CHURCH DESIGN IN COUNTER REFORMATION VENICE

BY

FAITH CHARLOTTE TREND

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Department of Art History, Curating and Visual Studies
School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music
College of Arts and Law
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VOLUME ONE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

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TO MICHAEL AND JILL TREND

&

PATRICIA CHARLOTTE TREND

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how Venice's church architecture was shaped by the Counter Reformation between 1550-1700. Overall, it demonstrates that Venice, despite her well known disputes with the papacy, did embrace the process of reform with far more commitment than has previously been assumed. It provides a snapshot of the situation with four pertinent case studies representing the broad spectrum of Venice's churches. Chapter One focuses on San Nicolò di Lido, a church that was part of the proactive Cassinese Congregation. The church was rebuilt entirely and represents an almost ideal response to the Counter Reformation. Chapter Two looks at the rebuilt parish church of San Moisè and it tackles the compromises that inevitably came with many competing factors. Chapters Three and Four look at how older churches were renewed and retrofitted with new features, adapting their existing structures to cater for new requirements as stipulated by the Council of Trent decrees or pamphlets such as Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones*. Chapter Three hones in on Santo Stefano, a large monastic Gothic church, while Chapter Four looks at the considerably smaller Byzantine parish church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. This thesis highlights many similarities between the four buildings (and others in Venice), which exemplify key facets of the reform movement and the pluralistic and complex challenges faced by each church.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

> *I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of images one sets out, not knowing who receives them… You must not believe the search for it can stop.*[1]
>
> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities,* 1972

In Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* the famous Venetian adventurer, Marco Polo, describes fifty-five cities encountered on his journeys across the globe to the ageing emperor, Kublai Khan. As Marco Polo's tales progress it becomes increasingly clear that the explorer is actually talking about the different facets to be found in just one city – the city of Venice – which here represents the pinnacle of perfection.[2] Calvino's *Invisible Cities,* as suggested by the quote above, produces a picture of a unique, 'perfect' city, and it evokes a sense of 'otherness': a quality that the Venetians themselves encouraged through their writing, art, architecture and sculpture. The city is littered with allusions to Venice's mythical, supposedly divine origins, her special, even unique status as a place unlike any other. This so-called 'myth of Venice' is one that the Venetians conceived in the early Renaissance and developed with much success throughout the following centuries. Calvino, writing in 1972, captures its essence very clearly in *Invisible Cities*. While we now clearly see the 'myth of Venice' for what it truly is, as a city built on a lagoon, Venice is still seen as being rather isolated – both physically and metaphorically – and this has shaped our view of the city.

One of the areas most affected by this vision of Venice is the way in which we view the city's architecture, in particular, in response to the Counter Reformation. By the mid-sixteenth century, great changes were afoot in the Catholic Church through the movement most commonly known as the Counter Reformation and while this term suggests that the Catholic Church was providing a *reactionary* response to the Reformation, the Church was, in fact, also very *proactive* and these reforms were the result of centuries of slow-burning discussion, arguably brought to a head in response to the actions of Luther, Calvin and other Protestant reformers.[3] This culminated in the Council

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[1] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver, London: Penguin Random House, 1972, 147.
[2] 'Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice…. To distinguish the other cities' qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it is Venice.' Ibid, 78.
[3] Despite the problems with the term 'Counter Reformation' it was decided that, among other phrases such as 'Catholic Reformation', Counter Reformation was more commonly known and understood. For more on the debates surrounding the term see: David Bagchi and David Steinmetz, eds., *The Cambridge Companion*

of Trent which was held, with much stopping and starting, over a period of nearly twenty years, between 1545 and 1563, and provided the Church with new decrees and doctrines to follow.[4] These new guidelines for Church governance cemented the Catholic Church's opinion on all sorts of spiritual matters. Many of the doctrines had either direct or indirect implications for ecclesiastic architecture, in particular, the thirteenth session confirming the Church's stance on the Eucharist and the doctrine of transubstantiation which was responsible for the growth and evolution of Chapels of the Sacrament (already a Venetian phenomenon) and the twenty-fifth session 'On the invocation, veneration, and relics, of saints, and on sacred images'.[5] On the whole, architects looked to step away from the dark, cluttered churches, deliberately imbued with mysticism and opaqueness, which typified the Gothic period and moved towards letting in the light, both literally and metaphorically. This meant opening vast windows that shone light on white stone and marble interiors. It meant making the liturgy more comprehensible, with Mass (now more regularly held and more regularly attended) taking place at more visible and accessible high altars, no longer blocked from view by choirs or altarpieces. Above all, the aim was to make the rituals more transparent, both through improving the liturgy and through the laity's access to these rituals. There is no doubt that lay involvement was front and centre of such reforms.

It is important to note that such discussions and changes started taking place long before the Council of Trent and continued long afterwards. Venice was not immune to these discussions but the city's full involvement in the Counter Reformation, and particularly the effect it had on Venice's architecture, has not been fully understood and appreciated. This thesis addresses this and looks specifically at Venetian architecture through the lens of the Counter Reformation. It looks at four church case studies, these being San Nicolò di Lido, San Moisè, Santo Stefano and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli – representing the range of newly built, renovated, monastic and parish churches – which provide a snapshot of Venice's overall response to the Church's reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The reality is full of compromises, unsurprising, given the pluralistic, complex nature of the situation, but throughout there is a clear engagement, from all types of

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to Reformation Theology, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; David Martin Luebke, ed., *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, Malden: Blackwell, 1999; John W. O'Malley, *Catholicism in Early Modern History: A Guide to Research*, St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1988.

[4] James Waterworth, ed. & trans., *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, London: Dolman, 1848.

[5] Ibid, 75-84, 233-236.

churches, with the reform movement and many dramatic, innovative reforms take shape in Venetian church architecture. Some of these developments follow a distinctively Venetian tradition but most are broadly in line with the architectural response to the Counter Reformation in other parts of Italy. Thus far, there have been no in-depth studies looking into Venice's architectural response to the Counter Reformation and this thesis demonstrates that there is scope for much more to be done in this area.

Given the dearth of literature in this area, this thesis aims to provide a starting point to open up the field for further research to complement and add to this work in due course. It is also the case that while Venice has a number of very famous and thoroughly researched churches, many of the city's ecclesiastic buildings are in need of more research before their contribution to any particular period can be fully ascertained. Thus the aims and research questions of this thesis are two-fold. Firstly, it aims to produce the first thorough contribution to our understanding of the impact of the Counter Reformation on Venice's church architecture by looking at the situation from the perspective of four typical Venetian churches. The thesis chooses quite deliberately to avoid using churches built by the new reforming orders as case studies, although they are mentioned regularly throughout the text. This is because their histories are complicated and would detract from the intentions of this thesis which are to establish the typical patterns of reform in Venice. The Jesuits, for example, having been removed from Venice in 1606, built their extant church in Venice significantly later than many of the others (1715-30), while the Theatines started building their church early but also finished some of its key features quite late (1590-1714), and the arrival of the Somascan Fathers in the 1630s was intertwined with the Venetian government's desire for a new devotional church praising God for ridding Venice of its latest virulent plague. Work is certainly needed on the churches built by the newer reforming orders in Venice because the study of the Counter Reformation in Venice will not be complete without analysing their input.

This thesis aims instead to highlight the majority of Venice's already extant monastic and parish communities and the chosen case studies – on the churches of San Nicolò di Lido, San Moisè, Santo Stefano and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli – are churches that make some of the richest contributions to our understanding of the Counter Reformation in Venice. This thesis demonstrates how significant and wide reaching the reforms made to churches were in this time and the cohesiveness and diversity in those responses. With

the firm grounding that this thesis provides, further studies could look at churches with more complexities: the churches of the new reforming orders, the nunneries and votive churches.

Of these four churches that make up the focus of the thesis a number of questions are asked. Key among them is to determine exactly what were the changes that took place and what can we establish of the motivations behind those changes. It is also important to understand whether there a difference between the approaches of the monastic and parish communities and to ascertain how much either the monastic order or Venice's patriarch influenced the changes and what other voices were involved. Comparisons can be drawn with many churches throughout Venice and as such, the thesis will conclude by drawing some provisional conclusions on Venice's contribution to the Counter Reformation.

Since many of the chosen case studies are churches that have not been thoroughly researched, to answer many of the above questions, it is necessary to include a history of each church to establish the context for the changes that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus, the second aim of the thesis is to develop our understanding of some of Venice's lesser-known churches. The thesis does this by collating the available archival, secondary and visual sources of each of the four churches within the study, and looking in-depth at their histories, providing, in some cases for the first time, a clear, up-to-date understanding of those histories as well as the first comprehensive photographic catalogue (both nineteenth and early twentieth century ones and the author's own contemporary photographs).[6] Not only is this of use for future historians of the Counter Reformation but also for future academics wishing to produce their own research into these churches.

It is also important to highlight that this thesis takes an unusual and distinct approach to the topic. It does not focus exclusively on the architecture of the buildings, instead, it looks at those buildings as ensembles tackling the furnishings and the paintings as well to provide a more complete picture of each building as a whole. It acknowledges that each church is a multi-faceted building and should be approached in an all-encompassing way.

[6] Establishing a firm history and providing a photographic corpus is particularly important for the churches of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, San Moisè, and to an extent, San Nicolò di Lido.

Reform of the Catholic Church was a long process and arguably had no clear start or end point. However, to provide clarity and structure to this thesis, the majority of this study concentrates on the time between 1550-1700. The 1550s were when the parish priests at the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli began their renovation efforts - with discussions taking place about renovating their Chapel of the Sacrament. Much of the impetus for reform in these churches took place after the Apostolic Visitation of 1581 when the majority of Venice's churches were visited. Thus, it is the early seventeenth century during which we see the majority of changes happening. By 1700 the bulk of the rebuilding and renovating had occurred, and priorities were quite clearly starting to shift; however, this thesis will look at a few changes that took place after 1700, focussing in particular on the installation of altarpieces in Santo Stefano and San Moisè. Despite the fact that these new altars and altarpieces were built after the main focal period for this study, these changes were part of the initial renovation or rebuilding plans for each of these churches so it would be remiss to exclude any which were not concluded by 1700. There are some church features, such as the commissioning of new confessionals, which this thesis does not cover, since there is limited and uneven information about them pertaining to these specific churches.

To situate the findings of this thesis, the Introduction will provide an overview of our current understandings of Venice's religious attitudes and religious architecture during the period of the Counter Reformation. It then elaborates on the intended structure of the thesis, explaining the justification for the case studies, before they are embarked upon individually in the four chapters.

CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE IN VENICE

VENICE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ROME

Understanding Venice's relationship with the wider Catholic Church is essential for situating the reforms to the city's church architecture. To an extent, the Venetians made a distinct separation between their Church and the Roman Church. In 1483, Bernardo Giustiniani told Venetian cardinals 'that Venice was their true parent and the Church only a step-mother.'[7] Indeed, this divergence was not only understood by the Venetians. Pope Pius II argued in his memoirs that the Church was completely neglected because the Venetians cared too much about the needs of the state:

> They wish to appear Christian before the world, but in reality they never think of God and, except for the state, which they regard as a deity, they hold nothing sacred, nothing holy. To a Venetian that is just which is for the good of the state; that is pious which increased the empire… What the senate approves is holy even though it is opposed to the Gospel.[8]

Pius's condemnation was perhaps overly harsh but it was true that the republican government of Venice was frowned upon by the Church because it was the antithesis of the medieval concept of the *respublica christiana* which sought the unification of all Catholics under one body, where every city state and their governments were all ultimately subject to the Catholic Church.[9] However, the notion of the animosity that was felt between Rome and Venice was reinforced and strengthened by our problematic interpretations of key events such as the Apostolic Visitation and the interdict of 1606. Research in recent years has shed new light on the relationship between Venice and Rome, allowing us finally to understand the complexities of the situation in greater detail.

For Paolo Prodi, the most contentious episode between Venice and Rome was the 1581 Apostolic Visitation.[21] One of the key stipulations of the Council of Trent was that pastoral visits should be undertaken throughout each Catholic diocese at the very least by

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[7] This proclamation comes from Bernardo Giustiniani's "Responsio ad sacrum collegium" (28 May 1483), *Orationes*. Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice & Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996, 174.
[8] Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1970, 112.
[9] William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, 9.
[21] Paolo Prodi, 'The Structure and Organization of the church in Renaissance Venice: suggestions for research,' in *Renaissance Venice*, edited by John Hale, London: Faber and Faber, 1973, 424.

the diocesan bishop and potentially by others as well. Pope Gregory XIII set the example by starting in 1573 to send bishops throughout the papal dioceses and their neighbours.[22] These bishops were to identify any religious abuse and instruct the local clergy in how to correct it. Cardinal Carlo Borromeo continued this pattern when he was allowed to move from Rome, after his uncle's death, to his archbishopric in Milan and he oversaw visitations throughout much of northern Italy. It was Borromeo who advised the pope that Venice and the dominions of the city should be visited. The cardinal paid a short visit to the city in February of 1580 and while he was impressed by the Venetians' piety, he became more convinced that Venice required a visitation from Rome.[23] In his written observations, Borromeo talked of his belief in the 'many fruitful outputs that could result in a short space of time' as a result of such a visitation.[24] The Venetians were displeased with the idea of an official visitation and various negotiations were undertaken between Venice and Rome in an attempt to avoid it.[25] The Venetians argued that they did not need such a visitation as they already carried out their own pastoral inspections and to them this was an example of Rome attempting to gain control over what they saw as a temporal – and therefore Venetian – aspect of governance that they felt they were already carrying out with success.[26]

However, one of Venice's more pressing issues with the idea of an Apostolic Visitation was the impact that it would have on their nunneries. The nunneries of Venice were known for their disregard of the standards expected – especially after the Council of Trent.[27] At the time it was popular for noble families to give daughters to the conventual houses to avoid paying the more expensive wedding dowries. If the nunneries were inspected and were found to be failing in their duties, this could lead to humiliation for those families who had daughters within them and would prevent the nobility from

[22] Silvio Tramontin, 'La visita apostolica del 1581 a Venezia,' in Studi Veneziani 9, (1967), 453.
[23] Ibid, 455.
[24] The original Italian is: 'molti frutti che in breve spatio di tempo ne possono risultare.' Aldo Stella, 'I rapport di San Carlo Borromeo con Venezia,' in *San Carlo e il Suo Tempo: Atti del convegno internazionale nel IV centenario della morte,* Rome, 1986, vol. II, 727.
[25] Silvio Tramontin describes the discussions in more detail. Tramontin, 'La visita apostolica del 1581 a Venezia,' 453-533.
[26] Ibid, 461.
[27] This was not the case in all the nunneries as Benjamin Paul documents in his study of the nuns at Santi Cosma e Damiano. The nunnery was founded by Marina Celsi in 1481. Celsi was appalled by the standards in other convents so started her own movement in accordance with a strict adherence to Benedictine principles. Paul looks in great detail at their religious background as one of the earliest promulgators of monastic reform in the fifteenth century and in particular the new art that they commissioned during the Counter Reformation period. Paul, *Nuns and Reform Art in Early Modern Venice: The Architecture of Santi Cosma e Damiano and its Decoration from Tintoretto to Tiepolo*, Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2012.

seeing a religious life as a beneficial option for their daughters.[28] As Marie-Louise Lillywhite observed in her examination of Venetian altarpieces of the Counter Reformation, this was a demonstration of how Venice saw her priorities - calming the concerns of the nobility came above enacting the newly promulgated reform measures.[29] Eventually a compromise was reached that meant the convents would not be inspected during the visit and that the patriarch would inspect them instead. Once this was agreed, the visit was undertaken by Agostino Valier, the Bishop of Verona, and the papal nuncio Lorenzo Campeggio, and it covered seventy-one parish churches, thirty-one monasteries and three priories.[30] The following reports compiled detailed insights into the structure of the parishes, including areas of inadequacy and recommendations for their improvement.

The decoration and functionality of the churches were a focus of the visitation because incorrect biblical subject matter or secular content in works of art, and inappropriate reliquaries were thought to be misleading to the general population and might stimulate heresy. The physical space was inspected to make sure that it made the Mass and the Eucharist fully accessible to the laity.[31] Despite their initial reservations, the Venetians took on board many of the recommendations made by the visitation showing that they did respect the reforms that were being enacted by the Church. For many of the city's churches, the Apostolic Visitation was a significant catalyst for the renovation or rebuilding of their fabric.

The true impact of the Apostolic Visitation on the churches of Venice will be demonstrated throughout this thesis since material from the visit is relevant for the majority of the case studies. As we shall see, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was particularly prompt in responding to the issues raised by the Apostolic Visitation and had a very active local community supporting the changes. At Santo Stefano despite the Augustinians acknowledging and accepting the problems, especially regarding the sacrilegious position of two altars on the *controfacciata* (the counter or internal façade), which forced the celebrant to turn their back to the high altar, it took them significantly longer to make the necessary changes. However, in each situation the guidance from the

[28] Tramontin, 'La visita apostolica del 1581 a Venezia,' 466.
[29] Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610: San Giacomo dall'Orio, Santa Maria dell'Umiltà, the Redentore and San Giorgio Maggiore', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2013, 30.
[30] Paola Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese Veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581. Il 'barco' di Santa Maria della Carità,' *Arte Veneta* 59, (2003), 39.
[31] Ibid, 39.

Apostolic Visitation was, on the whole, followed by the churches and followed up on by the Venetian Patriarch.

Coming after the Apostolic Visitation, the episode known as the Venetian Interdict, enacted by the Catholic Church in 1606, was seen for a long time as the culmination of an increasingly tense relationship between Venice and the papacy over the course of the sixteenth century.[32] This is the view of William Bouwsma, who, like many others before him, was fascinated with the character of Paolo Sarpi, the Venetian historian and patrician who believed that the state should be clearly split from the Church and who therefore strongly supported the ideology of Venice's republican government.[33] Sarpi's prominent role in the interdict conflict led Bouwsma, Gaetano Cozzi and others to the impression that all Venetians felt similarly to the vocal Sarpi, who was seen as the 'quintessential Venetian'.[34] However, as James Grubb explains, our understanding of the circumstances leading up to the interdict changed as historians in the last few decades of the twentieth century began to gain a clearer picture of Sarpi's character and motivations which suggest that his participation in the conflict was not as integral as previously thought.[35]

It was also concluded that the generational divide within the patriciate between the so-called *vecchi* and the *giovani* (of which Sarpi was one) on this matter, was again, not as black and white as formerly believed. The *vecchi* were previously seen as the old guard with conservative views connecting them to the Roman Church, whereas the *giovani* were understood to be fully supportive of 'a cleansed and thoroughly Venetian church,' desiring 'an ecclesiastical independence of Counter-Reformation Rome'.[36] However, it is now argued that the two groups were not as clearly distinct as previously thought and their views, on the whole, were not so polarised.[37] There was instead much unity between Rome and Venice, in particular on the subject of the enactment of the decrees from the

[32] The most pressing reason for calling the interdict was that the Venetians were refusing to change their time-honoured rules relating to the control of Catholic clergy and were trying two arrested clerics in the civil courts rather than handing them over to the Church, which was procedure elsewhere. The incident is a clear example of the disparity between what the Venetians thought were State matters and what the papacy thought were Church matters.
[33] Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation*, 339-482.
[34] James S. Grubb, 'When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography,' *The Journal of Modern History* 58, no. 1 (March 1986), 55.
[35] Ibid, 54-55.
[36] Ibid, 54.
[37] Ibid, 55-57.

Council of Trent.[38] The problem, according to Grubb, was that historians had assumed that the Interdict controversy was symptomatic of Venice's distrust of the Catholic Church and its proclamations regarding the Counter Reformation.[39] We now appreciate that the Venetians were vocal participants at the Council of Trent and were among the first to enact its decrees.[40] The concerns of the interdict can instead be understood less as the result of opposing ideologies and more as a matter of slightly differing legislative issues.[41] The contentions of older historians who saw this episode as a significant one in Venice and Rome's troubled relationship, when placed in comparison to the actual facts of the matter, is, Grubb warns, the outcome of using myths – in this case the myth of Venice – as part of historical writing.[42] Of course, this does not mean that Venice and Rome were actually in perfect accord. The Venetians undoubtedly took strong issue to what they perceived to be Roman interference in the way that they ran the Church in Venice as the Interdict showed, but despite disputes, these were often superficial, as in the case of the Apostolic Visitation where one of the most pressing issues, was not the Church's interference with Venetian church governance, but more the effect it would have on the city's nunneries and as such, the previously generous relationship between the patricians and the nunneries.

'HERETICS' IN VENICE

It has become increasingly clear in recent years, from the scholarship documented above, that the relationship between Venice and Rome was less fragile and more collaborative than previously assumed. At the same time, there were, understandably, groups of people in Venice who did take issue with the Catholic Church as headed by Rome and who did not support the decrees from the Council of Trent. These people were often labelled with the term 'heretic' – a catchall word that has been used both during the sixteenth century and by academics since to demonstrate that Venice was a hotbed of protestant heretic activity, thus strengthening the claim that Venice was particularly at odds with the Roman Catholic Church. Yet under this banner were also included those who actually felt that the Church's reforms were not going far enough and that more needed to be done, as well as those who felt that reforms should combine Catholic and Protestant ideas to create a unified Church once more. So while Venice was indeed the site of much

[38] Grubb, 'When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography,' 57.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid, 58.
[42] Ibid, 59.

conversation about religion and Protestant ideas were shared, many of these debates were actually in support of the Catholic Church and in pushing the reforms further.

As the nexus between the mainland of northern Europe and the islands of the Mediterranean and the lands to the East, Venice was a hub for travellers and therefore a natural melting pot of people from all religious persuasions. In particular, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi was known to be the frequent base of a number of self-confessed Lutherans.[43] The city was also famed for her printing industry and the controversial evangelical text the *Beneficio di Cristo* was said to have sold over 40,000 copies in Venice.[44] For the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, Venice was known throughout Europe as a city where so-called heretical ideas could be discussed and where even alternative religious ceremonies could be held – albeit in secret. Indeed there were many – such as the prominent Catholic monk turned Protestant reformer Bernardino Ochino - who considered that if the Reformation were to arrive in Italy, Venice would be 'the door' that it came through.[45] So, given Venice's trading function and her reputation for leniency, the development of a fruitful Protestant movement in Venice was an understandable and rather immediate concern for the Catholic Church.

However, as touched on above, and observed in detail by John J. Martin, those perceived as heretics in Venice were not necessarily just those with Protestant leanings, but also anyone whose interests did not fully cohere with the reforming vision of Rome or the views of the Venetian state.[46] This included those from the Italian evangelism movement who typically remained part of the Catholic Church but wanted to see the Church adopt some of Luther's teachings, in particular, the notion of salvation by faith alone (*sola fide*), and as a result of their support of such teachings, they were seen as heretics by the Church.[47] Such movements would have been quietly prevalent throughout Italy,[48] but it was in Venice where they were perceived as being more publically open with their

[43] John J. Martin, 'Salvation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Popular Evangelism in a Renaissance City,' *The Journal of Modern History* 60, no. 2 (June 1988): 206.
[44] Ibid, 218.
[45] Ibid, 205.
[46] John J. Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 9.
[47] Martin, 'Salvation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Venice', 208.
[48] This includes Rome – Michelangelo and his circle which included Vittoria Colonna, were all greatly affected by the evangelical movement and who were all believed to have read the *Beneficio di Cristo.* Alexander Nagel, 'Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna,' *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (Dec. 1997), 647-668.

opinions. Indeed, people like the controversial Bishop Pier Paolo Vergerio flocked to Venice to preach sermons to the multitudes who would listen.[49] Previous scholarship was of the opinion that groups such as the evangelism movement were the realm of wealthy, well-educated patricians, but Martin's research has demonstrated that evangelism reached all facets of Venetian society, in particular, those from the professional classes and those with skilled trades such as lawyers, doctors, jewellers and silk weavers. [50] The attraction of the movement for both the rich and poor of society suggests that 'the traditional institutions of Catholicism were no longer capable of meeting the religious needs of many Italians.'[51]

It is clear that many in Venice took issue with how the Catholic Church was presenting itself and that, for some, the reforms stimulated by the Council of Trent were not enough. Indeed, it is compelling to consider how popular the notion was of combining aspects of both Catholicism and Protestantism. It suggests that while those at the top of the Catholic Church and the Protestant movement saw the two religions as irrevocably split, many of the ordinary people – from the lowest to the highest classes – wanted something in between. At the same time, there were some, typically from the patriciate, who thought that the Church in Venice was already working satisfactorily and there was no need for reform at all.[52] Thus, discussion of religion in Venice was extremely varied and participated in by areas of society, understandably so because religion impacted all areas of life, and the changes occurring in the Church were tumultuous and reverberations were throughout every community in Europe.

