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Religion in the streets

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On 1 May 1627, the body of Saint Norbert – a twelfth-century itinerant preacher who founded the Premonstratensian Order – was welcomed into Prague marking a Catholic resacralisation of the city after two centuries of Protestant heresy.[1] The body came from Lutheran Magdeburg to the newly 'recatholicized' Prague. Colour and sound marked the entrance: the distinctive white robes of the Premonstratensian monks brushed unseasonal snowfall covering the road, and a drummer and eight trumpeters on horseback led the procession. At the city walls, the Archbishop of Prague, priests, musicians, and representatives of the city government, confraternities, schools and trades, and a parade of 20 flags depicting scenes from Saint Norbert's life greeted the saint. He was brought into the city and positioned on the high altar of the Týn Church in the Old Town Square. On the second day, a group of clergy led another procession of the saint's bones around the streets of the city and stopped at an elaborate arch that had been erected in the Old Town Square for a dramatic performance in which a figure symbolising Bohemia in royal robes was accompanied by 12 attendants representing the provinces. They acted out a greeting to Saint Norbert's reliquary as the six existing patron saints whose ranks he was about to join – Wenceslas, Vitus, Ludmila, Procopius, Adalbert and Sigismund – descended mechanically from the top of the arch. The saints gestured for Norbert to occupy a vacant throne. On the fourth day of festivities, a river spectacle used a fleet of boats to support an allegorical representation of Norbert's translation and was accompanied by singing. At the end of the celebration, there was a public abjuration of heresy by over 600 people. The crowd was urged to swear allegiance to

Saint Norbert while thousands of medals that had been minted to commemorate the occasion were distributed among them.

Accounts of religious activity in the streets like Saint Norbert's translation appear controlled and choreographed. However, there is an extensive gap between the ideal representation of religion in the streets that is presented in triumphant printed pamphlets and the contemporary experiences of it that are so often missing in the historical record. Without first-hand accounts of Saint Norbert's translation, we can only imagine alongside the narrative above the noisy, messy, thronging crowds of spectators, chants, silences, the kaleidoscope of colours, the excitement and awe at technical innovations and the production of gigantic theatrical and material spectacles, or even the horror to some of this event that paraded ostentatious Catholic devotion through the arteries of a once religiously plural city. The streets accommodated the sounds, smells, sights and touch of religion during this public celebration of Prague's turn towards Catholicism under Habsburg rule. It is the interaction of the idealised display of the sacred staged by authorities, and the messy reality of bodily and sensory experience that produced a distinctive type of religion to be found in the streets. These two perspectives are explored in this chapter, but first it is helpful to lay out the key historiography that has influenced research into urban religion.

Three trends have shaped the historiography of urban religion in the past 50 years. First, studies have focused on how distinctions between 'sacred' and 'secular' have divided the early modern city in our imagination. The church has been understood as the heart of the sacred urban experience. Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and Profane* (first published in French in 1957) wrote how 'the church shares in a different space from the street in which it stands', cleaving an enduring division in our understanding of the city.[2] This characterisation of the city has largely been taken up by historians of both early modern cities and early modern religion. In the 1970s and 1980s, the sacred/profane model had a pervasive influence in the writings of social and cultural historians. Much subsequent research into religion in the early modern city was bound by questions of 'what is sacred?' and 'what is secular?' Specific sacred places, objects, times,

routes and people were identified. They could all be mobilised to bring religion into the urban environment, which was essentially understood to be a secular environment.

Second, in the 1970s, the urban conditions of early modern Europe were explored for the part they played in Reformation 'success'. Bernd Moeller's study of the city of Göttingen in lower Saxony in central Germany was key to this new avenue of research. Moeller argued that free urban citizens felt that their rights had begun to be eroded by oligarchical city governments and territorial rulers in the sixteenth century.[3] Protestant theology which upheld the working laity as equal among the faithful gave support to citizens fighting for their rights. A number of studies followed suit, including the important examination of sixteenth-century Lyons by Natalie Zemon Davis in which she explored how religion informed urban values and mentality.[4] In the Reformation, Protestants who rejected much of the sacral world of Catholicism (such as images of saints, sacramentals like blessed *agnus dei* or herbs, or prayer beads), sought to redefine the presence of the holy. In Lyons, Davis identified that this was done through a renewed vision of the social body framed in Protestant terms and through networks and communities associated with print culture.[5]

Third, reflecting interests in practice and social aspects of early modern communities since the 1980s, examination of urban religion has moved away from investigating structures of religion in the city and towards religious practices in urban settings and lay religious experience. Studies tend to focus on lived religion in urban settings.[6] These provide richly detailed and innovative understanding of religion in the city and, by extension, in the streets. In spite of this, few works explicitly examine the relationship between the two. The street is largely presented as a backdrop – albeit a colourful one – to the examination of lived religious experience. The street provides the environment in which to hear the all-important church bells, to take part in community religious activities or to navigate a dangerous space outside the sanctity of both the church and the home. Recent work on the early modern street pioneered by Riitta Laitinen and Thomas Cohen, and Danielle van den Heuvel, shows how streets shaped daily life. The street of each city had 'its own flavour', and its materiality was integral to the experiences in it; order and

hierarchy imposed by authorities was resisted and negotiated as much as complied with in these streets.[7]

