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Catholicism Decentralized: Local Religion in the Early Modern Periphery

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Abstract

Expanding recent work on the heterogeneity of Catholicism and the challenges facing Tridentine reformers, this article examines local religion in two “extreme” settings: the village republic of Gersau in Central Switzerland and the missionary territory of the Custody of the Holy Land. Following conceptual remarks, the authors sketch the distinct secular contexts as well the phased evolution of localized networks for the administration of the cure of souls, the latter starting in the eleventh and sixteenth centuries respectively. A consistently comparative approach reveals notable similarities – in terms of expanding spiritual provision and better record-keeping – alongside substantial differences – especially between the clearly demarcated territorial parishes in the Alps and a more punctual system of sacrament centers in Palestine. At Gersau, where diocesan structures were weak, the church operated under the close supervision of a commune with extensive powers stretching to the rights of advowson and benefice administration. Around Jerusalem, the Franciscans – whose Custos acted as the Apostolic Vicar – used material incentives to win over converts from other Christian denominations. Building on recent reassessments of the post-Tridentine Church, both examples thus underline the strong position of the laity in the Confessional Age and the need to acknowledge local socio-political as well as organizational factors in the formation of early modern Catholicism.

I. Introduction

Recent research has fundamentally complicated the once widespread view of the Catholic Church as a homogeneous and uniform body. Despite its hierarchical structure (culminating in the popes as successors of St Peter) and central guidance in matters of faith and government

(through councils and the Roman congregations), historians point to numerous variations at all points in time. In the Middle Ages, for example, quite apart from the dramatic divisions during the Investiture Crisis and Great Schism, there were countless regional patterns in terms of worship and liturgy; during the early modern centuries, we can distinguish between a more ‘Baroque’ form of Catholicism in Italy and a less exuberant ‘Classicist’ type in France, while the split between Ultramontane and Cisalpine orientations during the *Kulturkampf* or the debates about the “liberation theology” movement from the 1970s provide cases in point for the modern period.¹

The advent of social history in the 1960s and 1970s provided one important stimulus for new scholarly approaches to the European Reformations. Breaking with the previous fixation on official doctrines, a new generation shifted its attention to social issues and lay practices which prompted new readings of religious change.² In this framework, particular attention was paid to how both Catholic and Protestant Churches tried to transform Christianity from the sixteenth century, eradicating well-established religious practices and encouraging the development of strong confessional identities.³ Through the “confessionalisation paradigm,” scholars came to describe how the emerging early modern states cooperated with the established Churches to enhance conformity and social discipline among the population through different methods, for example by implementing clear norms of religious practice, using propaganda, embarking on local visitations and fostering education.⁴ With regard to the specific character of the Catholic Reformation (alternatively referred to as Counter-Reformation, Catholic Revival or early modern Catholicism),⁵ studies on single dioceses traced how gradually better-trained priests attacked well-entrenched unorthodox practices by imposing reforms on their flocks. The confessionalization paradigm thus stimulated fruitful comparisons between the ways in which both the Catholic and Protestant Churches strove to enhance conformity and establish clear confessional boundaries.⁶

Nonetheless, the emphasis on similarities has also been criticized, along with the concept's link between confessionalisation and modernisation, its state-centred approach and the top-down perspective.⁷ Concerning the latter, for example, Mark Foster has convincingly demonstrated that, in the south-west German Diocese of Speyer, lay piety and village communes had a decisive influence on the shape of early modern Catholicism.⁸ Doubts have also been cast on the wider geographical applicability of a paradigm forged to explain links between confessional and political developments in the Holy Roman Empire, for example with regard to religiously divided kingdoms like France.⁹ In Ireland, as Ute Lotz-Heumann has argued, there were conflicting confessionalization processes steered from above (for the Protestant minority supported by the English crown) and below (among the domestic Catholic majority, itself divided into an increasingly Tridentine Anglo-Irish and a less receptive Gaelic community). Here again, there were no straightforward links between confessionalization and state formation, not least because of Ireland's peripheral position within the Tudor / Stuart "multiple kingdom", where the interests of government bodies in Dublin and London often failed to coincide.¹⁰ In fact, issues emerged even for the study of Catholic Germany itself, with many scholars challenging the relative disregard of its theological and doctrinal distinctions on the one hand, and the alleged significance of the process for socio-political modernization on the other.¹¹ It is now beyond doubt that the implementation of the decrees of Trent on sacraments, justification, seminaries, better record-keeping and enhanced papal / diocesan control as well as the renewal of Catholic life and worship proved laborious, lengthy and heterogeneous.¹² Many factors – such as location, distance from Rome, cultural and social landscape, political framework, presence of other religious communities – affected the outcome, leading to substantial local varieties and many intermediate forms.¹³

This article contributes to the ongoing debate on the diversification of post-Reformation Catholicism by juxtaposing two peripheral settings at considerable distance from "Trent": the

village republic of Gersau in the Central Alps and the Catholic communities established in the Holy Land over the course of the seventeenth century. Moving from centre to periphery, three key aspects of scholarly debate shall be addressed: *first*, the role of the secular framework for church reforms and local religious provision. For most areas, concerted backing by state authorities formed an important part of Catholic regeneration.¹⁴ Our self-governing Alpine case study, however, formed a policy without a prince, while in Ottoman-controlled Palestine, the Catholic Church could only count on its moral authority. The shared absence of a major component of the confessionalization concept – i.e. a Christian ruler wishing to enhance territorial coherence – provides meaningful ground for comparison, despite stark contextual differences. The way in which people made their livelihoods (be it through agriculture, crafts or services) also mattered, as did the relative prosperity of a region.

Secondly, we wish to focus on local ecclesiastical organization. From the late sixteenth century, churches evolved from “principal place[s] of worship and the celebration of the sacraments within the community” to “vehicles for religious reform and educating the faithful.”¹⁵ In the Catholic world the Decrees of Trent strengthened the centrality of the parish and emphasised the role of its priest charged with regular preaching and dogmatic instruction. The whole system was revised with a view to creating more homogeneous communities of similar sizes and resources; similarly, boundaries were tightened to clarify pastoral and financial responsibilities, while church interiors and decorations reflected new liturgical and religious priorities. The significance of the parochial framework for reform initiatives – albeit in various intensities and chronologies – duly emerges in many European settings.¹⁶ Yet, despite the Church’s harmonizing efforts, confessional competition and global expansion challenged the uniformity and very definition of the parish.¹⁷ In what follows, particular attention shall be paid to aspects such as church foundations and furnishings, divine service, the administration of sacraments, pastoral organization, elements of “voluntary” religion and

the relationship with other denominations.

Thirdly, the article explores the extent to which early modern parish life was shaped by clerical and / or lay impulses. Trent envisaged tighter priestly control and more regular archidiaconal or diocesan supervision, typically through visitations and/or ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Recent work has emphasized the constant negotiation of church discipline, since – under the conditions of (not yet bureaucratized) early modern government – any kind of change depended upon the active collaboration of subjects. There has also been much greater emphasis on the role played by the people themselves. Traditional understandings of top-down processes – in which change is imposed on passive recipients – have been fundamentally revised, with growing recognition of the influence of grass-roots interests, differentiated uptakes of reform elements and local self-regulation.¹⁸

Thanks to its wide geographical perspective, the article will also contribute to the debate over the relationship between European and overseas missions.¹⁹ Some scholars emphasize a Tridentine model of precept and authority, and a missionary model of practice and ministry, others their substantial uniformity and unity.²⁰ There is no doubt that regional divergences extend to the application of canon law,²¹ albeit on the background of strong Roman efforts to globalize its hierarchical structure.²² Yet our case studies contribute to challenge the idea of a clear dichotomy between a “Tridentine” and a “missionary” model.²³ Rather, they suggest heavily localized varieties reflecting the influence of regional characteristics, government systems and socio-economic structures. These factors not only shaped the organization of Catholic life of the area but also its position in the wider “church geography.”