Scholarly fascination with the division between the higher realms of the Church has not, until recently, taken into account the needs and conditions of local environments, and how ordinary people were being impacted by the splits and divisions taking place within

[49] Martin, 'Salvation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Venice', 213.
[50] Martin argues that this overrepresentation of professionals and skilled craftsmen had much to do with the social changes that were occurring in Venice during the sixteenth century. There was rapid growth in manufacturing which strengthened the position of many of the aforementioned groups who, as a result, understandably gained an appreciation for the idea of religious autonomy that was so promoted by the Protestants. The other change was the withdrawal of the aristocracy from any sort of trade or commerce and the repositioning of their status with their country villas on the mainland, harking back to Castiglione's notion of the ideal courtly life, which in turn widened the gap between the aristocracy and the professionals and skilled craftsmen below them. As society became more hierarchical, such groups turned to evangelism because it offered them an egalitarian outlook and a direct relationship with God. Ibid, 221-227.
[51] Ibid, 214.
[52] Ibid, 233.

the Church. During the 1990s a number of studies appeared which focused on local rather than broad responses to the Reformation and Counter Reformation. These analyses demonstrated that the process of reform was frequently a conversation between the local laity and clergy, taking into account their area's specific circumstances, rather than a directive from on high.[53] Such conversations often blurred the lines between what was perceived further up in the Church hierarchy to be strictly Catholic or strictly Protestant doctrine and structure, sometimes even with old superstitious traditions from popular religion being kept so as to avoid local outcry.[54] So the conversations taking place in Venice were not so different to those taking place throughout the Catholic world in response to the Church's proposed reforms. Yet in Venice, scholars have been fascinated with the more polarised ends of the scale, when such views would have been prevalent as well elsewhere but have been given less attention. Once again, this argument has strengthened the notion that Venice was particularly against the Church's reforms as a result of her dogged determination to maintain her independent status and distinction from the rest of the Church.

Indeed, while Rome and Milan were great bastions of Catholicism – Rome being the heart of the Church and the home of the Pope, and Milan being the dominion of the staunch reformer Carlo Borromeo - in Venice the whisperings of discontent were louder, but these whisperings have been given an unprecedented level of focus and agency, considering that they were happening throughout Europe. Venice's approach to the Catholic reforms might not be as assured as it was in Rome or Milan (although even in those places bringing the reforms about was not entirely straightforward - Borromeo himself had to make compromises) but the presence of significant numbers of evangelicals and Protestant supporters in Venice has perhaps coloured our opinion of Venice and her faithfulness to the Catholic Church, and added to the confusion that

[53] Two of the most pertinent studies come from Marc Forster and are highlighted by Mary Laven in her article documenting our changing response to the Counter Reformation. Marc Foster's *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages* looks at the approach taken in the Bishopric of Speyer where the impetus for change came from within the local community. Foster's later study *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque* develops the same argument, this time in south-west Germany where the rural population resisted some areas of reform, but wholeheartedly endorsed others. Marc R. Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720*, Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 1992; idem, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Mary Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 706-720.

[54] Mary Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation,' 710-711.

surrounds Venice's participation in the Counter Reformation. Partly, this is due to the action taken by the Catholic Church towards Venetian heretics.

Those seen as heretics, both in Venice and elsewhere, were handled with increasing severity by the Inquisition which was set up by the Church to deal with such matters. The doge and his patricians were undoubtedly rather lenient throughout much of the early sixteenth century towards those perceived to be heretics – partly because some of their own number would have been found guilty of heretical activity had they pursued its condemnation.[55] Despite a few rather vocal preachers, the majority of the evangelical and protestant communities in Venice were rather discreet in their activities, taking care not to draw attention to their meetings and discussions.[56] However, by 1572, the pope's ambassador to Rome had condemned these 'hidden enemies' in Venice and the Inquisition had swung into action to curtail their activities.[57]

Venice did not become 'the door' to Protestantism in Italy as Bernardino Ochino had hoped. As with elsewhere in the Italian states, the threat of the Inquisition and the trials and resulting executions, eventually cowed the heretical movements and by the 1580s they had all but disappeared completely.[58] Yet, while the more overt and problematic groups had been silenced, conversations still continued with the various Venetian communities, discussing how best to enact the reforms to suit the needs of the city. This community engagement with the Counter Reformation can be seen very clearly in Venice's churches, particularly those with active *scuole* as was the situation with one of this thesis's case studies, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. The church's four *scuole,* and most prominently the Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento, were the catalyst for a number of the most prominent reforms in the church; including the commissioning of a new crucifix, a layer of wooden panelling surrounding the nave walls, and a score of paintings in the

[55] Most notably the Venetian patricians Gasparo Contarini and Pier Paolo Vergerio had strong heretical views. Martin, 'Salvation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Venice', 214.
[56] One example was a mixed group of professionals – lawyers and doctors – and nobles, who met in the 1560s typically in each other's houses or in the quiet gardens on the Giudecca or San Giorgio Maggiore. Ibid, 219.
[57] Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City,* ix.
[58] Martin claims that this was partly because the evangelicals did not have a public church that they could attend, and partly because the crackdown on heretics meant that many became too afraid of expressing what they truly believed so they pretended to lead Catholic lives, waiting in the hope that a time would come when they could reveal what they truly believed. Martin, 'Salvation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Venice', 230-232.

nave, aisles, apse and ceilings, not to mention the attention they devoted to their individual altars.

THE CHURCH IN VENICE

Alongside the political issues such as the interdict or the Apostolic Visitation, and the notoriety of Venice's perceived heretical circles, the unusual structure of the Church in Venice has proved problematic to our understanding of the situation between Venice and Rome. The Venetian state had a much more liberated input into the running of the Church in Venice than most other communities did and there were many areas where Roman instruction was unwanted and often adamantly opposed in Venice, such as in the case of the Apostolic Visitation mentioned earlier, or during the events leading up to the Interdict. This was partly the result of the Venetian determination to be seen as a distinct and separate force from contemporary Rome, with Venice's ecclesiastical successes being its, and its alone. As discussed, this determination was less prevalent than previously thought but it was still a factor in Venetian decision-making. However, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Church in Venice was unravelling as much as it was elsewhere as a result of the tumultuous religious and political changes occurring in the region, with the traditions that had worked previously having been reduced to a now fragile state.[59] Understanding the Venetian system at this time is integral to understanding how it responded to the Counter Reformation.

In terms of the church hierarchy in Venice, the parish priests who oversaw the seventy parishes in Venice were elected by their parishioners and were supported by further clerics known as *titolari*.[60] The ability to choose their own priests was an unusual privilege peculiar to Venice's parish churches, which had been long since disallowed elsewhere in the Catholic Church.[61] Venice's parish organisational structure saw opposition from some of the Venetian patriarchs who wished to control these decisions themselves. Ultimately they failed, despite support from Rome, which included a papal bull from Clement XII, because the Venetian government intervened to preserve the responsibility for voting in the parish priests as the right of the Venetian people.[62]

[59] Prodi, 'The Structure and Organization of the church in Renaissance Venice', 411.
[60] Ibid, 419.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, 420.

The monasteries and convents were typically connected more closely to the wider Catholic Church than the parish churches because they were linked to larger orders with mother churches elsewhere. The monks and nuns therefore were often under pressure to enact reforms quickly and were sometimes in dispute with the Venetian state over how they went about that process. The strict ascetic of the Capuchin friars at the Redentore who disagreed with much of the festiveness that the Republic intended for the church, comes to mind. In 1521 the *Magistrato sopra i monasteri* was created to allow the Republic power over the economic output of the monastic and conventual communities.[63] A number of new orders – the Jesuits, Oratorians and Barnabites among others – were set up in the wake of the reform period as those involved felt the older orders were too corrupt and a fresh start was needed to be made to fully engage with the decrees from the Council of Trent. The Venetian government found these reform driven orders far harder to govern because they had a much greater central focus and listened closely to their mother churches. Indeed, the Venetians expelled the Jesuits for a number of years because of the conflict they were causing with the Venetian State.

Overseeing all of the different facets that made up the Venetian Church was the patriarch: the bishop in charge of the diocese of Venice and her surrounding territories. The patriarch had two, often conflicting, roles as Roman vassal and representative of the broader Venetian diocese. While similar positions had been around since 774, it was between 1451 and 1466 that a number of previous dioceses were merged together to create a Venetian patriarch, which was now responsible for old patriarchate of Grado, the Bishopric of Castello, Dalmatia, Eraclea and Equilio (modern-day Jesolo). It is one of just a few patriarchates that still remain in the Catholic Church. Elections for the patriarch were the responsibility of the Venetian government – again this was unprecedented elsewhere - and the first patriarch, Lorenzo Giustiniani (1451-56), and his early successors typically came from monastic backgrounds.[64] However, a shift came with the appointment of the Dominican Girolamo Querini (1524-1554) whose tenure was characterised by splits, both with the republic and the Roman Church.[65] After Querini, the majority of patriarchs, until 1619, came from the laity - men who had served on a number of councils and committees and made a name for themselves within the Republic's governance; thus they could be better controlled by the state. Paolo Prodi

[63] Prodi, 'The Structure and Organization of the church in Renaissance Venice', 421.
[64] Ibid, 415.
[65] Ibid.

believes this to have been 'a political response to the danger presented by the centralizing tendency of the Counter-Reformation, but it also amounted to a choice made on religious grounds.'[66] Naturally, Rome was concerned with the priorities and spirituality of the laymen who were being appointed in Venice and this added to the tensions that led up to the 1606 Interdict. However, it was the patriarchs who were most proactive in ensuring that the Council of Trent's decrees were enacted, and they had to negotiate the many layers and loyalties of the Venetian Church to be able to do so.[67] Their actions were not always approved of by Venetian patricians, many of whom - despite the lay background of a number of the patriarchs - were concerned with the patriarch's loyalty to Rome. This is seen prominently in the isolated location of the patriarch's seat, the cathedral of San Pietro di Castello.

SAN PIETRO DI CASTELLO AS A BUILDING OF ITS TIME

The patriarch of Venice set the example for the rest of the city and the way successive patriarchs in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries chose to renovate the city's cathedral gives us a clear understanding of how closely they actively engaged with the architectural stipulations coming from the reform movement. From almost the very beginning the island on which San Pietro di Castello was based was both literally and metaphorically on the outskirts of the Venetian community. In his classic work *The Stones of Venice* John Ruskin lamented that he was

> aware of no other city in Europe in which its cathedral was not the principal feature…. The patriarchal church, inconsiderable in size and mean in decoration, stands on the outermost islet of the Venetian group, and its name, as well as its site, is probably unknown to the greater number of travellers passing through the city.[68]

Venice was originally made up of a number of island communities, of which San Pietro – known previously as the island of Olivolo - was one of the most important, and it is thought to have been one of the oldest settlements in the lagoon.[69] The island was part of the popular waterway going east to west, from Santi Apostoli to San Pietro,

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[66] Prodi, 'The Structure and Organization of the church in Renaissance Venice', 416.
[67] Bruno Bertoli and Bianca Betto, *La Chiesa di Venezia nel Seicento,* Venice: Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1992, 10-11.
[68] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, edited and abridged by Jan Morris, London: Folio Society, 2001, 7.
[69] Areli Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins: The Patriarch's Piazza at San Pietro di Castello in Venice,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 359-360.

connecting many of the early island parishes.[70] However, when the relics of St. Mark arrived in Venice in 828, they were preserved in the newly built ducal chapel of San Marco which was to become the spiritual home of the doge.[71] After this time, it was from the hubs of the Rialto (where the city's markets and trading points were already located) and San Marco from which the rest of Venice expanded. The island of San Pietro was a significant distance away from them and was no longer on the main water route through the city, which was now the deep channel connecting the Rialto and San Marco, subsequently named the Grand Canal.[72] Despite this and the numerous changes to the structure of the patriarchate throughout the following centuries, the cathedral remained in Castello and it remained side-lined.[73] This was not to say that attempts were not made to boost the prominence of the cathedral – in particular much rebuilding took place during the sixteenth century, at a time most pertinent to this study. This rebuilding – especially the new façade of the cathedral - can tell us much about how the patriarch viewed his allegiances both to Venice and to Rome.

As mentioned previously, many of the patriarchs of the sixteenth century were elected from the laity – these being notable patricians with extensive political experience, rather than ecclesiastical men with a history inside the church. Yet they were frequently challenged to pick sides as a result of the tempestuous relationship between the city and the papacy. Few ceremonial events were held at the cathedral: most important festivities – both religious and secular – were, in fact, usually held at San Marco, and the patriarch would be summoned to preside over them there.[74] One of the recommendations of the Apostolic Visitation in 1581 was that the cathedral should be rebuilt in a more appropriate location in the city – i.e. somewhere more central so that it could be better connected with the heart of the Venetian community.[75] This proposal was rejected by the senate but it did pave the way for the renovation of the site to make it more worthy of being the papacy's seat in Venice.

[70] Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 364.
[71] Ibid, 365-366.
[72] Ibid, 366.
[73] For more information on the metamorphosis of the patriarch with regards to his role and his various titles, consult: Guidarelli, *I patriarchi di Venezia e l'architettura: la cattedrale di San Pietro di Castello nel Rinascimento,* Venice: Il Poligrafo, 2015; Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 353-429.
[74] Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 394-395.
[75] Ibid, 397.

The idea of a new façade for San Pietro di Castello was first proposed by Patriarch Vincenzo Diedo in 1558. Diedo recruited Andrea Palladio to devise a scheme for what would have been one of his first commissions had it been executed at this time. Palladio was probably chosen because of his *papalista* connections – i.e. his endorsement by those families who wanted a closer relationship between Venice and the papacy.[76] Diedo's instructions called for a façade covered in the most perfect Istrian stone and the project was estimated to cost 1,910 ducats.[77] The central section was to include six enormous Corinthian half-columns, which would have been unprecedented at the time, and art historians have long debated how Palladio would have made such a feature work aesthetically.[78]

Sadly, Diedo's plans were short lived and the new façade was eventually built thirty-five years later by Francesco Smeraldi (Fig. 293). Lacking a clear image of Palladio's façade plan we are left with just the description in the accompanying stonemason's contract, but Smeraldi's façade would appear to depend on Palladio's original proposal – he uses four colossal half-columns in the central section rather than the six that Diedo had called for and it includes pilasters on the side bays, another feature stipulated in the Palladian contract. Smeraldi's design also clearly has parallels with Palladio's already-completed façade of San Francesco della Vigna (Fig. 75) and it has been suggested that Smeraldi would have known the design for the Redentore (Fig. 74) which was still a work in progress when San Pietro's façade was finally being built.[79]

The façade and numerous other renovations to the cathedral's campo were, as Areli Marina argues, made so that the cathedral would comply with the guidelines of Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae*.[80] From his election in 1590, Patriarch Lorenzo Priuli worked hard to rid the campo of all elements which did not accord with Borromeo's pronouncements, but it is San Pietro di Castello's façade which proves to be most revealing. On the frieze below the upper pediment the words DEO OPTIMO MAXIMO (To God, the best and the greatest) are written, unambiguously and unsurprisingly, setting God at the top of what Marina argues is a hierarchy of

[76] Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 398.
[77] Howard, *Venice Disputed: Marc'Antonio Barbaro and Venetian Architecture, 1550-1600*, 94.
[78] Howard looks at Palladio's proposed façade for San Pietro di Castello in more detail. Ibid, 93-98.
[79] Cooper, *Palladio's Venice*, *75*.
[80] Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 403-405.

sovereignty that can be seen throughout the decorative programme of the façade.[81] To the left and right of the central portal are further inscriptions. The left proclaims: 'The house of God built on firm rock until the length of days. The year of salvation 1596. Clement VIII, pope'; the right goes on to record: 'His reverend excellency Lorenzo, Cardinal Priuli, Patriarch of Venice [built] this pious monument in the sixth year of his patriarchate. Marino Grimani doge of the Venetians.' Marina observes that the first line of the left inscription refers to the bible verse Matthew 16:18 which was when Jesus made Peter the head of the Church. This would have been seen by viewers of the time as a reproach to the Venetians and the Protestant sympathies that could be found within the city.[82] The right hand inscription praises Priuli himself and, as if as an afterthought, the Venetian doge. Marina suggests that this order implies that it is Priuli – as patriarch – who controls access to heaven for the Venetian faithful because he is the representative of Saint Peter and the pope in Venice, not the doge.[83] The inscription's clear hierarchy is a long way away from the patriarch's investiture pledge 'By God and San Marco' which is said to emphasise his Venetian loyalty; loyalty which is clearly challenged on this façade.[84]

After Priuli, one of the most proactive patriarchs was Giovanni Tiepolo who was elected in 1619 and oversaw a substantial renovation of the interior of the cathedral during the early seventeenth century. Tiepolo was also notable in reconfiguring the role of the patriarch by giving himself and future incumbents independence from both the Venetian state and the Roman Church.[85] According to Giustiniano Martinioni's edition of Francesco Sansovino's guidebook, the reconstruction of the cathedral was carried out between 1621 and 1630.[86] A pastoral visitation of 1633 confirms that the majority of work had been completed by that date.[87] The foundation of the old medieval building was used to create a contemporary classically inspired interior based on a Latin cross plan. Corinthian pilaster strips were combined with pre-existing pilasters, a new roofing system was constructed which allowed the inclusion of thermal windows throughout the

[81] Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 412.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid, 414.
[84] Cooper, *Palladio's Venice*, 73.
[85] Gianmario Guidarelli, 'Venice's Cathedral of San Pietro di Castello 1451-1630,' in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and its Territories, 1450-1750: Essays in Honour of Deborah Howard*, Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Emma Jones, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, 192.
[86] Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare, descritta in 14. libri da m. Francesco Sansovino. Nella quale si contengono tutte le guerre passate… Con aggiunta di tutte le cose notabili della stessa città, fatte, & occorse dall'anno 1580 sino al presente 1663,* with additions from Giustiniano Martinioni, Venice, 1663, 11.
[87] Guidarelli, 'Venice's Cathedral of San Pietro di Castello 1451-1630,' 193.

nave and presbytery, and an impressive dome on a tholobate was built (Fig. 56).[88] In particular, the high altar – one of Tiepolo's most important concerns – was positioned in a more accessible location, no longer hidden by a screen of columns.[89] The design has clear parallels with Palladio's recently constructed church of San Giorgio Maggiore.

Gianmario Guidarelli has looked at the motivations behind the renovation of the interior space, and although there was a significant fire in February of 1603, a 1609 pastoral visit confirms that in fact the cathedral was in reasonably satisfactory condition.[90] Thus, Guidarelli comes to the conclusion that the main encouragement for such renovations was 'the desire for a complete renovation of the sacred space, with improved lighting and a more modern architectural style.'[91] Tiepolo would have been keenly aware that while the façade and exterior piazza now adhered more coherently to the dictates of the Council of Trent and the further recommendations of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, the interior was still lacking in that respect. Guidarelli goes further, suggesting that through its Latin cross plan, the cathedral harks back to SS. Maria e Donato in Murano and the churches of San Lorenzo and San Salvador in the main city of Venice, which are all examples of the traditional Romanesque church and are familiar throughout the lagoon. Thus, he suggests, Tiepolo not only restructured the church to fit with Trent's new specifications, but he also chose to make use of a traditional Venetian model which he tailored to meet the needs of a large cathedral.[92] In doing so, Tiepolo perhaps demonstrates both his links with both Rome and Venice, whilst also highlighting his autonomy too.

Areli Marina's article on the development of the piazza of San Pietro di Castello, Gianmario Guidarelli's chapter on the reconstruction of the cathedral in the seventeenth century and his subsequent monograph on the church (complemented with a conference organised by Guidarelli on the building in 2015) go some way towards increasing our understanding of this much-maligned monument. The prior lack of interest in what - in any other city – would be one of the most important buildings tells us a great deal, not only about how the city viewed the building, but also about how academics have viewed

[88] More detail on the interior reconstruction can be found in Gianmario Guidarelli's recent account. Guidarelli, 'Venice's Cathedral of San Pietro di Castello 1451-1630,' 185-201.
[89] Ibid, 196.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid, 196-197.

the city and its relationship with the papacy. San Pietro also serves as an important example from which comparisons can be drawn with the case studies in this thesis.

THE REALITY OF CHURCH BUILDING AND RENOVATION IN VENICE 1550-1700

Between 1550 and 1700, Venice was a hive of activity with approximately sixty new churches built. The majority were the result of the complete rebuilding of old churches on the same site by the existing monastic order or church clergy, usually because the buildings had either been damaged or had been outgrown by the congregation and this was an excuse to rebuild in a period appropriate manner. There were also a few that were built from scratch for entirely new commissions such as the two plague churches – the Redentore and Santa Maria della Salute – which were both state-led enterprises. Both churches can tell us a great deal about the factors that were important for the Venetian government, and about how they contributed to the image of the city.

Some of the new churches were built for the new reforming orders, such as the Jesuits and Theatines, who arrived in Venice in the wake of the Council of Trent, as their membership grew and their influence spread throughout Europe. The presence of such reformist orders in Venice is significant since these were the orders that were most motivated by the reforming ideals promoted during the Counter Reformation. The fact that they wanted to build in Venice and that Venice let them build new churches is important. Granted, the notable dispute between the Venetian government and the Jesuits led to the order being banned in 1606 from the city until 1657; but before this time the Jesuits originally started building Santa Maria dell'Umiltà in the 1560s on land reclaimed when the Teutonic Knights were suppressed in 1525. On their expulsion the church was given to the Benedictine nuns from San Servolo and when the Jesuits were allowed back into Venice they acquired land to build the church of the Gesuiti (1715-30) on the outskirts of the city, again on the site of an old church, this time the Crociferi. The resulting building reflects an architectural climate that had relaxed the priorities of the Counter Reformation and moved on to the abundant exuberance of the period known most commonly as the High Baroque. Indeed, it parallels the renovation of the interior of the Gesù – the Jesuit mother church to which all other churches in the order

looked to for guidance – which, during, this period was updated so that its simple classic interior was covered in ornate decoration and paintings.[116]

The Venetian government looked more favourably on some of the other new orders, and it was the recently founded order of the Somascan Fathers who were asked to be the guardians of Santa Maria della Salute. The church was commissioned in thanksgiving for God stopping the terrible plague outbreak of 1630. Of note is the fact that the Somascan order was founded by a Venetian noble called Gerolamo Miani in Somasca, not far from Bergamo.[117] Andrew Hopkins believes there is significance in the order being a local one which had been working in Venice from the 1570s, as teachers of a Patriarchal Seminary and as educators of young Venetian nobles, rather than one with Roman connections.[118] Indeed this has been highlighted in relation to the state's treatment of the Jesuits, a prominently Rome-based order - first exiling them and then side-lining them to a church at the edge of the city.[119] The Salute is also notably a circular, or rather octagonal, church, which indicates how the State's opinions with regards to this form of church had evolved since the time of the Redentore's construction when Palladio's suggested circular design was discounted and the safer rectangular floor plan was chosen instead. Indeed, the centralised plan was now seen by the deputies whose responsibility it was to pick a final model for the church as "a pleasing design, which would be a novelty in this city."[120] This decision was seen by Hopkins – the Salute's most prolific recent researcher – as 'best fulfilling the senators' wishes for a grandiose monument,' but others have seen it as a 'polemical statement about Venetian statehood' and its propensity for architectural distinctiveness.[121]

The Salute is a very prominent but atypical example of Venetian church building, and its unique design made Baldassare Longhena famous. The controversial nature of the Jesuits

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[116] James S. Ackerman, 'The Gesù in Light of Contemporary Church Design', in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution*, edited by Rudolf Wittkower and Irma B. Jaffe, New York: Fordham University Press, 1972, 27.
[117] Andrew Hopkins, *Santa Maria della Salute: Architecture and Ceremony in Baroque Venice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 13.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Hopkins in particular plays up the distinction between the treatment of the two orders by the Venetian State. He stresses the fact that one advantage of the Salute's chosen location was the fact that it would overshadow the closely situated church of Santa Maria dell'Umiltà – the first home of the Jesuits before they were exiled. Hopkins also believes that the Venetian government encouraged the Somascans teaching institutions since this was a key strength of the Jesuits and once the Jesuits were reinstated in the city the Somascans already had a monopoly in this area. Ibid, 13-14.
[120] This is quoted from the Deputies' final report, written on 13 June 1631. Ibid, 27.
[121] Ibid, 28.

tenure in Venice has also made them of interest, but there are many examples of major changes in church design at the time provided by the rest of the sixty churches that were being built in the city. Indeed, some useful work has already been completed on individual churches during the time period of this thesis (1550-1700), most of which touch on the effects of the Counter Reformation. Many of the works referenced below will be discussed in more detail in the four chapters.