This chapter brings the relationship between religion and the street into sharper focus. It examines how the street was both idealised and practised in a religious sense.[8] One promising direction of research is to employ the use of spatial theory to examine the relationship between the ideal street and the practised street as they intersect with religion. As Andrew Gordon has highlighted, we still have much to learn from spatial theory developed in the writings of Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre.[9] De Certeau proposed 'space as a practised place'; it is through bodily engagement such as walking that the street becomes a space. He recognises 'how spatial interactions with the urban environment both give life to and contest the permanence of urban organisation on the ground'.[10] Yet Lefebvre's work develops this focus on practice, drawing attention to urban space as a combination of practice and the urban plan that de Certeau casts as a backdrop. Lefebvre argues that urban space must be viewed as a combination of the ideal and the real, the imaginary and the material, and thought and practice. Spaces like the street are 'produced' at the intersection of these polarities: in the nexus of the ideal image of the city, often projected by authorities, and the practical everyday realities of human actions.

The first section in this chapter examines religion in the street as part of an *ideal*, imagined and planned place. It looks at how the city and streets were constructed and visualised from the top down to reflect, celebrate and inculcate religious ideals. The second section examines how *practices* shaped the experience of religion in the street in ways that were different to religious experience in the home or the church. People could resist religion in the street or utilise it to suit their own needs. While dividing the chapter into these two parts provides a helpful heuristic approach, the ultimate goal is to go beyond such divisions and show how they interconnect, so elements of each are also distributed across the chapter. It is also important to examine the variety of religious modes and experiences across Europe. Cities were diverse. Most cities within the traditional remit of Central and Western Europe were Christian. Of these, some were Protestant, others Catholic, some were constrained by strict principles like Calvin's

Geneva, or others, like Prague, contained a spectrum of religious experiences changing across the centuries.[11] In Eastern Europe, a host of other religions prevailed. Islam was dominant in the Ottoman Empire although different sects shaped religious practice in a variety of ways. Other accepted faiths flourished in enclaves in the Ottoman territories, such as Judaism and Eastern Christianity. Many of the studies of urban religion focus on Italian cities or London, but this chapter seeks to represent a variety of examples from cities across Western, Central and Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

Sacred ideals

Late medieval cities, and Catholic ones after the Reformation, were often perceived as 'mystical bodies' – their communities drawn together under the protection of a civic patron saint.[12] Italian cities tend to be particularly representative of this. As Edward Muir noted, cities like Venice and Florence were cities in which 'the sacred was most completely interwoven into the urban fabric'.[13] The ideal city itself was envisaged as part of a divine cosmos and protected by saintly intercessors. Cities were often depicted and treated as spiritual territory and as part of a 'moralized geography'.[14] Maps and urban views from the period illuminate these attitudes. Encomiastic depictions enlarged churches and spires emphasising the city as '*civitas christiana*', such as in Lucantonio degli Uberti's 'Chain Map' (c. 1500) of Florence or even in the view of Florence in Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493).[15]

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Figure 7.1 Woodcut view of Florence, by Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514), dated 1493, colored woodcut

Source: Originally published in Nuremberg Chronicle fol. lxxxvi-lxxxvii (Nuremberg 1493)

Such messages were even more explicit in depictions of saintly intercession in urban events. A painting of the Battle of Camollia in 1526 outside Siena by Giovanni di Lorenzo Cini

exemplified the sacred connection between the city and the divine.[16] Supported by angels, her toe resting on the curly hair of one cherub, the Virgin Mary gazes down upon the city below. Its wall is prominent and the safely protected buildings and spires roll back into the landscape, as the viewer is presented with scenes of fierce hand-to-hand battles in the foreground. The intercession of Mary in this battle proved Siena's providential status.

In Baroque Catholic Central Europe, the city's edifices were harnessed to signal divine favour. In August 1650, two years after the end of the Thirty Years' War that had pitted Habsburg Catholic forces against Protestants, a triumphant Marian column was erected in the middle of the Old Town Square of Prague. It was commissioned by the Habsburg imperial committee and crafted by Jiří Bendl (1620–80). Between the Old Town council and the iconic Týn church, and in the middle of the market space, the 16-metre-high column struck through the heart of the city. A relief on the base depicted angels battling demons, and a gilded Virgin topped the column astride a defeated dragon. The city of Prague was symbolically claimed for Catholicism. The Protestant threat and Prague's heretical past had finally been destroyed. The city was a new symbol of Catholic (and Habsburg) triumph.[17] The monumental structure signified how the city had been chosen by God to prevail in the battle of Christianity. The activities of the city population were also structured around this symbolic ideal: litanies were sung at the column, and Jews were forbidden from crossing the Old Town Square during these choral events, as well as on Sundays and feast days.[18] Marian columns also sprung up in Bavaria and across Habsburg lands, the most famous being in Munich, lending its name to the *Marienplatz*, the central town square.