Given entirely different contexts, this study rests on heterogeneous empirical foundations. The only common genre are *parish registers*, in many ways the flagship sources of Tridentine reform. In both contexts, the first surviving books date from the early seventeenth century.²⁴ A series of charters, anniversary books and inventories make up the rest of the ecclesiastical

sources available for Gersau, with further clues deriving from the secular archives of the village, specifically in holdings such as compilations of local laws and official correspondence. A particularly distinctive set, straddling the sacred and profane spheres, comprises chronicles deposited, in accordance with a widespread Germanic custom, in the tower ball of the parish church on the occasion of major repairs from 1655.²⁵ Further clues on parish life in seventeenth-century Palestine, are furnished by Franciscan documents – such as chronicles²⁶ and books of conversions – and by the correspondence between the Franciscans and the Roman congregations, such as those of the Inquisition²⁷ and of Propaganda Fide. Founded in 1622, the latter was in charge of Catholic missionary activity in places without an established church hierarchy (such as Palestine). Besides letters, its archive also contains reports on the life of the Custody, which had to be submitted every two years by the *Custos* of the Holy land, the Guardian of the St Saviour monastery in Jerusalem and Minister Provincial of the Friars Minor living throughout the Middle East.²⁸

In the subsequent sections dedicated to secular frameworks (II), ecclesiastical organization (III) and lay-clerical relations (IV), the scrutiny of “extreme” settings shall help us to enhance our understanding of post-Tridentine Catholicism more generally (V). Both case studies draw on the findings of larger research projects, one focusing on the political / ecclesiastical autonomy of peasant polities, the other on aspects of cultural exchange and migration in the Mediterranean, a collaboration facilitated by the My-Parish network.²⁹

II. The secular framework

Gersau was a micro-polity on the shores of Lake Lucerne in the Central Alps. Its “peripheral” character resulted not so much from its location, given that the major Gotthard trade route passed along its boundaries, but the fact that the village was surrounded by high mountains and

accessible only by boat. Originally part of the estates of the monastery of Muri, it forged a loose alliance with the neighbouring Swiss Forest Cantons – a rare association of urban and rural republics in an area of weak lordship – in the early fourteenth century and obtained political freedom by purchasing all feudal and jurisdictional rights in 1390.³⁰ For the next four hundred years until the Helvetic Revolution of 1798, this “one-parish-state” of a few hundred inhabitants – arguably Europe’s most autonomous rural community – ran its own affairs, taking fundamental decisions at twice-yearly assemblies of all male burghers, with day-to-day government in the hands of a council presided by the land mayor (*Landammann*). Secular powers were rounded off by a royal grant of high jurisdiction (conveyed in 1418) and a general confirmation of all privileges by Emperor Sigismund in 1433.³¹ From the late fifteenth century, the entire region began to detach itself from the Holy Roman Empire and gained a formal exemption – effectively independence – in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Socio-economically, most people engaged in Alpine pastoral husbandry, co-ordinated by an agricultural association of all burghers (*Genossame*), complemented by a fair range of rural crafts and related occupations (from the eighteenth century additionally a flourishing silk industry). A property register compiled for rating purposes in 1510 reveals significant differences in wealth: Peter Baggenstoss owed the highest contribution of £105 (from seven plots of land), Jost Scheffer the lowest of £4 (from one) and “average” householders somewhere between £40-50.³²

With the defeat of the Byzantines and the (seventh-century) Arab conquest Palestine entered a long period of Islamic rule. The arrival of the crusaders in 1095 and the establishment of the Latin Kingdoms (1098-1291) temporarily slowed the spread of Islam but within a century Palestine returned to Muslim rule under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and its islamization resumed. By the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1517, the majority of the population in Palestine was Muslim, with Jewish and Christian minorities (the former concentrated in Jerusalem / Safed and the latter –

Orthodox Greeks and members of the Eastern churches – primarily in Galilee as well as south of Jerusalem). There is no record of local Catholics until the Franciscan Minors embarked on the “reconciliation” of the Orthodox community from the mid-sixteenth century.³³

During the Ottoman period, Palestine belonged to the Province of Damascus and was divided in districts, each ruled by a district governor (*sanjaq-bay*). From the late 1500s, centrifugal tendencies gained ground in the Arab lands. During the first half of the seventeenth century, and even though formally under Ottoman control, local families succeeded in retaining key positions, among which that of district governor. In the second half of the century, however, Istanbul started to impose governors sent from the capital. Besides the *sanjaq-bay*, who was the chief administrative and military authority of the district, other officials were charged with tax collection, police tasks and the functioning of day-to-day administration. Religious communities, guilds and village communities all had a certain degree of autonomy in allocating financial dues among their members and in choosing their representatives. One example is rural government. Villagers were represented by elected leaders (*shuyūkh al-qarya*) drawn from the oldest and wealthiest inhabitants. Their tasks included attending the court of justice alongside the negotiation and collection of communal taxes.³⁴ Christian inhabitants had their own representatives. Even though religious communities were responsible for the welfare of their members and the regulation of marriages, divorce and inheritance, the use of force remained a prerogative of the Ottoman ruler. All they had, therefore, was moral authority without the backing of a sympathetic political power, a situation fundamentally different from Catholic (and Protestant) territories in Europe, where secular support was crucial for the implementation of church discipline and princes or city councils took active roles in church government.³⁵ These circumstances shaped the missionary activity of the Franciscans and local religious life. First, the Ottoman ban on apostasy from Islam, which incurred the death penalty, forced the friars to focus their recruitment activities on the other Christians. The lack of political support,

as we will see, also restricted their capacity to discipline the new Catholics and to implement canon law well into the eighteenth century.

Economic conditions affected parish life as well. Palestine was dominated by agriculture, especially the cultivation of wheat and barley, and – in the mountains – olives and grapes. In Bethlehem and Jerusalem, part of the population found employment in crafts, some of which produced religious goods for the pilgrim market. Since their arrival and well before the beginning of the missionary activity, the Franciscans participated in the local economy as buyers, money lenders, and employers. They got also very involved in the production and trade of devotional objects, a key sector in the area. This clearly boosted the spread of Catholicism particularly in and around Bethlehem, as did the foundation of schools and other services. The importance of this phenomenon can be gauged from the fact that soon almost all the Catholics in the villages worked as artisans.³⁶

