurie, che si fanno dalli heretici à detto Santissimo Sacramento’. PC Reg. N, fol. 500^v.

⁵¹⁸ John Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991).

⁵¹⁹ Zardin, ‘A Single Body’, p. 116.

resonant here. The Venetian case of Santi Apostoli offers an excellent example of the potential of lay and clerical collaboration in transforming Eucharistic piety in the parish. Of course, the intended result of the project was to enhance the laity's relationship with Christ's presence. Moving the tabernacle required collaboration across the ecclesiastical hierarchy from the parish priest of Santi Apostoli to the Patriarch of Venice. The initiating trio were successful in gaining permission from both priest and patriarch, the latter ruling that no burials may be made in the high chapel out of respect of presence of the Holy Sacrament.⁵²⁰ This initial collaboration between laity and clergy was essential to secure the transference of the tabernacle. Once the decision was approved in principle, however, the proposal was placed before Alessandro Baselli, *gastaldo* of the Sacrament confraternity of Santi Apostoli.

In the record of his response, the instrumental role that the Sacrament confraternity and its members played in securing the transference of the tabernacle is articulated:

In that time, the preacher called the *gastaldo*, and some of the brothers of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, and he proposed to them all of these things, narrating this holy work as is above, and they responded together in a manner pleasing to this change [committing] to do this holy work with spirit, firstly because it was a very holy thing, and second, because it has already been desired by them for some time.⁵²¹

The Sacrament confraternity supported the project of transferring the tabernacle in the church of Santi Apostoli. Here, we see that the members of the confraternity agreed that the work was indeed a holy thing. What is more, despite not being the instigators of the project, the Sacrament confraternity indicated that the exact plan being described to them by the preacher

⁵²⁰ 'prohibendo, che nella detta capella granda non si potesse metter sepulture di sorte alcuna per rispetto del Santissimo Sacramento'. PC Reg. N, fol. 501^r.

⁵²¹ 'In questo tempo il Predicator fece chiamar il Gastalto, et alcuni fradelli della scola del Santissimo Sacramento, et li propose tutte queste cose, narrandoli questa santa opera come è di sopra, et essi unitamente risposero sopra modo piacerli detta mutatione essortando à far questa santa opera animosamente, prima perchè era cosa santissima, poi perchè era stata da loro già alquante giorni desiderata'. PC Reg. N, fol. 501^r.

had already been desired for them for some time. In the first instance, we already know that the Protestant challenge played some role in the minds of the three clerical and lay initiators. But the Sacrament confraternity were most keenly concerned with the devotional relevance of moving the tabernacle for Catholics. They described the high altar as ‘the most supreme, and honoured place in the church’ making ‘the need to put it [the Holy Sacrament] in the high chapel’ to be ‘his place in this majesty’.⁵²² The movement had a devotional function: to encourage ‘more adoration and universal devotion from everyone’.⁵²³ Here the members identified two ways that they understood the transference of the tabernacle: as a centralisation of God’s presence, referred to as majesty, in the church, and the increase in devotion to the Eucharist that this would encourage amongst the laity. The subsequent actions of Alessandro Baselli, and the Sacrament confraternity as a whole, transformed the project from an idea approved in principle, to an important physical and spiritual shift in the church of Santi Apostoli centred on the body of Christ.

To ensure that the work could be completed quickly, Baselli raised the issue of funds. He was, nonetheless, confident that such an important transformation in parish devotional life would attract significant support from the wider parish community. Although creating and transferring a new tabernacle to the high altar would be a costly endeavour, Baselli was confident that ‘he would find a great sum, seeing the parish united to this end’ referring to his intention to gather alms.⁵²⁴ On this effort, the statutes record that the Sacrament confraternity and clergy of Santi Apostoli were proactive in raising the funds necessary to pay for the work associated with the transference of the tabernacle to the high altar. The statute book indicates that ‘to start the conventions made between the reverend priests of Santi Apostoli and the

⁵²² ‘il più supremo, et honorato loco della chiesa [...] metterli nella capella granda per esser così il suo loco in questa Maestà’. PC Reg. N, fol. 501^v.

⁵²³ ‘più adoratione, et devotione universale d’ogn’uno’. PC Reg. N, fol. 501^v.

⁵²⁴ ‘assai danari, et ne havrebbe trovato molta somma, vedendo la contra unita tutta à questo fine’. PC Reg. N, fol. 501^r.

Chapter General of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament', alms would be sought by all those involved from the wider parish.⁵²⁵

Since it is a very right thing to honour the Holy Sacrament of the Altar with the greatest work that is humanly possible, in order that in the Church of the Apostles, the main chapel will be built or completed to house the Most Blessed Body of the Lord. [...] 200 ducats will be spent. All the great and honoured parishioners of this parish will be humbly begged in the mercy of Christ to give alms for as much as it pleases them [...] and finally, all the expenses that will be incurred will be shown to everyone; but above all, pray to each to keep an eye on the infinite obligation which they hold with Christ who shed his blood to make us honoured and happy in eternity.⁵²⁶

Although it is difficult to know what non-confraternity members in the parish thought about the decision to transfer the Eucharistic tabernacle in their churches, the statute books make it clear that their contributions to parish devotional life relied on almsgiving from parishioners. The Santi Apostoli Sacrament confraternity did not evaluate the success of their attempt to raise funds in numerical terms. They were, however, able to complete the transference in just over one year. This indicates that enough funds were raised through almsgiving to demonstrate a formidable degree of parochial enthusiasm for the project of tabernacle transference. Likewise, the promise that donors would be invited to survey the result of their donations evidences the confraternity's desire that parishioners felt as both financial and spiritual stakeholders in the reorientation of the tabernacle. The extract also indicates the important role that the Sacrament confraternity played in encouraging parish unity in relation

⁵²⁵ 'Per dar principio alle conventioni fatte trà li Reverendi Preti della Chiesa di Santi Apostoli, et Capitolo general della scola del Santissimo Sacramento'. PC Reg. N, fol. 502^v.

⁵²⁶ 'Essendo cosa giustissima honorar il SS. dell'Altar con quella maggiore opera, che humanamente si possa, acciochè nella Chiesa i SS. Apostoli si fabbrichi ò compisea la capella maggiore per riporvi il Beatissimo corpo del Signore, [...] si spender forsi ducati 200 saranno humilmente pregati nelle viscere di Christo tutti li clarissimi, et honorati Parrochiani di questa contra sottoscrivarsi per elemosina per tanto quanto li piace [...], et in fine si mostrerà à ogn'uno tutte quelle spese, che si faranno; mà sopra tutto li prega ogn'uno haver l'occhio all'infinito obbligo, che tiene con Christo che sparse il sangue per far honorati, et felice noi in eternum'. PC Reg. N, fol. 502^r.

to the body of Christ. In May 1568, slightly more than a year after the inception of the project, approval came from Rome which granted plenary indulgences to the new chapel of the Holy Sacrament at the church of Santi Apostoli. With Papal blessing secured, the time had arrived to execute the official transference of the tabernacle.

The record of the process of tabernacle transference drew attention to its importance for the wider parish and city. The day of Pentecost, 22 May 1568, was chosen for the official transference of the Eucharistic tabernacle to the high altar of Santi Apostoli.⁵²⁷ The entry for the official transference recorded that

On the Day of the Pentecost

The transference of the Most Holy Sacrament was done in a solemn procession with the *Scuole Grandi* and was placed upon the high altar according to the above written termination [...] the illustrious Monsignor Legate, and the Most Reverend Patriarch [...] and many other reverend prelates, accompanied together with many nobles, and all those of the parish with the greatest solemnity. A solemn mass was sung [...], with the happiness and satisfaction of all of Venice, thanking forever the Lord God.⁵²⁸

In this account we see the palpable sense of occasion and celebration that accompanied the event of transference indicating its importance for the church, Sacrament confraternity, and wider parish. The official transference was integrated with the Pentecost celebrations featuring a solemn procession with the city's *scuole grandi* before it was installed upon the

⁵²⁷ Pentecost was particularly relevant to the titular saints of Santi Apostoli. The feast of Pentecost, celebrated fifty days after Easter, celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the twelve Apostles of Christ. This New Testament story is described in Acts of the Apostles.

⁵²⁸ 'Il zorno delle Pentescoste. Fù essi solenne procession con le scole grande fatto la tramutation del Santissimo Sacramento, et messo nella Capella grande in essecution delle termination soprascritte, et Bolla da Roma, ove fù il Revmo, et Illmo. Monsign. Legato, et il Revmo. Patriarcha [...] et molti altri [...] à compagnar insieme con pur assai nobeli, et tutti della contrà con grandissimo solennità, et fù cantado una messa solenne [...] con contento, e satisfazion de tutta Venetia, ringratiando per sempre il Signor Iddio'. PC Reg. N, fols. 503^r-503^v.

high altar.⁵²⁹ The involvement of these major confraternities, the patriarch, and the wider parish demonstrates the importance of tabernacle transference as an event. Through these very public devotional acts, the significance of tabernacle transference was clearly communicated to lay Catholics, whether or not they were members of the Sacrament confraternity. The enthusiasm for the body of Christ worked through the Santi Apostoli tabernacle transference was highly visible and was a celebrated event. Turning now to the Sacrament confraternities of San Marziale and San Lio, this chapter continues to examine lay-driven examples of tabernacle transference. The Santi Apostoli case is essential for drawing attention to the importance of lay and clerical collaboration in these processes.

The confraternity at San Marziale was established in 1507 and maintained an official altar in a chapel near the sacristy. The church served the needs of a sizable parish of 2897 people.⁵³⁰ The decision to commission a new tabernacle, which was to be placed on the high altar, was made in 1573. In this case however, the records indicate that it was the confraternity who devised the idea and made formal request to the clergy of the church to use a sum of twenty-five ducats ‘to make a beautiful tabernacle that is to be placed into the Holy Sacrament above the high altar of the church’.⁵³¹ The request came from the *gastaldo* of the confraternity who at the time was a Hieronimo de Domenego. The confraternity members made it clear that they felt that the Holy Sacrament ought to be better honoured in their parish church. In their supplication, they argued that it was necessary to move the altar of the Holy Sacrament away from the old chapel and onto the high altar ‘lest it be left in that old, dark and disordered place not of the dignity that it contains’.⁵³² This detail of the request is

⁵²⁹ Fù essi solenne processione con le scole grande fatto la tramutation del Santissimo Sacramento, et messo nella capella granda’. PC Reg. N, fol. 503^r.

⁵³⁰ ‘Sotto la cura di questa Parochia vi sono anime 2897’. Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 140^r.

⁵³¹ ‘desiderando noi di far un bel tabernaculo che sia dovendo per poner in quello Santissimo Sacramento sopra l’Altare Grando di ditta chiesa’. PC Reg. O, fol. 89^r.