One of the earliest contributions to this field is Douglas Lewis's 1979 work on *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice* which gives an overview of the period before focusing in on six particular examples: the Scalzi, San Stae, the Gesuiti, the Gesuati, San Barnaba and San Geremia.[122] Lewis's examples are mostly rather later than the churches this thesis will be examining, but his text is a useful one because of the common themes occurring in both Lewis's examples and my own. Lewis's focus remains quite rigidly on the architecture of his six key churches and making comparisons with other churches in the city. He touches on the Counter Reformation but only briefly.

More modern examples, which generally include more of an acknowledgment of the role of the Counter Reformation, include Caterina Novello's 1999/2000 thesis on the changes that took place in Santo Stefano to the high altar and the altarpieces.[123] Massimo Bisson wrote on the church of San Nicolò di Lido (as part of a much wider argument about choirs in Cassinese Congregation churches) in his 2007 PhD thesis and, in a 2013 article, documented some of the changes to the high altar, relics, and retrochoir of the church, considering all to be instructive examples of Counter Reformation architecture.[124] Antonio Manno contributed a seminal book (and article) in 2012 on San Nicolò da Tolentino and its changes as a result of the Counter Reformation.[125] As with some of the case studies in this thesis, it is the most substantial contribution to the history of San Nicolò da Tolentino. While Gianmario Guidarelli's 2015 book on the

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122 Douglas Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*, New York: Garland, 1979.
123 Caterina Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' PhD thesis, Università Ca' Foscari, 1999/2000.
124 Massimo Bisson, "'Voltar il coro et poner l'altar alla romana". Le trasformazioni dei cori nelle abbazie Cassinesi del Veneto: tradizione e innovazione nell'architettura ecclesiastica post-tridentina,' PhD thesis, Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2007; idem, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice: Liturgical Problems and New Architectural Models in the Counter Reformation,' in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and its Territories, 1450-1750: Essays in Honour of Deborah Howard*, edited by Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Emma Jones, Farnham: Ashgate; 2013, 159-170.
125 Antonio Manno, 'La chiesa di S. Nicolò da Tolentino: Teatini, Controriforma e mentalità Veneziane in epoca barocca,' *Studi Veneziani* 64, (2012), 136-138; idem, *La chiesa di San Nicola da Tolentino a Venezia: storia, arte e devozione*, Venice: Il Prato, 2012.

long-neglected cathedral of San Pietro di Castello has been another such success, for it includes a detailed, well-researched chapter on 'Lorenzo Priuli e l'architettura della Controriforma a Venezia: politica sepolcrale e *decorum*.'[126] Guidarelli is also a director of the 'Chiese di Venezia, Isole e Terraferma Veneziana' project (first with Studium Generale Marcianum, now Ca' Foscari) which has held conferences (with subsequent publications) on the churches of San Bartolomeo, the Scalzi, the Mendicanti, San Zaccaria, and San Pietro di Castello.[127] Equally important are shorter accounts that pertain to some of the case studies of this thesis, which go into varying levels of detail about specific features of these churches that were inspired by the Counter-Reformatory ideas such as Maurice Cope's *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*.[128]

In the separate, but interlinked field of art history, research has been undertaken for some decades into the ecclesiastical art produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and how that was shaped as a result of the Counter Reformation. One of the earliest examples was Peter Humfrey's article 'Altarpieces and altar dedications in Counter-Reformation Venice and the Veneto' from 1996, which provides a thorough starting point for the genre.[129] Humfrey's work has since been added to by a growing field of academics, one of the most recent and progressive examples being the doctoral thesis of Marie-Louise Lillywhite.[130] This studied the artistic decoration of the churches of San Giacomo dall'Orio, Santa Maria dell'Umiltà, the Redentore and San Giorgio Maggiore. Ultimately, she found that 'Venice made an important and early contribution towards developing the "ideal" visual response required by Trent.'[131]

A further, more focused study, is Benjamin Paul's research into the nuns at the convent of Santi Cosma e Damiano.[132] Paul's work is of particular interest because it not only looks at the artistic output, which is the main focus of his research into the Benedictine

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126 Guidarelli, *I patriarchi di Venezia e l'architettura: la cattedrale di San Pietro di Castello nel Rinascimento*.
127 Natalino Bonazza, Isabella di Lenardo and Gianmario Guidarelli, *La chiesa di San Bartolomeo e la comunità tedesca a Venezia*, Venice: Marcianum Press, 2014; Giacomo Bettini and Martina Frank, *La chiesa di Santa Maria di Nazareth e la spiritualità dei Carmelitani Scalzi a Venezia*, Venice: Marcianum Press, 2013; Alexandra Bamji, Linda Borean, and Laura Moretti, *La chiesa e l'ospedale di San Lazzaro dei Mendicanti: arte, beneficenza, cura, devozione, educazione*, Venice: Marcianum Press, 2015; Bernard Aikema, Massimo Mancini and Paola Modesti, *"In centro et oculis urbis nostre": la chiesa e il monastero di San Zaccaria*, Venice: Marcianum Press, 2016; Guidarelli, *I patriarchi di Venezia e l'architettura: La cattedrale di San Pietro di Castello nel Rinascimento*.
128 Maurice Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Garland, 1979.
129 Peter Humfrey, 'Altarpieces and altar dedications in Counter-Reformation Venice and the Veneto,'*Renaissance Studies* 10 (1996), 371-387.
130 Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610'.
131 Ibid, 2.
132 Paul, *Nuns and Reform Art in Early Modern Venice*.

nuns of Santi Cosma e Damiano, but he also touches briefly on the architecture of their church, which was built in the 1540s and can be compared with the Venetian sister churches of Santa Croce and the Ognissanti, both part of the Cassinese Congregation, with which the nuns of Santi Cosma e Damiano were also connected.[133] Indeed, Paul goes even further to look at where the church of Santi Cosma e Damiano fitted with the innovative reformist architecture of the Cassinese Congregation as a whole.[134] Paul's approach is an example of the type of multifaceted approach that this thesis takes, though, in a reversal of priorities, the emphasis here is on the architectural innovation, while also touching on some of the artistic developments as well.

Alongside the extensive building and rebuilding that was taking place, pretty much all of Venice's older, predominantly Gothic churches were being updated during the period, many as a result of the findings of the 1581 Apostolic Visitation which, as Paola Modesti has demonstrated, involved the removal of very nearly every rood screen in Venice – with the notable exception of the Frari's – as well as entailing many other modifications and additions.[135] This is why two of the buildings that will be highlighted in this study are the churches of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and Santo Stefano. Both had significant makeovers during the period, renovating their structures, internal aesthetics and the religious objects they housed, as well as producing new decorative schemes of appropriate religious subject matter. What these older churches chose to prioritise when renovating, and the order in which their different parts were renovated, will be of particular interest to this study.

While we cannot know the true motivations of each church's governing body and of the architect (or architects) who worked with them, this thesis aims to look at the various features of their designs, and, for each example, to explain how the Counter Reformation and the guidelines that came with it (from Carlo Borromeo in particular) are likely to have shaped various decisions. Other important aspects of their designs will also be considered – practicalities that were site-specific, financial limitations, input of patrons, architectural styles used elsewhere in the city or by the same architectural order.

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133 Paul, *Nuns and Reform Art in Early Modern Venice*, 103-120.
134 Ibid, 121-140.
135 Paola Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese parrocchiali veneziane fra Rinascimento e riforma tridentina,' in *La place du choeur: architecture et liturgie du Moyen Âge aux temps modernes: Actes du Colloque de l'EPHE, Institut National d'histoire de l'art, les 10 et 11 Décembre 2007*, edited by Sabine Frommel and Laurent Lecomte, Vol. 1, Paris: Rome: Picard; Campisano, 2012; Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581', 39.

Since there are no comprehensive studies on the effect of the Counter Reformation on Venetian church architecture there are, inevitably, gaps in our understanding of the movement as a whole. We assume that, since currently most of the evidence and research are concentrated in Rome and Milan, these cities were at the forefront of most of the prevailing innovations and that other places copied and adapted as they saw fit. However, by ignoring Venice – which was also known as an innovative city architecturally, albeit very distinct from other Italian states – we are missing influences and connections that came *from* Venice as opposed to coming *to* it. As Marie-Louise Lillywhite demonstrated in her recent thesis which aimed to prove similar arguments relating to Venetian church art, that while the Gesù is thought to be the model that other churches followed, in fact the Jesuit church of Santa Maria dell'Umiltà in Venice started its new painted decoration *before* the Gesù committed to its programme.[136] This thesis will also demonstrate areas of architectural innovation which stem from Venice and then spread out to the wider Catholic community. Chapels of the Sacrament, for example, were a particularly Venetian phenomenon and the design we are most familiar took off in Venice long before it was popularised elsewhere; San Nicolò dei Mendicoli being a specific example of this.[137]

[136] Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610', 92.
[137] My research into this area is supported by Maurice Cope's seminal study. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

The bulk of this work will be broken into four chapters, divided into two parts. In the first part, Rebuilding and Renewal: New Churches for a New Age, Chapter One will look at the monastic church of San Nicolò di Lido while Chapter Two is concerned with the parish church of San Moisè. In part two, Retrofitting and Resurgence: Older Churches Restored, Chapter Three focuses on the monastic church of Santo Stefano and Chapter Four is on the parish church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. This thesis will then conclude by bringing all of the findings of these four chapters together, making broader comparisons and suggesting areas for further research.

Deciding on which four churches to choose came in part from wanting to shed more light on some of Venice's less well-researched ecclesiastical buildings and, indeed, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and San Moisè, both parish churches, are not well known at all and benefit significantly from further study. This is why many of the chapters have a strong introductory focus on the early and later history of the churches bringing some much-needed context and historical understanding. The early histories of these churches also provide us with an insight into their problems and the types of features that were no longer suitable in the post-Tridentine age. San Nicolò di Lido is slightly better known and Massimo Bisson has previously considered the design of the choir and high altar in terms of the Counter Reformation and with regard to the church belonging to the Cassinese Congregation.[138] However, being isolated from the majority of Venetian churches due to its location on the separate island of the Lido, the church is not nearly as familiar as its contemporaries situated in the Venetian heartland. Santo Stefano, as one of Venice's most prominent Gothic churches, is far better known in the literature in general and many researchers throughout the years have explored the archives, finding much of the key information for this study. Furthermore, Caterina Novello's 1999/2000 PhD, incorporates a comprehensive catalogue on many of the building's artistic fittings, including the sculptural design of the new high altar that was produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and has contributed to the argument of this thesis considerably.[139]

[138] Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice', 159-170.
[139] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII'.

It is helpful that modern-day researchers have already made a start on developing our understanding of these churches during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and this certainly does not hinder my own argument. None of these previous studies, for example, look at the effects of the Counter Reformation in such an all-encompassing way. Caterina Novello's thesis on the art of Santo Stefano touches on it briefly in her introduction; but her study has gaps in it, and a significant weakness is the lack of comparison with other churches in Venice. Massimo Bisson focuses his attention at San Nicolò di Lido on the choir and high altar.

In view of such shortcomings, the aim of this thesis is to examine these churches in comparison with each other, and in such a way as to provide a snapshot of the overall picture of what was happening during this period in Venetian church architecture. Not only do the churches chosen fit neatly into core categories with two newly built churches and two restored churches, one from each pair being a parish church and one being a monastic church, but each example was chosen with a view as to how well it represented and epitomised those categories. It will be helpful, therefore, to elaborate briefly on the specific qualities that make these four churches most useful for this purpose.

The churches of Venice number just over one hundred today, but there were even more before Napoleon's suppression of the monasteries in the nineteenth century. To do proper justice to the effects of the Counter Reformation on Venice's numerous churches it was clear that this study needed to look both at those that were newly built during this period and at those that were modified and restored. The thesis begins (in Part One) with those churches that were completely rebuilt to see how the authorities in charge of the commissions (whether they be parish or monastic communities) decided to design their buildings when they had complete freedom to start afresh from the ground up. This is not to say that the restored churches are any less important, indeed, older churches are particularly overlooked in terms of how much we know about the way they were retrofitted during their middle years. With Venice's Gothic churches in particular there is often a sense that any renovations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which often brought typically classical features into these otherwise Gothic buildings, ruined the purity of their Gothic nature, so that many such features were removed or modified in subsequent centuries (this was particularly true during the "Gothic Revival" period which was largely brought about by John Ruskin through the opinions he espoused in his work

The Stones of Venice). Indeed, it is a view that in many ways has lingered today, this idea of the church's structural purity coming only from its period of origin. Studies on these churches frequently gloss over such renovations and retrofitted features because they do not fit with the vision that many try to portray of these supposedly untouched Gothic masterpieces.[140] With many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century additions removed in later centuries this has also often made it hard for researchers to ascertain exactly what the situation was like during the period in question. Thus, grasping what the situation in these churches was really like is crucial to not only this study on the Counter Reformation but for our understanding of Venetian church architecture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a whole. For if we focus solely on the 'new builds', we distort the reality of Venetian church building, which saw so much effort and expenditure going into the modification and improvement of existing buildings so as to fit with prevailing spiritual trends and priorities. Part 2, therefore, will focus on the restored churches and it follows on from the newly-built churches because the latter will provide a useful context, allowing the reader to more clearly understand why certain types of renovation and retrofitting were prioritised and how those in charge of older churches worked with their existing spaces to provide architectural solutions that echoed those being undertaken with more ease for newly built churches. It is especially instructive in this context to consider what was prioritised when renovating and the order in which church features were renovated.

Part 1 will open with Chapter One on the church of San Nicolò di Lido: a monastic church that was then a dependency of the prominent and popular Cassinese Congregation, a reforming off-shoot of the Benedictine order. While this was not one of the completely new reforming orders that was set up in the wake of the Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent, the Cassinese Congregation (as we will be seeing in greater detail later) was especially proactive in its reforming zeal, dividing itself from the main Benedictine order in the early fifteenth century after new abbot Lodovico Barbo successfully reformed the Paduan church of Santa Giustina. The Congregation was a vocal participant at the Council of Trent and had its own, very clear, ideas as to how the Catholic Church should respond to Luther's proclamations.

[140] The term 'retrofitting' has seen a growth in use in recent years and it will be used throughout this thesis to describe features that were retroactively fitted in to churches, long after their initial completion.

San Nicolò di Lido was situated close to two of the key churches at the heart of the Cassinese Congregation, the order's mother church of Santa Giustina in nearby Padua and the large, influential monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore on an island just a few miles away, and importantly, closer to the heart of Venice. The church, therefore, perfectly captures the key issues that were important to reforming religious orders and is based not only on Venetian prototypes such as its companion church of San Giorgio Maggiore, or indeed, the equally close church of the Redentore whose innovation can be seen throughout the fabric of San Nicolò. It also epitomises a church that tapped into the discourses going on throughout its order, as can be seen in the similarities to many of the Cassinese Congregation churches. The church balances the importance of fitting with the religious traditions of its home city, Venice, while also corresponding closely with the identifying features of its religious order.

The church of San Moisè, which is the focus of Chapter Two, is, by contrast, a parish church, one located in the heart of the San Marco district and on numerous procession routes to the doge's chapel, San Marco. As a parish church San Moisè was visited frequently by the Patriarch of Venice. It was clear in the early seventeenth century that the church was in a poor condition, with so much damage and so much that was inappropriate for the new period that the decision was made to rebuild the church entirely. While this chapter will predominantly focus on the features of the new church, comparing them to other parish churches built during this period and seeing how they differed from monastic churches such as San Nicolò di Lido, it will also consider the material from the patriarchal visitations to determine what problems there were with the old church.

The church of San Moisè is also a useful indicator of how and when the impetus of the Counter Reformation started to decline as the rules were relaxed and decoration became more ornate and extravagant. This can be seen most clearly in the church's monumental façade, which is covered in superfluous ornament and other decoration, and, most importantly, was a memorial to the Fini family. Lay involvement in church design, when motivated by self-aggrandisement, was particularly problematic in this period, not only for the Church but also for the Venetian state which had numerous laws condemning the activity. Fini's grand façade at San Moisè – a church so close to San Marco and the heart of the city of Venice – is thus a demonstration of how the Counter Reformation had lost

its sense of urgency and importance by the time the façade was built between 1668 and 1688.

The first chapter in Part Two concerns Santo Stefano, a church for which numerous researchers in the past have already uncovered the majority of the key archival sources which allow us to piece together what went on with the church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, Caterina Novello's 1999/2000 PhD thesis looks at the significant changes to the high altar, other altars and artwork in general in the church during this time. This is of great use to this study and allows it to add to Novello's diligent research with other structural (architectural) issues that she did not cover; such as the insertion of thermal windows and the whitewashing of the interior frescoes which, combined with the artistic developments during the post Council of Trent period, gives a clear picture of how the church *as a whole* was modified and retrofitted.

While more has been written on the church of Santo Stefano than the other three churches in my study, this is not to be seen as a hindrance to my contributing something new to our understanding of the church. The renovation and retrofitting during this period at Santo Stefano have not been properly compared with those of other churches – in particular those Gothic, monastic buildings – elsewhere in Venice. Santo Stefano fits an essential piece of the puzzle that we would otherwise not have. While San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, the other renovated church of this study, is a small church of Byzantine origins, Santo Stefano reflects the other end of the spectrum: a large hall-like Gothic building. The more prominent examples of the Frari and Santi Giovanni e Paolo were also renovated but contain distractions from the intentions of this thesis with Santi Giovanni e Paolo being the resting place of many of the city's doges and the Frari retaining its choir screen. Santo Stefano is also larger and comes with a better set of archives than a smaller Gothic contemporary such as Santa Maria dei Carmini. Santo Stefano also provides a suitable companion and comparison to San Nicolò dei Mendicoli because they are such different buildings.

The final chapter of this study focuses on the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, which has similarities with San Moisè in terms of its lay involvement. However, the difference here is that the parish of San Nicolò was so poor that few of its residents were able to commission large pieces themselves. Instead, the contributions of a multitude of

residents were pooled together and it was the priests who decided on the key design changes to the church. The laity were thoroughly involved in the running of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli as can be attested by the number of *scuole* or confraternities that were based at the church and through the integral role they played in commissioning many of the renovations. The church itself is the quintessential Venetian parish church reformed. Built in Venice's Byzantine period, the church still retains many of its original features as well as many from each of the key architectural periods that followed.

As at San Moisè, patriarchal visitations, and the all-important Apostolic Visitation of 1581, are vital. At San Nicolò they show a church that changed significantly between each visitation, clearly demonstrating the seriousness with which the clergy and confraternities took the advice of the patriarchs and their positive and proactive engagement which brought about the changes quickly. The church was completely transformed, largely within a seventy year period, beginning with a new, dedicated, Chapel of the Sacrament, followed by a significant overhaul of the interior, ridding the church of clutter and obstruction and creating a new wooden cladding to bring cohesiveness to the inside, then adding new painting schemes, altars and further chapels.

The approach to refurbishments at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli is very different to that at Santo Stefano, which copies the bright white interiors of Palladio's churches. By cladding the church in wood and covering the walls in paintings, the priests and parishioners took a distinctly different attitude to reform, using a technique seen in *scuole grandi* buildings as well as the Doge's palace. It balances the traditional and familiar features of Venetian architecture that were of great importance and sentimentality to its priests and parishioners, and the modernising reforms of the Counter Reformation. It is a balance that I argue San Nicolò is successful in achieving – the church is proactive, even innovative in its reforming yet retains the identifying features that make the church the unique building that it still is today.

The amount of prior written material on each of these churches ranges from very little (San Moisè) to a lot (Santo Stefano). As such, archival research has provided a useful contribution to each of the chapters. For Santo Stefano and San Moisè there are detailed accounts written by eighteenth century scholars now preserved in the Museo Correr. For San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and San Moisè there are vital patriarchal visitation records and

observations by the Apostolic Visitation, now at the Archivio Curia Patriarcale, which provide a useful basis for the problems faced by each church and help account for when and where changes were made, as well as the reception such changes received. Venice's Archivio di Stato holds San Nicolò di Lido's church records which have provided much detail on the commissioning of features like the high altar, and an invaluable document on the incomplete church façade, which has not been considered in detail until now. These archival documents, along with the previous written accounts for each church, are combined with a rich collection of photographs taken by myself during numerous research trips to Venice to provide an essential visual companion to the written thesis. My photographs are complimented by older photographs, largely from the Fototeca of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, and various drawings, engravings paintings and maps of the churches in previous centuries which strengthen the visual aspect of this thesis further, allowing us to see many of the sixteenth and seventeenth century features in place before some were removed in the early twentieth century.

PART ONE: REBUILDING AND RENEWAL: NEW CHURCHES FOR A NEW AGE

CHAPTER ONE

SAN NICOLÒ DI LIDO

INTRODUCTION

In a city where the work of the architect Andrea Palladio is seen as the epitome of architectural achievement, the lack of academic attention on the church of San Nicolò di Lido is somewhat surprising. San Nicolò is an early seventeenth century building (constructed 1626-29) that in many ways emulates the core stylistic features of Palladio's two pre-eminent churches: San Giorgio Maggiore (constructed 1565-97) and the Redentore (constructed 1577-92). At the same time it has a number of unique aspects indicating that San Nicolò is not a mere copy of Palladio's designs, or of its other key influences: the churches of San Francesco della Vigna (constructed 1534-72) and San Nicolò da Tolentino (constructed 1590-1714). Throughout, there is the sense of a monastic community that thought carefully about the various features of the church (the high altar, the monks' choir, the chapels, etc.) and how they should be designed to best suit the priorities of the age. San Nicolò takes on both the popular architectural style as espoused by Palladio and Vincenzo Scamozzi, and also the preferences of the Counter Reform movement, acknowledging that the two do not need to be viewed as mutually exclusive. Thus, San Nicolò is a perfect case study to analyse both the key features of Counter Reformation monastic churches and also Palladio's legacy in Venice.

The main sources of information on the church of San Nicolò di Lido come from Venice's Archivio di Stato, which holds centuries worth of records on the church. Many of the *buste,* however, have significant water damage and are sadly illegible, but valuable information does survive, including letters from the monks asking permission to build a new church; as well as numerous contracts and details for various elements of the design, such as the high altar, retrochoir and the façade.

The twentieth century has seen a few small publications dedicated specifically to the church of San Nicolò di Lido. The oldest is Mario Hellmann's 1968 book *San Nicolò di Lido: nella storia, nella cronaca, nell'arte* which provides a rich account and goes beyond the history of the church building itself, providing historical details of surrounding features

such as the Jewish cemetery and the ancient bridge leading to the church, as well as an account of Goethe's visit.[141] Information on the church itself, however, is rather brief and is often more descriptive than analytical. The facts provided by Hellmann however, were expanded upon by Giorgio Cecconi in his 2004 book *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido: la fede, la storia, l'arte attorno al culto di San Nicolò al Lido di Venezia.*[142] Cecconi provides a more thorough and detailed account of the church and its architecture and focuses much attention on such features as the beautiful carvings of the seventeenth century choir stalls. It includes many diligently researched historical facts about the church but, like Hellmann's book, does not provide much analysis of any findings. Both books evidently drew much of their information about the early church from Flaminio Corner's well known eighteenth-century work *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello.*[143] Corner's account of the early church and of the finding (and verifying) of the bones of St Nicholas is exceptionally detailed but it supplies no information past the Medieval period.

These initial findings are most usefully furthered by Massimo Bisson in his 2007 doctoral thesis and his subsequent 2013 article. Bisson focused his research largely on the church's choir (and, in his thesis, those of other Cassinese Congregation buildings), giving some useful insight into the commissioning of, and incentives for, the high altar and the location of the church's three sets of saints' relics, as well as the church's distinctive retrochoir.[144] Bisson's work provides a generous foundation for my own research, as he considers the church as a work with many features of Counter Reform architecture, but does not look in any great detail at the chapels, the sculptures, the interior framework and the uncompleted façade (for which there is archival material documenting the monks' intentions). Nor does he look at how the building worked together as a whole – as is imperative for ascertaining the church's place in the history of seventeenth century Venetian architecture.

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141 Mario Hellmann, *San Nicolò di Lido: nella storia, nella cronaca, nell'arte*, Lido di Venezia: Istituto Tipografico Editoriale, 1968.
142 Giorgio Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido: la fede, la storia, l'arte. Attorno al culto di San Nicolò al Lido di Venezia*, Venezia: Comunità Parrocchiale S. Nicolò, 2004.
143 Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello,* Padua, 1758, 50-60.
144 Bisson, "'Voltar il coro et poner l'altar alla romana". Le trasformazioni dei cori nelle abbazie Cassinesi del Veneto: tradizione e innovazione nell'architettura ecclesiastica post-tridentina,' 2007; idem, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido', 159-170.