III. Local ecclesiastical organization

Papal charters of 1179 and 1189 supply the first references to a church in Gersau.³⁷ Here, as throughout Latin Christendom, the High Middle Ages saw the gradual formation of a network of clearly-demarcated units for the administration of the cure of souls to all residents, i.e. the emergence of “parishes” in the canonical sense of the term.³⁸ At a time when social organization was mainly based on *personal* bonds (e.g. between kings and vassals, knights and retainers, lords and peasants), the emergence of *territorial* units was a remarkable and innovative feature. This provided the local population with an institutional framework, a source of identity and – via shared tasks and resources – a collective capacity, not just in ecclesiastical matters: Gersau’s political emancipation was initially driven by the “parishioners.”³⁹ There are few sources for the late medieval period, but we encounter “typical” features such as clerical non-residence

and the quest for salvation, not least via the acquisition of indulgences.⁴⁰ Crucially for our purposes, and in line with wider tendencies towards lay control in the region, the parishioners purchased the right of patronage in 1483 and gradually expanded their corporate influence over local ecclesiastical affairs.⁴¹ At the same time, the influence of the bishop (seated in far-away Constance) and his diocesan courts eroded to a bare minimum,⁴² leading to the emergence of a “Communal Catholicism” characterized by doctrinal orthodoxy (Gersau sided against the “heretical” Zwinglians in the Swiss civil wars of Kappel 1529-31), religious fervour (especially with regard to the worship of saints and the cult of the dead) and almost total local control over ecclesiastical affairs in the early modern period.⁴³ In contrast to other heartlands of the old religion (like Austria, Spain or Bavaria), there was no prince or state bureaucracy to push the Tridentine agenda – Gersau thus provides rare “unfiltered” insights into early modern Catholicism from below.

In Palestine, the first establishment of an episcopal hierarchy and parish network separate from the Greeks dates back to the First Crusade (1095–1099).⁴⁴ With the fall of the Latin Kingdoms (1291), this organization collapsed and the religious orders all left the region. Supported by the crown of Aragon, the Franciscans returned to Jerusalem already during the fourteenth century. Upon their arrival, their main tasks were the maintenance of the Holy Sites and assistance offered to pilgrims. From the last decades of the sixteenth century, when the first Catholic missionaries arrived in the Middle East, they also embarked on the spreading of the Roman faith among local Christians. This movement sparked the re-emergence of a pastoral organization. In fact, even before the post-Reformation spread of Catholicism, Middle Eastern Franciscans had churches and chapels where they administered the sacraments to Catholic merchants and diplomats. In 1627 the Custody had six monasteries, each with one or more churches (two in Jerusalem and one each in Bethlehem [Figure 1a], Nazareth, Arnica in Cyprus and Aleppo) and seven chapels. These were usually located in leading trading cities and

harbors, often in the areas inhabited by foreigners (as exemplified by the two mendicant chapels in Alexandretta in Lebanon, one of which catered for Venetians and the other for the French *nazione*).⁴⁵ With the onset of missionary initiatives these churches started to serve converts as well, along with the establishment of others elsewhere.

The process was boosted by the converts' passage to the Latin rite, as promoted by the Franciscans against the prescription of Propaganda (which advocated the maintenance of oriental rites). When the congregation was established, the Franciscans already had a few pastoral bases: Nazareth was founded in 1620, following the acquisition of the monastery itself. It is not clear when those of Bethlehem and Jerusalem emerged but the first evidence of a sacrament administered in Bethlehem dates from 1618. In Jerusalem, because of the presence of foreigners, it is likely that Franciscans pursued pastoral activity also during the previous centuries. Later the friars set up further local bases in Jaffa (1654) and Ayn Karim / S. Giovanni in Montana (1674).⁴⁶ Slowly the number of Catholics grew and the pastoral network consolidated. A report sent by the *Custos* to Propaganda fide in 1664 offers a first detailed picture: by that year, Bethlehem looked after 98 souls, Rama 60, and Nazareth 24.⁴⁷ The last decades of the century saw further growth. With the spread of Catholicism in Bayt Jala and Bayt Sahur, these villages became affiliated to the neighboring parish of Bethlehem. The establishment of schools and charitable institutions also played a central role in parish life.

The meaning of the term "parish" in the Palestinian context deserves some clarification. Even though *parochia* is the word used by Franciscan documents, there were clear differences compared to the standard pattern sketched above. Unlike in Latin Christendom, the Franciscans would not collect tithes (see below) and there were no firmly-defined local ecclesiastical boundaries. Rather than as territorial units in the European sense, Franciscan pastoral bases in Palestine could be defined as "sacrament centers" focused on the

celebration of masses and the administration of baptisms, marriages and funerals for a scattered flock of believers. The same might in fact apply to other early missionary areas (e.g. in the New World) or countries with strong Catholic minorities (such as early modern England).⁴⁸

In stark contrast to Gersau, furthermore, the Franciscan network of spiritual provision was established only *after* the council of Trent. For Propaganda Fide, the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land with its sacrament centers constituted a mission *in partibus infidelium* under its jurisdiction, which – in the friars’ self-perception – threatened their order’s autonomy. Like all missionaries, the Franciscans now had to submit reports and accounts to the central congregation.⁴⁹ It also reserved the right to approve newly-elected guardians and forwarded complex canon law cases to the Roman Inquisition. In return, the friars obtained some other privileges: the Custos of the Holy Land officially received the prerogatives of an apostolic vicar – a titular bishop serving in a territory without an episcopal see – formalizing powers gradually acquired before. Furthermore, in a decree of 25 September 1628, the Congregation confirmed Franciscan pastoral rights over Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth, preventing missionaries of other orders from settling in these places.⁵⁰ From a comparative perspective, even though Palestine counted as a missionary territory, it should be seen as a special case. For a start, between the Crusades and the Ottoman conquest, Christianity had actually been the majority religion in the area. Furthermore, the presence of the faith’s holiest places was a highly distinctive feature, prompting a steady flow of pilgrims and alms from Europe since the Middle Ages. Last but not least, the position of the Franciscans themselves stands out. Their early arrival as guardians of the sacred sites guaranteed them a stable income and, initially at least, the relationship with local society was of a primarily economic nature. As we will see, this was to have a major influence on the development of local ecclesiastical life.

IV. Lay-Clerical Relations and Local Religious Experience

In the European heartlands, ever since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, all Christians had to make confession to – and take communion from – their local priest at least once a year.⁵¹ For this purpose, local inhabitants supported a dedicated clergyman who was canonically entrusted with the cure of souls in return for the receipt of tithes and customary fees. These incumbents were often non-resident, badly educated and in illegitimate relationships with concubines (as documented at Gersau in 1586⁵²), but they knew that they had to provide for their flock, at least through the appointment of a deputy or curate to say mass and administer the sacraments.⁵³ Regular assemblies for worship on Sun- / feast days and for church government, shared financial burdens (tithe, fees, building / maintenance) and membership of parish confraternities all fostered a sense of belonging, pride and Christian community, albeit one with social inequalities, sometimes fierce conflict and exclusion of marginals.⁵⁴ To address deficiencies and cater for supplementary needs, congregations often desired an “increase of divine service,” typically by means of individual or collective endowments of additional masses, clerical posts and/or houses of worship; at Gersau, for example, through the establishment of a chapel on the lakeside (in atonement for a child murder that had scandalized the inhabitants) in 1570, another one halfway up the mountain to cater for the herdsmen working on the alps during the summer months in 1683 (**Figure 1b [insert Figures 1a-b near here]**) and a curacy in the parish church a year later.⁵⁵ Collective pilgrimages to local and more distant shrines became another hallmark of early modern Catholic life, at Gersau e.g. to Steinerberg in Schwyz and to the Benedictine monastery of Einsiedeln.⁵⁶ In all these respects, our Alpine case study conforms to the “European norm.”