⁵³² ‘acciò sia levato via di quel loco antico, scuro, e mal dell’ordine e non di questa dignità, che si contiene’. PC Reg. O, fol. 89^r.

important for two reasons. In the first instance, it demonstrates that the laymen of the confraternity grasped the significance of the reorientation of the Eucharistic tabernacle and why the high altar was the ideal place. The centrality, light, and visual focus provided by the high altar were ostensibly the antidotes to the antiquity, darkness, and apparent ruin of the lateral chapel. While the liturgical geography of the church was theoretically the domain of clerics, as was the case with Carlo Borromeo, laypeople too were aware of its significance. Furthermore, the language used to describe the Eucharistic host – especially of the ‘dignity, that it contains’ – evidences the tacit awareness of the confraternity of the sacred immanence of the host. For them, the proximity to Christ through the real presence that the tabernacle contained merited similar visual and liturgical proximity in the parish church by being placed on the high altar.

The request itself is short, filling only one folio page of the San Marziale confraternity’s statutes. It does, however, offer another detail which sheds light upon how the process of tabernacle transference was perceived throughout the city of Venice. One of the final arguments made by the confraternity in San Marziale was ‘that adornment is being done in many parishes of this city’.⁵³³ Although this is somewhat of a vague estimation, the statement demonstrates that this confraternity was aware of other such developments in Eucharistic piety in Venice. At San Marziale, therefore, the Sacrament confraternity wanted to participate in a broader culture of enhanced devotion to the Eucharist which they were evidently aware of. What is more, the confraternity came to this decision on their own with no evidence of initial collaboration with the *piovano* of the church or other ecclesiastical authorities, as was the case at Santi Apostoli. The confraternity soon received written permission for their plan, along with the church chapter’s out the conditions. The formal response detailed the following:

⁵³³ ‘adornamento di quella come è stà fatto in molte parochie di questa città’. PC Reg. O, fol. 89^r.

Having seen the petition presented by Hieronimo de Domenego, Guardiano of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in the church of Saint Marcilian [Marziale], saying that in most of the parishes and churches of this city, many adornments are made, all of which give to the glory of God our Lord. And because in our church [...] the Altar of the Most Holy Sacrament is in a dark, ancient place which does not have the grandeur befitting such sublime dignity. It will be that by the authority of the Chapter, that [we] will have a tabernacle built over the altar of our Lord Jesus Christ: true Lord, and our own Redeemer for which will be spent up to sixty ducats [...] on condition that Hieronimo de Domenego and his company of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, as he is obliged, and promised by this writing [...] must spend twenty-five ducats in making the *soazoni* [decorative wooden entablatures] around the aforesaid church.⁵³⁴

The response indicated the good working relationship between the clergy of San Marziale and the Sacrament confraternity. The sense of enthusiasm for the project was reflected in the speed at which it was executed. It was twelve months later, in 1574, and under a new *gastaldo* by the name of Francesco Cenerio, that the transference was completed. The statutes record that ‘of the operations of our predecessors [who] have made an adorned tabernacle and placed that above the high altar where soon they will place the body of our Lord Jesus Christ’.⁵³⁵ The statutes indicate that once this process was complete, the committee of the confraternity held a vote on the motion of allocating money for decoration of the new altar

⁵³⁴ ‘Havendo veduto noi pressidenti la supplica presentada per Hieronimo de Domenego Guardiano della Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento in Giesa di San Marcillian dicendo che in la maggior parte delle parochie e giese di questa città si è fatto molti adornamenti, quali tutti cedono alla gloria de Dio nostro Signore, et perchè nella giesa nostra [...] l’Altare del Santissimo Sacramento è in luogo scuro, antico, e che non hà quella grandezza, che si conviene a tanta sublime dignita come in essa supplicatione. E anderà parte che per l’auttorità di questo Capitolo sia per li magnifici Pressidenti fatto far sopra l’Altare grande [...] un tabernacolo, et con qualia degni adornamenti, che si conviene, da esser posto in quello il Corpo Santissimo del nostro Sig. Giesù Christo, vero Signore, e Redentore nostro nel qual sia spesso fino ducati sessanta [...] con questa condizione però, che Hieronimo de Domenego et suoi Compagni della scola del Santissimo Sacramento siccome si hà obligado, et promesso per la presente scrittura hora fatta letta a questo Magnifico Capitolo debbi spender ducati venticinque in far li soazoni attorno la preditta giesa’. PC Reg. O, fol. 90^r.

⁵³⁵ ‘Considerando missier Francesco Cenerio al presente Guardiano della Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento, che avendo veduto le operatione fatti dalli precessori nostri [...] hanno fatto far loro un tabernacolo adorato, e posto quello sopra il Altar grande, dove con brevità li saranno posto il Corpo del nostro Signor Gesù Christo’. PC Reg. O, fol. 90^r.

including two marble columns. The vote indicated unanimous enthusiasm for the enhancement of the new altar with a result of 9 in favour to 0 against.⁵³⁶

The Sacrament confraternity at the church of San Lio was founded in 1511 and offers further evidence of lay-driven initiatives regarding tabernacle transference. The church in question served a parish of 1208 people by 1604.⁵³⁷ The church was subjected to significant rebuilding in the early sixteenth century and was reconsecrated in 1619. In the case of San Lio, the movement of the tabernacle occurred in December of 1608. As with San Marziale, the initiative was driven by the spiritual priorities of confraternity members. The statute book entry describes that in light of the ‘reverence [...] due to God, by the zeal of which moves us [...] wanting to follow a pious and devout institution, knowing the urgent need that this church has of a high altar, we have included it in our General chapter that this altar is built in stone with the money of the confraternity’.⁵³⁸ It was of course necessary to enlist the help of the *piovano* of the church. The entry implied that informal discussions had already occurred, and the permission had been granted since it went on to speak of the obligations that the confraternity was willing to shoulder with its new altar. Batista Banzasso, the *piovano* along with the unnamed titular priest ‘promising for them and for their successors [to] concede that chapel to our confraternity’ and thus gave their approval for the transference.⁵³⁹ The decision to take over the high altar of a church never rested solely with the Sacrament confraternity in question. Permission granted by the chapter of the relevant church was always needed. The 1608 entry of the confraternity at San Lio, however, describes a lay-driven initiative. The confraternity, perhaps owing to their amiable relationship with the *piovano* as evidenced by

⁵³⁶ PC Reg. O, fol. 90^r.

⁵³⁷ ‘Le anime sono 1208’. Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 110^v.

⁵³⁸ ‘Riverentia dovuto à Dio, dal zelo del quale mossi noi [...] volendo seguir un cosa pio, e devoto institution, conoscendo l’urgente bisogno, di hà questa chiesa di un Altare maggiore habbiamo preso parte nel nostro General capitolo che sia fabricato in pietra, l’detto Altar delli denari di essa compagnia’. PC Reg. Q, fol. 510^r.

⁵³⁹ ‘promettendo, per se e per suoi successori, dano promettono, e concedono la ditta capella alla nostra scuola’. PC Reg. Q, fol. 510^r.

joint donations, wanted to address the church of San Lio's need for a new high altar.⁵⁴⁰ They took it upon themselves to allocate the money to make this happen.

Like the case of San Marziale, there is also evidence that the Sacrament confraternity members at San Lio were aware that other churches in Venice were benefitting from similar enhancements thanks to their local branch. In the case of San Lio, their argument for taking over the high altar began with the observation that the decorative objective of Sacrament confraternities 'is the custom in the churches and parishes of this religious city that the confraternities of the Holy Sacrament to the greater devotion of the faithful'.⁵⁴¹ The language used here is almost identical to that used in the San Marziale statutes and demonstrates again the simple but clear awareness of the enhancement projects being undertaken by other Sacrament confraternities in Venice, including transferring their tabernacles to the high altar. The observation of the work of other Sacrament confraternities and their ideas may have inspired others to push for similar changes in their own churches pointing to the appeal that the high altar had for these members. My examination of these three cases brings the matter of lay and clerical co-operation to the fore. Crucially, these cases demonstrate that we must account for the interaction between lay and clerical culture when it comes to understanding post-Tridentine Eucharistic piety.

'Not being able to do it until now': Action and inaction in transference

The question of the tabernacle's position in parish churches was a cause for concern for the Apostolic Visitors of Venice. Patriarch Trevisan anticipated the conflict that zealous churchman, keen to ensure that the tabernacle was kept on the high altar, may have

⁵⁴⁰ On 24 March 1633 Pasqualin Fortuna, *gastaldo* of the Holy Sacrament confraternity of San Lio, and the *piovano* made a joint donation of a painting featuring the passion of Christ in thanks of the city's liberation from plague. See PC Reg. Q, fols. 515^r-515^v.

⁵⁴¹ 'È costume che nelle chiese parochiali di questa religiosa città la compagnie del santissimo sacramento à maggiore devotione di fideli'. PC Reg. Q, fol. 509^r.

encountered with the Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. Primarily, the patriarch did not want vibrant local enthusiasm for the Eucharist in Venice to be dampened by directives to shift already well-maintained and cherished altars in parish churches. Of course, this does not mean that the Venetian Sacrament confraternities were necessarily hostile to this particular expression of the expansion of the cult of the Eucharist. After all, in the cases of Santi Apostoli, San Marziale, and San Lio, the branches of the Holy Sacrament confraternity either happily co-operated with local clergy to ensure the transference of the tabernacle, or as was the case for the latter two, were the instigators of this development. But 1581 was a different spiritual and political context. Venice was fiercely protective of its freedom in religious matters from the patriarchate (archdiocese) to parish. After all, Venetian laypeople shaped religious life in their own parishes to the extent that they elected their own parish priests. So, how did Holy Sacrament confraternities react when reformers decided that universal reservation of the Host on the high altar was the ideal? As revealing as it is to look at instances where the tabernacle *did* move, and quickly so, it is also crucial to consider instances of inactivity or delay. In doing so, we get a sense of members of Sacrament confraternities in Venice may have related to reforming measures from above. Here I show that, while confraternity members were not necessarily hostile to Apostolic directives, they exercised the power to centre their own spiritual priorities relating to the matter of the tabernacle.

The confraternity at the church of San Giovanni Crisostomo in Cannaregio balanced the obligation to conform to apostolic directives with their own priorities. Like Santi Apostoli and Santa Maria Formosa, this church was one of another of the eight believed to have been commissioned by Saint Magnus in the seventh century. In terms of the parish that it served

however, San Giovanni Crisostomo was fairly modest, caring for 896 souls.⁵⁴² The Sacrament confraternity was established in the church in 1514 and in 1581 was subjected to the scrutiny of Agostino Valier, Bishop of Verona, and Apostolic visitor. Valier was Venetian by birth, and clearly hoped to bring the reforming zeal that he applied to his own diocese to his homeland. Valier's literary career reveals that he was something of an admirer of Carlo Borromeo having written a hagiography of the then beatified (now canonised) cardinal published in Milan in 1602.⁵⁴³ Cyriac K. Pullapilly, in his study of Valier's conceptual approach to Catholic reform, confirms that Borromeo was a close contemporary of Cardinal of Verona and influenced his approach to reform. In this sense, Pullapilly has characterised Valier as both 'a practical reformer' and one who made important impressions upon the conceptual and theological shaping of the Counter Reformation.⁵⁴⁴ His role as an Apostolic Visitor was well received in Rome and in 1583, the Bishop of Verona was elevated to the rank of Cardinal. It is unsurprising that during his visit of San Giovanni Crisostomo, Valier was keen that the reservation of the Holy Sacrament adhered to a Borromean interpretation of Trent.