Of some value, too, is Licia Fabbiani's book *La fondazione monastica di San Nicolò di Lido (1053-1628)* which provides some key maps, drawings and floor plans for both the medieval and seventeenth century churches as well as a good understanding of the medieval church and monastic community.[145] Fabbiani's work develops the findings of a much earlier article by Mario Guiotto: 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia' which was published in 1948.[146] Guiotto, who had recently excavated the site, was responsible for the discovery of walls from the old church and monastery, which allowed scholars to piece together a floor plan of the church and gain an understanding of the building's interior of the early church, which had three altars, a mosaic floor and frescos on the façade (Figs 1, 2, 3).[147] There are, in addition, a few more generic works of interest on the Lido as a whole, which take in the church and include Giovanni Distefano's *Lido di Venezia: atlante storico* (which provides a number of useful old photographs); Charles Malagola's *Le Lido de Venise: à travers l'histoire*; Luigi Gallo's *Lido di Venezia: abazia S. Nicolò* and Giorgio and Patrizia Pecorai's *Lido di Venezia: oggi e nella storia.*[148]

San Nicolò's location on the Lido, a half-hour crossing from the main islands of Venice, and its lack of an eye-catching monumental façade perhaps account for the dearth of serious literature on the building, despite the fact that, as this study will attest, the church is of exceptional interest and importance to our understanding of the influence of the Counter Reformation in Venice and of the priorities guiding architectural design in Venice during the seventeenth century. San Nicolò can be readily compared with Palladio's churches of San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore, especially since, like these, its interior has remained largely unchanged (albeit for financial reasons) since its initial conception so that it did not undergo a heavy High-Baroque refurbishment - unlike the slightly later church of Santa Maria di Nazareth (otherwise known as the Scalzi).

To understand why the decision was taken to have the church of San Nicolò completely rebuilt in the early seventeenth century, this chapter will first trace the church's history as

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145 Licia Fabbiani, *La fondazione monastica di San Nicolò di Lido (1053-1628)*, Venice: Comune di Venezia, Assessorato Affari Istituzionali, 1989.
146 Mario Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 106, Part II, (1948): 176-193.
147 Ibid, 176-193.
148 Giovanni Distefano, *Lido di Venezia: atlante storico,* Supernova, 2013; Charles Malagola, *Le Lido de Venise à travers l'histoire*, Venice: Marcel Norsa, 1909; Luigi Gallo, *Lido di Venezia: abazia S. Nicolò,* Istituto Tipografico Editoriale, 1964; Giorgio e Patrizia Pecorai, *Lido di Venezia, oggi e nella storia*, Venice: Edizioni Atiesse, 2007.

well as noting how the new church thrived after its rebuilding and then survived Napoleon's suppression largely intact. It will also reflect on the importance of the Cassinese Congregation, considering the roles both of the small group of monks that lived on the Lido and of the wider governing body which also oversaw other Congregation churches in the region, in particular, those of San Giorgio Maggiore and Santa Giustina in Padua. An examination of the key design features of the new church – the floor plan, interior, high altar, retrochoir, chapels, altarpieces and intended façade – will then form the bulk of the remainder of this chapter.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

San Nicolò di Lido is the first of two churches in this study dedicated to St Nicholas of Myra (or of Bari), the other being San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, one of the older churches that was heavily renovated during the period in question rather than fully rebuilt. St Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors, had been a highly popular saint throughout Europe from well before the sixteenth century, and especially so in the maritime city of Venice where the economy relied on the successful navigation of the oceans. It is no coincidence that these two churches are located at the western and eastern poles of the city, guarding it from both elemental and human invasion.

While San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was the hub of the thriving fishing community of the Nicolotti, San Nicolò di Lido was built up alongside one of Venice's most prominent fortresses, being located where the mouth of the lagoon meets the Adriatic and thus at one of the city's weakest points of defence (Fig. 4). Yet this is one of the reasons why the Benedictines chose to base themselves there when they arrived in Venice in the eleventh century. When expanding their monastic communities throughout the Catholic world, they were known for their strategic planting of monks in areas of particular need, and often situating themselves next to fortresses.[149]

In the early days of Venice's existence, most monastic communities were based on islands on the outskirts of the main area of the city.[150] These, however, were largely engulfed as the city increased in size, and newer monasteries began to be founded on

[149] Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 21.
[150] In particular, monastic communities were positioned on islands that surrounded the Realtine archipelago, one of the earliest focal points for the city of Venice. Areli Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 389.

outlying islands. Areli Marina recently argued that these monastic islands formed a sort of 'spiritual defence system' which protected the city from the dangers outside the lagoon, and San Nicolò di Lido, although slightly outside this circle, also contributed to such an aim.[151] The vast amount of space on the little-inhabited island that was acquired by the monks of San Nicolò allowed them to lease out land to farmers who would grow food and wine for both themselves and the monks.[152] Early maps and Guiotto's archaeological findings show that the monastic land was situated close to the northern edge of the Lido, running alongside the *strada commune* on the water's edge (Figs 5, 6).[153]

The first church and monastery are believed to have been constructed in 1053, a date provided by Flaminio Corner, although, as Giorgio Cecconi speculates, there may have been an oratory in this area for some time before the church was built.[154] Records for the site, however, go back to 1043, which may mean that they pertain to the oratory, but this also draws attention to the uncertainty surrounding the dating of the first church. Indeed, in his 1964 account, Luigi Gallo was of the opinion that the church originated in 1044 and that it was the monastery which was built in 1053.[155] However, Cecconi and the majority of scholars – including Massimo Bisson in the most recent research on the church - have tended to follow Corner's pronouncement that the first church dated from 1053, and that it was commissioned from Sergio, the first Benedictine abbot.[156] What is certain is that the building was completed by 1063 when records show that the Bishop of Padua came to consecrate the church.[157]

It also seems likely, as Corner had described, that the Benedictines chose to dedicate their site to St Nicholas from the very beginning, since this was certainly where the Venetian government chose to place the bones of St Nicholas just a few decades after

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[151] Each island would include a church, bell tower and monastic dormitories, and most would also have land to grow food and wine. The islands included Sant' Elena (east), San Michele (north), San Francesco del Deserto (northeast), San Giorgio in Alga (southeast), San Giorgio Maggiore (south), San Lazzaro (southwest) among others. The monasteries of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and San Zaccaria were among the first to be subsumed into the greater Venetian archipelago. Ibid, 389-390.
[152] Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 22.
[153] Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' 176-193.
[154] Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 21.
[155] Gallo, *Lido di Venezia: abazia S. Nicolò,* 15.
[156] Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido,' 159; Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello,* 50; Hellmann, *San Nicolò di Lido,* 21.
[157] Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' 177.

the church's conception.[158] Following the successful attempt by the residents of Bari, in 1087 to acquire the relics of St Nicholas from the city of Myra in modern-day Turkey, which was where Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, had been buried, the Venetians themselves sailed there in 1096 and took possession of some remaining fragments of bone, which they then placed in the care of the Benedictine monks of San Nicolò di Lido.[159] According to Corner's detailed account, while searching for the bones of the saint, the Venetians also came across the bones of his uncle - another St Nicholas – and those of St Theodore. These bones were also collected and taken to the church of San Nicolò di Lido.[160]

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

As Corner relates, the original church of the eleventh century was built with financial assistance from three men named Domenico: Doge Domenico Contarini, a second Domenico Contarini who was Bishop of Olivolo and Castello, and Domenico Marengo, Patriarch of Grado.[161] In 1134 the church was modified to enable the installation of a crypt which was built to house the relics of St Nicholas and the two other saints that had been acquired: Saint Nicholas *zio* (known as 'uncle' since he was indeed the uncle of St Nicholas of Myra), and St Theodore.[162] Further additions and amendments then took place after 19 April 1316 when the Venetian government agreed to contribute fifty per-cent of the funds to restore the church which was now in a poor condition after years of weather erosion.[163]

The layout of this early building was determined during Guiotto's excavations of the 1940s which showed that it was designed with a basilica plan. The nave and side aisles all

158 Corner allocates the majority of his section on the church of San Nicolò di Lido on a very detailed account of the Venetians decision, journey and encounters while collecting the relics of Saint Nicholas, as well as an equally detailed account of the various occasions which took place over the centuries to verify the relics and reassure the people that the bones were indeed those of Saint Nicholas. Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello,* 50-60.

159 In 1992 the relics of San Nicolò, held above the high altar were tested and compared with those in Bari. It was concluded that the Lido bones came from the same person meaning that both San Nicolò di Lido and San Nicola di Bari could claim to hold the relics of Saint Nicholas. Bari holds 75% of the relics while San Nicolò di Lido has about 25%. Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 10.

160 The church does hold relics from a number of other saints which are listed in Corner's account, but further details are unknown as they were not perceived to be as important as the three that they reclaimed from Myra. Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello,* 52, 60.

161 Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 12; Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello,* 50.

162 It should be noted that in Venice, the church of San Salvatore also claims to hold the relics of Saint Theodore.

163 Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 38.

ended in semi-circular apses and were separated by two rows of five columns, holding up arches and topped with Corinthian capitals (Figs 2, 3, 7, 8).[164] As with many churches of its day (indeed we will find in the later chapter that the medieval church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was very similar) the building is thought to have had Byzantine features and to have been broadly similar to Santa Maria Assunta on Torcello (Fig. 9), the Giudecca's Sant' Eufemia and San Giovanni Decollato (otherwise known as San Zan Degolà) in the Santa Croce *sestiere*.[165] According to Guiotto the method of connecting the beams between the arches was like that used in Torcello and the polychrome mosaic floor – which was structured with geometric patterns based on flower and animal designs - had similarities with the floors of San Marco, S. Donato Murano and Santa Maria Assunta on Torcello.[166] Frescoes unearthed by Guiotto, and identified as being part of the façade structure, suggest that the church may have been entered through a front porch, much like those of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and San Giacomo di Rialto.[167] Guiotto strengthens his hypothesis by making reference to a sketch of the church from 1554 (now in the Archivio di Stato) which shows it with what does indeed appear to be a small front porch (Fig. 5).[168] He also has reason to believe that the interior was very colourful, being made up of bi-coloured bricks and painted frescoes.[169]

While most of the material from the medieval church was recycled when it was rebuilt in the seventeenth century, some remnants – such as parts of the mosaic floor – were left untouched and just buried beneath a new walkway connecting the cloister with the new church (Fig. 2).[170] Further explorations in the 1980s, combined with careful restoration in 2002, have allowed some of that first church - including part of the rich mosaic floor of the original nave and a number of eleventh century Corinthian columns – to be viewed today (Fig. 3).[171] These various discoveries have allowed historians to make further, more concrete comparisons with Torcello's Santa Maria Assunta which is notable for its mosaics (Fig. 9).[172] The monastery buildings were then restored in the early fourteenth

[164] For more information on these aspects, Guiotto's article expands on their findings and comparisons in greater detail. Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' 176-193.
[165] Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 38; Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' 188-193.
[166] The information on the design of the tiles in shapes of foliage and animals comes from Stefano Magno's fourteenth century account. Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' 183-184.
[167] At the time of Guiotto's discovery, the fresco from the façade was the earliest example of Venetian mural painting. Ibid, 186-187; 191.
[168] Ibid, 187.
[169] Ibid, 192.
[170] Ibid, 181.
[171] Guiotto, 'L'antica chiesa di S. Nicolò del Lido di Venezia,' 176-193; Hellmann, *San Nicolò di Lido,* 25.
[172] Hellmann, *San Nicolò di Lido,* 24.

century but, by the late fifteenth century, they needed a complete rebuilding which took place between 1496 and 1585.[173] From all this, it is clear that, in its early days, the church was a wealthy one, partly due to the land that it possessed for farming and the generous contributions it received from both the Venetian government and Benedictine communities. The church, however, was a victim of an earthquake (1285), high tides (1314), and general deterioration and decay over the centuries, so that, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, its condition had again become dilapidated and dangerous.[174]

THE CHURCH REBUILT

It was in the 1620s when the old church building was deemed to be no longer fit for purpose. In an archival letter from around 1622 the monks wrote about preparing the church for Ascension Day and the coming of the 'Most Serene Prince' who would take part in the Ascension Mass.[175] However the preparations for the event were marred by scandal when the 'ruinous state' ('stato rovinoso') of the church became apparent as stones and mosaics fell onto the doge's throne and concern was raised about whether it was an appropriate place for 'the corpse of Saint Nicholas a very eminent saint and protector of this Serenissima' ('il Corpo di San Nicolò santo tanto eminenti, et prottetir di questa serenissima…').[176] It was decided that it was necessary to build a new church, and the letter, to the order's president, details money already raised: 11000 ducats, with 6000 advanced by the Venetian government, in the hope that the president would give permission for the church to be rebuilt.[177] A response from 10 July 1622 confirms that the monks were to be allowed to rebuild the church, in consultation with experts and according to the Congregation's constitutions, with support from monks at Santa Giustina and San Giorgio Maggiore.[178]

An invoice from 1628 demonstrates how far the masons had already come on the project; with work already completed on the vaulting, the chancel, the chapels, the two sacristies, and the choir.[179] A further invoice from 1629 lists both Contin and one of the bricklayers, Mattio Citroni stipulating for more work on the church including the altars,

173 Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 22.
174 Ibid, 13.
175 Despite the work being undated, it comes in a volume of letters after one dated in 1611 and just before many that are dated from 1626, so one might assume that the volume follows a sequential order. ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 12r.
176 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 12r.
177 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 12r.
178 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 13.
179 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 21r-25r.

the main entrance, the church walls, the pilasters, the steps, the windows and the cornices.[180] It is clear that work was progressing quickly and in 1629 work also began in earnest on the high altar itself, which was produced by Cosimo Fanzago.[181]

The majority of the work was completed by 1630 and the relics were moved into their final resting place on the high altar on Ascension Day 1634 in a great ceremony which included a high Mass sung by the choir of Saint Mark's.[182] Although the main body of the church was complete by this date, the commissioning of the altars continued with the second altar only being completed some time after 1638.[183]

The rebuilding, therefore, presented an opportunity for the Benedictine monks of the Cassinese Congregation to design a perfect Counter Reformation church from scratch. What exists today is faithful to this design except for the exterior, which was never finally realised in the way originally intended (Figs 10, 11). Today the incomplete brick façade just accommodates the urn of Doge Domenico Contarini, one of three founders whose financial assistance significantly aided the building of the first church. A marble façade was intended by the monks but it was sadly not completed, a matter which will be considered in more detail later in this chapter. The adjoining bell tower to the left is a part of the early seventeenth century rebuilding and it once held bells that were consecrated in 1528, although these were replaced in 1939 (Fig. 12).[184] The design for the new church had envisaged two bell towers, one on either side of the building, but the second was never constructed.[185]

The church's interior, however, is largely faithful to the original project. It boasts a modest-sized single nave with three uniformly designed chapels approached from three steps along each side (Figs 13, 14). Each chapel is gated with wrought iron and was originally adorned with a small statue of St Nicholas, although several of these have long since been removed (Fig. 15). At the end is a presbytery preceded by further steps containing the high altar (1629-30) designed by Cosimo Fanzago and beyond is a retrochoir with twenty-seven beautifully carved wooden choir stalls depicting scenes

[180] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 34r-39r.
[181] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 40r-42v.
[182] Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 166.
[183] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 110r.
[184] Hellmann, *San Nicolò di Lido,* 102.
[185] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 14v.

from St Nicholas's life (Figs 16, 17, 18, 19). The internal walls are a crisp white, unornamented except for a number of niches with statues depicting doctors of the church and the evangelists. The inner façade is topped with a frescoed lunette, (dated around 1673) depicting an allegorical scene featuring Saint Nicholas by Girolamo Pellegrini (Figs 20, 21).[186] The round arches of the chapels and the use of Corinthian pilasters, carrying a cornice that travels almost uninterruptedly around the whole interior, draws on contemporary Venetian examples, as will be analysed in more detail later in this chapter. The church is lit by two rows of thermal windows (one in the chapels and the other in the clerestory of the nave above), a window type brought to Venice by Palladio and which then proliferated in Venetian church architecture – in both newly built churches and many that were renovated in following times (Fig. 22). In all, despite its unfinished façade, the church is the embodiment of Venetian church architecture of the Counter Reformation period.

The church remained in use until the later eighteenth century. Foreshadowing Napoleon's more widespread monastic suppression, however, a new decree from the Venetian Senate required monasteries to have at least twelve monks over the age of twenty-one in residence, and since the monastery at San Nicolò di Lido had fewer than that number, it was suppressed in 1770.[187] While much of the building stayed intact, there is evidence to suggest that some of the chapel altarpieces were removed during this time. The monastery then became a military compound until 1926 when Franciscan monks were allowed to move in and make the site a religious one once again. In 1953 San Nicolò became a parish church, which is still active, and open for services, while the monastery has since become an EIUC Human Rights Village.[188]

THE ROLE OF THE CASSINESE CONGREGATION IN THE COUNTER REFORMATION

In 1454, the monks at San Nicolò di Lido became part of the Cassinese Congregation, a proactive reforming branch of the Benedictine order which was instrumental in making San Nicolò such a major example of Venetian architecture of the post-Tridentine

[186] The archival document commissioning Pellegrini is dated from 1673 so we can assume that Pellegrini completed the work either in that year or the subsequent few years. ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 132r.
[187] The law came about after a long and expensive war in the East which depleted state funds and one of the ways the Senate chose to cut costs elsewhere was to reduce the amount that they spent on funding both their parish and monastic communities. Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 53.
[188] https://eiuc.org/human-rights-village/the-village.html [accessed 25th July 2016].

period.[189] The efforts of the Cassinese Congregation during the Council of Trent were little appreciated until Barry Collett's *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua.*[190] This work demonstrates that the theological teachings of the Cassinese Congregation were widely discussed during the Council of Trent, and shines a light into the Congregation's integral position in the reform movement. Previous scholarly attention had largely been focused on the impact of the new reform-driven religious orders, such as the Jesuits and Theatines, which were set up from scratch during this time, while the older orders were perceived to be part of the reason that the Council of Trent was needed, and were seen as less engaged, or at least slower to engage, with the reform process.[191] As this chapter will elaborate, this was clearly not the case with the Cassinese Congregation who were key players in the Counter Reformation and this translated into their ecclesiastical architecture.[192]

The decisions made in the building of churches for the newer orders are of course vital to understanding how the Counter Reformation played out in architecture, however, in Venice these orders took longer to establish themselves, or were otherwise linked to State sponsored projects and thus were not in full control of the architectural aesthetic of their ecclesiastical buildings. Both new orders and others such as the Cassinese Congregation were providing fresh solutions, as well as uncompromising devotion and loyalty to the Catholic Church, and proving to be pivotal to the success, generally and in Venice, of the Counter Reformation. Thus the Cassinese Congregation stands out as having the same mind-set and ambition for change as these new reforming orders. With regard to the movement in Venice, having rebuilt San Giorgio Maggiore at the end of the sixteenth century, and then following with San Nicolò di Lido in the 1620s, the Congregation provides a key example of how, in Venice, modernising, reform-driven monastic orders were crucial arbiters of Counter-Reformation-style architecture. Indeed,

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[189] Luigi Gallo, suggests that in response to the crisis that was going on throughout the Catholic Church in the fifteenth century the Abbot of San Nicolò di Lido, Bartolomeo III, met with the abbot of Santa Giustina, Lodovico Barbaro, who recommended that they join the newly created Congregation of Santa Giustina and that the meeting took place after 1451 and was followed by San Nicolò becoming part of the Congregation. Gallo's account is, however, slightly problematic since it appears that he is confusing Lodovico Barbaro with Ludovico Barbo who died in 1443. Gallo, *Lido di Venezia*, 46-47.

[190] Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

[191] It is clear that many of the religious orders stagnated and became too comfortable in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Luigi Mezzari and Paola Vismara, *La chiesa tra Rinascimento e Illuminismo*, Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 2006, 56.

[192] Massimo Bisson of course has also made some headway in demonstrating the innovations of the Cassinese Congregation with their organ design. Bisson, "'Voltar il coro et poner l'altar alla romana.'" 2007; idem, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 159-170.

as will be detailed below, the Congregation's architectural response was quite innovative, and they were the group, with the commissioning of the new church at San Giorgio Maggiore in 1565, that finally gave Andrea Palladio the opportunity to design his first full building in Venice.

One of the reasons that the Cassinese Congregation came into being was because of their desire for a more rigorously spiritual lifestyle than was being followed then by the Benedictine Order more generally. By the start of the fifteenth century, the number of Benedictine monks had declined significantly due to the lax guidance of worldly abbots. However, the Benedictines were blocked from serious reform by the tradition of *in commendam* which was the appointment of abbots by the pope who could easily promote and remove abbots, including bringing in those from other religious orders;[193] and naturally, this system was prone to corruption, bribery and the whims of the particular presiding pope. The problem was exacerbated by another Benedictine tradition of having autonomous houses, meaning that they were all distinctly separate from one another, and were not particularly bound together except for their adherence to the Rule of St. Benedict, and for many, that adherence was flexible and full of compromises.[194]

In 1412, the Venetian noble and newly promoted abbot of Santa Giustina in Padua, Lodovico Barbo, decided to bring his monastery and its church more closely in line with the exact requirements of the Rule of St. Benedict, and eventually created a community of like-minded monasteries to help facilitate such reforms throughout the Benedictine Order.[195] Although Barbo had started his monastic life as a prior in the Augustinian Canons Regular of San Giorgio in Alga, he had been appointed Benedictine abbot of Santa Giustina *in commendam* by Pope Gregory XII, Gregory having made this choice because he was aware of the particular corruption at Santa Giustina under their previous abbot, and hoping that Barbo would be able to reform the monastery.[196]

Despite opposition from the resident monks at Santa Giustina, in a matter of years Barbo had turned around their fortunes and the number of monks there had grown to over two hundred, and, at this point, with Santa Giustina's reform being deemed a

193 Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars,* 1.
194 Ibid, 2.
195 Ibid.
196 Barbo's transition from the Augustinian Canons Regular of San Giorgio in Alga to the Benedictines and the abbacy of Santa Giustina took place in 1409. Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars,* 2.

success, he was able to entice other Benedictine monasteries to join together in a new Congregation.[197] By 1421, four other houses – in Verona, Bassano, Pavia and Genoa – had joined the group which was known at the time as the Congregation of Santa Giustina.[198] The group stipulated that abbots and the congregation president were to be elected annually by a chapter-general, while a later pope, Eugenius IV, decreed that all Congregation monasteries would still be subject to the Holy See to prevent local ecclesiastic authorities from interfering too much in the reforms that were taking place.[199] While there was of course dissent and much else that could have seriously hindered the Congregation, by the 1430s they were bringing great swathes of Benedictine houses under their banner, including, in 1429, the Venetian monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore.[200] It was only later, in 1504, when the monastery of Monte Cassino joined the group, that the name was revised to the Cassinese Congregation.[201]

Barbo's initiative partially reshaped the Benedictine order.[202] At its peak, the Cassinese Congregation took in one hundred and ninety monastic communities, seventy-six of which could be described as large monasteries, and at least three thousand monks.[203] Naturally, this meant that the group grew very wealthy, and in Venice it was seen as one of the more appealing religious orders for patrician sons to be admitted into. Much of this money was ploughed into new churches and amassing large libraries, meaning that the Congregation gained a reputation for biblical and patristic scholarship, which was used to shape not only the religious life of the monks in the order itself but also their approach to the problems faced by the Catholic Church through the doctrines of Protestantism.[204] The Cassinese Congregation's input into the Council of Trent is not well known, since, ultimately, it was not taken up by the Catholic Church, indeed, it was

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197 Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars*, 2-3.
198 The Congregation was ratified in 1419 with a bull from Pope Martino V under the name Congregazione d'Unitate. Massimo Bisson, 'Santa Giustina di Padova e San Giorgio Maggiore di Venezia: musica, architettura e liturgia in due grandi monasteri Benedettini del Veneto,' in *I luoghi e la musica*, edited by Fabrizio Pezzopane, Rome: ISMEZ, 2009, 129.
199 Cooper, *Palladio's Venice*, 110.
200 For more details on the order's expansion see Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars,* 1-10.
201 Christian Adolf Isermeyer, 'Le chiese del Palladio in rapporto al culto,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 10, (1968), 44-45.
202 More information on this, along with the reform movements that were undertaken in some of the other older monastic orders – including the Dominicans and Observant Franciscans see: Mezzari and Vismara, *La chiesa tra rinascimento e illuminismo*, 56-61.
203 Bisson, 'Santa Giustina di Padova e San Giorgio Maggiore di Venezia,' 129-130.
A comprehensive list of all of the Cassinese Congregation's monasteries and their known resident monks between 1409 and 1699 can be consulted: *Matricula monachorum congregationis casinensis ordinis S. Benedicti*. Vol. I: 1409-1699, Cesena: Centro Storico Benedettino Italiano, 1983.
204 Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars*, 8.

rejected quite firmly as heresy.[205] Their teachings were very different to those of other orders since they took their inspiration from the Greek Fathers, such as Chrysostom and the Fathers of Antioch, whose teaching they used at Trent to propose that the debate between whether humans needed grace alone or grace by works to be justified was not a key issue, and that instead our predicament lay in our mortality, and that both works and free will were necessary for salvation.[206]

Barry Collett argues that after their failure to convince the other delegations at the Council of Trent of the merits of their proposals, the Congregation started to lose their scholarly reputation and generally began a decline that lasted until the suppression of the order by Napoleon in the late eighteenth century.[207] Mary-Ann Winkelmes further posits that this was also the moment when the previous cohesion that could be seen in Cassinese Congregation church architecture started to wain.[208] Nevertheless, it was still a force to be reckoned with until well into the seventeenth century.