[CAPTIONS:] Figures 1a-b: The Church of St Catherine, Bethlehem. Photo: Felicita Tramontana. The herdsmen chapel of St Joseph, Käppelberg, above Gersau erected in 1683. Photo: Beat Kümin.

Yet there were very distinctive features. Exceptionally extensive political autonomy went hand in hand with disproportionate lay influence over ecclesiastical life. The (male) parishioners, effectively identical with the republican citizenship, not only elected their own parson from the late fifteenth century, they also administered *all* financial assets associated with the church: apart from fabric, chapel, curacy and poor funds, as in many other places, even the resources of the benefice (including tithes) itself.⁵⁷ Startlingly, at least for Catholic prelates used to clerical pre-eminence, priests had to sign “benefice contracts” (*Pfrund-* or *Bestallbriefe*), which committed them to the conscientious serving of their cure and effectively turned them into communal employees. One of the articles asked them to re-apply for their position every year, others emphasized the need to observe all the local devotional customs!⁵⁸ On the whole, relations with the clergy appear harmonious, with the exception of an acrimonious dispute during the 1720s. Josef Anton Müller, who hailed from neighbouring Schwyz, chose to ride roughshod over communal customs and absented himself from numerous religious and convivial occasions. After several warnings and complaints to the episcopal commissary for the Forest Cantons, the commune took its case all the way to Constance. There, the bishop’s officials were left under no illusion that, failing a dismissal for neglect of duties, Gersau would eject the recalcitrant priest on its own authority.⁵⁹ Alongside, parish assembly and council exercised local church government in similarly proactive and assertive fashion, deciding e.g. to reject the Reformation (fighting the Kappel wars on the side of their Catholic neighbours), establishing new forms of worship (e.g. processions to ward off floods) and seeking modifications of the liturgical calendar (successfully petitioning the papal nuncio at

Lucerne to abolish eleven minor feasts in 1663).⁶⁰ By the time of a visit of the Archbishop of Milan – the later canonised Charles Borromeo – in 1570, the Counter Reformation figurehead acknowledged that popular piety remained orthodox and vibrant, while criticizing lay influence as unacceptably extensive.⁶¹

In contrast to Gersau, our Franciscan parishes knew neither lay financial control nor communal patronage, at least not officially. Just like other missionary orders, the Palestine friars sought to stay in charge of all related affairs. Yet, since mendicants could not manage the alms they received, Clement VI – when recognizing the Custody in the *Nuper Charissimae* bull of 1342 – initially arranged for a lay administrator to do so. When this proved difficult to sustain because of the paucity of men desiring to spend long time in the area, the same pope – in *Cum Hora undecima* of 1307 – allowed the friars of the Custody to own and administer properties. The arrangement was confirmed in 1458 by Callisto III's *Devotionis vestrae ardor*. Custody income consisted mainly of alms collected in other Franciscan provinces and sent to Jerusalem for the maintenance of the order and of the Holy Sites. Other receipts derived from donations, economic activities and sales. Even though, in theory, alms could not be used for missionary activity, in practice they were, as testified by numerous complaints of Propaganda Fide.⁶² In fact, these donations were probably the primary source of funding for pastoral activities as well. Because of their relatively weak position, the friars could not tax their flocks as in Europe. In other missionary territories like Guatemala, too, the Spanish Crown decided to exempt the Indians from the payment of tithes, as this would discourage conversions.⁶³ Among the Franciscan records there is also no trace of any fees for the administration of sacraments. A further interesting characteristic of the Palestine system is the lack of autonomy for individual churches and houses, as the central institution of the Custody, the St Saviour monastery in Jerusalem, met all their expenses directly.

Because of the lack of political support and the fierce competition between faiths, the spread of Catholicism progressed slowly and re-conversions remained common. Even though in Palestine clerical authority was not threatened by assemblies and councils of lay people, as at Gersau, these factors affected the control the friars had over their flocks, especially in the first century. Moreover, in line with the friars' local entanglement, well before the beginning of the missionary activity, the relationship with new converts was often based on material exchange. Thus, in contrast to parish priests in Europe and other missionary territories such as south America, not only were the Franciscans unable to make any kind of fiscal imposition on their flocks but they bestowed material assistance on the local laity in order to encourage conversions and to avoid their returning to their former faith.⁶⁴

Starting in the 1590s and growing with the increasing Franciscan missionary activity in the area, the names of local Catholics are cited among the alms-recipients. Many of them, for instance the Maronite "Giorgio," are mentioned more than once. Indeed sources suggest that some families were regularly helped by the friars. Those who are mentioned most often were the *dragomans* (interpreters) of the monasteries and people that had close ties with it. Between 1620 and 1636, for example, the Maronite gatekeeper, "Hannā," and his sons were regularly given money, clothing and wheat. Less often but still frequently the list mentions also "Battista" and his sons and the relatives of "Betros."⁶⁵

These data are corroborated by the correspondence with Propaganda Fide: a letter sent to the Sacred Congregation in 1660, for example, states that the friars "maintain [the Catholics that live in Jerusalem and Bethlehem] with love and charity." It further specifies that many of their number are poor and that the friars "give them economic assistance so as to prevent them from begging."⁶⁶ Apart from the economic incentives, the scarce power that the Franciscans had over their flocks is revealed also by the friars' difficulties to implement canon law and punish any offences.

V. Early modern Catholicism: A Tridentine church?

To which extent, then, do the case studies conform to the models and ideals of the Catholic Reformation? How influential was the secular framework and lay/clerical power? For the area in and around Gersau, as we have seen, the impression of Borromeo in 1570 was mixed. His was an early verdict, however, and in the longer term we see marked changes compared to the medieval situation. Visitations, albeit tolerated for the clergy only, seem to have had the desired effect. By the eighteenth century, there were no more concubines and the resident priests, such as incumbent Johann Balthasar Camenzind in 1785, appear as conscientious and morally upright servants of the parish.⁶⁷ Throughout the Forest Cantons region, more emphasis was now placed on training for the priesthood, with many candidates attending the Jesuit College in Lucerne or the *Collegium Helveticum* in Milan. Popular piety displayed all the hallmarks of Baroque Catholicism: the inhabitants placed great emphasis on an elaborate ornamentation of their parish church (when it was rebuilt in the early nineteenth century, Gersau's artistically notable set of pulpit, pews, font and side altars was donated to Lauerz in Schwyz, where it can still be viewed *in situ* today).⁶⁸ Alongside, people joined confraternities (catering e.g. for subgroups like the herdsmen or special cults like rosary veneration) and endowed anniversary services (the earliest surviving book dating from 1627), the churchwardens regularly paid for visiting preachers and, in the 1720s, the village council co-operated with a nearby Capuchin house to establish a monthly "Soul Sunday," offering the laity further edificatory sermons and opportunities for confession.⁶⁹ On the other hand, lay control over the clergy remained undiminished, exchanges with papal or diocesan authorities appear limited to matters of communal interest (such as the removal of parson Müller discussed above or particularly tricky

marriage disputes) and parish conviviality resisted Church appeals for greater social discipline.⁷⁰