The entry in in the confraternity's statute book was not contemporary to the Apostolic Visitation of 1581. Instead, it was penned in thirty years later in 1610 when the order was actually carried out. Particularly striking in the account of the tabernacle transference at San Crisostomo is the time that the Sacrament confraternity spent reflecting on the divine nature of the Eucharist and how this corresponded directly to the transference of the tabernacle. The statute book reported that the

⁵⁴² 'Le anime ascendono al numero di 896'. Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 143^r.

⁵⁴³ Agostino Valier, *Vita del Beato Carlo Borromeo* (Milan: Gratiadio Ferioli, 1602).

⁵⁴⁴ Cyriac K. Pullapilly, 'Agostino Valier and the Conceptual Basis of the Catholic Reformation', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 85.3 (1992), 307-333 (p. 308).

most decent, honoured and marked place must be the place of the habitation of our Lord here on earth among us. And because God is no less in this, that we have covered under the sacramental bread and wine, I speak of the Altar of the Most Holy Sacrament of the one who now reigns in heaven, and from here conclude how much reverence, honour and respect is owed to it.⁵⁴⁵

The awareness of the Real Presence and the clear sense of how this should be honoured by an equally physical position in the church of San Giovanni Crisostomo was expressed by the Sacrament confraternity. As I raised with the case of San Marziale, the framing of the decision to transfer the Eucharistic tabernacle emphasised the need to centralise the presence of God in the parish church. The confraternity decided that it was finally possible to move the tabernacle to a ‘more conspicuous, more conducive, and more honoured’ place.⁵⁴⁶ Despite the reverential language used in the record of this event, the tabernacle transference at San Giovanni Crisostomo was not a lay-driven initiative. Instead, the 1610 transference was actually the fulfilment of a commitment made in 1581 to effect this change following the recommendations of the Apostolic Visitors.

The entry clearly identified the Visitation of 1581 as the impetus for this change:

in the general Apostolic visit, already made some years ago by the orders of the Most Holy Pope Gregory XIII [...] and the Reverend Lord Cardinal of Verona, Augustine Valier, then simple Bishop of that city, among the many worthy things of eternal memory, this one of the principal [concerns], that the tabernacles of the Holy Sacrament were to be transported above the high altar of the churches and parishes, with, however, the willingness of the members of the same confraternities.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ ‘decente, honorevole, et segnalato loco deve esser l’habitatione di esso nostro Signore qui in terra trà noi: et perche non è meno Iddio questo, che habbiamo coperto sotto le specie sacramentali di pane, et vino, dico nel Santissimo Sacramento dell’Altare, di quello, che hora regna in Cielo, di qui si conchiude quanta riverenza honor, et rispetto se li deve’. PC Reg. N, fol. 535^r.

⁵⁴⁶ ‘in luoco più conspicuo, più condecante, et più honorato’. PC Reg. N, fol. 535^r.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘nella visita Apostolica generale fatta già alquante anni de ordine del Santissimo Pontefice Gregorio XIII [...] et Revmo Sig. Cardinal di Verona Augustino Valiero all’hora semplice vescovo di quella città trà le molte cose degne d’eterna memoria, questa fin una delle principali, che il Tabernacoli del Santissimo Sacramento fossero trasportati sopra l’Altare maggiore delle chiese, e parochie, con consegna però, et volontà delli confratelli di esso scuole’. PC Reg. N, fol. 535^r.

In addition to identifying the motive for moving their tabernacle to the high altar, the entry is important for emphasising that moves of this very kind were indeed one of the ‘principal’ concerns of the Apostolic Visitors in practice as well as in theory. But why do their statute books contain no mention of either the Visitation or the directive concerning the tabernacle from Valier until 1610? At San Giovanni Crisostomo, the Sacrament confraternity was being practical rather than defiant. The 1610 entry explained that, while the confraternity members of 1581 recognised the worthiness of the endeavour, moving the tabernacle, with all the accompanying toil and cost, simply was not a priority at that moment in time. They recognised that the transportation would come at ‘no little expense’ and that ‘our parish at that time was occupied in other necessary expenses’.⁵⁴⁸ Specifically, ‘in the building of the bell tower’ and ‘for our poverty we have not been able to attend to this work, so important and worthy’.⁵⁴⁹ In 1610, however, a new generation of confraternity members decided to fulfil the directives made thirty years ago ‘desiring now many good Christians of our parish to give perfection to this holy desire and commandment of our illustrious superiors’.⁵⁵⁰

Apostolic scrutiny during the Visitation of 1581 influenced the practice of Eucharistic reservation at the church of Santa Maria Formosa. The confraternity of the Holy Sacrament was organised in the church in 1507. Like the churches of Santi Apostoli and San Giovanni Crisostomo, the church of Santa Maria Formosa itself was one of eight believed to have been commissioned in the seventh century by Saint Magnus. According to the lore, Saint Magnus received a vision of the Virgin Mary in which she instructed him to have a church dedicated to her built on the site. Santa Maria was a prominent parish church that by

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Far non poca spesa’ [...] et essendo la nostra contra all’hora occupata in altre necessarie spese’. PC Reg. N, fol. 535^v.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘nella fabrica del campanile per la povertà nostra non ti hà potuto attendere à questa opera così principale, et degna’. PC Reg. N, fol. 535^v.

⁵⁵⁰ ‘et desiderando hora molti buoni Christiani nostri parochiali di dar perfezione à questo Santo desiderio et commandamento de nostri Illmi. Superiori’. PC Reg. N, fol. 535^v.

1604 served the spiritual needs of around 3766 parishioners.⁵⁵¹ In addition to the illustrious history of its foundation, Santa Maria Formosa was also the site of an annual pilgrimage made in February by the senate and the doge on the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.⁵⁵² Like San Giovanni Crisostomo, the Apostolic Visitation was an important moment for the confraternity at Santa Maria Formosa as the Visitors ordered the reservation of the sacrament to be shifted to the high altar of the church.

The account of the transference in this case is briefer than that provided by the members of the San Giovanni Crisostomo Sacrament confraternity, but the statute records indicate that this branch also delayed in carrying out the directive, this time by ten years. The entry begins by identifying the Apostolic Visitation as the motive behind the efforts to shift the locus of the Eucharist in Santa Maria Formosa to the high altar. The entry was dated to 1592 under the heading ‘Transportation from the Altar of the Most Holy Sacrament to the High Altar’.⁵⁵³

Being that for the Illustrious Visitors, in their visit to the collegiate and parochial church of Santa Maria Formosa of this city of Venice [...] it was concluded [...] that the Most Holy Body of Christ would be lifted from the chapel where it was then found, and still is now, and be transported above the high altar of that church. The will of the aforementioned Illustrious Visitors not having been fulfilled up to now, and at the present, wishing the reverend *piovano* [...] and the company of the Reverend Confraternity of the aforementioned Most Holy Body of Christ to carry out this good work, especially those who come to obey the Apostolic rules.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*. fol. 109^v.

⁵⁵² Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*. fol. 109^v.

⁵⁵³ ‘Transportation dalle Altare del Santissimo Sagramento alla Altare Maggiore’. PC Reg. N, fol. 169^v.

⁵⁵⁴ ‘Essendo che per il Illmi. et Revend. Visitatori Apostici nella visita per loro datta della Collegiata, et Parochial chiesa di Santa Maria Formosa di questa città di Venetia si stato terminato [...] che el Santissimo corpo di Christo fosse levato dalla Capella dove si ritroveva allora, ed hora ancora si ritrova et trasportato sopra l’Altare della Capella grande di detta chiesa, ne essendo fin ad hora stato essegeuito la volontà delle predetti Illmi. Visitatori, et volendo al presente il riverendo Piovano [...] et Compagni della Reveranda Scuola del predetto Santissimo corpo di Christo di effetuare questa buona opera, messime, che vengono ad abbedire li precetti Apostolici’. PC Reg. P, fol. 169^v.

In this entry, the need to adhere to the orders of the Apostolic Visitors is foregrounded as the chief motive for the transference of the tabernacle. Although, the confraternity at Santa Maria Formosa also had some unspecified difficulty in fulfilling this requirement noting that they were ‘not able to do this up until now’.⁵⁵⁵ The Sacrament confraternity of Santa Maria Formosa were not specific as to why the tabernacle transference was not possible to complete until 1591 – a decade after the Apostolic Visitation. Like San Giovanni Crisostomo, it is possible that money was a key impediment. The confraternity was permitted to reuse a measure of the stone of their existing altar to build their new one on the high altar to reduce the expense of the endeavour. Moreover, it was further stipulated in the entry that the cost of wax to illuminate the high altar would not fall to the Sacrament confraternity alone. In fact, it was stipulated that ‘of that confraternity, it is not obligated to place above the aforementioned altar that will be built any more lights than it is obligated to place at the present’.⁵⁵⁶ This ruling meant that the correspondingly higher cost of wax and lamps associated with transferring the tabernacle to the high altar would not burden the eponymous confraternity. In this case, as with San Giovanni Crisostomo, it is likely that the delay associated with fulfilling the requests of the Apostolic Visitors was down to lack of resources.

Both branches of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament at San Giovanni Crisostomo and Santa Maria Formosa were ordered to relocate themselves and the tabernacle to the high altar of their host churches. Yet, neither rushed to fulfil the request made during the Apostolic Visitation in 1581. There is no evidence, nor am I suggesting, that these confraternities were necessarily hostile to the idea of moving to the most honoured position in the church in any spiritual sense. Certainly, the cases of Santi Apostoli, San Marziale, and San Lio demonstrated that confraternity members sometimes strove to reposition themselves

⁵⁵⁵ ‘non havendosi fin ad hora ciò fin ad hora potuto fare’. PC Reg. P, fol. 169^v.

⁵⁵⁶ ‘che detta scuola non sia obbligata e poner sopra l’Altare predetto, che sarà fabricato più luminaria di questa è obbligata di ponere al presente’. PC Reg. P, fol. 170^r.

upon the high altar. The cases of San Giovanni Crisostomo and Santa Maria Formosa do show us the ability of Sacrament confraternities in Venice to resist change from above and focus on their priorities. This comes through most clearly in the case of San Giovanni Crisostomo. The thirty-year gap between Apostolic Visitation and execution of the tabernacle transference demonstrates that the resistance could last quite a while. While the Sacrament confraternity there recognised the value of Bishop Agostino Valier's request, commissioning a new altar and effecting a transference simply was not a priority for them as they were occupied by their in-progress bell tower. The confraternity did not abandon nor postpone its project. Its members did not rush to gather alms as their counterpart in Santi Apostoli did in 1567 to make sure the tabernacle was transferred as soon as possible. Instead, they addressed this task when they could and when it became a priority. Although the Santa Maria Formosa branch of the Sacrament confraternity was less forthcoming in their statutes, they too were able to postpone the transference of the tabernacle until it too aligned with their priorities and capacity.

In her study of lay devotional life and Catholic reform in the Veneto, Celeste McNamara has shown that laypeople could embrace Tridentine devotional practices that they wanted, especially relating to catechism schools and confraternal piety, while 'quietly resisting those that did not'.⁵⁵⁷ In the case of San Giovanni Crisostomo and Santa Maria Formosa, the concept of 'quiet resistance' is also a useful for understanding the delays ranging from one to three decades in effecting the transference of the tabernacle. At no point do we get these sense that these confraternities simply did not want to relocate to the high altar. We must, however, put these cases within the context of the reservations of Patriarch Trevisan who before the Apostolic Visitation, was concerned that the cost and effort that

⁵⁵⁷ Celeste McNamara, 'What the People Want: Popular Support for Catholic Reform in the Veneto', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 102.3 (2016), 492-516 (494).