Winkelmes's comprehensive analysis of Cassinese Congregation church architecture is also pertinent to this study. She demonstrates that between 1490 and the 1540s the Congregation developed a characteristic architectural style which was common throughout the order, something that she argues demonstrated 'an unusual level of historical self-consciousness'.[209] The nature of Congregation as a 'unified group patron', with their internal communication networks and ever-expanding wealth, allowed the propagation of distinctive features of design and decoration that would form the basis of their architectural style.[210] The Congregation's popularity, before the downturn at the Council of Trent, meant that its members were able to hire the most esteemed architects and *capomaestri* who would attend to, and be constrained by, their wide-ranging architectural knowledge and their specific recommendations.[211] Even Andrea Palladio, working at San Giorgio Maggiore, was reined in; features of the church such as the

[205] Mary-Ann Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform: Illuminated, Cassinese Reform-Style Churches in Renaissance Italy,' *Annali di Architettura* 8, (1996): 62.
[206] Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars*, 26-27.
[207] Ibid, 261.
[208] Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 62.
[209] Ibid, 61.
[210] Ibid, 62.
[211] Much of the time the Congregation used local *muratori* (masons or builders) rather than architects, giving them pre-approved designs to work from to avoid the issue of single authorship (which was not in keeping with the Cassinese Congregation's cooperative decision-making structure) and to keep control of the project with the monks themselves. Ibid, 63-64.

retrochoir are thought to be a result of the express desire of the monks rather than the initial intentions of Palladio himself.[212]

The key design features of Cassinese Congregation churches from the 1490s onwards included the use of domes, especially a quincunx arrangement, as employed previously in the ducal chapel of San Marco. Many of the larger Congregation churches were rebuilt or renovated to include domes including Santa Maria in Praglia (Fig. 23); San Benedetto, Ferrara (Fig. 24); and of course Santa Giustina itself (Fig. 25). Winkelmes argues that the decision to design domed churches came from the Congregation's interest in, and emphasis on, the teachings of the Greek Fathers.[213] The other identifying features of Cassinese Congregation churches were classical features and proportions, and white interiors which were uncluttered and full of light. The classical features of this style were of course not synonymous solely with Congregation churches, and indeed it is clear that much was adopted from observant Franciscan churches and the architectural heritage of Brunelleschi and Alberti more generally.[214] Further inspiration came from the Cistercians who built bright, light-filled, clean-lined interiors to their churches because they, supposedly, embodied the metaphorical illumination of God.[215] The Cassinese Congregation, however, emphasised the connection of light with God far more conspicuously than the Cistercians, using large, clear-glass windows combined with polished white surfaces throughout their churches to make each interior bold and bright throughout; whereas the Cistercians had used clear-glass windows but in smaller numbers and sizes, to create a range of bright and dark areas.[216] In the 1490s and the early sixteenth century, the Cassinese interior was very different from the dingy, enigmatic, stained-glass-windowed interiors of most monastic churches, and the order's mother church of Santa Giustina, begun in the 1520s, was perhaps the apotheosis of this style.[217]

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[212] Christian Adolf Isermeyer, 'Il primo progetto del Palladio per S. Giorgio secondo il modello del 1565,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 22, (1980): 264-265; Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 63.

[213] Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 67-71.

[214] Winkelmes expands on these connections and comparisons in much greater detail. Ibid, 71-77.

[215] Ibid, 75.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Many of the Cassinese Congregation's nunneries were also reformed during this peak period of activity. There were some differences between their churches and the Congregation's monastic ones, but yet again, there was a sense of cohesion and communication between different Cassinese convents. In the 1540s, the conventual church of Santi Cosma e Damiano on Venice's Giudecca was rebuilt in a classicising style. The interior was brightly lit and the nuns intended to include a dome, which, for financial reasons, they were never able to complete. There are many similarities with the Ognissanti and Santa Croce della Giudecca,

Winkelmes argues that, from 1547, this coherent style began to peter out very quickly, with Santa Giustina being the only church under construction, and earlier churches began to be modified in ways that did not fit the Congregation's previous reform aesthetic, as exemplified by San Benedetto in Ferrara's fresco decoration, and by the introduction of retro-choirs in many of the Congregation's churches, including Santa Giustina itself.[218] Yet, despite their fading popularity after Trent, the Cassinese Congregation remained at the forefront in the use of innovative architecture. Retro-choirs were, arguably, a reform-driven feature, although they were a late addition to the architectural innovations of this period.[219] Palladio was to include a retrochoir as a late addition to his original design for San Giorgio Maggiore, and the Congregation also remodelled many already completed churches to include them.

San Giorgio Maggiore thus seems to fit the style guidelines for Congregation churches very closely, despite the late inclusion of a retro-choir into the design. Winkelmes puts this down to a 'temporary effort' to re-establish the Congregation's former sense of identity through its architectural style.[220] Yet one could also argue, that San Nicolò di Lido follows a similar style - despite not being large enough to suit any domes which, by the seventeenth century, had become almost ubiquitous in church design. A further link between the two churches is that both appear to have featured red interior arches (either brick or painted), even if this, again, seems to be a departure from the usual Cassinese Congregation aesthetic (Figs 26, 27, 28).[221]

Some aspects of Winkelmes's analysis of the Cassinese Congregation's distinctive architectural style may seem a little forced since many features are shared by churches of other orders, and are common to what many architects were doing at the time. Nevertheless, it still appears clear that Cassinese ideology was represented as much by its

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both of which were also attached to the Congregation. Despite the style chosen by Santi Cosma e Damiano being slightly out-dated by the time it was built, Benjamin Paul believes the reason for its choice was due to the Congregation's failures at Trent and the desire to demonstrate their unity and continued adherence to the Congregation's ideals. Paul, *Nuns and Reform Art in Early Modern Venice*, 60-140.

[218] Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 80.

[219] While there are pre-Tridentine examples of retrochoirs, their increasing popularity in the late sixteenth century can certainly be linked with church reform as they removed monastic choirs from blocking lay access to the high altar. Neither Borromeo or the Tridentine decrees stipulated that they be used so it appears that they became a natural solution organically. Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610', 171.

[220] Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 80.

[221] This is a factor which will be discussed in greater detail in the 'Interior' section of this chapter.

architecture as by its teaching. The Congregation was sharp at spotting key architectural trends (and the spiritual motivations behind them) before others and making them a common requirement for all of their churches. It is also clear that the Congregation's architectural aesthetic did not just disappear after 1547, although I would argue that by that stage it is harder to determine whether certain architectural features were included because they were stipulated by the Congregation, or simply because they were now accepted and widespread in church architecture. Many of the features that the Cassinese Congregation used in their churches were later appropriated by Carlo Borromeo – among others – for his *Instructiones,* and therefore promulgated even further throughout the ecclesiastic architecture of the Catholic world.[222]

That the requirement for all of the Congregation's churches to follow a common architectural aesthetic spread so rapidly is partly due to the fact that from about 1490 churches and monasteries were often entirely rebuilt.[223] In 1490, moreover, new legislation was introduced that required each monastery to submit both a plan-drawing and model to be approved before any building could go ahead:

> It is established that regarding the erection of buildings in every monastery of our congregation in general, and specifically regarding the construction of buildings in the Tiburtine community, Ravenna, Ferrara, and Maguzano, first drawings shall be made, and after these have been diligently considered, models shall be made subsequently for the judgment of the father president and of the visitors along with the two additional prelates of our congregation.[224]

As this chapter will later demonstrate when we consider the rebuilding of San Nicolò di Lido in more detail, this system must still have been in place – to some extent at least – in the 1620s, because the monks at San Nicolò were constantly sending letters to their superiors at Santa Giustina with explanations and requests for their new building. Winkelmes stresses that the internal communication channels that the Cassinese

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[222] Evelyn Carole Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae, 1577: A Translation with Commentary and Analysis*, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1980.
[223] Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 64.
[224] The original Latin text reads: 'Conclusum est ut pro edificiis erigendis in omnibus nostre congregationis monasteriis in genere, et in specie pro edificiis in Tiburtina civitate, Ravenne, Ferrarie et Maguzani, faciendis, prius dessigna fiant, quibus diligentissime consideratis, postea fiant modelli, ad arbitrium tamen patris presidentis et visitatorum, adiunctis duobus aliis prelatis nostre congregationis.' (From T. Leccisotti, *Congregationis S. Iustinae de Padua O.S.B. ordinations capitulorum generalium parte II* (1475-1504), Miscellanea Cassinese 35, Montecassino 1970, 58). Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 64, no. 29.

Congregation relied on from the end of the fifteenth century were speedy and efficient, with great accuracy, such that the 1490 ruling was circulated and enacted rapidly throughout the various members of the Congregation.[225] There were many ways that information was spread among the order, one of the most successful being the requirement of representatives from each monastery to attend the annual meetings of the General Chapter, the policy discussions and decisions from this being then recorded in their various individual *Ordinationes* – the congregational policy manuals that were kept in every Congregation monastery.[226]

Other information that was recorded during these meetings included financial reports, which meant every monastery was aware of all the building projects being undertaken by the Congregation, with relevant files also documenting the projects that were receiving funding from a central Congregation treasury (built up by the annual dues that came from each monastery). In addition, the representatives at the General Chapter were party to decisions that were made over individual building projects.[227] Anything not written down in each monastery's *Ordinationes* could well have been passed on orally by the representatives from the General Chapter once they had returned home to their own monasteries. In between the annual General Chapter meetings it is also clear that individual monasteries were keeping in frequent contact with each other, as is attested to by the letters from other monasteries sent to San Giorgio Maggiore, which appears to have been where the Congregation's central treasury was located.[228] Alongside these official records and requests were the letters that flowed between monks and monasteries discussing various projects and, furthermore, there were the frequent visits from monks who gave advice on any plans and models that a monastery was preparing as part of a rebuilding project.[229]

Strong communication was a key feature of the most successful reform driven orders. Orders such as the Jesuits shared not only information but also drawings and designs for their churches, which is why a distinct Jesuit style – based largely on the Gesù in Rome –

[225] Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 64-65.
[226] Ibid, 65.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] An abundance of such letters between monks throughout the Congregation still survives. Many are rich with detail regarding building projects and descriptions of church interiors. Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 65.

emerged. Christian Isermeyer further argues that good communication combined with a clear hierarchy, and involving monks from all communities, often led to a consensus over architectural style, such that it is often possible to track and explain similarities in architectural (as well as liturgical) features in monastic churches in a given period of its history.[230] Winkelmes has demonstrated how this applies in particular to the Cassinese Congregation's architectural aesthetic.

Despite the waning of the order's influence after they failed to convince the Council of Trent of the merits of their approach to the theological problems that the Church was facing, and the relaxation of their previously stringent architectural guidelines, the order did not decline completely. Indeed, with the rebuilding of San Nicolò di Lido, we see that strong levels of communication were maintained with San Giorgio Maggiore and Santa Giustina, along with a contingent reciprocity of ideas and expertise. This is particularly evident from the fact that San Nicolò was the first Congregation church to be built specifically with a retro-choir from the beginning but was then followed at Santa Giustina where the monks then used the same architect – Francesco Contin - to have their interior reshaped so that a new retro-choir could be built there too.

After 1547 it is certainly clear that communication and the sharing of ideas were still operating, at least to an extent, between the monastic houses of the Congregation. Paolo Veronese, for example, was commissioned to paint the *Wedding Feast at Cana* for the refectory at San Giorgio Maggiore after having produced works for Cassinese churches in Verona and Mantua, and before beginning his high altarpiece at Santa Giustina.[231] San Nicolò di Lido, San Giorgio Maggiore and Santa Giustina all have the further advantage of being situated close to each other, with both San Giorgio Maggiore (as treasury) and Santa Giustina (as the mother church of the Congregation) being two of the most dominant churches in the order. San Giorgio Maggiore and Santa Giustina worked very closely together and it is known that abbots would often first be abbot of one before moving on to become the abbot of the other.[232] Such sharing of abbots would have strengthened the relationship, communication and coordination between the two churches and the nearby abbot of San Nicolò (a post which was held for three years)

[230] Isermeyer, 'Le chiese del Palladio in rapporto al culto,' 45.
[231] Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 111.
[232] Ibid, 121.

would clearly have benefitted from that close connections between these two most important of the order's churches.[233]

Although the requirement to stay true to a specific Cassinese Congregation design aesthetic was no longer so heavily enforced, the letters from San Nicolò to the order's superiors at Santa Giustina demonstrate that they still had a strong input into the decision-making processes. Massimo Bisson argues that it was 'probably natural for a smaller community, such as [at San Nicolò], to be attracted to the customs and innovations of larger ones.'[234] However I believe that the matter is not as simple as this. While it is true that the monks at San Nicolò di Lido regularly consulted their superiors for guidance and were still required to request permission for their various projects, the church's architecture is also innovative, finding new solutions to the specific architectural problems that were identified; which demonstrates something more than the monks' diligent obedience to their monastic superiors. The decision to include a retrochoir from the beginning, and its design by Francesco Contin, for example, shows how San Nicolò di Lido also provided inspiration for its superiors in the Congregation, demonstrating that this culture of communication worked both ways. The impression we get is that the monks at San Nicolò, while being supported diligently by the wealth of knowledge and resources available to them through their connection with the wider Cassinese Congregation, were given far more free-reign in their architectural aesthetic than those involved with the churches built during the order's heyday.

One question that still remains unclear is why San Nicolò was not restructured when the Congregation was having its big push to create a uniform style between 1490 and the 1540s, since San Nicolò had joined the community in 1454. For San Giorgio Maggiore, despite not actually being rebuilt until late in the sixteenth century, there had been an initial plan for reforming and rebuilding the monastery, produced in about 1520 by either Tullio Lombardo or Alessandro Leopardi, which is similar to the new design for the church of Santa Giustina, complete with its five domes (see Fig. 29 for the early plan and Fig. 30 for the final floor plan).[235] However, the late rebuilding of San Nicolò allows us to

[233] Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 47.
[234] Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 166.
[235] The medieval church barely survived a number of incidents, including an earthquake, and had to be reconsecrated, in a heavily restored state, in 1419. Plans to rebuild the church were made as early as 1520, and the choir was remodelled during this time, but the church was not fully rebuilt (including another new

track a new dimension to Winkelmes's study into the Cassinese Congregation regarding the priorities and influencing factors of the new Congregation churches designed and built after the order's decline in influence and loss of a coherent architectural ethos.

choir – this time a retrochoir) until Palladio came onto the project in the 1560s. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 109-110.

THE REBUILDING PROJECT AT SAN NICOLÒ DI LIDO

THE FLOOR PLAN

Venice's overcrowding and the density of its urban space are well known facts and it is on their account, Douglas Lewis argues, that each building's architectural mass as a whole is less important than its individual internal features.[236] With buildings on all sides, often rising many stories high, very few architects of public buildings in Venice considered how their building played out in the cityscape.[237] Instead, architects of Venetian public buildings – especially its churches – tended to focus on 'the development of interior surfaces and spatial arrangements', while generally ignoring the façades, despite them being such potentially important parts of these buildings.[238] The fact that many churches remain façade-less today, while having perfectly completed, harmonious and aesthetically pleasing interiors, means that the focus for architects and their patrons was directed mostly on the interior and that the façades were afterthoughts to be executed, if possible, when budgets allowed. Thus, the floor plan of Venetian churches takes on an extra level of importance, especially – as Lewis also argues – in its sixteenth and seventeenth century churches.[239] The church of San Nicolò di Lido, as well as San Moisè and many of the other churches they are compared with in this study, demonstrate the problem of this feature in Venetian church designs and its subordination to other aspects of design.

In support of Lewis, I would argue that the floor plan of the church of San Nicolò di Lido is perhaps its most significant feature. In many ways, it is fairly simple and straight forward: a rectangular nave with three interconnected side chapels on both sides, and further along, the chancel with the high altar and a retrochoir beyond (Fig. 31). Indeed, these are the features that are depicted in a drawing of San Nicolò's floor plan by Antonio Visentini (or a member of his workshop) in around 1700, although this fails to include the two sacristies either side of the chancel and the transversal corridor, apparently a vestibule area, which connects these to the retrochoir (Fig. 32).[240] This

[236] Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*, 58.
[237] Ibid, 58-59.
[238] Ibid, 59.
[239] Ibid.
[240] John McAndrew, in his catalogue of Antonio Visentini's works at the Royal Institute of British Architects admits that this drawing is missing elements of the actual floor plan and also expands the size of the nave by 20 feet so that it is out of proportion with the chapels. John McAndrew, *Catalogue of the*

arrangement means that the monks could enter the retrochoir without having to go in front of the high altar and that the design as a whole retained its symmetry.

Visentini's inaccuracy is notorious and numerous authors have disputed the reliability of his floor plans and façade drawings (a point to which we will later return when discussing the San Nicolò facade).[241] Visentini worked largely for an international market and often passed off rather generic drawings as accurate representations of individual buildings, since they were likely to be more popular with their audience.[242] However, his floor plan also suggests a lack of realisation that the layout of San Nicolò was rather unusual and could have merited highlighting. Indeed, the floor plan of the church has received very little comment until now. Even in Massimo Bisson's most recent analysis of the church's features he appears to miss the significance of the double sacristy layout, doing little more than refer to them in passing.[243]

Churches with rectangular layouts were quite common in Venice by this time. Such a format had developed in Venice over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: San Giobbe (Fig. 33), San Francesco della Vigna (Fig. 34) and the Redentore (Fig. 35) all have similar floor plans. San Nicolò is inspired by the tradition of these churches but is not a clear copy of any one of them. San Giobbe is the earliest example with a long rectangular nave flanked by four chapels on one side and, notably, a row of five altarpieces on the other (there being no space for proper chapels). San Nicolò diverges substantially from this design because it has chapels on both sides of the nave. It is more similar in layout to the Franciscan church of San Francesco della Vigna, which has a single nave and chapels on each side, although those at San Nicolò have interconnecting doorways. Such a feature can also be found at the Redentore and is common in many other churches of this period including the Theatine church of San Nicolò da Tolentino in Venice (Fig. 36), and the Theatine church of Sant' Andrea della Valle in Rome (1590-1650) (Fig. 37) and the Gesù (1568-1580) (Fig. 38), the heart of the Jesuit order in Rome.

Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects: Antonio Visentini, Farnborough: Gregg International, 1974, 36.

[241] This is covered thoroughly later on in this chapter in the section on the uncompleted façade of San Nicolò di Lido.

[242] Visentini's reliability will be discussed in more detail further on in this section but for the main debates on this subject see: Rudolf Wittkower, 'L'influenza del Palladio sullo sviluppo dell'architettura religiosa Veneziana nel sei e settecento,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio,* (1963), 65, 67; Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*, 4, 14-15; Elena Bassi, 'Considerazioni su alcuni disegni di Antonio Visentini,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio,* (1964), 285-286.

[243] Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 161-162.

The rise in popularity of interconnected side chapels, which is not mentioned by Carlo Borromeo in his *Instructiones* is indicative of the increase in communication regarding Counter Reformation architectural ideals. The feature allows the monks or priests of a church to move between them rather than through the main nave, and so avoids any disruption of the Mass which was one of the main concerns of the Council of Trent.[244] San Francesco della Vigna is much larger than San Nicolò di Lido and thus has more chapels (five each side, plus two next to the high altar) as well as a spacious crossing, and so such a problem there is less pressing.

In terms of size, San Nicolò's floor plan is closer to that of the Redentore which also has three chapels each side of the nave and a retrochoir, but unlike at San Nicolò, its crossing is structured around the large dome above. The size of San Nicolò and the church's function as a home to a small monastic community meant that a dome would have been unnecessary and would have looked out of place. There are further similarities with the Redentore, however, in that San Nicolò is also broken into three distinct zones: nave, chancel and retrochoir. This clear separation of the three areas was important at the Redentore for the three groups of people catered for when the church was being used for its votive, celebratory purpose of thanking God for rescuing Venice from the plague. The nave was where the laity would sit while the space in the chancel beneath the dome would be reserved for the Doge and other important dignitaries, and the retrochoir was set aside for the monks.[245] As at San Nicolò there is a two-fold division between the space solely reserved for the monks in the retrochoir and the rest of the church which was accessible to the laity, as is the case in San Giobbe or San Francesco della Vigna.

As a significantly smaller and more modest church, in comparison to both of its nearest Cassinese Congregation associates, San Giorgio Maggiore and Santa Giustina, the style of San Nicolò is much simpler and the interior is devoid of the domes that characterise Santa Giustina and form a central focus at San Giorgio. Some earlier Cassinese churches, such as San Pietro, Modena, however are of simple rectangular plans so here the church

[244] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 174-181.
[245] As eyewitness accounts attest, during the festivities, the chancel was the centre of attention. Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti. *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, and Acoustics*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009, 122.

of San Nicolò di Lido is not so unusual in comparison to the other churches in its order.[246]

Despite having a large plot of land on which to build, San Nicolò di Lido is a small church in comparison to many of the others that were built during this period (Fig. 1). This is likely to be due partly to the financial constraints of the monks on the Lido, but also due to their small congregation which meant they did not need a larger church.[247] Considering its location close to San Giorgio Maggiore, one of the most significant churches in the Cassinese Congregation, with its huge financial resources, large library and treasury responsibilities, it is unsurprising that the monastic community at San Nicolò was considerably smaller. San Nicolò's location at the edge of the Venetian lagoon, next to a fortress, would have been another reason for a far more modest building and why members of the rich young nobility who were drawn to monastic life in the Cassinese Congregation were instead attracted to San Giorgio.

In many ways, the design of San Nicolò is most like that of the Redentore which also has twin sacristies (Fig. 35). Here, they follow the domed chancel and are positioned either side of the retro-choir. They extend the route from the interconnected side chapels to the retrochoir - through side passages around the side of the dome – without the need for the monks to walk in front of the high altar. At San Nicolò, without the need for a dome, it appears that Francesco Contin intended to adapt the Redentore design, coming up with a new arrangement for the chancel and choir areas that entailed the unusual sacristy arrangement that we see there.

The invoice from the masons confirms that the two rooms were both always intended to be sacristies as it lists work achieved on both the first sacristy and 'the other sacristy' ('dell'altra sacrestia').[248] This double-sacristy arrangement is rather unusual but there are a number of other explanations for it as well. In part, the design reflects a desire for an overall symmetry. We know that at San Francesco della Vigna and elsewhere, monks such as Francesco Zorzi took the proportions and symmetry of their churches very

[246] For a more in-depth comparison, including floor plan images for a variety of Cassinese Congregation churches see: Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform,' 61-84.
[247] As the Matricula Monochorum attests through its lists of monks and their monasteries, San Nicolò was always one of the smaller houses of the Congregation: *Matricula Monachorum Congregationis Casinensis Ordinis S. Benedicti*. Vol. I: 1409-1699, 1983.
[248] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 22r.

seriously, since harmonious proportions were thought to be most pleasing to God and most effectively representative of His dwellings on earth.[249] Palladio, among others, also expands on this theme stating that churches should be built 'in such a way and with such proportions that together all the parts convey to the eyes of onlookers a sweet harmony and each church fulfils properly the use for which it is intended.'[250] The symmetry of San Nicolò di Lido is certainly in keeping with this recurring theme.

The linking of the sacristies to the chapels and the retrochoir had a similar purpose to the connecting doors between the chapels: it avoids disrupting and distracting from the view of the high altar and, therefore, the ceremony of the Mass. A further reason for this arrangement could be due to the fact that San Nicolò was the first church (at least in that region) to be built with a retrochoir included in the design from the beginning. As such, it led the way in providing an innovative design for the building of other smaller churches that included a retrochoir. Although Borromeo regularly stipulates advice for churches of different sizes and functions, he does not give much instruction at all with regard to choirs except, to recommend that they be 'separate from the standing place of the people.'[251] San Nicolò established a valuable model for such an ideal.