The Palestine case study yields a similarly differentiated picture. For sure, increasing conformity to Tridentine norms can be noted in several respects. Liturgical objects and church furnishings for Palestine monasteries and chapels were usually sent by the Commissariats of the Custody spread in other Franciscan provinces, sometimes upon the request of the Guardian himself. These included chalices, altar cloths, lamps and corporals, to take just some examples. Even though such items had helped to constitute sacred spaces since Antiquity,⁷¹ their importance was emphasized in the period of the Counter Reformation. The Council of Trent reaffirmed the didactic role of sacred furnishings as means to enhance people's devotion. On the basis of the Council prescriptions on the celebration of the Eucharist, the same Carlo Borromeo elaborated on how churches had to be built and furnished in his *Istrucionum Fabricae et suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae* (1577).⁷² Accordingly, among the objects requested by the Guardian in the 1650s there are the *cartegloria* (the framed Latin text of the mass) whose usage was introduced by Borromeo himself.⁷³

Because of the importance given to church rites, as symbols of belonging to a specific denomination, sacraments – and especially baptisms and marriages – were closely monitored and registered. The Council of Trent made their recording mandatory and Pope Paul V issued more detailed instructions.⁷⁴ Unlike in Gersau, where they were introduced under close communal supervision (Figure 2.1), parish books normally came to be one of the instruments of hierarchical control and confessionalization. From the point of view of this essay, our case studies thus illustrate that even conscientious implementation of the decrees of Trent – regarding both the administration of sacraments and the keeping of parish registers – failed to trump the influence of political and socio-economic contexts.

The most detailed information derives from Palestine. At the beginning of the century,

sacraments were recorded in common books for different places, with the earliest surviving example covering all baptisms in Ramleh, Jerusalem and Bethlehem from the 1610s. This practice was probably linked to the low number of Catholics. Accordingly, with more and more conversions, each parish started to keep its own books for the various sacraments. The first separate book for Bethlehem records all the sacraments from 1618, and from 1669 Bethlehem and Jerusalem started keeping parish registers devoted to just one sacrament each (Figure 2.2 [insert Figures 2.1-2 near here]). The 1670s in fact represents a turning point from many points of view. Starting with the practice of recording itself, sacraments were originally not registered at the time of administration, but probably copied into the book at a later stage; thus none of the entries were signed. From the 1672, however, they were written down immediately by the officiating clergyman (who certified the act with his own signature) as prescribed by the Roman ritual (1614). From that moment, moreover, the office of the parish priest itself gained in importance, another aspect that shows an increasing conformity with Church reform. The latter not only promoted better clerical training but also personal residence, regular preaching and reliable record-keeping. Before the 1670s, sacraments had often been administered by the Guardian of Jerusalem or the monastery, who would simultaneously exercise the office of parish priest. From that decade, in contrast, most of the entries feature the signature of another priest delegated by him. As in Gersau, we sometimes find additional information such as the appointment of a new parish priest (e.g. Dionisio da Cutro, in 1672) and, in another intriguing parallel to the Alpine case study, clergymen retained their post for a limited time span varying from a few months to some years. With regard to the level of detail recorded for each sacrament, canon law prescriptions seem to have been followed since the very beginning, with some personal variations but also a tendency towards greater uniformity over time. For baptisms, as at Gersau, most of the entries contain the name of the child, the relevant date, the names of

parents and godparents. The mother's name, however, is sometimes missing and in many cases also the date of birth. Marriage records follow the prescriptions of the *Tametsi* decree,⁷⁵ featuring the presence of witnesses and the spouses' consent *verba de praesenti*. They also report the pronouncement of three bans before the wedding, not only in the parish where the wedding was celebrated but also in those of the spouses. The records also mention any dispensations, mostly of consanguinity, which were awarded by the Guardian of Jerusalem.

[CAPTIONS:] Figures 2a-b: *Left*: The first book of baptisms surviving for Gersau, an eighteenth-century copy of previously kept records, reaches back to the year 1627. The entries record at least dates plus the names of the infants, parents and Godmothers/-fathers; occasionally supplementary parish information like the election of a new priest. PAG, Pfarreibuch no. 3: Taufbuch 1627-1807. Photo: Beat Kümin. *Right*: Page from the *Registrum coniugatorum* of the parish of Bethlehem, starting in 1672, with signatures of the officiating priests. Archivio storico della Custodia di Terra Santa, Jerusalem. Photo: Felicita Tramontana.

Overall, while parish registers represent an aspect of parish life in close alignment with the prescriptions of Trent and canon law, important qualifications apply. First, as at Gersau (but for different reasons), the ecclesiastical hierarchy proved rather weak. In Palestine the functions of the bishop were exercised by the apostolic vicar, i.e. the Franciscan Custos. In theory, all ecclesiastical matters fell under his power, but in practice this was not always the case. Because of the growing competition between religious orders, some regulars refused to acknowledge the superior position of the Custos. Rather than turning to him as an intermediary authority, they wrote directly to Propaganda fide in Rome. In addition, the enforcement of canon law in the area was a long and difficult process. As for other missionary territories, the analysis of the documentation kept by the Roman Congregations reveals

constant negotiation between the central Church authorities, local clergy and their flocks which accompanied the implementation of the Tridentine canons. For Palestine, evidence for these kinds of interactions derives from the *dubia* submitted to the Inquisition,⁷⁶ from the correspondence with Propaganda⁷⁷ and from the parish books themselves. While openly attesting the formal respect of the canons of Trent, the latter also contain some hints on difficulties with regard, for example, to mixed marriages. Banned in principle by Propaganda Fide, the *liber coniugatorum* in Bethlehem contains a few instances, possibly no more than the tip of the iceberg. To adduce just one example from the 1670s, Custos Teofilo da Nola married some Bethlehem couples consisting of a Catholic and a Greek Orthodox spouse; the ceremonies took place in Jerusalem, apparently to avoid the “*murmur graecorum*”.⁷⁸ Even more problematic were those mixed marriages celebrated “*in more et ecclesia grecorum*”, as they were followed by the return to the Greek orthodox church of the Catholic spouse and sometimes even of his family.⁷⁹

Mixed marriages (a phenomenon unknown in the denominationally homogeneous Gersau context) are only one of the problems that friars faced in Palestine. Other issues, related with the *comunicatio in sacris* with other denominations, were commonly raised in the correspondence with the Roman congregations, such as the Catholics’ participation in Orthodox ceremonies⁸⁰ or the presence of hidden Catholics, who had secretly joined the Church of Rome but were still officially part of their former Churches.⁸¹ Among the friars’ efforts to have an effective control of the new Catholics, the centrality given to interactions with other denomination strongly suggests the connection between the implementation of canon law, on the one hand, and the construction of clear boundaries between denominations and more broadly of a Catholic identity, on the other. This connection influenced the negotiations between missionaries, local clergy and the Roman congregations in the whole of the Middle East, mirroring the close relationship between

social discipline and confessionalization which characterized early modern European history.⁸²

VI. Conclusions

Inspired by recent work on the diversity of early modern Catholicism in increasingly global perspective, this article set out to juxtapose two “extreme” examples of religious life on the periphery, one in Alpine Europe, the other in the Middle East. In spite of numerous contextual differences, their common denominator is the absence of Christian princes with state-building ambitions (and thus of a key component of the confessionalization paradigm). The preceding analysis of local government structures, ecclesiastical organization and lay-clerical relations revealed a gradual alignment to Tridentine norms on the administration of sacraments from the late sixteenth / early seventeenth century but equally the continuing difficulties clerics faced in disciplining their flocks, both in the well-established Catholic context of Gersau and during the first phases of missionary activity in Palestine. Many aspects reflect scholarly findings for other settings: the long duration of reform processes, bottom-up influences on religious change and the peculiar conditions in areas of confessional plurality. If anything, however, the absence of state backing led to even lower levels of external interference than elsewhere. At Gersau, priests needed to adapt to a local republican regime with rights of patronage and control over benefice affairs; in Palestine the Franciscans resorted to material “incentives,” not least to stem competition from rivalling religious orders.