Venetian laypeople put into their altars of the Holy Sacrament might be dampened if orders to relocate were applied from above. With San Giovanni Crisostomo and in my opinion with Santa Maria Formosa, it was practical rather than spiritual matters which impeded the transference ordered by the Apostolic Visitors. Crucially, these confraternities *did* carry out the respective orders, but they were able to postpone the transference until it suited them.

The Sacrament confraternity at the church of Santa Lucia also offers evidence of the delay to carry out orders potentially emanating from the 1581 Apostolic Visitation. The statute book of this confraternity did not directly raise the issue of a direct order to relocate to the high altar of the parish church. Although, the commitment made by the *gastaldo* Antonio Trentin to have a new tabernacle made in 1581 is likely connected to the matter of Eucharistic reservation brought to the fore by the Visitors. Despite the commitment being made in 1581, it was almost forty years later that the money was allocated for a new tabernacle to be made for the high altar of the church of Santa Lucia. At this time, the Sacrament confraternity was under the leadership of Bortolamio Rizzotti. The statute book entry of 1681 recorded that

In the time of Bortolamio Rizzotti, Guardian [*gastaldo*] [...] began producing the tabernacle of the Most Holy that is above the altar, and the columns of the chapel. The aforementioned Guardian was responsible for the end of the said building, three hundred ducats of the confraternity were spent, and rest the alms of devout people.⁵⁵⁸

Unlike the cases of the tabernacle transference of San Crisostomo and Santa Maria Formosa, we have no clear evidence that the creation of the new tabernacle for the high

⁵⁵⁸ ‘In tempo di Bortolamio Rizzotti Guardian [...] fu dato principio alla fabrica di la Tabernaculo del Santissimo che è sopra l’Altare, et alle collonelle alla capella, et hebbe carico il detto Guardian sino al fine di detta fabrica furono spesi ducati trecento della scola, et il rimanente d’elemosina de diverse persone divote’. PC Reg. O, fol. 505^r.

altar was a direct order of the Apostolic Visitation. Nonetheless, like the other two cases, the delay of several decades draws attention to the ability of the Sacrament confraternities in Venice to set the pace when it came to the costly and time-consuming project of tabernacle transference. As with the Sacrament confraternities at San Crisostomo and Santa Maria Formosa, there was no spiritual objection discernible in the delay at Santa Lucia. Certainly, the seventeenth-century developments that the Sacrament confraternity at Santa Lucia made to the high altar post-transference, a matter to which this chapter now turns, indicates considerable enthusiasm amongst confraternity members to take care of their new altar. What we see in these cases, therefore, is that while the orders of the Apostolic Visitors did indeed play a significant role in shaping Eucharistic piety in Venice, the results were not as dramatic as Patriarch Trevisan feared in his 1581 warning to the Collegio. This chapter now turns to examine the important role that Sacrament confraternities in Venice played in enhancing chapels of the Most Holy Sacrament after they took over custody of the high altar, or those that were already under their custodianship. In doing so, I examine how members of Sacrament confraternities both felt about tabernacle transference before and after the 1581 Visitation, and their important role in enhancing these central spaces to centralise the Eucharist.

Voting on devotion: Transference, decoration, and enthusiasm

Art historians have been instrumental in tracing important developments in Catholic iconography which aimed to centralise Christ in church spaces. The conscious shift towards the primacy of Christ in Italian religious art has been emphasised by Alexander Nagel. He argues that early sixteenth-century figures like Erasmus sought to bring Christ back to the centre of devotional consciousness that was preoccupied with the Virgin Mary and the cult of

the saints.⁵⁵⁹ More recently, Marie-Louise Lillywhite has argued for the influence of the Tridentine decrees on the Eucharist in informing decoration programs in Venetian parish churches. Focussing on the decoration of the church of San Giacomo dall'Orio from 1567 to 1606, Lillywhite suggests that it was the decrees on the Eucharist rather than the ostensibly more relevant ones concerning sacred art that shaped the choices made at San Giacomo dall'Orio.⁵⁶⁰ This chapter now turns to the transformation of church space in relation to Eucharistic piety through both tabernacle transference and post-transference maintenance and enhancement.

Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament were unified in their devotional mission, but they were comprised of people with different thoughts, feelings, and priorities. Several cases of tabernacle transference analysed here correspond to a directive resulting from the 1581 Apostolic Visitation. The records of these events serve as important evidence for how the lay confraternity members felt about orders to relocate to the high altar. Although the decision to do so ideally involved the co-operation of the Sacrament confraternity in question, there is no evidence that these organisations were able to defy the commands of local and foreign clergy on the matter. They did, however, exercise sway over the decoration of the new altar and the nature of their contribution to the new site of Eucharistic reservation. As we saw with the case of Santa Maria Formosa, the confraternity there had it stipulated that they would not be obliged to provide any more illumination for their new high altar than they did for their old lateral chapel. Cost was an issue and, as many of the regulations the Sacrament confraternities stipulated, expenditure had to be a collective decision. The results of the votes relating to the decoration of newly acquired high altars, sometimes but not always recorded,

⁵⁵⁹ Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 94.

⁵⁶⁰ Marie-Louise Lillywhite, 'The Decoration of the Church of San Giacomo dall'Orio in Venice, 1567-1606: Palma il Giovane, Giovanni Maria da Ponte and the Counter-Reformation', *Artibus et Historiae*, 77 (2019), 117-150 (p. 118). On this church and its decoration, see also *La chiesa di San Giacomo dall'Orio: una trama millenaria di arte e fede*, ed. by Massimo Bisson, Isabella Cecchini and Deborah Howard (Rome: Viella, 2018).

gives us some insight into how the *banca* of various confraternities felt about actual or proposed changes to their positions. In the case of San Marziale, where the confraternity petitioned to be allowed to take over the high altar, the vote relating to its decoration was an almost unanimous 9-1. This is unsurprising since the records demonstrate that the confraternity devised the idea to move to the high altar rather than being ordered to move by the clergy. Voting records nonetheless show that the confraternity members were not always unanimous in their ideas about the best place for the tabernacle and their own altar to be located.

The confraternity at the church of San Felice existed since the early sixteenth century, and conversations between it and the *piovano* began in 1554 regarding the possible transference of the tabernacle to the high altar. The activity surrounding the tabernacle followed a more comprehensive process of renovation at San Felice. The church, which supported the spiritual lives of 1206 parishioners, was ‘remade and restored in the year 1547’.⁵⁶¹ The attention drawn to the position of the tabernacle was initiated by the *piovano*, Gasparo Taiapietra who wished that it be placed on the high altar. Before the restoration of the church in 1547, the tabernacle resided in a lateral chapel of the Holy Sacrament. The entry reported that the *piovano* ‘did not want to dress the chapel, and altar of our Lord Jesus Christ as it has been before the rebuilding of the church but wanted its place to be on the high altar’.⁵⁶² The enthusiasm of the *piovano* was not enough to enact this change. The statute records indicate that the church chapter and Sacrament confraternity could not reach an agreement on the matter and that ‘the *piovano*, unable to obtain his intent, thought to give the righthand altar and chapel’ to the Sacrament confraternity.⁵⁶³ The records are not clear as to

⁵⁶¹ ‘rifatta, & ristaurata l’anno 1547’. Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 140^v.

⁵⁶² ‘el detto Piovan non voleva vestituir la capella, ed Altare del nostro Sig. Gesù Christo come haveva ananzi il fabricar della chiesa, mà voleva el loco suo fusse sul Altare grando’. PC Reg. O, fol. 199^r.

⁵⁶³ ‘detto Piovano non poter ottener il suo intent, s’imagine li dar l’Altar a man sinistra, et capella’. PC Reg. O fol. 199^r.

where the resistance came from with regard to the transference. It is possible that members of the church chapter or the Sacrament confraternity themselves objected to the change.

Nonetheless, the evidence demonstrates that the Sacrament confraternity committed to the maintenance of their new chapel in San Felice and helped to shape eucharistic piety in the parish church. Taiapietra, and *gastaldo*, Marco Dabbe, reached an agreement in 1555 and the Sacrament confraternity was permitted use of ‘the chapel near the high altar’.⁵⁶⁴ It was agreed that the new lateral chapel of the Holy Sacrament would bear no iconography apart from ‘the image of our Lord Jesus Christ’.⁵⁶⁵

The confraternity deliberated further enhancements of their new position in San Felice in the form of a new tabernacle in 1580. The old one was apparently insufficient with both *gastaldo* Anzolo Indorador and *piovano* Pomperio Signissimo agreeing that ‘it was a shame not to put a beautiful tabernacle [on the altar] to keep the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ’.⁵⁶⁶ The confraternity then voted on the motion to commission a new tabernacle of silver and to transfer this, along with the Holy Sacrament, to the new altar that they maintained using their own funds. The vote demonstrates considerable enthusiasm amongst the confraternity with a result of 24-1.⁵⁶⁷ The results of these votes are helpful for quantifying confraternal enthusiasm, or occasionally resistance, to tabernacle transference and altar decoration. There was little resistance at San Felice, and the Sacrament confraternity was committed to maintaining their new altar despite quite possibly resisting a more substantial move to the high altar of the church. In 1612 the Sacrament confraternity began to lay the plans for decorative enhancement of their lateral chapel. The suggestion was that their altar should be

⁵⁶⁴ ‘la capella appresso l’altare grando’. PC Reg. O, fol. 199^v.

⁵⁶⁵ ‘solamente l’immagine del nostro Sign. Giesu Christo’. PC Reg. O, fol. 199^r.

⁵⁶⁶ ‘che l’era vergogna à non metter un bel tabernaculo per tenerci il Corpo del Nostro Signor Giesu Christo’. PC Reg. O, fol. 201^r.

⁵⁶⁷ ‘tabernaculo di argento [...] per metter il corpo del nostro Signor M Giesu Christo [...] et farlo con li denari della scuola del Santissimo Sacramento’. PC Reg. O, fol. 201^r.

decorated with new pictures ‘in the best way that will be possible’.⁵⁶⁸ The motion was put to vote and returned a positive result of 24-2.

Some years later in 1619, the Sacrament confraternity expressed interest in taking responsibility for the monstrance in the church. This liturgical object could have been used during the Forty Hours devotion. The ritual, featuring the exposition of the Host for forty hours was closely tied to the Tridentine Church’s emphasis on the Real Presence in the Eucharist. The entry does not refer to this devotion specifically, but the essential function of the monstrance was to facilitate the visibility of the Host for extra-liturgical adoration. In the end, it was decided that the monstrance would remain ‘in the hands of the *piovano*’ rather than being taken by the confraternity with a result of 15-6. We see here, however, considerable favour amongst the confraternity to bring the monstrance into their possession as it had been made with their own money.⁵⁶⁹ It was not long after this motion that the issue of tabernacle transference was again raised at the church of San Felice. The matter was put to the banca of the confraternity in 1624 and was passed, although quite tightly, with a result of 17-12.⁵⁷⁰ Nearly half of the confraternity’s membership wanted to continue to honour the Eucharist in their lateral chapel rather than transfer to the high altar.