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Figure 7.2 Gold statue crowning the Marian Column in the Marienplatz, Munich, Germany

Source: Photo by Erika Piffer

In Catholic cities, efforts to sacralise space also called for performative material strategies in the streets. Much of the research on religion in cities has focused on how the sacred

was made manifest at particular times or places in the city. Richard Trexler's classic work on Our Lady of Impruneta – a wooden image (*tavola*) depicting the Virgin Mary located in the town of Impruneta – showed how a sacred object could work miracles on the city. The *tavola* was taken on procession at times of need to the city of Florence, particularly for rainfall – either to stop constant rainfall or relieve the city from droughts. On the day of the procession, the image would be removed from the church in Impruneta and taken to the church of San Felice in the Piazza in Florence, accompanied by choirs and the peal of bells throughout the city.[19] Trexler argued that outside the church and outside the realm of theology, the 'average religious mentality' was formed through popular engagement in activities like the procession of images in the street.[20] The sacred could be mobile and the involvement of religious objects in a moment of ritual could bring miraculous material relief to the city's population.

Edward Muir similarly focused on religious objects in the streetscape to examine the interaction of sacred and secular in Renaissance Italy. Statues and images of saints and the Virgin Mary on street corners in Italian cities could extend 'the sacrality of the church outward'.[21]

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Figure 7.3 Street shrine with the *Adoration of the Child* by Della Robbia, tin glazed terracotta. Via San Gallo, Florence, Italy, fifteenth century

Source: Photo by Sailko

While these statues were often intended to inculcate reverential behaviour or foster a parish cult, they could also protect the street from plague and deter crime or blasphemous acts.[22] Muir argued that these objects

> permeated urban spaces in many Italian cities to such a degree that rigid distinctions between sacred and profane, so typical of the Reformation, must have seemed alien, even irreligious, to many who lived in towns magically tied together by little shrines.[23]

Sacred objects could infuse the secular or profane city and streets with an aura of sacrality, and allow citizens to augment, control and negotiate the sacred in the urban environment.

While Catholic cities visually and materially projected their godly status through street accretions like monuments, statues and church spires, or through paintings of cities featuring oversized protective saints, Protestants enacted different means of protecting their communities. Sacred icons and statues were eschewed in Protestant theology, although emphasis on the object of the Bible, images of Reformers and scripture emblazoned on surfaces all provided a rich visual and material Protestant culture of its own.[24] In the street, Protestant tracts were sold, outdoor sermons were given and the very structure of urban society tied to Reformed ideals formed alternative ideals for a godly city. In cities like Augsburg, the town council was made up of guildsmen whose behaviour had to conform to Reformed ideals. Their conduct was judged on an ideal patriarchal godly household in which they presided over a family unit including apprentices and educated the members of their household in Protestant scripture.[25] In Calvinist Geneva, austere moral behaviour was strictly prescribed. Measures were outlined in the 1547 Ordinances ordering those partaking in unworthy singing or dancing to be imprisoned for three days.[26] In the street, the regulation of practices and a new code of moral behaviour and civility became the defining features of the ideal Protestant city.

A number of studies have focused on how the Reformation augmented divisions in the city between the so-called sacred' and 'profane. Research on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England has sought to uncover the changing nature of space within this Eliadean model. A study of spiritual punishments for sinners taking place in sixteenth-century English marketplaces by David Postles argued that space might be labelled as sacred or secular, but it was human action within those spaces that could transform one into the other.[27] A 'secular' market square could become 'sacred' through the public spectacle and ritual of punishing adulterers and heretics. Struggles for power over 'sacred' and 'secular' space are also at the heart of Carl Estabrook's research on seventeenth-century English cathedral cities, which finds that divisions were increasingly made unambiguous with the separation of cathedral precincts from other areas in the

city.[28] Confessional divisions in the early modern period are thus understood to have entrenched notions of what was sacred and what was profane, especially in public areas.

The city was not just a static entity. The precarious urban cosmos, threatened as it was by war, famine and disease, was in need of constant care to ensure that harmony and divine favour were maintained amidst fluctuating pressures. Moments of crisis could prompt specific actions in the city to restore the balance of favour. City and ecclesiastical authorities often attempted to control the streetscape in order to do so. In Florence, the French invasion of Italy in 1494 and collapse of Medici power prompted citizens to turn to Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98). The fiery Dominican preacher called for personal repentance and reform to atone for the sins that had brought about these crises: citizens must be disciplined, young women must dress modestly and veil their faces, all sexual misconduct was to stop and games and festivals were to be replaced by 'solemn religious processions'.[29] As the main public spaces and as stages to display correct religious morals, city streets were central to these measures.