All in all, placing “extreme” cases alongside other communities, early modern Catholicism emerges as a very “broad church,” not just from political, social and economic perspectives, but also in terms of spiritual organization. Our comparative investigation accentuates the question of whether there was such a thing as a post-Tridentine “standard” at all. The burghers

of Gersau maximized lay influence within the Tridentine ideal of a *territorial* parish with resident parsons, tightly-defined boundaries and a confessionally homogeneous population,⁸³ the Franciscans of the Holy Land – as regulars rather than diocesan agents – administered the cure of souls through a more *punctual* network of poorly-institutionalized “sacrament centers” for small groups of converts within an overwhelmingly non-Christian environment. Other key variables include the strength of archidiaconal and diocesan structures, which – again – were near-absent in both case studies.

What appears at Gersau might be termed Reformed Catholicism without centralization and diocesan consolidation, while the Holy Land saw the emergence of a post-Tridentine system without classical parishes. Decentralizing the viewpoints, therefore, gets us closer to early modern religious experience and enriches our understanding of local communities as individually negotiated manifestations of a global brand.

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¹ On differences between monastic, mendicant and diocesan practices in medieval England see Richard W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. ch. 14: Regional uses and local variety; for early modern regional patterns cf. Peter Hersche, “‘Klassizistischer’ Katholizismus: Der konfessionsgeschichtliche Sonderfall Frankreich,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 262 (1996): 357-89; on *Kulturkampf* divisions *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Michael E. Lee, *Revolutionary Saint: The Theological Legacy of Óscar Romero* (New York: Orbis Book, 2018).

² For an overview of major trends in Reformation historiography, see Mack P. Holt, “The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 133-144; Hans J. Hillerbrand, “Was There a Reformation in the Sixteenth Century?,” *Church History* 72, no. 3 (2003): 525-52; Stefan Ehrenpreis and Ute Lotz Heumann, *Reformation und konfessionelles Zeitalter* (2nd edn, Darmstadt: WBG, 2008); Scott Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

³ See for example, John Bossy, “The Counter-Reformation And The People Of Catholic Europe,” *Past & Present* 47, no.1 (1970): 51-70; Graham W. Searle, *The Counter Reformation* (London: University of London Press, 1974).

⁴ Developed by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard on the basis of the concept of *Konfessionsbildung* (formation of confessions) proposed by Ernst Walter Zeeden in the late 1950s: Wolfgang Reinhard, “Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State: A Reassessment,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 75 (1989): 383-404, 1989; Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555– 1700*, eds. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand and Anthony J. Paplas (Aldershot: Ashgate 2004)..

⁵ Hubert Jedin, “Catholic-Reformation or Counter-Reformation,” in *Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David Luebke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 21-45; many scholars use the two words almost interchangeably. On the Catholic Reformation see, for example, Michael Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation* (London: Routledge 1999); Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999). On alternative phrases: John O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Marc Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶ See for example, Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550-1750* (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁷ See for example O’Malley, *Trent and all that*, and 'Forum: Religious History beyond Confessionalization', *German History* 32, no. 4 (2014), 579-98.

⁸ Marc R. Forster, *Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univeristy Press, 1992); for similar conclusions on Zwinglian Bern see Heinrich R. Schmidt, *Dorf und Religion: Reformierte Sittenzucht in Berner Landgemeinden der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer 1995).

⁹ Marc Venard, *Le temps de confessions: 1530-1620/30* (Paris: Desclée, 1992).

¹⁰ Ute Lotz-Heumann, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt und Koexistenz im 16. und in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), esp. 423, 434.

¹¹ On the former, see for example Walter Ziegler, “Kritisches zur Konfessionalisierungsthese,” in: *Konfessionalisierung und Region*, eds. P. Frieß and R. Kießlin (Konstanz: UVK, 1999), 41-53; on the latter, Mark Foster, “With and Without Confessionalization. Varieties of Early Modern German Catholicism,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 1 (1997): 315–43.

¹² Online edition at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent.html> (all e-resources were last accessed on 8 April 2019).

¹³ On Italy see Agostino Borromeo, “I Vescovi Italiani e l’applicazione del Concilio di Trento,” in *I Tempi del Concilio. Religione, cultura e società nell’ Europa Tridentina*, eds. Cesare Mozzarelli and Danilo Zardin (Rome: Bulzoni, 1997), 27-101; and Peter Hersche, *Italien im Barockzeitalter 1600-1750: Eine Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999).

¹⁴ *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, eds. Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995); Helen Rawlings, *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Spain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

¹⁵ Andrew Spicer, “The early modern parish church: An introduction,” in *Parish Churches in the Early Modern World*, ed. idem (London: Routledge, 2015), 1-30, at 5.

¹⁶ Werner Freitag, *Pfarrer, Kirche und ländliche Gemeinschaft: Das Dekanat Vechta 1400-1803* (Bielefeld, 1998); Anne Bonzon, *L’Esprit de clocher: Prêtres et paroisses dans le diocèse de Beauvais (1535-1650)* (Paris, 1999); Helen Rawlings, *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Spain* (Basingstoke, 2002), esp. Ch. 4: “The Church and the People”; Wietse De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden, 2000).

¹⁷ See the various regional and extra-European contributions in Spicer (ed.), *Parish Churches*.

¹⁸ The classic case study is Forster, *Villages*, esp. 20-41, 200-13 (Diocese of Speyer); cf. Andreas Holzem, *Religion und Lebensformen: Katholische Konfessionalisierung im Sendgericht des Fürstbistum Münster 1570-1800* (Paderborn, 2000); Lotz-Heumann, *Konfessionalisierung*, 407 (Ireland); Frans Ciappara, “‘Who’s the Master Here?’ The Parish

Community in Early Modern Malta,” in *The Catholic Historical Review* 94 (4/2008): 671-94. Similar observations have been made for Protestantism: C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Society: The Parishes of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach 1528-1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For general reassessments see Heinrich R. Schmidt, “Sozialdisziplinierung? Ein Plädoyer für das Ende des Etatismus in der Konfessionalisierungsforschung,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 265 (1997): 639-682; and Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Imposing Church and Social Discipline,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 244-60.

¹⁹ For a recent “global” survey see Simon Ditchfield, ‘Catholic Reformation and Renewal’, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation*, ed. Peter Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 152-185.

²⁰ On this debate see Karen Melvin, “Globalization of Reform,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, eds. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2013), 391-405; see also, Alison Forrestal, and Seán Smith, “Rethinking Missionary Catholicism for the Early Modern Era,” in *The Frontiers of Mission: Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism*, eds. Alison Forrestal and Seán Smith (Leiden: Brill 2016), 8.

²¹ P. Broggio, C. Castelnau-L’Estoile, and G. Pizzorusso, “Le temps des doutes : Les sacrements et l’Église romaine aux dimensions du monde,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 121 (2009): 5-22.