Several decades later in 1678, the Sacrament confraternity was called upon again to ensure the church of San Felice had a decent monstrance. Their previously commissioned one was described as made ‘of ruined copper’.⁵⁷¹ The motion to ‘make a monstrance of silver for the exposition of the Holy Sacrament’ was passed unanimously with a result of 17-0.⁵⁷² The post-Tridentine development of the Forty Hours devotion amply demonstrates the emphasis on engaging with Christ’s body outside of the Mass. As Alessandra Buccheri notes, the

⁵⁶⁸ ‘nel miglior modo che sarà possibile’. PC Reg. O, fol. 204^v.

⁵⁶⁹ ‘e fù passata la parte, che si debba dar nelle mani del Piovan [...] di Sì – 15 di No – 6’. PC Reg. O, fol. 207^v.

⁵⁷⁰ ‘portar el Santissimo Sacramento sopra l’altare maggiore [...] de Sì – 17 di no – 12’. PC Reg. O, fol. 209^r.

⁵⁷¹ ‘esser uno al presente di rame irovato’. PC Reg. O, fol. 215^v.

⁵⁷² ‘far un ostensorio d’Argento per l’esposizione el Santissimo Sacramento [...] di Sì – 17 di No – 0’. PC Reg. O, fol. 207^v.

practice of displaying the Eucharist in elaborate monstrances lavishly illuminated for adoration for forty continuous hours predated Trent. She nonetheless emphasises that Forty Hours devotion underwent significant development in the post-Tridentine period following its promotion by key figures like Carlo Borromeo and Filippo Neri.⁵⁷³ The Forty Hours devotion captured the same devotional values of physical and visual primacy that drove processes of tabernacle transference. The concern of the San Felice Sacrament confraternity with possessing a decent monstrance raises the issue of the extra-liturgical devotion to the Eucharist, and the role that the Sacrament confraternity played in San Felice to ensure that the appropriate liturgical apparatus was available in the parish church.

At the church of San Luca, the Sacrament confraternity was alive to both post-Tridentine spiritual culture and, quite possibly the impending Apostolic Visitation of Venice. The church served 1961 souls of the parish.⁵⁷⁴ Flaminio Corner also tells us that it possessed a prestigious Christological relic: a thorn from Christ's crown.⁵⁷⁵ A Sacrament confraternity was founded in 1511 and in 1581 this organisation took steps to relocate to the high altar of their church. The date of the entry, 20 June 1581, coincided with the period of most intense activity of the Apostolic Visitors. Even though the statutes do not reference the visitors directly, as we see in the case of San Crisostomo, it is highly likely that they did order that the Eucharistic tabernacle be transferred to the high altar of the church. As with the case of Santi Apostoli, the record made by the confraternity show that, while not solely lay-driven, the confraternity members enthusiastically supported the transference of the tabernacle to the high altar. The relevant entry reads as follows:

⁵⁷³ Alessandra Buccheri, 'I teatri delle Quarantore. Il popolo testimone dell'epifania del divino', in *La Sovrabbondanza nel Barocco*, ed. by Valeria Viola, Rino La Delfa, and Cosimo Scordato (Leonforte: Euno Edizioni, 2019), pp. 191-207 (pp. 191-2). On the post-Tridentine development of the Forty Hours devotion in Italy see also Andrew Horn, 'Teatri Sacri: Andrea Pozzo and the Quarant'ore at the Gesù', in *The Holy Name. Art of the Gesù: Bernini and His Age*, ed. by Linda Wolk-Simon and Christopher M.S. Johns (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press), pp. 351-371; Mark S. Weil, 'The Devotion of the Forty Hours and the Roman Baroque Illusions', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 218-248.

⁵⁷⁴ Stringa and Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 93^r.

⁵⁷⁵ Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 220.

the principal end of our confraternity is to procure that the Most Holy Body of Christ [...] is to be found established, resorted, and placed in an altar of his own, and in the most noble place of the church, because it is our obligation to do, and also because it seems that the decrees of the Council of Trent want it, which should not be deferred any longer.⁵⁷⁶

The direct reference to the Council of Trent is intriguing. In the case of Santi Apostoli, the assaults on the Eucharist elsewhere in Europe by Protestant reformers directly influenced the position of the tabernacle in this parish, and in this church. These sentiments were not explicit, but the climate of reform directly influenced the same decision at San Luca. The Tridentine decrees did not rule that the Sacrament needed to be reserved on the high altar, just a sacred place. The framing of the motivations behind the transference of 1581 therefore drew directly upon the Borromeoan interpretations of the reservation of the Holy Sacrament in parish churches, even though the Council of Trent did not insist upon this specifically. The decision of the Sacrament confraternity to cite this as a major factor behind their enthusiasm for tabernacle transference is significant. Lillywhite has cautioned against understanding developments in Venetian church decoration as simple manifestations of Trent, but, in the case of tabernacle transference, I argue that the relationship was sometimes quite direct. When it came to the Apostolic Visitors, this is unremarkable. Of course, the implementation of the Tridentine decrees was at the fore of their minds. In the case of San Luca, the direct invocation of the Council of Trent by the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament warrants thought. It demonstrates the awareness of the Sacrament confraternity members in Venice of the broader developments of post-Tridentine and their willingness to adhere to these. When it came to putting the motion to vote, there was considerable support for transferring the

⁵⁷⁶ '1581 XX Zugno. Il principal fine della scola nostra è di procurer, che il Sacratissimo Corpo di Christo [...] sia riporstato, et collocate in Altare à lui proprio, et nel più nobile luogo della Chiesa si perchè con è debito nostro di fare, si anco perchè pare, che così vogliono i Decreti del Sacro Concilio di Trento, il che non si deve più differire'. PC Reg. T, fol. 153^v.

tabernacle. The results were not unanimous, coming in at 34-10 but still enough to secure the motion and to demonstrate the general support that a transference had amongst the members of the Sacrament confraternity at San Luca.⁵⁷⁷ It was decided that

our confraternity will be found having built that great altar of the church in the most honoured, and worthy form that is possible having regard to the dignity of such a sacrament, and at the same time, it will embellish that church as best as possible. This charge is incumbent on the above-mentioned *Gastaldo*, and company, and on the other three assistants to be elected by the General Chapter.⁵⁷⁸

In addition to the quantifiable enthusiasm through the vote, the manner in which the tabernacle was transferred in San Luca also points to considerable enthusiasm from members of the Sacrament confraternity. In this extract, the significance of the transference for the material fabric of the church of San Luca is clearly emphasised, as is the principle that the Eucharist was worthy of the greatest embellishment and most honoured position in the parish church. Like the case of Santi Apostoli, the transference of the tabernacle at San Luca was completed in a short time after the initial idea – or in this case, order – was articulated. The official transference took place on the second Sunday of March 1583 and the altar itself was consecrated on 5 March.⁵⁷⁹ The process of transference was marked by a procession:

On the morning of the second Sunday of March, the Most Holy Sacrament was transferred from the old altar to our new altar, and the Most Holy Sacrament was taken in procession by our reverend *piovano*

⁵⁷⁷ ‘fù ballottata. De Si – 32 De No – 10’. PC Reg. T, fol. 153^v.

⁵⁷⁸ ‘si ritrovarà haver la scola nostra sia fatto da nuovo il detto Altar maggiore della detta chiesa nella più honorata, et degna forma, che si possa, havendo riguardo alla dignità d’un tanto sacramento, et insieme anco, che sia accommodata [...] Il qual carico sia commeso alli tre sopradetti Gastaldo, et Compagni, et altri trè aggiunti da esser eletti dal presente Capitolo generale’. PC Reg. T, fol. 153^v.

⁵⁷⁹ ‘1583 5 Marzo. Fù sacrato l’Altar nostro’. PC Reg. T, fol. 155^r.

Pietro Paulo on the orders of our Illustrious and Most Reverend Monsignor Zuanne Trevisan [...]

Patriarch of Venice.⁵⁸⁰

The 1583 tabernacle transference of San Luca emphasised the broader significance of the development beyond the parish church itself. There is less detail on the procession of the Eucharist which took place at San Luca in 1583, but we get the clear sense of a public rather than private process of transferring the Eucharistic tabernacle to the high altar. The voting record and efficient efforts of the Sacrament confraternity of San Luca points to the enthusiasm of the confraternity in both transferring the Eucharistic tabernacle and enhancing prominence of Christ in their church despite being likely ordered to by the Apostolic Visitation. In examples where there was a significant delay between order and execution, we still see the active role that Sacrament confraternities played in the post-transference enhancement of their new altars for the benefit of the wider parish.

After completing the transference of the tabernacle to the high altar in 1592, the confraternity of the Holy Sacrament at Santa Maria Formosa began to think about the long-term illumination of their new tabernacle. The members raised the question of five silver *cesendoli* (lamps) which, having been paid for by the *gastaldo*, were traditionally kept in his house rather than in the parish church. The statutes proposed that the *cesendoli* ought to be used ‘only to honour the Most Holy Sacrament, Body of our Lord Jesus Christ in our church of Santa Maria Formosa’.⁵⁸¹ Their new responsibility for the high altar encouraged the members to readdress longstanding practices as they decided that ‘it is not good to keep the aforementioned silver in the house of the *Guardiano* as it has been done

⁵⁸⁰ ‘La seconda Domenica di Maggio di mattina fù traslatato il santissimo sacramento dall’Altar Vecchio al nostro altar novo Piovan il Santissimo Sacramento in processione dal nostro Reverendo Piovan il Signor Pietro Paulo di metrio de ordine de Monsignor Illustrissimo, et Reverendissimo il Signor Zuanne Trevisan [...] Patriarca di Venetia’. PC Reg. T, fol. 155^r.

⁵⁸¹ ‘solamente per honorar il Santissimo Sagramento Corpo del nostro Signor Giesu Christo nella nostra chiesa di Santa Maria Formosa’. PC Reg. P, fol. 172^r.

in the past'.⁵⁸² The confraternity at Santa Maria Formosa had expressed some concern regarding the potential cost of illuminating the new altar which possibly accounts for the decade that lapsed between Apostolic demand and tabernacle transference. This context perhaps explains the enthusiasm to repurpose the silver lamps belonging to the confraternity as the company voted on the motion to move them perpetually to the church with a unanimous result of 31-0.⁵⁸³ The confraternity at San Cassiano, who relocated to the high altar in 1562, was also enthusiastic in its duty to illuminate the Holy Sacrament. This included the 1601 commissioning of a new *cesendello* at the cost of 50 ducats from the confraternity's funds.⁵⁸⁴ There is no mention of voting in this case as the entry represents a *fait accompli* rather than a proposal. The Sacrament confraternity continued to think about the proper illumination of their new altar over the next few years. In 1603, the statutes record the commissioning of 'another *cesendello*, that is found in our confraternity'.⁵⁸⁵ A year later in 1604, the confraternity enhanced its lighting program yet again deciding that 'it is necessary, to accompany the first and second, to make also the third *cesendello* of silver'.⁵⁸⁶

At the church of Santa Lucia, we recall that the Sacrament confraternity committed to creating a new tabernacle for the high altar in 1581, likely resulting from scrutiny from one or several of the Apostolic Visitors. Whether or not this commitment resulted from the Apostolic Visitation of the same year, the project only got underway when three hundred ducats were allocated for the work in 1618. The statute book does not indicate when the formal transference took place, but this must have occurred before the Sacrament confraternity of Santa Lucia began significant decorative enhancement of the high altar

⁵⁸² 'non sta bene il tenir detti Arzenti in casa el Guardiano, come si è fatto per lo passato'. PC Reg. P, fol. 172^r.