Extreme examples of city regulation come from sixteenth-century Venice. Most famously, in Venice far more drastic measures were taken in response to the beginning of imperial decline in the early sixteenth century. An earthquake on 26 March 1511 was taken as a providential sign from God that the sinful behaviour of Venetian citizens must be rectified. The diarist, Mario Sanudo, noted that Patriarch Don Antonio Contarini ordered 'processions at St Mark's for three days, and in the parishes in the evenings [around the public squares, singing the litanies], and three days fasting on bread and water to appease the wrath of God'.[30] The streets became the site for citizens' repentance and public display to God in an attempt to resacralise what had become tainted by everyday sins. The activities of Jews were also increasingly regulated. In 1516, the Jewish Ghetto Nuovo was founded with two gated drawbridges which were to be secured by Christian guards and whose canal was policed by two patrol boats that circled day and night. Facing the streets, the increasingly tall exterior walls of the ghetto had their balconies removed and the windows were shut at night. In daylight, Jews were allowed into the city but were required to wear yellow hats to mark them out.[31] The ghetto's material

transformation sent a clear message to those inside and outside: the community was to be sealed off.

Cloistered nuns were similarly controlled. Diarist Girolamo Priuli wrote of the 'most grave sins of these whoring nuns' who were thought to have brought about the ruin of the Venetian state.[32] A series of measures controlling the boundaries followed. In June 1509, harsh penalties were set for those who entered a nunnery without licence or who aided a nun's departure; and in 1521 a new magistracy was founded to regulate and police convents – one of their first priorities was to police the convent walls. In 1566 the Council of Trent followed suit with its policy of compulsory enclosure – a widespread attempt across Catholic lands to secure the faith against retribution from God. High walls were built to encircle the convents marking them from the street and windows and even ventilation holes for latrines were blocked up. Sight lines were dealt with in great detail. The bell tower of Sant'Andrea di Zirada was locked to prevent nuns climbing up and 'flaunt[ing] themselves before the neighbourhood'.[33] Wheels replaced doors as access points for goods in and out of the convents. Enclosure extended outwards too, and the areas around the convent walls became policed against loitering, singing, conversations and especially profanities – activities of the street that were seen as the natural opposite to the controlled and regulated space behind the walls.[34]

While sources readily reveal the attempts by city and church authorities to regulate and 'purify' the city in the image of a Christian ideal, alternative archival evidence sheds light on more complex everyday realities within the city. Official regulations indicate, for example that Strasbourg's Jews were expelled in 1390 and were not officially allowed back until 1791. However, court records reveal that Jews lived a fully integrated life among the city's Christian population in the intervening years.[35] The extraordinary autobiographical account of Glückel von Hameln, a Jewish merchant wife based in Hamburg who was herself involved in trade and travel across European cities in the seventeenth century, also indicates that while the prevailing image of Europe is of segregated religious communities, interactions were far more common in

what was actually a highly pluralist faith society.[36] The streets were often the location of this encounter and exchange.

During the confessional struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the physical street could be used by both authorities and the laity to assert their visions of religious truth and authority. The street was the site of palpable religious conflict in numerous episodes of iconoclasm. What might start as an attack on churches and icons often overflowed onto the street and moved through the city from church to church.[37]

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Figure 7.4 *Beeldenstorm,* by Frans Hogenberg (1535–90), dated 1566–70, etching on paper, 21 × 28 cm

Source: Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

In 1540s Naumburg in central Germany, the Herren Gasse was implicated in religious conflict on an urban scale in an even more protracted form. This single street acted as a constant reminder and battleground through which religious divisions were played out, becoming an instrument in the fight between Catholic and Protestant communities in the city.[38] Naumburg's 500-metre-long Herren Gasse linked the city and the cathedral area known as the *Freiheit*. Every year a procession of episcopal representatives gathered in the chapter house and celebrated Mass in the Freiheit, then marched to the town church of Saint Wenzel to confirm the newly elected councillors and accept the city's homage. In 1541 the absentee bishop Philip von Wittelsbach died, and the Cathedral chapter tried to secure Julius Pflug as his Catholic replacement. However, the Protestant Elector John Frederick ordered the city not to recognise this new bishop until a proper and favourable election took place. That year, in September 1541, citizens reversed the procession. On 11 September 1541, a crowd of evangelical followers led by Pastor Medler marched from the market square *to* the Cathedral, demanding to be let in to worship in the cathedral, and tearing down the doors when they were refused entry. The street became a ritual site of the battles between Catholics and Protestants over the next five years. Gerritdina Justiz

argues that the street itself played a significant part in the experiences of this to-ing and fro-ing. 'Points of stability' such as the cathedral door or the Herren Gate prompted collective memories of 1541 to increase humiliation but also instilled a 'mood of defiance'.[39] The ritual significance of the Herren Gasse provides an exceptional example of how the street's fabric could preserve religious memory through ritual repetition and variation.