Later Venetian examples, where there are two sacristies both on the left and right sides of the chancel, include the Gesuati (constructed 1726-43). Again these connect the side chapels with the retrochoir, meaning that the monks could avoid obstructing the high altar when walking through the church. This is the layout which corresponds most closely with that of San Nicolò di Lido and could well have been inspired by its design (Fig. 39). Other comparable later Venetian churches include the Gesuiti (Fig. 40), which was built for the Jesuits in the eighteenth century and again includes the now familiar rectangular format with three interconnected side chapels on each side of the nave but here with a dome and crossing which is comparable with the early sixteenth-century church of San Salvador (Fig. 41). A further pertinent example is San Pantalon (Fig. 42), which was rebuilt between 1668 and 1686 by Francesco Comino and follows a similar rectangular format with three side chapels on either side of the nave. However the Cappella di San Pantaleone is extended outwards, matching the location of the apse of its

[249] Francesco Zorzi published his views on the church's design in his 1525 work *De harmonia mundi totius.* Howard and Moretti. *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice,* 101.
[250] Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, Book 4, Forward to the Readers, 213.
[251] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 153.

predecessor church, and there are further chapels – the Cappella del San Chiodo and the Cappella della santa Casa di Loreto (which were added in the eighteenth century) – bordering the high altar. As a whole, however, the building is clearly an attempt at a format similar to San Nicolò's and its predecessors.[252] Augusto Roca De Amicis, in fact, sees San Pantalon as a clear development specifically from San Nicolò, rather than the Palladian examples.[253]

Of note is the fact that an archival contract stipulates that two bell towers were to be built, one either side of the church.[254] As we can see today, only one, on the left side of the church (as we face the entrance) was completed and it is not clear why the second one was never finished (Fig. 12). This is especially unusual given that the Redentore popularised the use of two bell towers in Venice and later examples, including those overlooking the Giudecca canal on the opposite side to the Redentore (Fig. 43), the Gesuati (Fig. 44) and the Salute (Fig. 45) in particular, took inspiration from the Redentore's design. Of course, the bell towers at the Redentore are quite different to the one completed at San Nicolò – they are thinner, set closely into the church, and as Deborah Howard argues, take influence from Islamic minarets or, more likely, the church of the Santo in Padua.[255] Since the one completed at San Nicolò is much larger and more traditionally Venetian, it may be that the size of the project and the finances involved prevented the second one from being built.

THE INTERIOR

While it is smaller than many of its contemporaries, when you enter San Nicolò di Lido there is a clear sense of spaciousness. The single nave draws your eye immediately to the high altar, in the most prominent position in the church, which almost completely hides the retrochoir beyond (Fig. 11). Either side of the nave are three chapels positioned in the manner earlier established at S. Francesco della Vigna and the Redentore (Figs 13, 14, 46, 47). The contrast with previous Gothic churches is striking. These had often attracted a hodgepodge of chapels with little stylistic or artistic conformity, due typically to the

252 For further information on the church of San Pantalon see: Marcello Brusegan, *Le chiese di Venezia: storia, arte, segreti, leggende, curiosità*, Rome: Newton Compton, 2007, 213, 256-260; Maria Da Villa Urbani and Stefania Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Pantalon: arte e devozione*, Venice: Marsilio, 1994.
253 Augusto Roca De Amicis, 'Le chiese e le facciate commemorative,' in *Il Seicento*, edited by Augusto Roca De Amicis, Venice: Marsilio, 2008, 251.
254 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 14v.
255 Deborah Howard, 'Venice between East and West: Marc' Antonio Barbaro and Palladio's Church of the Redentore,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 3 (Sept 2003): 318.

differing aims and desires of their individual lay patrons. San Francesco della Vigna saw an early attempt at homogenous chapel design, which was achieved with the exceptions of the Grimani Chapel and the Sagredo Chapel, both situated among the left row of five chapels. As with Gothic churches, the chapel designs for San Francesco della Vigna were influenced by the lay patrons who paid for them, whereas at the Redentore Palladio was able to enact perfect uniformity in his chapel design and San Nicolò continues this trend. A later section will look into the chapels and altars in more detail but it seems likely that the chapels were under the control not of lay donors but of the monks themselves, allowing them to decide on and commit to a uniform scheme.

As at both the Redentore and San Francesco della Vigna, each of the entrance arches to the vaulted chapels is supported by pilasters which meet the arch at the same place as the level of the thermal window positioned at the rear. Flanking the chapels' arches, taller monumental Corinthian pilasters extend to an entablature above. Such monumental pilasters are also found at San Francesco della Vigna, whereas at the Redentore giant half-columns are used instead. A further difference is in the floral decoration that surrounds the arches of the chapels at San Nicolò di Lido (matching the thinner line around the fresco above the front door), which is not present at the Redentore where instead the curve of the arches is a crisp clean line.

San Nicolò di Lido corresponds very closely, however, with the Redentore when it comes to the clerestory: an almost exact reproduction of the entablature at the Redentore with the same sort of modillion cornice carries the thermal windows that match those in the chapels below. At San Francesco della Vigna, the clerestory is populated with small arched windows that are framed with pilasters above the larger pilasters of the lower storey. This format was then superseded by Palladio, who was responsible for introducing the thermal window into Venice and did so on his façade for San Francesco della Vigna which was begun in the early 1560s.[256] At San Nicolò some of the clerestory thermal windows have been partially closed off, although the building is still well-lit naturally from the thermal windows in the chapels below which are all fully open (Figs 22, 48). To partially close some of the thermal windows is not unusual and can be seen in

[256] Jacopo Sansovino began the interior of San Francesco della Vigna in 1534. Yet, despite completion of this work and his prominent position as *proto* of San Marco, it was Andrea Palladio who was asked to design the façade in the 1560s.

churches throughout Venice, including San Giorgio Maggiore (Fig. 49), where, Stanislaw Wilinski argues, this was a way of directing the light to produce a more dramatic effect.[257]

On the exterior of San Nicolò di Lido the thermal windows are flanked by buttresses which extend out from the chapel partition walls inside. These are, again, similar to those seen at the Redentore and San Nicolò da Tolentino (Figs 50, 51). However, the Redentore has two buttresses between each thermal window while San Nicolò da Tolentino's walls have single buttresses which continue the whole length of the church clerestory (with the exception of the crossing) so that it includes the thermal windows which bring light to the retrochoir.

The parallels with the Redentore continue with the aforementioned interior entablature which, as at the Redentore, goes around the whole building, modifying only at the retrochoir, again as at the Redentore. Other similarities include the arrangement at the corners, where pilasters are paired with folded half-pilasters carrying folded capitals. Further comparisons can be made with the niches that populate both the Redentore and, slightly less bounteously, San Nicolò di Lido. In both buildings they house statues, those at San Nicolò comprising the four Doctors of the Church: Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose and Gregory the Great, attributed to Angelo Marinali,[258] and the Four Evangelists: Matthew and Luke by Heinrich Meyring, John by Michele Fabris (known as Ongaro) and Mark by Giovanni Comin - these were produced towards the end of the seventeenth century.[259] There is some dispute over the authors of some of the sculptures. Luigi Gallo's 1964 work attributes all of the sculptures to Angelo Marinelli, Cecconi's more modern work, identifies the Doctors of the Church as being produced by Meyring, Fabris and Comin.[260] However, consultation of the archival documents proves Cecconi's

[257] Stanislaw Wilinski, 'La finestra termale nelle chiese di Andrea Palladio,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 14 (1972), 334.
[258] These are the attributions as identified by Giorgio Cecconi. Gregory is represented with his papal tiara, while Jerome is depicted wearing his cardinal outfit (as opposed to his other identifying hermit dress which would not be fitting with the theme of 'Doctors of the Church'). Ambrose and Augustine are recognised through their episcopal robes, mitre and staff – with Ambrose holding a book and Augustine with a child at his feet. Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 17-18.
[259] Heinrich Meyring is a particularly interesting figure since his style leans heavily towards the Roman Baroque which is unsurprising since he was a follower of Bernini. His style became popular in Venice in the later seventeenth century and he will appear again later in this thesis as the author of the high altar and sculpted façade of the church of San Moisè.
[260] Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 17-18; Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 60.

attribution since all three artists – Meyring, Fabris and Comin – are listed quite clearly in the commissioning document from 1680 for these sculptures.[261]

At the Redentore, the sculptures for the niches came after Palladio's death but, as Tracy Cooper argues, both Palladio and the Capuchins would have intended those niches to be filled, even though the Senate did not initially devise a plan for this and the task only began in 1618.[262] Palladio, as he stated in *I quattro libri*, thought that: 'through the form, the ornaments, and the materials we honour the Divinity as much as possible'.[263] At the Redentore, Padre Cosmo da Castelfranco produced the grisaille figures of Prophets and Sibyls in the nave, and the Four Evangelists and the Doctors of the Church in the piers. Padre Massimo da Verona produced further sculptures in the 1640s of the Twelve Apostles which were placed in the drum of the dome. While the sculptures are no longer *in situ,* photographs from the 1950s show how the arrangement would have then looked (compare Figs 52 and 53). Their removal leaves the interior of the Redentore more strikingly stark, yet this surely goes against Palladio's conception for the church. San Nicolò di Lido, therefore, with its sculptures still intact, provides, perhaps, a better idea of some of the ideals and features that the Redentore was meant to embody. Although the sculptures at San Nicolò were inserted later on in the seventeenth century, their commissioning demonstrates the extent to which the monks were still looking to the Redentore for ideas for developing their building.

While the Redentore has, in recent decades, lost its interior sculptures, the inside of San Giorgio Maggiore also features a comprehensive sculptural scheme (Fig. 54). On the interior façade and its adjoining walls, Palladio positioned eight niches to be filled with sculptures, with one of the first commissions being the upper niches which were allotted sculptures of the Four Evangelists by Alessandro Vittoria. There are further niche sculptures close to the high altar and a number of portrait busts – both on the interior and external façades - that were particularly unusual, especially in the religious climate at the time, because they were of certain notable Venetians with connections to the church.[264] The niches near the high altar do not follow the same pattern as for the

[261] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 130r-130v.
[262] Tracy Cooper, *Palladio's Venice: Architecture and Society in a Renaissance Republic,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005*,* 250.
[263] Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, Book 4, ch. 2, 7.
[264] Tracy Cooper analyses the sculptures and busts at San Giorgio Maggiore in far more detail. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 139-140.

interior façade where niches covered the façade and the adjoining walls, but are instead inserted, with one niche above the other, between a pilaster and a gigantic column to either side of the entrance to the presbytery, just in front of Tintoretto's monumental paintings of *The Falling of the Manna* and *The Last Supper* (Fig. 55). A few other individual niches are then positioned symmetrically around the rest of the church.

Another Venetian building interior that provides a significant parallel is the patriarchal cathedral of San Pietro di Castello which was redesigned in 1621-30. While it has side altars rather than chapels the arches that frame and divide its nave and aisles are designed in a very similar manner to those at San Nicolò di Lido (Fig. 56). Although the walls are blank in the aisles beneath the arches, in the clerestory above there are thermal windows which match the arches below. The arches with their small supporting pilasters and the giant Corinthian pilasters reaching to the cornice above, as well as the mullions of the cornice itself are all very similar to the design at San Nicolò except on a much more magnificent scale.

Returning to the chapels, there are further similarities with both the Redentore and San Nicolò da Tolentino. In all three churches the chapels are reached from three steps and then fenced off with marble pillars. At San Nicolò di Lido these pillars are accompanied with iron gates carrying figures of St Nicholas, of which only a few remain intact (Fig. 15).[265] Both the steps and railings are features for which Carlo Borromeo provides very specific guidance. He stipulates that chapel floors should be raised at least 'eight ounces above the floor of the church' (this equating to 14.55 cm) and that the entrance to each chapel should be made of marble or stone and must be

> sufficiently raised as to be on a level with the floor of the chapel forming its entrance step, and only one step should be constructed for the entrance to the chapel in addition to this step, when a main chapel is constructed with several steps, two other lower steps may be made in proportion to the place and site and size of the chapel.[266]

It is here where Venetian buildings typically diverge with Borromeo's advice since the majority have three steps leading to their chapels and this parallels the three steps leading up to the presbytery, typically with a further three steps up to the high altar itself.

[265] Over the centuries many of these have been broken off, either by treasure seekers or vandals.
[266] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 180.

Resorting to three steps as opposed to two is unsurprising since three is a more harmonious number, while using three steps consistently in the church matches Borromeo's advice that three steps lead up to the high altar.[267] Borromeo gives further advice regarding the enclosure of the side chapels. The tallest step, he recommends, should be affixed with iron railings, although these may be exchanged for marble (as is the case with all of the examples here) if good quality iron is hard to obtain; and the chapel should be fully enclosed with an iron gate.[268]

Sadly, one of the most striking features of the interior of San Nicolò di Lido – the red frames to the arches - is no longer extant.[269] A contract, from the church's architect, Francesco Contin, to the bricklayers Mattio and Comin Citroni stipulated that, among the many requirements of Contin's that they were to fulfil, the arches should be built using brick (as opposed to stone since it was cheaper) and that they were to have their frames painted in red.[270] In recent years it has been proved that San Giorgio Maggiore, San Nicolò's closest Benedictine contemporary, also had red-painted arches to start with.[271] This was the finishing touch of a technique that Palladio adapted from the Middle Ages, which involved using rectified bricks mixed with clay to create the various elements (friezes, column shafts, architraves etc.) and then coloured red. Palladio also used this technique with the peristyle at the Carità.[272] (Figs 26 and 27 are models that show all of the areas believed to have been painted red at San Giorgio Maggiore while Fig. 28 shows the original colour revealed after stratigraphic tests). It was less than a century after the church's completion in 1652 when the prior of San Giorgio requested Baldassare Longhena to paint the entire interior white:

> all the columns, pillars and other parts of the said church, now red, will be given a coat of white, or several coats, if necessary, so that they remain very white… and the other vaults, at present red, must be made to look like hard

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267 Ibid*,* 145.
268 Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 191-192.
269 This was first brought to my attention by Massimo Bisson and was followed by my own consultation of the archives. Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 161.
270 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 14r-17v.
271 Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns, *Palladio*, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008, 316-317, 321; Andrea Guerra, 'Quel che resta di Palladio. Eredità e dispersione nei progetti per la chiesa di San Giorgio Maggiore a Venezia,' *Annali di Architettura* 13, (2001): 105-106; Howard and Moretti. *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice,* 63-64.
272 The effects at the Carità and San Giorgio Maggiore can be seen in illustrations 30.6, 30.7, 30.8 and 30.9 in Beltramini and Burns, *Palladio*, 316-317.

> stone with one and several coats applied with great diligence so that they emulate hard stone.[273]

It is not inconceivable that, due to the close connection between San Nicolò and San Giorgio, the interior of San Nicolò is likely to have been whitewashed at a similar time. While Mario Piana attests that the red colour scheme is unusual, it is, as mentioned, something that Palladio used in other buildings.[274] However, the use of red at San Nicolò di Lido is even more exceptional at a time fifty or so years after Palladio's work, since, as far as we are aware at the moment, no other Venetian buildings produced by architects other than Palladio used this red-painting technique. Thus, for San Nicolò the technique serves to highlight the relationship between these two Cassinese churches, and demonstrates the clear desire of Contin to produce a distinctly Palladio-inspired building.

It is in the general interior framework where San Nicolò diverges most from its Benedictine contemporaries and instead reflects more of a Venetian character, as in the Redentore and San Nicolò da Tolentino. Nevertheless, it is perhaps understandable that San Nicolò di Lido did not draw so much from Santa Giustina which was itself undergoing a process of modernisation to include the building of a retrochoir, designed by San Nicolò's architect, Francesco Contin. Both Santa Giustina and San Giorgio Maggiore are also much larger, grander buildings, suited for their more prominent positions within the order and for their more populated monasteries (Figs 57, 58). Both were also expected to be at the heart of processions and votive activities in their respective cities as well as their monastic rituals. Thus, there are many similarities between the designs of the two buildings.[275] San Nicolò is significantly smaller and more modest, and it is also a more modern building, very much of its time.

THE HIGH ALTAR

With its single nave and clean walls, the focus of the interior of San Nicolò di Lido is undoubtedly the high altar. As previously described, the monks went to great lengths to avoid anything blocking the view or distracting the laity from the high altar. To this end,

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[273] The archival source for the prior's request is: ASV, *San Giorgio Maggiore,* busta 21, document sciolto, in data 10 maggio 1652.
The English translation comes from Mario Piana in Beltramini and Burns, *Palladio*, 321.
The original finding, transcribing and publishing of this material comes from: Guerra, 'Quel che resta di Palladio,' 105-106.
[274] Mario Piana in Beltramini and Burns, *Palladio*, 321.
[275] Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 111-113.

they put interconnecting doors between the chapels and a path to reach the retrochoir without walking in front of the high altar; and they gave the chapels a uniform and unassuming appearance so as not to attract an inappropriate amount of attention. Thus, the high altar is the church's visual focal point and is designed as a magnificent marble structure in order to capitalise on this (Figs 17, 18).

The high altar is located at the highest point of the church. There are not only three steps leading up to the chancel but another three, made of Verona marble, ascending to the altar itself (Figs 59, 60). Its positioning is a clear sign of the monks acquiescing to Carlo Borromeo's desire for churches to have a clear delineation of space and of the hierarchy of the high altar over the rest of the nave.[276] This is a feature that most churches of this age, including the Redentore, San Giorgio Maggiore and San Nicolò da Tolentino, had integrated seamlessly into their designs so it is not surprising that at San Nicolò di Lido the monks followed suit.

The high altar was the work of sculptor Cosimo Fanzago who executed the work between 1629 and 1630. Fanzago was born in the small town of Clusone, near to Bergamo in 1591, but, despite originating not so very far from Venice and becoming famous for his work, he spent most of his career in the south of Italy and so was little known in Venice.[277] When he was commissioned to produce the high altar for San Nicolò di Lido he was living in Naples but still managed to oversee the project's completion in barely a year.[278] Considering his artistic experience in the south, it is perhaps understandable that Fanzago's altarpiece is very different to anything produced in Venice at this point. The monks' decision to choose Fanzago, instead of a local sculptor working in the Venetian tradition, is very interesting. Indeed, the monks highlight his background in the archival documents pertaining to the high altar.[279] As detailed above, the Cassinese Congregation shared architects and artisans among themselves and there was a strong degree of communication of ideas. With the influences and recommendations of the wider religious order to consider as well as Venetian models that had gone previously, it is perhaps not so very surprising that the

[276] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 143-146.
[277] Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 163.
[278] The project began on 9 June 1629 and was completed by 1 May 1630. These dates can be found in the archival documents which date the project and reiterated by Bisson in his paper. ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc 5, fols 40r-42v; Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice," 163.
[279] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc 5, fols 40r.

monks at San Nicolò decided to break with Venetian tradition and chose a prominent sculptor from elsewhere and a design that was new to Venice.

Although the altar was designed by Fanzago, it was actually constructed under the direction of two Neapolitan stonecutters: Giambattista Galli and Gianandrea Lazzari. The execution was quick, but there were delays in the altar's installation because the monks did not accept that it had been produced to the high standards they had stipulated in the contract. The contract described in detail what the altar should look like and included a list of the types of stone and marble to be used.[280] The altar was also clearly expected to house the tabernacle which was to be made with similar marble inlays to those on the altar surrounding it.[281] However, on completion of the project, the monks were disappointed with the end result (and recorded their disappointment for the archives), arguing that the builders had not used good enough stone (as stipulated thoroughly and repetitively in the contract) and had not produced the tabernacle to accompany the altar.[282] The issues were eventually resolved, and the resulting high altar is, indeed, a glorious construction in white marble and richly coloured inlays, and with the tabernacle right at the centre (Fig. 18).

While the tabernacle was arguably the main focus, the high altar also played another important role, since it was required to house the relics of its three saints – St Nicholas, St Nicholas '*zio*' and St Theodore - which had previously been housed in the crypt; and it was also needed to solve the problem of allowing the monks behind to see some of the host during Mass. The translation of the relics into their new home took place on the 25 May 1634, Ascension Day.[283]

The altar itself can be regarded as having two parts. The lower part is the altar table where the polychrome marble inlays are elegantly shaped into a symmetrical design which intertwines birds, flowers and leaves, with a central flower shaped like a cross a reminder of the sacrifices made by Christ and the importance of the Eucharist. Positioned in the centre of the table, above the cross-like flower, is the tabernacle itself,

[280] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc 5, fols 40r-42v.
[281] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc 5, fols 40r-42v.
[282] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc 5, fol. 43r.
[283] The relics, while originally located in the crypt, were moved on May 9th 1628 and stored on an altar in the monastery until they were moved to their final resting place on the new high altar in 1634.
Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello*, 59.

also made from white marble and polychrome inlays. Behind, the tabernacle is framed by an upper section. Two columns frame an open arch and support a large chest holding the relics of the church's three saints, with wooden sculptures of the saints positioned above. The composition is further enriched with white marble sculptures including two *putti*.[284] As a whole the altar is an array of colour and decoration, providing a contrast with the simplicity of the rest of the church.

One of the most interesting decisions regarding the high altar is that of having a tabernacle above it, rather than keeping the host in a dedicated chapel of the Sacrament. This, according to Maurice Cope, is a practice that developed with increasing frequency during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, writers from that period came to see the high altar as a sort of 'Cappella del Sacramento' if the Sacrament was housed there.[285] Placing the tabernacle on the high altar was to be widely seen all over Italy and it was much encouraged by Cardinal Carlo Borromeo in his *Instructiones*.[286] Central to Borromeo's concerns was that the 'size of the tabernacle should be in keeping with the importance, magnitude, and proportion of the church in regard to the main altar on which it is to be placed.'[287]

While the San Nicolò tabernacle is small in size, the focus on the high altar serves to draw attention to it. Its presentation, however, is still rather unusual for the period. The later sixteenth century had seen a trend for smaller tabernacles accompanied by theologically significant paintings, such as Tintoretto's altar paintings of *The Falling of the Manna* or *The Washing of the Disciples' Feet* which are often paired with *The Last Supper,* as also seen at San Giorgio Maggiore. In the seventeenth century, Maurice Cope tracks a gradual shift away from the inclusion of biblical paintings, and more towards larger, more monumental tabernacles that provide the focus alone.[288] The tabernacle at San Nicolò fits in with this development. In conjunction with the rest of the high altar it is notably magnificent and attention-catching. It may lack some of the majesty of the much larger tabernacles to be seen in certain Milanese churches or of certain, slightly later Venetian examples (including, for example, Santo Stefano's tabernacle, which will be discussed

[284] These putti or 'cherubini' as they are referred to in the documents, are specifically requested as part of the original design. ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc 5, fol. 40v.
[285] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 4.
[286] The Council of Trent gave no specific guidance except for stating that the Eucharistic Sacrament should be kept in a special place. Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones*, 160-173.
[287] Ibid, 161.
[288] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 24-25.

later in this thesis). As ever, at San Nicolò, the result is moderate – to suit the simple, yet elegant interior of the church as a whole.

A particularly unusual feature of the composition is the gap at the centre. This is not a typical design for Venice but one that allows a connection between the retrochoir and the rest of the church. It is very different from the more sculptural arrangement at San Giorgio Maggiore, where Girolamo Campagna's magnificent assemblage (1591-93), which consists of a golden globe supported by four bronze Evangelists with Christ above and angels either side, obscures the view of the high altar from behind necessitating a second altar table to be built facing the retrochoir (Fig. 61). At the Redentore, the current altar arrangement (Fig. 62) – another magnificent sculptural and architectural ensemble with bronze figures of St Mark and St Francis on either side of a crucifix with a bronze figure of Christ above – is not as originally installed, leading Wladimir Timofiewisch to propose that the original arrangement would have had a gilded wooden tabernacle with Christ at its pinnacle and the two saints again on either side (Fig. 63).[289]

Tracy Cooper argues that the high altar of the Redentore, which was produced by Girolamo Campagna in 1590, was something that Palladio was anticipating when he designed the church interior with its retrochoir.[290] The increased importance of tabernacles and their positioning on high altars precipitated a rise in double-sided architectural altar structures that incorporated the tabernacles into overall designs, which replaced the single-sided painted altarpieces that had gone before as exemplified by Titian's *Assunta* in the Frari. Thus, these double-sided compositions usually accompany retrochoirs which were becoming a frequent feature of church design during this period. The two-sided high altarpiece was something that Giorgio Vasari had been introducing in Florence and Pellegrino Tibaldi was exploring this in Milan as drawings for his high altar designs for Milan Cathedral demonstrate.[291] Such developments are likely to have been known about by Palladio who then adapted them, in collaboration with Campagna at San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore, and thus established the practice in Venice.