⁵⁸³ 'Ballotada si – 31 no – 0'. PC Reg. P, fol. 172^r.

⁵⁸⁴ 'ducati cinquanta con li denari della nostra scuola'. PC Reg. R, fol. 296^v.

⁵⁸⁵ 'un'altro cesendello, che si ritrova nella nostra scuola'. PC Reg. R, fol. 296^v.

⁵⁸⁶ 'stimato necessario per accompagnare il primo, e secondo di far anco il Terzo Cesendello d'Argento'. PC Reg. R, fol. 296^v.

beginning in 1629. The Sacrament confraternity's subsequent activities show both a commitment to altar maintenance and their enthusiasm for ensuring that the Eucharist was housed in the most decorous chapel that was possible. Between 1629 and 1640, the Sacrament confraternity significantly enhanced the chapel that housed the tabernacle under their care. In 1629, under the leadership of *gastaldo* P. Lodero Zoierler, the confraternity had made 'the Saviour and the crucifix of bronze that are above the tabernacle'.⁵⁸⁷ The Christological decorations were accompanied by further enhancements in 1637 when the confraternity was under the leadership of *gastaldo* Steffano Brocco. At this point, 'the six angels of bronze that are above the tabernacle were made'.⁵⁸⁸ Finally in 1640, when the primacy of Christ had been established through the decoration of the chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament, the Sacrament confraternity had made 'the two figures, which are of Saint Paul and Saint Moses that are above the tabernacle'.⁵⁸⁹

The Sacrament confraternity of the church of San Biagio also demonstrated both enthusiasm and concern for the maintenance of the high altar. The transference of the tabernacle in this case is closely related to broader developments in the life of this church that served the spiritual needs of a small flock of 373 parishioners.⁵⁹⁰ The church of San Biagio was originally the spiritual home of Venice's Greek Christian community who were given permission to celebrate the Greek rite there by the Council of Ten in 1470. Corner tells us the Greek community secured approval for a larger church (San Giorgio Martire) to be built for their use. The Greeks had moved to their new premises by the middle of the sixteenth century and the church of San Biagio was used for exclusively Latin Catholic worship.⁵⁹¹ Following

⁵⁸⁷ 'In tempo di P. Lodero Zoierler Guardian [...] furono fatti il Redentor, et il crocifiso di bronzo che sono sopra il Tabernaculo'. PC Reg. O, fol. 535^v.

⁵⁸⁸ 'In tempo di P.Z Steffano Brocco [...] furono fatti li sei Angioli di bronzo'. PC Reg. O, fol. 537^v.

⁵⁸⁹ 'furono fatte le doi figure, cioè il S. Paolo, et S. Moisè che sono sopra il tabernaculo'. PC Reg. O, fol. 537^v.

⁵⁹⁰ 'haver anco piccola contrada di anime 373'. Stringa and Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 106^f.

⁵⁹¹ Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 26.

the departure of the Greeks, Stringa, in his 1604 expanded volume of Sansovino's *Venetia*, reported that the high altar of San Biagio was rebuilt and a gilded tabernacle was been placed above.⁵⁹² Writing after Stringa's time, Corner tells us that 'by the middle of the seventeenth century, this church was wholly parochial', and officially became a collegiate church in 1664.⁵⁹³ The involvement of the Sacrament confraternity in the process of transition at San Biagio is not clear from the sources, but their statute book described the 1686 effort taken to enhance the high altar of the church. The Sacrament confraternity voted unanimously – 25-0 – to have a new stone tabernacle made. The statute book records that 'being the wooden tabernacle of the Most Holy Sacrament half broken due to the antiquity of the time in which it was made, since it is necessary to renew it in a better form than it is presently found'.⁵⁹⁴ The language used regarding the age of the tabernacle in question indicates that it was the same one which was transferred to the high altar in the middle of the sixteenth century following the departure of the Greeks. San Biagio is one of the latest examples of high altar enhancement considered in this section, but the framing of the entry emphasises the sense of newness and renewal that characterised the activities of Sacrament confraternities in Venice in this period.

Whether the process of transference was directed by the Visitation of 1581 or not, the cases analysed in this section point to the considerable enthusiasm on the part of members of Sacrament confraternities when it came to post-transference altar maintenance. The visibility and illumination of the Host was a long-standing duty that became especially important for Sacrament confraternities after they had relocated to the high altar. With the examples drawn from San Felice, Santa Maria Formosa, and San Cassiano, lamps and monstrances were the

⁵⁹² Sansovino and Stringa, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, fol. 106^r.

⁵⁹³ Corner, *Notizie storiche*, p. 26.

⁵⁹⁴ 'Essendo il tabernaculo dl Santissimo Sacramento di legno mezo rotto e carolato per l'antichità dl tempo che è stato fabricato perciò essendo di bisogno il rinovarlo in miglior forma di quel lo si ritrova al presente'. PC Reg. Q, fol. 468^r.

topics of discussion, instruments designed to ensure the visual centrality of the Host. Votes, whether relating to the initial transference of the tabernacle or the decoration of the high altar, were not always unanimous. The results of these motions, however, demonstrate that the Venetian Sacrament confraternities studied in this chapter were generally enthusiastic about their role in the centralisation of the Host in their churches with consequences for the wider parish's engagement with the body of Christ.

Conclusions

The transference of Eucharistic tabernacles to the high altars of parish churches resulted in the centralisation of Christ's presence in these important devotional spaces. This chapter has drawn attention to the motivations for changes of this kind. The Tridentine decrees affirming the Real Presence in the host resulted in an emphasis on the primacy of Christ in Catholic devotional culture. Through their participation in Sacrament confraternities, laypeople in Venice drove processes of tabernacle transference. The cases examined in this chapter offer vital evidence for the ability of the laity to push to have Eucharistic tabernacles transferred to high altars. Although collaboration with local clergy was essential, this chapter has drawn attention to the role of Sacrament confraternities in deciding the particulars when it came to Christ's body. Orders from clerical authorities also motivated transference. The Apostolic Visitation of 1581 was a key moment for drawing attention to practices of Eucharistic reservation in Venice. Venetian religious authorities were concerned that the directives of the visitors might be poorly received by Sacrament confraternities in the city. Nevertheless, the visitors made several directives to ensure that the Eucharistic tabernacle was relocated to the high altar in Venetian parish churches.

Examining tabernacle transference has resulted in important conclusions regarding the relationship between the laity and the clergy in the period of reform. In many of the cases

examined in this chapter, Sacrament confraternities enthusiastically supported processes of tabernacle transference and made strenuous efforts to centralise the body of Christ in parish churches. I have also shown that Sacrament confraternities in Venice were able to defer tabernacle transference until it became a priority for them. Although there is no evidence of spiritual resistance to changes of this kind, Sacrament confraternities had a degree of autonomy which allowed them to fulfil directives to relocate to the high altar with delays of several decades in some cases. Sacrament confraternities continued to play indispensable roles in enhancing the high altars of parish churches after they relocated to this central space. By analysing the post-transference activities of these confraternities, this chapter has shown that members were generally enthusiastic about their new positions. Commissions, enhanced lighting, and decorative work drew attention to the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic tabernacle. This important change to the cult of the Eucharist in Venice therefore relied upon both the co-operation and enthusiasm of the Sacrament confraternities. This draws attention to the vital role that these confraternities as *scuole piccole* played in reshaping devotional culture in Venice. Scholarship has accounted for the important role that Venice's *scuole piccole* played in driving different aspects of lay devotional life in Venice. From artistic commissions that enhanced parish churches, to charitable activities, to participation in city-wide processions, these lay organisations made profound and sustained contributions to religious life. *Scuole piccole* could even be the custodians of powerful miraculous icons. The Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament stand out in relation to other *scuole piccole* due to the direct relationship they had with the most profound source of sacrality that a Catholic could encounter – the Eucharist. Through this relationship, Sacrament confraternities played a unique role in the reshaping of sacred immanence.

The transference of the tabernacle had important consequences for the sacrality of parish churches and for the wider parish. Although the accounts of these processes recorded

in statute books represent ideals written from the perspective of a given confraternity, they made it clear that the process of transference would have consequences for the wider parish. Confraternity members emphasised that transference was intended to bring the presence of Christ to the centre of things. The statute books emphasised the awareness of confraternity members of the Real Presence of Christ contained in the Eucharist and the need for it to have a correspondingly honoured place in the parish church. Processes of transference could be lavish affairs that engaged the faithful from the wider parish. The goal of honouring the body of Christ enhanced the sacrality of parish churches by bringing the Real Presence to the physical, visual, and liturgical centre. These confraternities played indispensable roles in the revival of Eucharistic piety in Venetian parishes for members and non-members alike by supporting a vibrant Catholic culture at the parish level. Sacrament confraternities were by no means an invention of sixteenth-century Catholic reform, but their significance and activities changed in this period and contributed to the culture of devotional revival. The centralisation of the Eucharist brought the 'Real Presence' of Christ to the heart of the parish churches around which ordinary Catholics organised their religious lives. Laypeople, through the Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament, put Christ's body front and centre.

Conclusions

A sacred city

This thesis has examined the consequences of Catholic reform for devotional culture in the city of Venice throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has argued for the importance that this process had upon the ability of Catholic people living and worshipping in the lagoon city to encounter the sacred. These changes had profound consequences for the experience of 'being a Catholic' in Venice. The renewal of devotional culture encouraged a new aspect of Catholic devotional identity which was predicated upon a closer relationship between the believer and the sacred. The wholesale intensification of sacred immanence was not a predetermined, or even shared goal of the many clerical and lay Catholics in Venice and beyond that attempted to reshape the religious culture of the city. But this was indeed the result of different strands of devotion undergoing major renewal. By bringing four major aspects of Catholic devotional culture under examination, and by drawing attention to the idea of sacred encounters, I have argued for a shift in Catholic worldview. This worldview emphasised both the proximity of the sacred to the mundane world and the ability of believers to interact with the holy through a range of devotional principles and activities. The ultimate result of the renewal of devotional culture was that Venice became holier than it was before.

The climate of Catholic reform, the decrees of the Council of Trent, and the innovations of people in the city of Venice had consequences for the experience of urban religious life. By analysing four distinct, yet often interrelated aspects of Catholic devotion, I have attempted to account for the broader reasons as to why and how each underwent development in this period. In this context, the city is essential. Catholic urban centres were transformed in the period of reform in the context of devotional renewal. The city of Venice

provided an abundant context of sacrality that could be reshaped in the image of a new Catholicism. Some of the conditions in Venice, such as its status as a centre of print, or its relationship with the central reforming Church made manifest through the 1581 Apostolic Visitation of the city, or the local ‘cultural work’ that the cults of the saints did in this period are rooted in the Venetian context. Beyond specificity, I have drawn attention to the relationship between sacred immanence and the city in different ways. Venice was a city of sacred encounters. It was a city that, by the end of the period of this study, immanence confronted the Catholic at every turn. God made himself known in highly perceptible ways. In the Venetian context, enhanced access to the sacred for Catholic people through books, shrines, Eucharistic hosts, and the emphasis of the holiness of the city itself were the vehicles of this communication.