In Prague, the Jewish community exploited the ability of the street's physicality to prompt community memories. They purposefully left markers of past disasters visible in the street. The blood-spattered walls of the New Synagogue (*Altneuschul)* remained unwashed to remind passers-by of a massacre there in 1389 and depressions in the roof of the Old Synagogue (*Altschul*) made by artillery fire during the Swedish siege of Prague in 1648 were left unrepaired to 'preserve as a memory on the sanctuary of the Lord'.[40] Yet these physical memorials were an unusual occurrence in the Jewish community, where unsettled status and an emphasis on the biblical past provided a vastly different context for how religious memory could be presented in the community. More often, they turned to songs to spread news between isolated religious communities throughout Ashkenaz – binding their temporary streets and soundscapes together in music. The *Shvedish lid* printed in Prague in 1649 described an event that took place in the ghetto streets the year before and served to commemorate its dead. It detailed an exploding canon ball that landed in the Jewish quarter and claimed the lives of nine people, identifying one Heni ben Judah Leib Gedalyes, 'a bridegroom' who, in the aftermath, had 'the appearance of a king/His brains spread out on the ground'.[41] The street allowed religious memory to accrue, be forgotten, memorialised or reinvented. Religious memory was often layered through different strategies – either as part of their history, as marked memorials or perhaps even recounted in song. In the time of Reformation, Counter-Reformation and religious wars, the ability of the street to become a contested site was particularly palpable.

As part of the urban fabric, streets provided stages, liminal spaces and powerful boundaries through which to display, celebrate, petition and negotiate the sacred. They allowed the city and its citizens to perform their morality – through processions, such as those welcoming

Saint Norbert, or atoning for sins in Venice, through everyday moral conduct and facades emblazoned with sacred images and texts. However, they were also vulnerable channels which might allow impurities and immorality to arise and to spread. As such, they called for detoxification. Processions might be instigated, and walls built, or openings closed to preserve a notion of purity. Religion did not just take place *in* the streets, but the spaces and edifices of the streets themselves allowed people to negotiate and navigate the cosmos and divine favour *through them*. The streets were a crucial part of the sacred anatomy of the city.

Religious practices

While authorities often attempted to construct the ideal moral city through its visual and material forms, the religious conduct of citizens was of equal concern. Practices were prescribed by authorities to create ideal cities that were favourable to God in Christian Europe: the participation in processions through streets, or the banning of certain blasphemous or impure activities, although correct behaviour did not always follow prescription. While authorities could try to control ideal behaviours, streets were inevitably also the setting for uncontrolled practices – dissent against authorities or individual or community attempts to engage the sacred in the city, often interacting with the ideals presented by the authorities. The intersection between religious practice and the street is here brought into sharper focus. What were the particular religious practices that took place in the street? How did the street shape certain religious practices? And, building on de Certeau, in what ways did religious practice produce the space of the street? Exploring this last question, we will turn to recent approaches that use the history of senses and the history of the body to illuminate early modern experience and examine what light they can shed on religious practices in the street.

To the first question, religious practices in the street were rich and diverse. Praying, preaching, processing, singing and church-going all mobilised the urban population. It is perhaps helpful to start with the layout of a typical early modern city as the physical environment for

these practices. The layout of the city was often determined by religious landmarks, which shaped daily practices of the laity. Across Europe, the parish provided the ground plan for the most important daily religious interaction in the community. The parish church was often at the centre of the community – a place of worship and the domain of the parish priest who tended to the daily requirements and life cycle needs (baptism, marriage, last rites) of his parishioners.[42]

Markets pitched up around the parish church. Civic and sacred bells provided the 'regular rhythms' of the early modern city's soundscape, calling people to 'prayer, meals, celebrations, councils, executions, and bed'.[43] Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore describe,

> The streets of London before the Great Fire of 1666 had been sites of
> profound ritual meaning. That long, broad artery of Cheapside and Poultry to the
> east, and Ludgate to the west tied the great cathedral of St Paul's into a network
> of routes through which the great and the good of early modern London
> processed; laying claim to the authority of church and state, while at the same
> time bringing the parishes and communities of the capital within a unified
> intellectual order.[44]

Such mappings were resistant to change. Even after the Great Fire provided the opportunity to start afresh, old neighbourhood configurations sprung from the ashes.[45] The community was knitted into these religious nodes and the physical buildings and streets could not be altered without dramatic consequences for the people living there and their daily lives.

In Catholic cities, confraternities often mapped onto distinctive neighbourhood communities based on devotional focus. Nicholas Eckstein's study of the district of the Green Dragon in Renaissance Florence showed how religion defined the neighbourhood.[46] A principal function of the lay confraternities of Sant'Agnese and San Frediano was to provide charitable assistance to the neighbourhood's poor. Confraternities' annual processions took distinctive routes through the city to display competitively their adorned statues of Jesus or the Virgin Mary. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Seville, glass eyes, wax tears and real hair were incorporated into the lifelike statues, and some were made to move.