[289] Wladimir Timofiewitsch, *Girolamo Campagna: Studien zur venezianischen Plastik um das jahr 1600,* Munich, 1972, fig. 45.
[290] Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 253.
[291] Ibid, 253.

The high altar at San Nicolò di Lido suggests an important development in the conception of altar design subsequent to the building of the Redentore, and while the San Nicolò altar is perhaps not as imposing as those of the Redentore or San Giorgio Maggiore, it makes its own statement and helps connect the different areas of the church.

THE RETROCHOIR

For Benedictines, the choir was often a focal point of monastic devotion. From around 530, the Rule of St Benedict stipulated that followers should congregate at the choir seven times throughout the day to sing the divine offices, so its placement and design was of some importance.[292] In early Cassinese Congregation churches, as in other monastic churches, the choir was placed in front of the high altar. This would have been the case at the medieval church of San Nicolò di Lido as well as the earlier church of San Giorgio Maggiore.[293] Indeed, Palladio's original 1565 model for the new church of San Giorgio Maggiore placed the monks' choir in front of the high altar, although the choir's position was later moved to the rear.[294]

On the whole, the Congregation were most proactive in adopting the retrochoir once its usefulness in clearing the nave in front of the high altar became apparent. In fact, the abbot of San Giorgio between 1576 and 1579, Giuliano Careni, had originally come from the Cassinese church of San Sisto in Piacenza, which was the first Congregation church to be built with a retrochoir so it is likely that Careni was involved in the commissioning of the retrochoir at San Giorgio.[295] Massimo Bisson discussed the installation of retrochoirs in other Cassinese Congregation churches and has shown that from the early 1570s until the 1610s most of the northern Italian Congregation churches added retrochoirs to their buildings. The fact that this practice was so widespread in

[292] Howard and Moretti. *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice,* 62.
[293] The final choir arrangement in the medieval church of San Giorgio Maggiore was produced in the 1550s and would have significantly altered the church both internally and externally from the layout that can be deduced in de' Barbari's 1500 Map of Venice. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 115.
[294] While the work was completed between 1583 and 1589, after Palladio's death in 1580, numerous academics have argued in favour of Palladio's involvement in this decision. A key piece of evidence lies in a drawing which both Christian Isermeyer and Wladimir Timofiewisch date as 1579-80 which depicts the new arrangement of the choir along with the Cloister of the Cypresses which we know that Palladio designed in this period. More recently, Howard and Moretti have confirmed that while the retrochoir was not part of Palladio's original intention for the church, it was agreed upon during the beginning of the second phase of building when Palladio was still alive and would have been still part of the project. Isermeyer, 'Il primo progetto del Palladio per S. Giorgio secondo il modello del 1565,' 265-266,268; Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 66-7, Wladimir Timofiewitsch, 'Eine neuerbautrag zu der Baugeschicte von San Giorgio Maggiore,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 5, (1963): 335, 337, 339.
[295] Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 67.

Congregation churches demonstrates how important this feature had become for the Benedictine monks.[296] Not only did it enhance the importance of music but it also, of course, indicated their willingness to adhere to the Tridentine decrees which advocated the removal of any distractions or barriers between the high altar and the laity. The medieval church of San Nicolò di Lido was one of the few churches not to be renovated to include a new retrochoir, something which Bisson puts down to its financial position and its small congregation of monks.[297] However, with a retrochoir included from the very beginning in the design of the new church of 1626-29, it is likely that San Nicolò was the first Cassinese Congregation church to be built with a retrochoir from the outset.

Work on the choir continued after the completion of the rest of the church, perhaps the result of more funds being needed. The walnut choir stalls were executed in 1634 by a woodcarver, Giovanni Carlo, with the upper tier consisting of twenty-eight seats (one of which is larger than the others for the abbot of the order) and the lower one being in the form of more basic wooden benches (Fig. 19).[298] The archival document on the choir stalls stipulates that the examples at Venice's San Giobbe and San Giorgio Maggiore were to serve as examples for the project.[299] In 1635, a further craftsman, Giovanni Cremoso, designed the relief panels for the stalls depicting scenes from the life of St Nicholas.[300] Each of the seats are separated by fluted Corinthian columns, and each also includes both the face of an angel and the face of the devil - the angelic faces looking all the same but the devil heads all looking different, because, as Giorgio Cecconi argues,

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[296] The following list accounts for nearby Cassinese Congregation churches and the dates that they changed their interior to include a retrochoir:
San Pietro in Gessate in Milan 1571
Santa Maria in Praglia 1572
Santi Nazario e Celso in Verona 1572-75
San Procolo in Bologna 1573-80
San Sisto in Piacenza 1576
San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma 1587-88
San Pietro in Modena 1600
San Benedetto Po c.1600
San Giacomo in Pontida before 1604.
In Bisson, 'The Seventeenth-century Project for the Church of San Nicolò del Lido in Venice,' 170, no. 30.

[297] Another exception to the list of Cassinese Congregation churches which undertook a renovation of their church in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century to insert a retrochoir is the heart of the Congregation, the church of Santa Giustina, which, despite discussions taking place as early as 1590, did not commission their retrochoir until 1627 and until that time retained their choir in front of the chancel. When the monks of Santa Giustina did design their own retrochoir it was with Francesco Contin, architect of San Nicolò di Lido's retrochoir. Ibid, 166.

[298] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 101r-102v.

[299] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 101r-102v.

[300] Cremoso was helped in this enterprise by a local joiner known only as Camillo. ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fols 105r; 106r.

evil can take many forms but goodness is always the same (Fig. 64).[301] At the top of the central stall rests a wooden figure of St Nicholas, presiding over the arrangement while in front of the stalls is a walnut lectern table. The scenes on the choir stall panels show St Nicholas's life chronologically from the beginning, including his birth and baptism, until the end with his death and funeral, with many of the saint's most prominent miracles in between. As with sacred paintings in the post-Tridentine era, the panels focus on the virtuous aspects of St Nicholas's life and his moral code which could be most influential on and copied by the faithful, rather than a generic glorification that might have been seen previously.[302] Although positioned almost out of sight from the laity, the importance of this Tridentine message was not incidental but was especially relevant to the Benedictine monks who sat in these stalls and would be able to reflect on the images regularly.

THE CHAPELS

As regards to the chapels, we only have limited information but it is likely that the monks were responsible for the choice of decoration and painted subject matter. As noted earlier, their style and uniformity hark back to their predecessors at the Redentore, San Nicolò da Tolentino and others, while the altarpieces are – on the whole - typical examples of seventeenth-century Venetian painting, with none being particularly notable or produced by an artist of renown. Indeed, it is partly the chapels' uniformity and lack of flamboyance that makes them so well suited to the church (Figs 13, 14).

The interior altars and altarpieces are pretty uniform in their decoration. The marble altar tables are all covered with inlay in coordination with the high altar, and each is framed by a large marble columned arch to house the painted altarpiece which, in turn, is framed by a further columned structure, this time built in a marble to corresponds with the marble in the rest of the chapel. On top of the marble columns in the two outer chapels on each side sits a broken pediment, while the central chapel has a triangular pediment. Today, the two chapels closest to the high altar have panels covered in gold mosaic; the one on the left houses a marble sculpture of *The Madonna with Child* attributed to Heinrich Meyring (one of the sculptors who contributed to the niche sculptures and the master behind the façade of San Moisè) and the one on the right features a marble crucifix (Figs

[301] Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 15.
[302] Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, 233-236.

65, 66).[303] Gianantonio Moschini (in his nineteenth-century guides to the city) identifies the crucifix as the work of Angelo Marinelli, the author of some of the niche sculptures elsewhere in the church, although Moschini gives no explanation for this assertion.[304] The crucifix is not identified in any other guides to the church, indeed Cecconi, writing in 2004, believed the sculptor to be unknown.[305]

The altarpiece in the central chapel on the left depicts *St Spyridon Performing a Miracle* (Fig. 67). Not a particularly well-known saint, Spyridon was a fourth-century bishop who was active in Cyrpus and was at the First Council of Nicaea along with St Nicholas, the titular saint of the church, which makes his representation here more understandable.[306] It may be that the monks saw Spyridon as a worthy exemplar like St Nicholas. The author and dating of the work is unclear, and there is apparently only one other painting of St Spyridon in Venice, located in the church of the Pieta.[307] The final altarpiece on the left-hand side is *The Ascension of Christ* which Cecconi believes to be the work of a painter named Pietro della Vecchia (sometimes referred to as Pietro Muttoni) who had worked under *il Padovanino* (Alessandro Varotari) and lived between 1603 and 1678 (Fig. 68).[308]

The central chapel on the right of the church contains a painting of *St Mark the Evangelist* attributed to the little-known painter, Pietro Damini, and must be one of the earliest paintings to be commissioned since he died in 1631 (Fig. 69).[309] Damini was a painter who lived and worked for most of his life in the city of Padua and it comes as no surprise that he also painted a work for the monks at Santa Giustina: *Blessed Giovanna who discovers the well of martyrs*, demonstrating yet another example of connections between the two churches.[310] This work was mentioned by Giuseppe Antonelli in 1881 as a distinctive feature of the church and he claims that, although begun by Damini, it was completed by Marco Vecelli.[311] It appears very possible, therefore, that Damini was commissioned when the building was still unfinished, and that he then died before the painting was

303 Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 18.
304 Gianantonio Moschini, *Guida di Venezia*, 2nd ed., Venice: Vincenzo Maisner, 1847, 171.
305 Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 18.
306 Ibid, 19.
307 Ibid.
308 Ibid.
309 Damini came from Castelfranco where he was born in 1592 and died in Padua during the plague of 1631 which spread also to Venice and resulted in the commissioning of Madonna della Salute in thanksgiving when it finally came to an end. Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 18.
310 For more of a biography of Pietro Damini and further works by the artist see: Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura Veneziana del Seicento*, Vol. 1, Venice: Alfieri, 1981, 87-89.
311 Giuseppe Antonelli, *Guida artistica e storica di Venezia*, Venice: G. Antonelli, 1881, 433.

completed so another artist was required to finish it. However, it is known that the altar to Saint Mark was one of the first altars to be completed since an archival document of 1638 details the commission of a second altar 'opposite the altar to Saint Mark' ('dirimpetto all'altar di S. marco') which was to be designed in a similar style using the same type of columns, with stone from Genoa, and to be completed by Mattio Citroni and his brother, both of whom had already worked on much of the church interior.[312]

The final altarpiece, in the chapel closest to the church entrance is a work sometimes described with the title *The Holy Trinity Appear to Some Saints* and it shows St Benedict and two other Benedictine saints – St Maurus and St Placidus - appearing alongside St Gertrude and St Scholastica (the sister of Benedict) and performing the miraculous cure of a sick woman and child (Fig. 70).[313] The grouping of significant Benedictine saints, in particular, Benedict, Maurus and Placidus is typical of the Cassinese Congregation and can also be seen at San Giorgio Maggiore in Jacopo Tintoretto's *Coronation of the Virgin with Sts Benedict, Gregory, Maurus and Placidus* painted in 1594.[314] In both works the saints appear as intercessors for the faithful on earth.[315] The San Nicolò painting is thought to be by a Venetian painter called Domenico Fedeli (called *il Maggiotto*) who lived between 1712 and 1793. Rodolfo Pallucchini identifies Fedeli as the author of the Pieta's painting of St Spyridon.[316]

It is clear therefore, that the altarpieces for the chapels were commissioned at different points during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with Damini's *St Mark the Evangelist* presumably being one of the earliest, and Fedeli's *Holy Trinity Appearing to Some Saints* being one of the latest. Since there are no obvious lay patrons for these works, the time difference was probably due to the availability of funds. The overall scheme is not as cohesive as the one seen at the Redentore, and it is possible that a coherent scheme was also intended for San Nicolò but was left unrealised as the priorities of subsequent monks in charge were changed. The subjects were still, however, mainly canonised figures who were clear examples for the monks to follow.

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312 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 110r.
313 This is, perhaps, an unusual title since it does not take in the sick people in the foreground, but Cecconi believes that its intention is to make the viewer meditate on the true meaning of the painting and the role of God in all miracles. Cecconi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò di Lido,* 18.
314 Despite being commissioned from Jacopo Tintoretto, the work has been clearly argued to be largely painted by the hand of his son, Domenico Tintoretto. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 128.
315 Ibid, 128.
316 Pallucchini is also the best source to consult for a biography of Domenico Fedeli. Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura Veneziana del Settecento*, Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1960, 160-161.

The shortage of obvious lay patrons for the altarpieces (or indeed for the chapels themselves) is interesting. It suggests that the monks at San Nicolò di Lido, chose to wait until they were able to finance the interior decoration of the church themselves, rather than rely on private patronage. This, therefore, is in sharp contrast to San Moisè, which was rebuilt during the same period yet had significant lay input, especially as regards the monumental Baroque façade commissioned by the Fini family. If there was a firm decision at San Nicolò to keep the decoration of the church in the hands of the monks, it would be in keeping with the situation at the Redentore, where a coherent interior painting scheme was possible because it was a state sponsored church, and with San Giorgio Maggiore where a few lay commissions were negotiated in specified places in the church, but where the church retained control over the rest of the interior design. Such self-sufficiency, as Tracy Cooper highlights with regard to San Giorgio Maggiore, was 'unusual' and she goes on to stress that part of this church's ability to retain control was due to the wealth of the Cassinese Congregation.[317] At San Nicolò, the slow progress in the commissioning of the artwork (and the non-realisation of the façade) indicates that the monastery was not as financially secure as San Giorgio, perhaps due to its smaller size and its fewer bequests. To some extent, however, the uniformity of the altars and the frames makes up for the uncohesive painting scheme.

A word of caution is required on the paintings, however. When Giulio Lorenzetti wrote about San Nicolò in his guidebook to Venice of 1926, he commented that the 'original good paintings [had] disappeared [and] nothing of note remains except for the rich Choir'.[318] Although he goes on to praise the statues of the Doctors of the Church in the interior niches, and the richness of the high altar, it is clear that he was implying that the paintings were then absent from the church. Further back, in 1881, perhaps for reasons of brevity, (although this is not entirely clear), Giuseppe Antonelli only mentions the altarpiece by Pietro Damini.[319] Adding to the confusion is the information provided on the church in Gianantonio Moschini's 1847 guide to the city, which only identifies one of the works currently *in situ* in the left hand side chapels – Pietro della Vecchia's *Ascension of*

[317] Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 122.
[318] This is the 1961 English translation of the original 1926 Italian version. Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*, translated by John Guthrie, 2nd ed., Trieste: Edizioni Lint, 1994, 800.
[319] Giuseppe Antonelli, *Guida artistica e storica di Venezia*, Venice: G. Antonelli, 1881, 433.

Christ – and instead lists a *Conversion of St Paul* by Luigi Scaramuccia as its companion.[320] Meyring's *Madonna and Child* and *St Spyridon Performing a Miracle* by an unknown artist are both unmentioned, although all the works in the right-hand side chapels are accounted for. Thus it is not clear whether the paintings were removed from the monastery completely, or indeed when they returned to the church. This presents us at least with a concern that perhaps not all the works of art are original to the church and came into its possession only later in its history. Nevertheless, it would be surprising if Meyring's *Madonna and Child* was not an original commission for the church since, Meyring worked on so many other sculptures there. The rather more mysterious *St Spyridon Performing a Miracle* could have been a replacement for the Scaramuccia, if indeed the Scaramuccia was the original work. Although the archives suggest that the altar on which the Scaramuccia work sits was the second to be completed, there are no details confirming the painting's connection with the altar.[321]

THE INCOMPLETE FAÇADE

In *I quattro libri* Andrea Palladio wrote that '[t]emples fronts should be constructed overlooking the most impressive part of a city so that it seems that religion has been placed there like a guard and protector of the citizens.'[322] While San Nicolò is some distance from the main islands of Venice, those looking out from Sant' Elena or travelling towards the Lido from the main city would no doubt have been struck by a magnificent marble edifice, standing close to the shoreline, in the manner of Palladio's San Giorgio Maggiore and Redentore, or of later churches such as the Gesuati, which stands across the canal from the Redentore.[323] At the same time, such a façade would have also accentuated – as Palladio suggests – the role that San Nicolò played as a spiritual protection for the people due to its location at a vulnerable edge of the city. However, the façade for San Nicolò di Lido was never completed. (See Fig. 10 for the façade today and Fig. 71 of the façade in 1938 without the tree situated on the left).

For a church with such a carefully planned, harmoniously organised interior, this is a great shame. Its sole eye-catching feature is the marble urn with its bust of Doge Domenico Contarini, which sits on top of the large entrance portal itself framed with

[320] Moschini, *Guida di Venezia*, 171-172.
[321] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5, fol. 110r.
[322] Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, Book 4, ch. 1, 5.
[323] The façade at San Giorgio Maggiore was partially obscured by buildings until a decree from the doge in 1610 had them removed.

two columns (Fig. 72). The urn of Doge Contarini (one of the three founders of the church) was meant to be the centrepiece of a much more monumental marble façade which the monks did not have the funds to complete.[324]

Despite the absence of a physical façade there are sources that indicate what may have been intended. Firstly there are the church archives where, helpfully, there are numerous copies of the same letter detailing the monks' intentions for the façade design.[325] However, this document has not been properly analysed before now. Secondly, there is a plan produced by Antonio Visentini in 1700, which, despite Visentini's documented inaccuracies, must also be considered (Fig. 73). With these documents we can build up an understanding of a façade which would have drawn yet again on the influence of Palladio, and which would have harmonised perfectly with the church's interior and provided a stunning visual addition to the lagoon.

The archival letter lists the proto of the project as one 'Alessandro Trimignon' who also worked on the façade of the church of San Moisè (to be discussed later in this thesis).[326] Tremignon was born only in 1635, so his selection for the project demonstrates that the façade was tackled much later than the rest of the church, which is unsurprising due to the great costs involved. Indeed, the façade of San Moisè was also designed and built many decades after the church had been completed. Very few churches, whether parish or monastic, had the money both to rebuild the church *and* produce an Istrian stone façade in quick succession. At San Moisè they were only able to complete the façade at all due to a generous donation from the Fini family. Tremignon, still a fledging architect at this stage, was brought in to the project in 1683, while he was still working on San Moisè, yet what we can gather from his design for San Nicolò is that it was very different to the project at San Moisè.[327]

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[324] Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 51.
[325] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 7, without pagination.
[326] ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 7, without pagination.
[327] As will be discussed in far greater detail in the following section on San Moisè, Tremignon was working on a design that was heavily influenced by the Fini family. Both projects had strong patrons who clearly had firm opinions about what they wanted for their churches. This is likely to be the main reason for the distinctive difference between the two church façades, and also a reminder that at this stage, Tremignon was quite unknown as an architect and his own architectural style not yet fully matured.
Martin Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano: Venezia e la politica dei monumenti dal Quattrocento al Settecento*, Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2002, 329.

The archival document lists various features of the façade (columns, niches etc.) and their intended size, but it does not give an overall picture of what the completed façade would have looked like. The letter suggests that a design, perhaps even a model of the intended façade, was produced by Tremignon, and this would have filled in the gaps. We can ascertain some useful information from the document. For example, it was clear that the stone for the project was to come from Rovigno (on the Istrian coast).[328] There were to be four columns with Corinthian capitals, two pilasters and two niches along with a door portal with more pilasters and some sort of pediment over the frame.[329] There was also meant to be an entablature above the columns, with details given for the architrave.[330] The end of the letter suggests that Tremignon would get started on the project right away as plans were being made for all of the material needed, invoices were being drawn up and money allocated.[331] Given the level of organisation that had already taken place it is surprising that the façade never actually took shape.

In many ways, Visentini's design does appear to cover the features listed in the archival document and perhaps he had access to Tremignon's designs or models for the project. This would not be entirely unlikely since Visentini's design was completed in 1700, fewer than twenty years after the letter demonstrates action was being taken on the façade project at San Nicolò and, despite the lack of activity after this point, it may be the case that all of the material was still available for Visentini to work from. Visentini's design shows an image of a projected façade for San Nicolò which Rudolf Wittkower argues is clearly a simplification of the Redentore's façade (Fig. 74).[332] Indeed, the comparison is obvious and, considering the other elements where the monks at San Nicolò had borrowed features from the Redentore, it is not surprising.

The Redentore is not the only Palladian church that Visentini's design for San Nicolò di Lido can be compared with; indeed it echoes the façades of San Francesco della Vigna (Fig. 75) and San Giorgio Maggiore (Fig. 76) as well. As at San Francesco della Vigna and San Giorgio Maggiore, the composition is focused on four giant half columns which support a large entablature with a triangular pediment above, and a smaller order of

328 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 7, without pagination.
329 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 7, without pagination.
330 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 7, without pagination.
331 ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 7, without pagination.
332 Wittkower, 'L'influenza del Palladio sullo sviluppo dell'architettura religiosa Veneziana nel sei e settecento,' 66.

pilasters supporting a half pediment below.[333] Where the design for San Nicolò differs is in the use of low pedestals for the columns, as opposed to the gargantuan ones used at San Giorgio and San Francesco. This element is therefore much closer in style to the design of the Redentore, which also uses low pedestals. This is a format also seen in later designs such as Giuseppe Sardi's façade for San Lazzaro dei Mendicanti (Fig. 77) which was completed in 1673. In the case of San Lazzaro, Douglas Lewis argues that by lowering the portal there was more room for placing a large thermal window at the façade's centre.[334] Indeed, at San Nicolò the intention was arguably similar, except that the central area would be filled with the urn and bust of Doge Domenico Contarini rather than with a thermal window, and this would correspond with the plaque at the centre of the San Giorgio Maggiore façade, or with the central sculptural relief on the façade of San Stae (Fig. 78), which was completed almost a century later in 1712. The arch above the door is rather different from those at San Francesco della Vigna and San Giorgio and is more closely aligned with the later façade for the church of the Gesuati (Fig. 79) which was completed in the mid eighteenth century. The two niches at the lower level are comparable with all three of Palladio's façades. The result of Visentini's drawing is a façade design, which is a composite of all of Palladio's façades, avoiding their individual pitfalls, instead taking the strongest features from each façade to create what might have been intended to be seen as a more perfect hybrid of Palladio's style.

Wittkower has unshakable faith in the authenticity of Visentini's designs, claiming that Visentini 'had knowledge of projects that were never executed' ('ha avuto conoscenza di progetti non furono mai eseguiti'), including those for San Pantalon and San Marcuola.[335] While Wittkower's belief in Visentini may not be altogether mistaken with regard to his drawing for San Nicolò di Lido, many other 'lost' projects have been proved by Elena Bassi to be incorrect and were instead inventions for his largely English clientele.[336] Bassi's view was that Visentini envisaged the whole city full of Palladian façades and she is supported by Douglas Lewis who, in his comprehensive study of the late Baroque churches of Venice, analysed both Wittkower's and Bassi's arguments and sided with Bassi. Indeed his own thesis demonstrates that the buildings of 1650 to 1750 were not

[333] While Visentini's drawing only uses clean lines, one imagines that the intention for both the triangular pediment and the broken pediment is that they would have had a row of dentils, in keeping with Palladio's façade designs.
[334] Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*, 123.
[335] Wittkower, 'L'influenza del Palladio sullo sviluppo dell'architettura religiosa Veneziana nel sei e settecento,' 65, 67.
[336] Bassi, 'Considerazioni su alcuni disegni di Antonio Visentini,' 285-286.

the 'unimaginative reworkings of Palladio's apparent prototypes' that everyone had previously perceived them to be.[337] While Visentini's drawings clearly have their shortcomings, it is likely, in the specific case of San Nicolò di Lido, that a reworking of a Palladian prototype *was* the intended aim of the monks, especially given the parallels with the interior.

The urn and bust of Doge Domenico Contarini is all that was ever completed of the project. Long before the archival letter of 1683 about the Tremignon façade, a document, presumed to date from 1629, stipulates the design for the urn and the arrangement of the façade portal (with the urn, inscription and columns either side of the door) as we see it today.[338] The work was undertaken in 1640 as attested by the inscription underneath the urn, which also highlights the continued importance of Contarini to the church.[339] The 1629 document informs us that the project was commissioned after the old home of the Doge's bones was destroyed in the rebuilding process, and breaks down the various elements of the work carried out at a cost of 9632 lire.[340] The later archival source from 1683 shows how the façade would have been transformed had the project been completed, however it is not clear that Contarini's urn was to remain in the centre.

The urn is a major omission from Visentini's design. Instead of the urn and inscription in the centre of the façade above the door, Visentini gives the door a small, semi-circular pediment much like his design for San Pantalon's unfinished façade (Fig. 80), and clearly also similar to the triangular pediment in his interpretation of Scamozzi's intended façade

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337 Lewis argues that the work of Baldassare Longhena (which in the 1960s when Lewis was writing was not as diligently researched and appreciated as it is now) and the nearby Roman Baroque movement were also key influences on the architecture of this period. Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*, 4, 14-15; Bassi, 'Considerazioni su alcuni disegni di Antonio Visentini,' 285-286.