These findings have important implications for the way in which we think about the role of the city in both shaping and being shaped by processes of religious reform. Primarily, this research on devotion and Catholic reform in the city of Venice has raised attention to the reciprocity of the urban and the religious. Of particular importance is my conclusion that both the material and the intangible worked together in Venice to enhance the sacrality of the city as a whole as a context of Catholic devotion. By bringing ‘the communicative and ritual productions of the city’ into focus here, I have shown that both tangible things such as shrines, sites, and objects, as well as the intangible – affectivity, history, and civic identity – worked together to both emphasise the sacrality of the city of Venice and influence urban religious life.⁵⁹⁵ Applying this theoretical approach to Venice has led to further conclusions, especially for our understanding of urban religious life during the European Reformations. Catholics in Venice had their urban landscape resacralised during the period under study here, while other Catholics in Europe may have had their key points of sacred encounter

⁵⁹⁵ Rüpke and Rau, ‘Religion and Urbanity’, *Religion and Urbanity Online*.

removed. By studying the expansion rather than deprivation of Catholicism in the urban context, this thesis has argued for the renewed role that the vibrant and expanding culture of sacred immanence played in the daily practice of religion for urban Catholics.

Printing piety, printing Catholic reform

Print was an essential vehicle of Catholic reform and an indispensable tool of devotional renewal in the city. The impact of print on devotional culture occurred not only through the expansion in printed vernacular devotional works in this period, but also through the complex and diverse ways in which Catholic authors attempted to capture the hearts and minds of their readership. ‘Print’ cannot be analysed in a homogenous way, although the overall importance of the press in disseminating Catholic truth through books has been emphasised throughout this thesis. By foregrounding the different ways that diverse genres of religious works printed in Venice attempted to influence Catholic devotional life and alter their readers’ perception of and relationship with the sacred, I have accounted for the influence of print in shaping religious culture. Print played an indispensable role in communicating and elaborating on both the decrees of the Council of Trent and the priorities of Catholic reform more broadly. In some instances, an author’s familiarity with the Tridentine decrees was clearly stated in their works. In others, printed works expanded upon the somewhat vague decrees of Trent and applied its spirit to different aspects of devotional life. Religious print in Venice was a crucial vehicle for communicating new ideas about Catholic reform, devotional culture, and the nature of the sacred for their lay readership. Authors attempted to do this by engaging both the hearts and minds of their readers.

Books, and the act of reading them, were designed to create specific religious experiences that provided encounters with the sacred and ideally reshape the spiritual lives of their readers. In Chapter 1, I demonstrated that authors, particularly through their addresses to

the readers, provided their readership with clear instructions on how to approach miracle collections, and filled them with the expectation that engaging with a text would result in a perceptible spiritual and emotional transformation. Others, such as the shrine books examined in Chapter 2, were concerned with furnishing the reader's mind with a factual understanding of particular sacred places and objects in Venice. Hagiographies, in addition to narrating the lives of the saints, aimed to instil within their readers a keener awareness of the sacrality of the city of Venice. The texts analysed throughout belong to distinct genres of religious print, but all served to bring the reader into closer encounter with or enhance their awareness of the sacred. My analysis of religious texts in terms of cultural productions has focussed on understanding the devotional options open to the laity in Venice and how these attempted to direct devotional culture in specific ways. Although it was beyond the scope of this thesis to study reception, I have highlighted the extent to which authors encouraged Catholic readers to reflect upon their relationship to the sacred through pious reading. The act of reading, and reflecting, offered Catholics in Venice the opportunity to expand their own relationship with the sacred. This research has foregrounded the crucial role that print played in the process of Catholic reform. In particular, it draws attention to the potential of print to transform and renew the hearts and minds of Catholic readers in Venice and influence their worldviews in specific ways. A key limitation of this approach lies in the issue of literacy. It is equally important to emphasise that scholarship has shown that direct engagement with a text was not the only way that messages could be encountered. As Salzberg has shown particularly for the Venetian context, oral circulation played a vital role in the exchange of religious ideas conveyed in printed material in this period.⁵⁹⁶ The texts examined throughout this thesis also demonstrate pre-existing non-literary forms of exchange, such as the oral tradition

⁵⁹⁶ Salzberg, 'The Word on the Street', 336-348.

surrounding the Holy Nail of Santa Chiara fixed in print by Zilotti, or the potential for parents to educate their children by reading them miracle stories.

Print was a versatile and powerful tool for communicating religious truth in Venice. Authors believed that appropriating the press would lead to a distinct form of devotional renewal. Its utilisers were mainly clerical, and most of the authors analysed throughout this thesis were clerical. Yet, the laity also harnessed the press in Venice and collaborated with priests to produce religious books. The Venetian context offers a fruitful lens through which to study the importance of print in the reshaping of urban devotional culture. Given its dominance in the production of pious print, and in the scope of genres, the Venetian context sheds light on the diversity of religious print in Venice, and its role in both reflecting and driving Catholic reform in the city. A particularly striking aspect of print, one which was articulated by several of the clerical and lay authors examined in this study, is the sense of newness. In several cases, authors spoke clearly of their desire to utilise the press to inaugurate a fresh phase in devotional culture. The issue of loss motivated the production of printed devotional works in Venice – the loss of original source material and the more intangible sense of loss of cultural relevance of particular aspects of devotion. Print expanded devotional culture in Venice because it offered widened access. Authors provided readers with previously inaccessible manuscript material and collected disparate sources into approachable volumes. Authors consolidated stories and ideas that circulated in other spheres into settled ink, as was the case with the capacious miracle compendia that piled miracle tale after miracle tale, sometimes into the hundreds. The appropriation of print in Venice reflected the perceived need for innovation. Authors sought to nurture and drive a new phase of Catholicism, and to offer something new to the Catholics living and worshipping in the city. This motivation was in part fuelled by broader questions concerning certainty with which Catholic culture wrestled with in the period of reform.

Asserting certainty in post-Tridentine Catholicism

Different aspects of devotional renewal were driven by different motives, and certainly, by diverse groups and individuals in Venice. All of those examined here reflect a key concern on the part of Catholicism in the period of reform: the matter of certainty. None of the devotional principles that I have analysed were brought into doctrinal question by Catholics in Venice. Miracles, the cult of the saints, the sacrality of places, and the revelation of God in the Eucharist were always fixtures of Venetian devotional life. The Council of Trent attempted to provide certainty through doctrinal assertion. These ideas also manifested through innovations in devotional culture – the points of sacred encounter around which Catholic people organised their spiritual lives. My findings indicate that concerns with removing ambiguity from these aspects of devotional life and fixing them more closely in the religious consciousness of the laity was a driving force behind Catholic reform in Venice. Chapter 2 explored the search for certainty in relation to the perceived need of Venetian authors to shear myth away from accounts of site foundation legends and replace these with historical proof and method. The matter of certainty, however, is something which shaped devotional culture in Venice in ways beyond concerns with historicity.

In speaking of ‘certainty’, I refer to the perceived need on the part of both lay and clerical Catholics to imbue old truth with fresh meaning, relevance, and surety. This foregrounding of certainty brought the matter of devotional culture in Catholic life to the fore. This process often involved the production of new ways to encounter the sacred such as the production of miracle books examined in Chapter 1. The clerical authors of those books sought to instil within their readers a sense of certainty regarding the potential intervention of the miraculous to change their lives. Certainty was communicated by engaging both the intellect and the emotions and aimed to provide something of a personal revelation as to the keen eye that heaven fixed upon Catholic people and their lives. In Chapter 3, I showed that

the cult of the saints was used in a twofold way to establish certainty: the certainty of the validity of a range of cults, and the certainty of the holiness of the city of Venice that produced them. By breathing fresh life into old holy heroes, hagiographers reasserted fundamental truths about the special standing that the city of Venice had in God's sight. Places and spaces were used to communicate Catholic certainty. Through the centralisation of the Eucharist in parish churches, both clerical and lay Catholics worked to ensure that there was no doubt about the primacy of Christ in the celestial hierarchy and affirmed the Real Presence contained within the host for the benefit of the wider parish.

The search for certainty reflected a deep-rooted concern in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholicism with the issue of authenticity. Catholic culture in this period exhibited an almost panicked need to confirm that manifestations of the miraculous were indeed holy, that sacred stories had foundations supported by scholarship rather than by assuming goodwill, and that holy people really lived, really died, and were *really* worthy of a spot in devotional life. The matter of certainty influenced the direction that devotional transformation took in the city of Venice. Reasserting certainty required devotional truths to become more visible, more accessible, and perceptible. This process often resulted in the production of new or renewed points of encounter for Catholic people and the devotional principle at hand.

New and updated books, renewed sacred sites, old stories told afresh, and even the shifting of sacred emphasis in parish churches attempted to reorient Catholic people in Venice towards the holy in significant and new ways. Ultimately, this thesis has shown that the intended result of devotional renewal in Venice was to bring Catholic people into closer communion with the sacred. The question of certainty in Venice was not driven by immediate contexts of doubt or denial. Iconoclasm, confessional divide, or loss of Catholic hegemony, spectres that harassed Catholics elsewhere in Europe, were not part of everyday religious life

in Venice. Moves to establish Catholic certainty were not always propelled by immediate challenges to Church authority. Instead, it was an all-permeating matter that touched the lives of all Catholics, if in varying degrees. These findings build upon Simon Ditchfield's argument that historians should more closely question the prevailing assumption that the Catholic use of the past after the Council of Trent was mainly used to 'reinforce confessional identities against their opponents'.⁵⁹⁷ Notwithstanding the importance I have placed on the sacred past for influencing the devotional present in Venice, I have shown that history was not only used to provide a convincing answer to the search for certainty in this period. I have emphasised that the search for certainty manifested in aspects of devotional life, such as the expansion of miracle stories or the centralisation of the Eucharist in parish churches, that were not concerned with historical method specifically. Finding answers to dispel doubt, or to stop it from rearing its head in the first place, drove devotional renewal in Venice. These findings offer a call to extend our scope in terms of how the matter of certainty shaped devotional life for Catholics in this period of reform by bringing it down to the context of everyday devotion.

Venetian authors, confraternity members, and ecclesiastical authorities were not ignorant as to the significance of the Protestant challenge. The need to reassert truth was still paramount for renewing the devotion of the Catholic laity in addition to biting back against Protestant criticism. The search for certainty tells us something significant of the perceived need of Catholic people in this period of reform. The production of new texts, the process of enhancing sacred spaces, and the reemphasis of sacrality to Venetian devotional life offered Catholic people something new. This was a renewed devotional culture buttressed by spiritual, physical, emotional, and historical truth. The matter of certainty occupied the spiritual priorities of a range of Catholics in Venice from the Patriarch to parish-based

⁵⁹⁷ Ditchfield, 'What Was Sacred History?', p. 73.

confraternities. Venetian clergy strove to engage the devotional passions of the laity and direct these in specific ways, especially through the production of accessible and persuasive print. Laypeople as well as foreign and local Catholic authorities manifested a concern with fixing truth through their devotional activities, as I emphasised in Chapter 2 through the publication work of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, or the efforts of individual Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament in Chapter 4.