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Figure 7.5 Procession of Jesus del Gran Poder, by Juan de Mesa (1583–1627), wooden statue, Seville, Spain, 1620

The sculptures had to provoke emotional reactions in the street setting. They were viewed from different perspectives and distances, and so these artistic details were paramount to their success and commission. The statues would be fixed to their mobile stages and members of the confraternity would carry the heavy constructions along the procession routes to solemn music, prayer and the smell of incense.[47] Community-based religious practice could define the character of religion in the street in certain neighbourhoods.

The transformation of religion across Europe could also change streetscapes. A dramatic example is in Reformation London, where the Dissolution of Monasteries between 1536 and 1540 caused spaces to be recast for new purposes. Archaeological examination reveals how neighbourhoods in St Bartholomew Smithfield and Austin Friars emerged from two respective monastic sites in the late sixteenth century. The churches were reused, but the stone monastic buildings were transformed into luxurious town houses for rich courtiers, and the large open spaces were infilled over time with new timber and brick housing into whole streets. Winchester Street and its houses emerged from the monastic garden at Austin Friars, and three parallel streets – Long Lane, Cloth Fair and Bartholomew Fair – arose from St Bartholomew's.[48] Religious practice specifically tied to the monastic institutions fell by the wayside, but the churches continued to draw people to them with a new kind of piety.

Religious persecution in this period across Europe similarly shaped the city's physical spaces. Protestant Huguenots escaping from France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries congregated in the neighbourhoods of Spitalfields and Soho in London. 'Stranger churches' sprung up to cater for the devotional and linguistic needs of the persecuted newcomers. The French Stranger church was established in Threadneedle Street and the Dutch Stranger church was established in Austin Friars (both in 1550), providing Calvinist preaching to refugees from

the continent. The print 'Noon' by William Hogarth (c. 1738) depicts a Huguenot congregation leaving *des Grecs* church in Soho in wigs and suits, moving with graceful gestures and upright postures to navigate the cobbled dirty streets, unlike the haggard couple kissing in the street beside them.

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Figure 7.6 *Noon: The Four Times of Day*, by William Hogarth (1697–1764), dated c. 1738, engraving, 48.8 × 40.2 cm

Source: Courtesy of the Met Museum, New York

The social and cultural distinctions of these foreigners were made in direct relation to their national and religious identity. Their different dress, manner, religion and language were on display *en masse* in the street as they went to and from church.[49]

Another significant aspect of the street's physicality that affected practices around it was how it acted as the 'outside' to interiors that could often be more easily protected. The margins, thresholds and boundaries that the street-house relationship produced were sites in need of particular religious protection. Conduct literature encouraged making the sign of the cross on leaving the house, and images and texts inscribed on thresholds aided and prompted such practices.[50] Moving across these borders attracted ritual and material practices aimed at supplicating divine intercession. In Italy, passing into the street from the house on one's death was marked in special architectural form. In Ascoli Piceno, *porta dei morti* (doorways of the dead) were small openings in the wall of a house also sometimes marked with a religious symbol especially designed for this purpose. Out of them, the dead, on a bier, foot-first would depart the house on the way to the church and cemetery.[51]

The streets were considered particularly vulnerable places open to the exigencies of daily life. Thousands of surviving ex-voto tablets depict earthquakes that shook their owners into the streets, jousting battles and fights taking place in public squares or alleyways, or children falling from windows onto the road below.[52] Street boundaries also became central to the careful

management of this vulnerable space. Building façades and porticos were a canvas on which to signal piety and negotiate with God. Certain inscriptions and objects might even act as talismans on thresholds to protect from plague or earthquake.[53] Mural inscriptions could provide a godly environment that contributed to the protection of urban space. An inscription on the Palazzo Antici of 1514–18 on the main street in Recanati prompted passers-by to reflect on their surroundings: 'The divinity of the Lord is a fountain of all light: the world and everything that is in it'.[54] Symbols, such as the sacred monogram IHS and a sunburst over a door or on the wall, might also reference devotional affinities.[55] In Treviso (known as *urbs picta* for its extensive murals), religious frescos and reliefs of the Madonna and Child, and saints were incorporated into porticos confronting pedestrians below, and acting apotropaically to protect the home.[56] Onlookers from the street may have reflected on such textual and visual statements as they passed by. The walls of houses and churches that bordered the street were an interface that was permeable, transient and dialogic. They produced a dynamic space into and out of domestic devotion and consecrated church.