²² Simon Ditchfield, “De-centering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and peoples in the early modern world,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101 (2010), 186-208; Idem, “San Carlo Borromeo in the Construction of Roman Catholicism as a World Religion,” *Studia Borromaica* 25 (2011), 3-23.

²³ A similar point is made by Karen Melvin, “Globalization of Reform,” 391-405.

²⁴ In Palestine, Archivio storico della Custodia di Terra santa (from now on ASCTS), Parrocchie, Betlemme S. Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, vol. 1 and *Registrum coniugatorum et defunctorum huius parochiae S. Caterinae....* (ab anno 1669-1735); Parrocchie, Betlemme S. Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Register baptizatorum* (11/05/1669-08/12/1721). At Gersau, while the first preserved entries date from 1627, recording of sacraments may have conceivably started earlier: Parish Archive [henceforth PAG], Pfarreibuch no. 3: Book of Baptisms 1627-1807, Book of Marriages 1627-1807, Book of Confirmations 1693-1807, Book of Deaths (*Sterbebuch*) 1733-1807.

²⁵ Gersau, District Archive [henceforth BAG], Bücher, Stiftsurkundenbuch [henceforth: UKP] and *ibid.*, Briefe. On the custom of making deposits for posterity in balls located on of church towers: Siegfried Haider, “Kirchturmurkunden vornehmlich aus Oberösterreich,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 106 (1998): 1-30; the respective Gersau documents have been edited in Josef Wiget (ed.), “Die Turmkugeldokumente der Pfarrkirche Gersau,” *Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Schwyz* 76 (1984): 161–75. Beat Kümin is working on a more detailed study of the phenomenon.

²⁶ Verniero da Montepeloso, *Croniche ovvero annali di Terra Santa*, ed. G. Golubovitch OFM, and Francesco da Serino, *Croniche ovvero annali di Terra Santa....*, ed. T. Cavallon, both in *Biblioteca Bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa*, ed. G. Golubovitch OFM (Florence: Quaracchi, 1931-34), vols. 6-10, and 11-12.

²⁷ Archivio della Congregazione della dottrina della fede (henceforth: ACDF), St. St., M3 B, fasc. 10 and St. St. Uv 50, fasc. 9 and 10.

²⁸ Archivio Storico della Congregazione De Propaganda Fide, Roma (henceforth: ASCPF), SC (Scritture riferite ai congressi)-Terra Santa, SC, Terra Santa e Cipro, vol. I and Miscellanea 1: Conti di Terra Santa; ASCPF, SOCG (Scritture originali riferite alle congregazioni generali), vols. 104, 242 and 135.

²⁹ Beat Kümin, *Imperial Villages: Cultures of Political Freedom in the German Lands c. 1300-1800* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming c. 2019); Marie Curie Actions, Project: MIGMED 65711 within Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. For the activities, symposia and resources of the Warwick-based My-Parish initiative see: <http://warwick.ac.uk/my-parish>.

³⁰ This paragraph is based on Albert Müller, *Gersau: Unikum der Schweizer Geschichte* (Baden: Hier + Jetzt, 2013); a brief, if dated, survey in English can be found in W.A.B. Coolidge, “The Republic of Gersau,” *English Historical Review* 4 (1889), 481-515.

³¹ These imperial charters are documented in *Regesta Imperii Online*, http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1418-09-16_1_0_11_1_0_3930_3470 (no. 3470; 1418) and http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1433-10-31_4_0_11_2_0_3905_9724 (no. 9724; 1433); the latter survives in BAG, Urkunden no. 8 (1433).

³² BAG, Urkunden, no. 18: copy of a *Güterschatzung* (13 March 1510).

³³ On the Catholic missionary activity in the Ottoman Middle East see Charles Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1983); Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique* (Rome: École française, 1994).

³⁴ On village organization and leaders see Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 30-32. On seventeenth-century Palestinian History: Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (New York: SUNY Press, 1996).

³⁵ Lotz-Heumann, "Imposing Church and Social Discipline," 247.

³⁶ Felicita Tramontana, "Missionaries as local agents in 17th century rural Palestine," in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization*, eds. Bernard Heyberger, Christian Windler *et al.* (London: Routledge, forthcoming c. 2019).

³⁷ Albert Müller, "Gersau" (2006), in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*: <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D711.php>; the church was dedicated to Pope St Marcellus.

³⁸ The formation of the parish network in the Lake Lucerne region is traced in P. Iso Müller, "Die Entstehung der Pfarreien an den Ufern des Vierwaldstättersees," *Geschichtsfreund* 117 (1964), 5-59, esp. 18-19 (Gersau). On parish formation and organisation in England, Italy and the Holy Roman Empire see *Pfarreien in der Vormoderne: Identität und Kultur im Niederkirchenwesen Europas*, eds. Michele Ferrari and Beat Kümin (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), Part I: Regionale Überblicke.

³⁹ The alliance with the Forest Cantons of 1359, for example, was entered into by the "kilchgenossen gemeinlich von Gersowwa": BAG, Urkunden, no. 3.

⁴⁰ Dispensations for non-residence e.g. in Freiburg i.B., Erzbischöfliches Archiv, HA 105: *Protocollum Proclamationum et Investiturarum*, f. 64 (1437); HA 107, f. 35r (1470), 48r (1471). The grant of a papal indulgence for all benefactors of the Gersau church is documented in BAG, Urkunden, no. 16 (1504).

⁴¹ BAG, Urkunden no. 12 (1483).

⁴² Late medieval church developments in this highly autonomous area are surveyed in Carl Pfaff, "Pfarrei und Pfarreileben," in *Innerschweiz und frühe Eidgenossenschaft*, ed. Historischer Verein der V Orte, (2 vols, Olten: Walther, 1990), vol. 1, 203–82.

⁴³ For a comparative situating of the religious regime see Beat Kümin, "Gersau, Innerschweiz und Europa: Kirchenmodelle im Zeitalter der Reformationen," *Der Geschichtsfreund* 171 (2018), 9-20. On the "typical" features of early modern Catholicism in the neighbouring Forest canton of Schwyz cf. Stefan Jäggi, "Religion und Kirche im Alltag," in *Die Geschichte des Kantons Schwyz*, ed. Historischer Verein des Kantons Schwyz (Zurich: Chronos, 2012), vol. 3, 243–71.

⁴⁴ Paolo Pieraccini, *Il ristabilimento del patriarcato latino di Gerusalemme e la custodia Terra Santa: la dialettica istituzionale al tempo del primo patriarca Mons. Giuseppe Valerga (1847-1872)* (Jerusalem: The Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, 2006), 20-34.

⁴⁵ Leonhard Lemmens (ed.), *Collectanea Terrae Sanctae*, Biblioteca biobibliografica della Terra Santa, ed. G. Golubovich (Florence: Quaracchi, 1933), v. 14, 312-14.

⁴⁶ Pieraccini, *Il ristabilimento del patriarcato latino di Gerusalemme*, 53.

⁴⁷ ASCPF, SOCG, 242, f.62v.

⁴⁸ Andrew Redden, "Heaven on earth: Churches in early modern Hispanic America," in *Parish Churches*, ed. A. Spicer, ch. 10; Ruth Barbour, "Pinpointing Catholics in eighteenth-century Warwickshire," *Midland Catholic History* 24 (2017), 24–42. On Franciscan missions in Viceroyalty of New Spain see also Adriaan Oss, *Catholic Colonialism: a parish history of Guatemala, 1524-1821* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Karen Melvin's more recent *Building Colonial Cities of God: mendicant orders and urban culture in New Spain, 1570-1800*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 2012).