The makers of urban devotion in Venice

Transforming urban devotion in Venice was a collaborative process involving a range of Catholic agents each with different priorities. These agents were collectively responsible for bringing about shifts in devotional culture in Venice, and for bringing the sacred world closer to the sphere of everyday life. This thesis has examined the individual and collective contributions of both clerical and lay Catholics in Venice in bringing around specific changes to devotional culture. One demographic which stands out is clerical writers. Through their published works, clerics in Venice, or those sending their works there for publication, attempted to stimulate and direct Catholic devotional life in specific ways. The authors analysed here always had the laity in mind. Many were clear in their printed devotional works that the ideal reader was the devout Catholic layperson. I have examined the relationship between such authors and the ‘imagined reader’ to understand both the priorities of clerical Catholics and the spiritual resources available for Catholic laypeople in Venice in this period. Indeed, the clergy of Venice were a diverse group, and this thesis has examined worked written by the Patriarch of Venice to titular priests. What comes across clearly is that different writers had different priorities, personalities, and approaches to writing reform. Some, such as the fiery Giovanni Felice Astolfi or Niccolò Laghi, had clearly absorbed the threat to Catholicism posed by Protestantism and spoke of this in their substantial collections

of miracle stories. While their works were not entirely shaped by the matter of heresy, it was nonetheless addressed in straightforward ways. Other clerical writers, such as Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo or Giovanni Maria Zilotti, scrupulously examined and celebrated the sacred heritage of the city of Venice – shrines, relics, and history. Historiographers like Guido Casoni or Paolino Fiamma were more concerned with the lives of Venetian holy people, and the city which birthed them. Clerical authors therefore played an indispensable role in researching and writing vernacular texts which sought to bring the Catholic into closer communion with God and shape Venetian devotional life in specific ways. This thesis has also drawn attention to the important role that the laity, especially through their membership to confraternities, played in shaping religious culture.

Lay and clerical people sometimes collaborated in the production of printed works, as I raised in Chapter 2 regarding the evidence of collaboration in Giovanni Maria Zilotti and the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pace in his shrine book. I have also raised important examples of lay-driven efforts of revival through print, as with the case of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista's appropriation of the press. Chapter 3 drew attention to role that individual families in Venice, such as the houses of Sagredo and of the Collalto, in disseminating the cults of their ancestor saints within and beyond the city. I also emphasised the role of individual religious orders in helping to preserve and promote particular cults. Chapters 1 to 3 focussed mainly on understanding the devotional resources open to laypeople through new and updated printed works and the physical revival of spaces of devotion. Laypeople were involved in these processes, but it is the role of the clergy that stands out particularly as the producers of the spiritual resources which were designed to influence belief and practice in the city. Chapter 4, on the other hand, emphasised the role of laypeople in Venice as instigators of devotional shifts through their involvement in Sacrament confraternities. Like the clergy, the laity were not a homogenous group. But through

examination of the work of these confraternities concerning the Eucharist, I have argued for profound lay contribution to the intensification of sacred immanence. This aspect of the thesis has centralised the importance of lay and clerical collaboration when it came to shifting the Catholic worldview with regard to the sacred, in this case, through the centralisation of Eucharistic tabernacles in parish churches. I have also emphasised the ability of the laypeople that formed these confraternities to act according to their own priorities. Sometimes, priorities meant resisting the directives of Church officials, such as those who conducted the influential Apostolic Visitation of Venice in 1581.

Examining distinct forms of Catholic devotion has revealed clear points of cross-fertilisation. The culture of the miraculous nourished a range of devotional acts. Yet, the makers of urban devotion I have underlined above were not working towards one predetermined goal. Hagiographers had very different priorities to Holy Sacrament Confraternities, and the spiritual concerns of different writers of miracle collections resulted in equally different spiritual messages being conveyed through their works. Bringing these different aspects of devotional change together has the value of shedding light on the myriad agents involved in this process. The decrees of Trent, and the broader culture of Catholic reform exerted clear influence upon many of the changes analysed throughout. A unifying goal of the makers of urban devotion in Venice was to renew the Catholic faith and enhance devotional culture in specific ways. But this required elaboration, creativity, and innovation given the vagueness of the Tridentine decrees in practical terms. The motivations and priorities of the Catholic people in Venice differed, as did their approaches to engaging with reform. The result of their work, however, coalesced around the matter of the immanence of the sacred, and expanded access to this in the city of Venice. Intensifying the closeness of the sacred world was not a pre-determined or articulated goal, but expansion of devotional culture in Venice resulted in this. By considering the diverse contributions of a range of

agents, this thesis has cast the intensification of sacred immanence in Venice as a collaborative process. These separate, if sometimes interrelated efforts of devotional renewal had important consequences for the spiritual worldview of Catholic people.

Encountering the sacred

Changes to devotional culture had profound consequences for the way that Catholic people in Venice could encounter the sacred. I want to emphasise how the ultimate result of the transformation of devotional culture was offering the faithful closer proximity to sacred immanence. The sacred also became more accessible for Catholics in Venice in this period. This access occurred in different ways. Physical proximity was enhanced. This occurred through the celebration of shrines, relics and most profoundly, through the centralisation of the Eucharist. Material sacrality was brought to the centre of devotional life. A key contribution that this thesis makes regarding thinking about the sacred is the attention that it draws to intangible dimensions of immanence. The term ‘immanence’ in the Catholic context encompasses the ability of the sacred to inhere within the mundane world, especially through objects and places. This thesis has examined intangible ways that Catholics in Venice could be brought into closer encounter with the sacred. I return to the concept of ‘hierophany’ – a moment in which the sacred manifests and makes itself known.

Proximity to the sacred could be achieved through knowing, feeling, and perceiving – things that did not rely solely upon material adjunct to devotion. In Chapter 1 particularly, I argued that miracle collections encouraged their Catholic readers to adopt an increasingly sacralised worldview, one in which miracles were frequent occurrences. My investigation of the relationship between site and sacred history in Chapter 2 showed how the authors of printed texts believed that possession of and understanding of key moments in the Christian

past brought the Catholic into closer communion with the sacred in the present. Despite being intangible, these moments of hierophany attempted to shape Catholic devotional life in Venice and bring the holy closer to the devotional act. This thesis frames devotional life in terms of 'encounters'. These encounters could be physical, such as the literal encounter with a sacred space or object. The sacred could be encountered also through the application of the religious emotions, the intellect, and by being aware of the sacred past. My findings emphasise the role that inward devotion and private, voluntary faith could play in transforming attitudes towards sacred immanence amongst Catholics. Sacred immanence is a term almost always used to describe material religion by scholars of Catholicism. I have argued that sacred immanence in Catholicism does not need to refer exclusively to the presence of God in spaces and objects.

Work focussing on the sites of devotion, or on the objects which served as adjuncts to Catholic worship, show that materiality was a vital channel of sacred encounter. The primacy of the material has been rightly asserted by scholars such as Caroline Walker Bynum, and those who bring into focus the sites where sacred encounters occurred, such as Laven, Brundin, and Howard or Spicer. My approach to the concept of immanence has called for closer thought about how this may have manifested for a Catholic living in Venice in this period of reform. Shrines, holy bones, Eucharistic hosts provided tangible proximity to the sacred. The sacred could make itself known in private moments of devotional reflection on the miraculous, through the intellectual grasp of the historicity of sacred places, and through a sense of belonging to a city which was in itself sacred. Through such means, the sacred could become manifest for Catholic people in intangible, yet profoundly transformative ways. Understanding the changing nature of Catholic devotional culture in this period requires historians to accept a less rigid approach to sacred immanence in Catholic culture and to

instead think harder about intangible moments of sacred encounters and how these may have shaped the faithful's experience of their Catholicism.

By the end of the period under study here, encountering the sacred in Venice had undergone important changes. I will summarise these changes in terms of the qualities of this emphasised sense of immanence. These qualities are expansion of points of encounter, increased proximity to the sacred, and the intrinsic relationship between sacred immanence and Catholic identity. For the first, this thesis has argued for the expansion in points of encounter. New books, refurbished shrines, and shifts in Eucharistic piety were intended to extend the devotional options open to Catholics in Venice especially when it came to the matter of hierophany – the moments where the sacred was made manifest. In addition to expansion, I argue also for a shift in terms of proximity to the sacred. We not only have an expansion in points of encounter but also evidence that the encounter brought the Catholic into closer communion with the sacred than was previously possible. This point regarding proximity is particularly true in relation to those intangible points of encounter which I previously raised. Take the efforts made by Venetian writers to replace unverifiable myth with historical fact in relation to key sacred sites in Venice that I examined in Chapter 2. The writers of these books emphasised that being in the intellectual possession of sacred history resulted in a discernible devotional change. Understanding also transformed the nature of the encounter that a Catholic could have with a particular sacred site by providing a deeper, more comprehensive knowledge of the sacred moments which brought it into being. On the side of tangible immanence, the efforts made by lay and clerical Catholics in Venice to centralise the Eucharist in parish churches were driven by the need to ensure the physical, spiritual, and visual proximity to the Real Presence.

What then did this amount to for Catholics in Venice? When it comes to the matter of Catholic identity, the changes I have examined throughout aimed to promote a new,

increasingly sacralised Catholic worldview to which devotional culture was vital. This was, borrowing from Walsham, a context of urban devotion that encouraged ‘a fresh receptiveness to the supernatural and the sacred’.⁵⁹⁸ Miracle collections, hagiographies, renewed shrines and holy sites, and the Real Presence of Christ through the Eucharist communicated a clear message to Venetian Catholics: being a Catholic meant being in close proximity to the sacred in everyday life. This idea was not created by the Council of Trent, nor its interpreters. Catholicism was always a religion of immanence. Yet, the period of Catholic reform, the questions that the Church asked of itself in this period, and the transformation of devotional culture analysed throughout this thesis brought this message to the fore. This message was buttressed in Venice by new, more accessible books that told Catholic readers to expect daily miracles, provided surety on the lives of important saints, or reminded them that their very homeland was indeed holy. Many of the changes occurring in the city of Venice manifested elsewhere in Catholic Europe. The context of Venice has demonstrated that questions about the immanence of God and the nature and extent of accessing the sacred through devotional life were fundamental issues for Catholicism in this period, even in contexts of stable Catholic hegemony. In different urban contexts, conflict, confessional divide, or minority Catholicism propelled lay and clerical Catholics throughout Europe to cling ever more closely to their devotional identities, and to defend more fervently the idea of the immanence of the sacred. But as the Venetian context has shown, these conditions were not essential for either the significant renewal of devotional culture, or broader consequences relating to the proximity of the sacred. Being a Catholic in Venice meant being part of a resacralised devotional culture in which the sacred was more knowable, perceivable, and open to closer encounter.

⁵⁹⁸ Walsham, ‘The “Disenchantment of the World” Reassessed’, p. 527.

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