Religious practice was interwoven with the physical structure of the city. Churches, synagogues, mosques, monasteries, convents, brotherhoods and confraternities, and the to-ing and fro-ing that they gave rise to characterised the daily rhythm of many cities. The call from religious authorities of all faiths to the devout to pray, attend religious services and celebrations pulsed bodies through the streets at specific times of day.[57] The street, however, was not just a channel between the home and church but could become an integral part of devotional practice. Preaching (either condoned or illicit) might take place in the streets.[58] Sermons at St Paul's Cross in London drew an audience of up to 6,000 people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[Insert 15032-5662-PII-007-Figure-007 Here]

Figure 7.7 *Bishop King Preaching at Paul's Cross before King James I*, by John Gipkin, dated 1616, oil on panel, 127 × 101.6 cm

John N. Wall's 'The Virtual Paul's Cross Project' has transformed analysis of John Donne's sermons preached outside St Paul's in London from being read as 'sermon-as-text' to 'sermon-as-event'. Digital recreation allows the researcher to examine the sermon as it would have been performed and as it was experienced by the thousands of public listeners in context. Virtual acoustic recreation revealed that the spoken sermon would have been audible anywhere in the square as long as the audience was quiet and that improvisation *in situ*, responding to the sonic environment, would have enriched the sermons at the moment of their performance.[59]

In daily life the sound of religious activity could permeate the streetscape. Niall Atkinson has shown how civic and sacred bells set a daily rhythm in Florence. Bells were the loudest sound any early modern person would have heard. They signalled the beginning and end of the day, called people to prayer, meals, public celebrations and executions. By bringing urban communities together in or dispersing them from certain spaces at certain times, 'they choreographed the theatres of urban life'.[60] Reflective of this, in Istanbul, Nina Ergin has noted how mosques were turned 'into stages for the melodic rendition of the Qur'an, or, one might say, sound boxes resonating the holy text'.[61] The Sülemaniye Mosque, built in 1548–59, was encircled by a densely populated area of the city and the almost constant daily recitations of thousands of prayers, creeds and hundreds of sections of the Qur'an would have resonated through the surrounding areas. Street and mosque interacted together during these sonic events.[62] The prayer call resounding from the minarets five times a day would have bound the Muslim community of the city together, both within small territorial units associated with the different mosques, and also at large as sound and time coalesced across communities in the city and beyond.[63] While the visual presence of the domed towers and stratospheric minarets of the mosques dominated sightlines in the streets and squares, it was the sonic effect of the mosque and its resonant architecture that brought about a sense of united religious identity.[64]

The practice of illicit faiths in the city is normally discussed in the context of what happened behind closed doors in the 'privacy' of the interior. Yet it was sometimes also evident in the streets. The case of the 'Fatall Vesper' in Blackfriars, London in 1623 provides an oblique insight into this issue. On Sunday 26 October, 300 people had gathered in a makeshift chapel to hear the Jesuit preacher Robert Drury. The floor collapsed in the middle of the sermon and over 90 people died.[65] The 300 strong crowd flocking through the streets to attend the sermon must have been obvious to passers-by, and the noise from within the garret where the sermon took place must have aroused suspicion. Crowds of onlookers quickly attended the scene of the disaster blocking the street outside while authorities scrambled to try to save the remaining victims, many of whom were badly maimed. In the Ottoman Empire, where the religious practices of Christians and Jews were heavily restricted, Eastern Christians altered many of their normal practices. As John-Paul Ghobrial notes, Eastern Christians utilised

> wooden clappers instead of bells, churches that folded themselves quietly into the urban architecture, festivals carried out only after extensive negotiation with local authorities and, most importantly perhaps, accommodation to the unpredictable hostility that risked showing its face at particular moments of worship, for example during processions, pilgrimages and other ceremonies and rituals.[66]

There was intense negotiation of religious sensibilities in societies host to plural faiths.

As this section has so far shown, religious practice in the streets could take many forms. Accounts of events and daily life can be illuminating for such an enquiry. However, historians of religion have begun to examine early modern religious experience by paying attention to the senses and material and visual evidence. We might similarly try to understand the sensory, bodily, physical and psychological experiences of religion in the streets. How did streets influence the bodily, emotional and material experience of religion? And reflexively, how did religion shape early modern women and men's experience of the streets? David Karmon and Christy Anderson have proposed reimagining the city through body and senses, drawing on the

observation of the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa; 'I confront the city with my body . . . and the city exists through my embodied experience'.[67] The final part of this section examines how such an approach might be applied to religion in the streets in the early modern period.

Two new areas of research, which show the potential for understanding the religious conditioning of street experiences, are in examinations of the scentscape and of dress. Smells were used by the church to define and augment sacred spaces. Scentscapes might also heighten memories and prompt religious comportment.[68] The language of flowers had been well-developed since medieval times. Dried myrrh at Christmas prompted reflection on the dead and Christ's birth. Dried bergamot at Lent was made into incense to calm anger and control emotions tied to this part of the liturgical calendar.[69] Such smells moved through the urban landscape. As Michel de Montaigne noted in his *Essais*,

> I have often noticed that [scents] cause changes in me, and act on my
> spirits according to their qualities; which make me agree with the theory that the
> introduction of incense and perfume into churches, so ancient and widespread a
> practice among all nations and religions, was for the purpose of raising our spirits,
> and of exciting and purifying our senses, the better to fit us for contemplation.[70]

Smells could also be dangerous. In sixteenth-century Toledo, Spain, the smell of olive oil and aubergines emanating from a house could attract accusations of being a Jew. Olive oil would be used in cooking to avoid bacon fat or lard, and aubergines might replace pork meat, so as to avoid non-Kosher foods.[71] The porous home, open windows and doors allowed such religiously incriminating odours to seep onto the street for accusers to alight upon.