⁴⁹ On the limits of Propaganda's authorities in territories of the Spanish Crown see Giovanni Pizzorusso, "Propaganda Fide e le missioni cattoliche sulla frontiera politica, etnica e religiosa delle Antille nel XVII secolo," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 109, no. 2 (1997): 581-599.

⁵⁰ Basilius Pandžić, "L'interesse della Sacra Congregazione per la Terra Santa," in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum: 350 anni a servizio delle missioni*, ed. Joseph Metzler (Roma: Herder, 1971-1975) vol. II, 413–423, at 416.

⁵¹ "The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), no. 21," in *Internet History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp>.

⁵² Jäggi, "Religion und Kirche im Alltag," 259.

⁵³ For medieval parish life in the Holy Roman Empire see now Enno Bünz, *Die mittelalterliche Pfarrei: Ausgewählte Studien zum 13. – 16. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); for Italy / France *La parrocchia nel medioevo*, eds. A. Paravicini Bagliani and V. Pasche (Rome: Herder, 1995).

⁵⁴ Jerzy Kloczowski, "Communautés rurales et communautés paroissiales en Europe médiévale et moderne," in *Communautés Rurales*, vol.4: Europe occidentale (Paris: Société Jean Bodin, 1984), 87-106.

⁵⁵ The earliest record for the foundation story of the Mary Helper chapel can be found in Johann Leopold Cysat, *Beschreibung deß Beru(e)hmbten Lucerner= oder 4. Waldsta(e)ttten*

Sees (Lucerne: David Hatten, 1661), 235-6; on the herdsman church of St Joseph see BAG, Sammlung der Pfrundbriefe, pp. 65-8; communal election of the *Kaplan* or assistant priest is documented in 1684: BAG, UKP, p. 322.

⁵⁶ Kümmin, “Gersau,” 17.

⁵⁷ Kümmin, *Imperial Villages*, ch. 5. On the rarity of rural communal patronage see Dietrich Kurze, *Pfarrerwahlen im Mittelalter: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gemeinde und des Niederkirchenwesens* (Cologne-Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1966), 435.

⁵⁸ BAG, Urkunden, no. 43: Pfrundbrief of 1726/62. Local customs included regular evening performances of the *Salve Regina*, weekly rehearsals of church benefactors and invitations issued to guest preachers on special occasions.

⁵⁹ The process emerges from BAG, Briefe, 1700-1800, nos 29, 30-33, 39, 41 and EAF, HA 223: Geistlicher Rat (1725-27), 240-1 (11 July 1726).

⁶⁰ Gustav Nigg, “Verzeichnis der Pfarrherren der Kirche St. Marzellus Gersau,” *Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Schwyz* 87 (1995): 109-114, at 110.

⁶¹ Wilhelm Oechsli (ed.), *Quellenbuch zur Schweizergeschichte* (2nd edn, Zürich: Schulthess, 1901), 461-9.

⁶² See for example, ASCPF, SOCG, vol. 135, f. 237.

⁶³ Oss, Catholic colonialism, 25

⁶⁴ Lemmens, *Acta Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide pro Terra Sancta: documenti*, vol. I, 101. See also SOCG, vol. 135, f. 237.

⁶⁵ On the recipients of charity Verniero da Montepeloso, *Croniche ovvero annali della Terra Santa*, vol. IV, 174-82,

⁶⁶ SC Terra Santa e Cipro, vol. I, f. 336 v.

⁶⁷ Jäggi, “Religion und Kirche im Alltag,” 259; Staatsarchiv Schwyz, Archiv 1, Akten 1, 577.006, Nr. 50–52: Bistum Konstanz, Visitationen (1785).

⁶⁸ For building history and furnishings see Michael Tomaschett, *Die Pfarrkirche St. Marcellus in Gersau* (Bern: Gesellschaft für Schweizerische Kunstgeschichte, 2013).

⁶⁹ PAG, Pfarreibuch Nr. 1: Jahrzeitbuch (1627); Nigg, “Pfarrherren,” 110-1 (Soul Sunday from 1727).

⁷⁰ Further details in Kümmin, *Imperial Villages*, ch. 5.

⁷¹ Eleonora Destefanis, “Accessibilità ed esclusione negli spazi culturali: il ruolo degli arredi liturgici fissi,” in *Martiri, Santi Martiri, Santi, patroni: per una archeologia della devozione*, eds. Adele Coscarella and Paola Santis (Cosenza: Università della Calabria, 2012), 137-53. See also Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma*

tardoantica e medievale: Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994); George Galavaris, “Some Aspects of Symbolic Use Lights in the Eastern Church Candles, Lamps and Ostrich Eggs,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 4 (1978), 69-78.

⁷² This originally appeared as part of the *Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis* (1583) and is available in an English translation at: <http://evelynvoelker.com/>.

⁷³ Mariano da Madeo, che fu Guardiano tra il 1652 e il 1659 ASCPF, SC- Terra Santa-Miscellanea 1: Conti di Terra Santa, unpaginated.

⁷⁴ Cfr. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, sess. XXIV, I; *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, sess. XXIV, II; *Rituale Romanum*, 91-97, 1614. For a general introduction to these sources in a different confessional context see Will Coster, “Popular religion and the parish register, 1538–1603,” in *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600*, eds. Katherine French, Gary Gibbs, Beat Kümin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 94-111.

⁷⁵ The ruling of the Council of Trent on matrimonial law (1563).

⁷⁶ See for example, ACDF, St. St. Uv 50, fasc. 9 and 10, containing doubts submitted by the Custos on matters such as the participation of hidden Catholics in the ceremonies of the former churches and (10) *varia dubia circa communicationem catholicum cum hereticis, eorumque matrimonia*; ST.ST., UV 48, Fasc 21.

⁷⁷ See for example, ASCPF (Archivio Storico della Congregazione De Propaganda Fide), SC (Scritture Riferite ai congressi) Terra Santa e Cipro.

⁷⁸ ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, *Register coniugatorum* (28/08/1672-19/06/17350 ff. 1-68), f.1.

⁷⁹ ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, *Register coniugatorum* (28/08/1672-19/06/17350 ff. 1-68), ff. 19, 20.

⁸⁰ Felicita Tramontana, *Passages of Faith: Conversion in Palestinian Villages (17th Century)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 98-100. See for example, ACDF, St. St. M3 B, Fasc 10.

⁸¹ Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, *ibid.* On the problem of the communication *in sacris* see Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 77, 79, 386; Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 88.

⁸² See Reinhard, “Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the early modern state,” 383-404.

⁸³ In this respect, the Gersau example can stand for the Catholic Forest Cantons of the Swiss Alps more generally; for the remarkable survival of the parish federation of Andorra see Paul H. Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford: University Press, 1999), 184–6. Comparable communal control over a Protestant regime can be found in the northern German land of Dithmarschen (until its conquest by neighboring princes in 1559): Beat Kümin, “Kirchgenossen an der Macht. Vormoderne politische Kultur in den ‘Pfarreirepubliken’ von Gersau und Dithmarschen,” in: *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 41, no. 2 (2014), 187-230 (Dithmarschen until 1559).