Bodily comportment also contributed to the experience of the street. What one wore was inevitably central to this. Rosaries and devotional jewellery were essential for many going into the street. Robert Davis compares old women in Venice 'mumbling their beads' to the immoral noblewomen that they propped up, tottering about Venice's uneven stone lanes and humped-backed bridges wearing highly fashionable *zoccoli* (platform clogs about nine inches high or more).

[Insert 15032-5662-PII-007-Figure-008 Here]

Figure 7.8 Chopines, silk and metal, Italy, 1550–1650

Source: Courtesy of the Met Museum, New York

Attire often indicated religious and moral identity.[72] In Jerusalem, the Capuchin missionary Michel Febvre commented on the religious practice of Christian women in the city, noting that 'it would be said that they were only coming to church to show off their beauty, and ultimately in hopes of getting married'.[73] He decried that going to church was a form of courtship, rather than a form of worship for many women. Paying more attention to the material qualities of clothing and jewellery may further deepen our understanding of such practices. In Prague, prayer beads in burgher inventories indicate the noises that went with religious identity – for example the jingling beads of one Adam Šmukyc threaded with 13 Hungarian ducats in 1600.[74] Perhaps worn on special festive occasions, such a noisy item would certainly have drawn attention to himself and his investment in pious display.

For many, patronage of permanent markers and elaborate memorials were beyond financial means, but jewellery offered an everyday way to carry religion and divine protection around the streets. These portable items were an affordable strategy for protection in a space where misfortune may strike at any time. Extant items, inventories and pawn records attest to the widespread ownership of devotional jewellery, amulets and prayer beads.[75] The apotropaic function of such items and their use for protection as one stepped into the street is portrayed in paintings such as Gentile Bellini's *Miracle of the True Cross at the Bridge of St Lorenzo* (c. 1500) or the depiction of Neapolitan women wearing rosaries in Cesare Vecellio's costume book, *De gli habiti antichi et moderni* (1590).[76] The need to keep the sacred close and visible through such objects indicates that whilst the ideal city acted as sacred cosmos, the real city was a far more dangerous environment for the urban dweller. Citizens built up numerous strategies to sacralise street space through their bodies (carrying objects, or processing), or through contact with permanent or mobile sacred images and objects.

Conclusion

A late eighteenth-century travel account of Prague notes that 'In every part of the city people are seen kneeling before statues. . . . [Travellers] will marvel at the piety of the people here, specifically at the burning passion they display before the saints of the bridge'.[77] The comment reveals the difference in behaviour of these citizens from Protestants who disdained the veneration of saints. Between 1659 and 1714, the iconic 'Charles Bridge' over the River Vltava in Prague was lined with 28 statues of saints, commissioned by the city's religious orders, wealthy individuals and urban authorities.[78] The image of men and women conditioned instinctively to kneel in reverence before a saintly statue highlights the increasing divergence of religious experience in the streets among those of different faiths across Europe at the end of the early modern period. The establishment of particular confessional 'repertoires' throughout this period affected the 'sensory, emotional, and bodily experience' of individuals.[79] The project to make Prague an ideal Catholic city appears to have finally been successful 150 years after Saint Norbert's body was brought into the city by urban authorities keen to instil a Catholic identity in its citizens.

It is evident that the materiality of the street – both the physical street and the objects within it – were integral to the everyday religious experiences of urban dwellers.[80] The street was a physical stage for quotidian religious practices. Urban religious communities and memories were solidified in the layout of streets centred on parish churches and providing views of city cathedrals. Religious community memories might be materialised in architectural accretions providing memorials that would be layered with meanings over time.[81] As in between spaces, conduits, borders and 'the outside', streets provided a variety of religious physical and symbolic functions. Beyond the physicality of the conduit itself, objects (both fixed and mobile) in the street could also augment, control and negotiate the sacred.

Analysis of bodily and sensory interaction with the street provides another approach that has advanced our understanding of how religious experience was shaped by the street, and,

conversely, how the street was shaped by the religious practices that took place within it. The pull of a sacred spectacle, such as Saint Norbert's translation, jostling for a view of a religious procession in the crowd, the somatic experience of being near an imposing church or Marian column or even the passive everyday erasure of a once sacred site contributed to everyday early modern religious experiences in the city. Research on religious clothing, or how those of different faiths navigated the streets (sometimes the same street) in a variety of ways, reveals that the experience of the street was furthermore dependent on different religious bodily practices.

Through material, bodily and sensory approaches, the street is cast as a dynamic space, that shaped not only the presentation of religious ideals in the city, but also religious transformations and individual religious experiences. How ideals and practices interacted is key to future studies of religion in the street. Owing to the paucity of first-hand accounts of such everyday experiences, employing new methodologies such as digital reconstruction is essential to this endeavour.

Notes

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