338 These observations are highlighted by Martin Gaier in his description of the façade for his book on lay subjects on sacred façades. Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano,* 506-507.
The archival reference is: ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5 (Conti relativi alla ricostruzione di S. Nicolò sotto il proto Tommaso Contin, 1626-29), fol. 114 (Gaier confirms that the document is not dated but is attached to a document from 1629 so it may be assumed to come from a similar time period).

339 DOMINICO CONTARENO | QUI REBELLEM DALMATIAM COMPRESSA IADERA DOMVIT | GRADVM PVLSO AQVILEIENSE RECEPIT | NORMANDOS IN APVLIA VICIT | PACE PATRIAE REDDITA RELIGIONE AVCTA | HOC NICOLAO ET ALTERVM ANELORVM DVCI | CONSTRVCTA TEMPLA AMPLISSIMIS LOCVPLETATA PROVENTIBVS | SACRIS DIVORVM CINERIBVS ORNAVIT | ATERNAE PRINCIPIO MEMORIAE | SEXCENTIS POST OBITUM ANNIS VIGINTI SEPTEM CVM PRAEFVISSET | MONACHI CASINATES BENEFICIORVM MEMORES | HAC TVMVLI RENOVATIONE LITANT | MDCXL

340 Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 506-507.
The archival reference is: ASV, S. Nicolò di Lido, busta 4, proc. 5 (Conti relativi alla ricostruzione di S. Nicolò sotto il proto Tommaso Contin, 1626-29), fol. 114.

for San Nicolò da Tolentino (Fig. 81), all of which echo those at San Giorgio Maggiore, the Redentore and the Zitelle. This is likely to be an example of when Visentini, rather than producing a fully accurate piece, has modified the existing, distinctively identifying features of the San Nicolò façade, making them more generic and therefore more appealing to his intended audience.

One of the most notable features of Palladio's Redentore is the unity between the church's interior and exterior, which is arguably achieved more successfully than in any other building of its time. With the church designed as a homogenous whole from the beginning, interior adaptions can be accounted for by their correspondence with the exterior features.[341] Indeed, Palladio's *quattro libri* explains some of these decisions in more detail.[342] Assuming that it was likely that Contin, Tremignon and the monks would have envisaged the interior and exterior of the church as a single entity, without the completed façade at San Nicolò di Lido, our understanding of the interior is partly lacking.

[341] Palladio, and other architects of the period, attempted to 'deform' (in Cooper's words), the prototype of classical temples to fit Renaissance ecclesiastic building. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice,* 247-248.
[342] In particular in the section 'On the planning of temples' in Book 4. Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, Book 4, ch. 5, 9-10.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the absence of the full Istrian stone façade, San Nicolò di Lido makes a significant contribution to Venetian church architecture, and of all of the churches in this study, fits most neatly into the timeframe during which Venetian churches were most influenced by the turbulent religious climate brought about by the Counter Reformation. Its flaws were identified in the early seventeenth century and the concerns were quickly accepted by the wider monastic order, which gave a clear blessing to rebuild the church. The rebuilding itself was also a quick and efficient process. Most of the church had been knocked down and rebuilt between 1626 and 1629, with the high altar following by 1635. The monks also made headway with the chapels and their altars in the 1630s although this process appears to have taken longer to complete than the rest of the church. By the late 1630s the new church of San Nicolò was almost complete and the visitors to that first Ascension Day Mass, when the church's three prestigious relics were ceremoniously brought to their new home, would have met a church which epitomised so many of the values that were important to the Counter Reformation.

One of the most significant features of the interior of San Nicolò is the focus on the high altar and the fact that the monks could travel seamlessly throughout the church without blocking anyone's view of it. The interconnecting side chapels are a feature of many churches of this time, corresponding most closely in Venice with the Redentore. However, the symmetry of the floor plan is more developed with the two sacristies, and with originally two bell towers on the exterior as well.

The high altar itself is another, carefully thought through masterpiece. As with many of the features at San Nicolò, it draws from the best aspects of its contemporaries – the Redentore and San Giorgio Maggiore in particular – but refines and finesses them to suit a church of its size. Although the monks clearly had problems with the quality of the work produced by Cosimo Fanzago, this demonstrates their desire for perfection and the completed work reflects the outcome of their determination.

There are two key areas where we are missing vital visual information that would complete the church of San Nicolò. Firstly, as at San Giorgio Maggiore, the interior arches were once painted red and this is clearly a field where much more research would

be beneficial. The red arches would have transformed the visual aesthetic of the interior of San Nicolò and would have distinctly acknowledged the debt owed to its nearby Cassinese contemporary. Without the red arches, the symmetry between San Nicolò and the Redentore is far greater and the church loses some of its visual connection with San Giorgio.

The second incomplete aspect of San Nicolò is, of course, the façade. It is clear from the archives that the monks had been thinking about the façade almost from the outset of the project and had taken decisive action in the 1680s to commission Alessandro Tremignon and to identify the necessary material. There can be no doubt, given the monks' meticulous attention to detail, that the façade would have been the crowning glory of San Nicolò.

The fact that the façade was never completed says much about the situation of the monastery as it headed towards the eighteenth century. It is no surprise that by 1770, there were fewer than 12 monks inhabiting the site which caused the monastery to be closed.[343] With the decline in the number of monks a downturn in the church's finances would also have followed and this corresponds with the unravelling of the tight-knit Cassinese community more broadly after its lack of success at the Council of Trent. However, from the construction of the church of San Nicolò, it may be inferred that the Cassinese Congregation did not fall apart quite as quickly as has been thought after the failure at Trent. Instead, the rebuilding of San Nicolò appears to demonstrate a brief resurgence of the order during which San Nicolò, with its retrochoir, fully conceived from the beginning of the project, surely exemplifies the order's evolving style.

That San Nicolò has changed very little since its rebuilding, with the exception perhaps of a few of the altarpieces, may be attributed to in the Cassinese Congregation's fortunes once again. For us today, however, this makes the church a particularly useful one to study with regards to the period during which it was built. It remains almost as it was then, and serves as a perfect example of the Counter Reformation style in Venice during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

[343] Gallo, *Lido di Venezia,* 53.

CHAPTER TWO

SAN MOISÈ

INTRODUCTION

Situated in the heart of Venice, the church of San Moisè is in many ways the polar opposite of San Nicolò di Lido. The location is one of its key differences. While San Nicolò di Lido is very much on the outskirts of the city and was home to a small monastic body, San Moisè is just a few hundred metres from San Marco, its location ensuring that the patriarch always took a great deal of interest in the church since it was on most of the processional routes to San Marco. The church has always been a parish church and, as such, the interior layout is markedly different to that of San Nicolò di Lido. The interior is a large, square, hall-like room well suited to preaching, for which the church was renowned (Fig. 82). Unlike S. Nicolò, San Moisè has a completed façade, which is one of the church's most striking and memorable features (Fig. 83). However, there are also links between the two churches, as both of them house sculptures by Heinrich Meyring, who produced some of the statues at San Nicolò and sculpted the façade and high altar at San Moisè.

In stark contrast to the amount of published secondary sources about the other churches covered in this study, the material on San Moisè is far more limited in quantity. There is just one small book on the church: Attilio Costantini's, *Chiesa di San Moisè* from 1999, which gives a brief history of the building as well as descriptions of the façade, interior and some of the church's other features.[344] A second, more useful source of information is Giulio Girardi's 1990 article: 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia: da un impianto bizantino all'attuale configurazione ad aula unica.'[345] This work looks briefly at the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history of San Moisè before detailing the structural condition of the church in the 1980s and the work carried out to prevent further damage; and it also includes a number of archival appendices, of which this thesis makes use. Beyond these, there are two brief nineteenth-century pamphlets, one by the whimsical Alvise Piero Zorzi who wrote evocatively and entertainingly on the proposed demolition of San

[344] Attilio Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, Genoa: B. N. Marconi, 1999.
[345] Giulio Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia: da un impianto bizantino all'attuale configurazione ad aula unica,' *Bollettino d'Arte* 59, (1990): 97-124.

Moisè in 1877, arguing – successfully – for the church to be saved.[346] The second pamphlet provides information on the restoration of the church's façade in 1878, after the decision was made not to demolish the building.[347]

The most extensive source is an eighteenth-century manuscript by Niccolò Coleti who was a priest and historian based at San Moisè.[348] Coleti's text is unusually, for that period, written entirely in Latin and tells the history of the church through the various works carried out, and the various decisions made during the tenures of each of the church's parish priests. While the book is dense and thorough, the specifics pertaining to architectural decisions are still not very detailed or informative.

The church underwent a number of patriarchal visitations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the all-important Apostolic Visitation of 1581.[349] However, only one of these visitations, the pastoral visit of Patriarch Morosini in 1659, took place *after* the church was rebuilt and this visitation largely deals with liturgical and administration issues.[350] The visitations are, therefore, less useful for how the new church took shape, but are better as a resource for understanding the problems with the old church which meant that it required rebuilding. Patriarch Priuli visited the church in 1592 and Patriarch Vendramin in 1610 and the records from both visitations provide some insight into the general dereliction of the church and the aspects of its architecture and decoration which were deemed inappropriate in the post-Trent age.[351]

One might argue that the very appearance of the church has done little to endear it to the general public and academics alike. Indeed, even Alvise Piero Zorzi in his defence of the church calls it a 'monstrosity' and was aware that its façade - which was at the time

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346 Alvise Piero Zorzi, *Sulla demolizione della chiesa di San Moisè*. Venice: dalla tipografia del "Tempo", 1877.
347 *Poche parole sulla facciata della chiesa di S. Moisè in Venezia: ristaurata l'anno di grazie 1878*, Venice: Sacchetti, 1878.
348 Niccolò Coleti, *Monumenta ecclesiæ Venetæ Sancti Moysis: ex ejus tabulario potissimum, atque aliunde, ac secundum antistitum seriem, deprompta digesta, hodiernoque illius præsuli, Joanni Baptistæ Moscheni dictata*, Venice: Sebastianus Coleti Typographus, 1758.
349 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di S. Moysis, fols 204r-208v.
The dating of the visitations are as follows:
Apostolic Visitation - 19 June 1581
Visitation of Patriarch Priuli – 28 October 1592
Visitation of Patriarch Vendramin – 31 January 1610
Visitation of Patriarch Morosini – 23 November 1659
350 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Morosini, busta 12, chiesa di S. Moisè, no. 36, without pagination.
351 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fols 287r-292r; ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Vendramin, busta 8, chiesa di S. Moisè, no. 9, without pagination.

perceived by a majority as grotesque - was part of the reason that the church's proposed demolition had received such strong support.[352] Zorzi, however, is one of very few writers to have looked past the appearance of San Moisè to recognise its cultural and historical importance. More generally, San Moisè is perceived to be an unattractive church from an unattractive period. As mentioned in the Introduction, it is only recently, as a result especially of Andrew Hopkins's work, that the 'Baroque' period in Venice has been highlighted, but the focus of this work is firmly on Baldassare Longhena.[353] Douglas Lewis's *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice* provides a snapshot of later church building but, as the title suggests, it is concerned with '*late* Baroque' churches.[354]

It is also notable that the monastic churches of Venice are more extensively researched than her parish churches. The reasons, however, are likely to be architectural rather than anything else. The monastic churches are generally more experimental and more monumental, as a result of the funding that was often available from wider monastic communities. This is not to say that the parish churches of Venice are ignored in architectural discussions of the city, but it is certainly the case that there have been major gaps in the coverage of Venice's ecclesiastical architecture. Even the patriarchal seat of San Pietro di Castello has only gained significant academic attention in recent years through the work of Areli Marina and Gianmario Guidarelli.[355]

Thus, San Moisè not only provides a rather striking example of ecclesiastical architecture in the age of the Counter Reformation, but it also proves to be a useful template for comparing other parish churches that were rebuilt or heavily reshaped during this period. As previously with San Nicolò di Lido, the first part of this chapter will take in the history of the church as well as supplying some understanding of the parish system into which San Moisè fitted. The demands on parish priests and the people guiding them were somewhat different to those of monastic orders like the Cassinese Congregation, and the role here of the patriarch was key. The patriarch, who was a servant of the wider Catholic Church as well as being answerable to the Venetian government, was in a complex position and often provoked the ire of both. One of the many duties of the

[352] Zorzi, *Sulla demolizione della chiesa di San Moisè*, 6.
[353] For Hopkins's key works on the subject see: Andrew Hopkins, *Santa Maria della Salute: Architecture and Ceremony in Baroque Venice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; idem, *Baldassare Longhena and Venetian Baroque Architecture*, revised edition, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
[354] Douglas Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*.
[355] Marina, 'From the Myth to the Margins', 353-429; Gianmario Guidarelli, *I patriarchi di Venezia e l'architettura: la cattedrale di San Pietro di Castello nel Rinascimento*.

patriarch, particularly encouraged in the post-Trent era, was to undertake pastoral visitations to review the organisation and facilities of parish churches in the diocese. The recommendations given as a result of such visitations covered architecture, decoration and accoutrements, as well as providing guidance for clergy management and the practical application of theological doctrines. Those undertaken at San Moisè before the rebuilding of the church provide useful insight into a few of the problems that had arisen or were now perceived, and they highlight concerns the patriarch had with the building. The rebuilding itself takes up the bulk of this chapter, as we look at specific features of the new church particularly in comparison with its parish-church contemporaries. The memorable façade will close the study, and we will also look at how the church dealt with compromises required of many churches of this time: on the one hand requiring a design appropriate to the post-Tridentine period, and on the other having limited finances, and dealing with the appeal of rich lay donors who were willing to help on the condition that they were allowed a say in the design.

A Brief History

Our records for the church of San Moisè are in some ways limited, and consequently its early history is somewhat incomplete and certainly not as detailed as the histories of the other churches. Local tradition suggests that the first church on the site was built at some point in the eighth century by the Artigieri and Scopari families and was dedicated to the martyr St Victor.[356] Francesco Sansovino dated the church to 796, but this is contested by Giulio Girardi who believes the church could not have been completed by then.[357] Attilio Costantini concluded that the first church was then rebuilt sometime before the eleventh century, replacing an original wooden building with a stronger structure also of wood.[358] Girardi does not mention this rebuilding, but both agree that the church was destroyed in 1105 in the fire that spread throughout half of Venice, from the Palazzo Ducale to S. Angelo Raffaele in Dorsoduro and S. Lorenzo in Castello.[359] The post-1105 rebuilding is thought to have been funded by the patrician Moisè Venier and the church was renamed after his name saint – St Moses - making it one of very few churches in the Catholic Church to be dedicated to this figure.[360] For many centuries, the church retained

[356] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 1.
[357] Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 112; Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 98.
[358] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 1.
[359] Ibid, 1; Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 98.
[360] Marcello Brusegan, *Le chiese di Venezia: storia, arte, segreti, leggende, curiosità*, Rome: Newton Compton, 2007, 213.

an altar dedicated to St Victor, the original patron saint of the church, but the altar disappeared at some point before the final rebuilding in the seventeenth century.[361]

Costantini asserts that the post-1105 rebuilding lasted the next few centuries but was demolished and reconstructed again in 1520; but Girardi (and also Marcello Brusegan in a brief note on the church) does not mention any sixteenth-century rebuilding, and implies that the twelfth-century church was the final building before the seventeenth-century church.[362] Both agree that the church on the site prior to the 1632 rebuilding had a nave and two aisles, divided by two rows of columns but of the same shape as the 1632 reincarnation.[363] The nave led to the high altar, in front of which was a large wooden choir, extending to the first pair of columns.[364] Girardi provides a speculative layout of the earlier church which shows that - like the present building - it had chapels either side of the high altar, with various altars being placed along the church's sides (Fig. 84).

When the church was rebuilt in 1632 the columns of the earlier building were dispensed with, as was the wooden choir, leaving us with a large central apse that is uncluttered and open with a clear focus from all points on the high altar (see Fig. 85 for Girardi's floor plan of the current church). The church was finally finished in in the late 1680s when Alessandro Tremignon and Heinrich Meyring completed the monumental façade, although subsequent centuries saw brief additions such as the new pulpit and baptismal font arrangement, which was completed in 1783.

As with the rest of Venice's ecclesiastic fabric, San Moisè was not immune to the after-effects of Napoleon's invasion and it was supressed in 1808. Later, in 1967, the parish was combined with that of San Marco and Santa Maria del Giglio.[365] Work took place between 1980 and 1990 to stabilise the walls and restore sculptures inside the building. The church campanile has been *in situ* since 1520, a replacement for one that was brought down by an earthquake in 1511.[366] The bell tower reaches approximately fifty

[361] Costantini suggests that this might have happened during one of the large restorations before the seventeenth century, perhaps even as early as 1105 when fire destroyed much of the old church. However, Girardi asserts that the altar to Saint Victor is mentioned in a document of 1390. Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 1; Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 98.
[362] Brusegan, *Le chiese di Venezia*, 213; Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 1; Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 98.
[363] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 1; Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 98.
[364] Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia', 98.
[365] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 2.
[366] Ibid, 32.

metres high, is completely detached from the church and holds bells which were commissioned in the nineteenth century.[367]

PARISH CONSIDERATIONS

The Introduction to this thesis has already touched on Venice's parish system and the role of the patriarch but a few more specific points should be noted here. Key to understanding the reform at both San Moisè and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli are a few specific patriarchs. First of these figures is Patriarch Giovanni Trevisan, a Benedictine monk who ruled between 1559-1590. It was Trevisan who was opposed to the Apostolic Visitation, arguing that Venice was more religious than 'ten Milans'.[368] Trevisan saw the Venetian doge as a legitimate alternative Church authority to the pope, even though this was exactly the type of individualistic behaviour that the Catholic Church was trying to stamp out through the Council of Trent.[369] Trevisan was followed by Patriarch Priuli, who, despite being a member of the laity, was far more zealous with reform than the Benedictine Trevisan. Deborah Walberg describes Priuli as 'the most austere, intractable and rigid of the Counter Reformation patriarchs'.[370] Clearly a divisive figure, Priuli nevertheless was integral to the reform at San Moisè and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, as the documentation on his patriarchal visits to the churches attest. At San Nicolò changes were quickly made in response to his visit and praise was issued for the renovations that the church had already carried out and which met with his approval.[371] The effect of his visit to San Moisè will be seen in the following section of this chapter. Priuli was also integral to the reforms that took place at the patriarchal home of San Pietro di Castello, although it was one of his successors, Patriarch Tiepolo, who oversaw the rebuilding of the cathedral between 1621-1630.[372]

Like Priuli, Tiepolo was also very concerned with the parish churches and undertook his own visitations as well as writing numerous parish texts to inspire the literate of Venetian

[367] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 32.
[368] Tramontin, 'La visita apostolica del 1581 a Venezia,' 453-534.
[369] Deborah Walberg, 'Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo and the Search for Religious Identity in the Waning of the Renaissance,' in *Celebrazione e autocritica: La Serenissima e la ricerca dell'identità veneziana nel tardo Cinquecento*, edited by Benjamin Paul, Rome: Viella, 2014, 235.
[370] Walberg, 'Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo and the Search for Religious Identity in the Waning of the Renaissance,' 235.
[371] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fols 171r-175r.
[372] Guidarelli, *I patriarchi di Venezia e l'architettura,* 153-195.

society.[373] In particular, Tiepolo made a significant contribution to the study of Venetian hagiography, taking advantage of the Council of Trent's confirmation of the cult of saints.[374] Both Priuli and Tiepolo can, and have been, used as examples of patriarchs who strove to undermine the wider Church, ignoring their attempts to bring closer unity and coherence, instead cementing Venice's individual authority and guidance.[375] Yet at the same time, both patriarchs were essential to the Counter Reform movement in Venice and were integral to the changes that took place in parish churches like San Moisè and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, turning them into the reform driven buildings that we still see today.

THE PROBLEMS WITH THE OLD CHURCH AND THE IMPETUS FOR REBUILDING

To understand the issues with the previous church of San Moisè we must look to the Apostolic and patriarchal visits to the church preceding its rebuilding. The Apostolic visitors arrived at the church 19 June 1581 and their account confirms the existence of many of the church's features including a Chapel of the Sacrament with its tabernacle of marble and a magnificent baptismal font.[376] Indeed much money had been spent on restoring the Chapel of the Sacrament and the altars, many of which were portable, were in a satisfactory condition, adorned with suitable ornaments.[377]

Patriarch Priuli visited just over ten years later on 28 October 1592. Concerns were raised almost immediately as Priuli noted that the 'main chapel was very old and in need of restoration' ('la cappella maggiore molto vecchia et bisognosa de restauratione').[378] The Chapel of the Sacrament however was in 'a very good and honourable state' ('fu ritrovatoia bonissimo et honororevolissimo stato').[379] This is interesting and, as we shall see later with the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, suggests that the Sacrament was already an important priority for these parish churches and despite the dereliction elsewhere, the chapels and altars to the Sacrament were well preserved.

[373] Walberg, 'Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo and the Search for Religious Identity in the Waning of the Renaissance,' 238.
[374] Ibid, 239.
[375] Ibid, 233-252.
[376] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di S. Moysis, fols 204r-v.
[377] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di S. Moysis, fols 206r-v.
[378] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 287v.
[379] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 287v.

Priuli's visitation also records the building of two new altars: one to the Holy Cross and another to the Blessed Virgin.[380] These altars had not yet been provided with the correct ornaments and decoration and this was an issue that Priuli felt should be dealt with rapidly.[381] While liturgical accoutrements – chalices, candlesticks, chasubles etc. - are not a focus in this thesis, their importance should be noted here and they are listed very carefully in other church visitations and inventories. Priuli's determination that these new altars should be properly equipped further serves to stress the Council of Trent's impetus for the correct performance of liturgical ceremonies.

Further observations of Priuli demonstrate that the altar to St Nicholas was very 'ornate' ('ornato') and was still a portable altar, as the Apostolic Visitation had also suggested.[382] The altar to St Jerome was unconsecrated and was described as 'an altar of flawed design' ('un altare disegno guasto') because the wood of the altar was rotted and damaged.[383] Improvements recommended included the removal of the damaged or wooden altars and the decent ornamentation of the new altars so that they could be used correctly.[384] Priuli's visit also touches on the more fundamental structural problems with the church such as the damaged floor.[385] Priuli's account lists altars to the Holy Cross, the Blessed Virgin, St Nicholas, St Jerome and another to the Virgin in the chapel of the Justinian family, with some of these altars being recreated in the new church but, as we shall see, some were replaced with new ones commissioned by the *scuole*.[386]

Subsequent patriarchal visits, despite a lack of detail, suggest that some of the concerns with the altars were amended and that some of the more problematic altars were removed altogether. Patriarch Morosini's visit of 1659, the first of the visitations to the new church, reveals frustratingly little about the patriarch's thoughts on the new building and instead focuses on the priests' administration of the sacraments and their diligence

[380] 'Due altari di nuovo fabbricati fanno ritrovati nella nave destra della chiesa uno de quale so dedicherà alla santissima Croci, et l'altro alla gloriosa Vergini…'. ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 288r.
[381] '…et perché non sono ancora forniti ordinò S.S. Illustrissima che si proveda quanto prima ridurle a perfezione et ornarli decentemente, accio si possa celebrari, et in questo menti cnon si celebri a modo alcuno, come anco dissi il Reverendo Piovano che non si le celebrava.' ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 288r.
[382] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 288r.
[383] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 288r.
[384] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fol. 290v.
[385] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fols 289r, 291r.
[386] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di S. Moisè, fols 288r-v.

with the doctrine.[387] It is clear that the problematic wooden altars and the lack of altar accoutrements could be easily brought up to the correct standards, however the general dereliction of the church building itself was something that could be less easily fixed.

The derelict state of San Moisè had become so serious by the early seventeenth century that the parish priest, Don Antonio Auramo, declared it to be 'threatened with ruin', and set in train its rebuilding.[388] The foundation stone was laid on October 12 1632, and special coins were commissioned to mark the occasion. Various requests for money were made to assist with the rebuilding: in 1634 the patriarch was petitioned for 1200 ducats and in 1637 the Senate gave 600 ducats.[389] Money was also obtained for specific projects later on in the rebuilding process: the Scuola del Sacramento gave money for the rebuilding of the Chapel of the Sacrament (along – as we shall see later – with very specific requests for its design), and money was given in 1667 to reinforce an old external wall that was being retained in the rebuilding process but was starting to crumble.[390] Further money was requested for certain particular parts of the building such as the church floor, and bequests were bequeathed by patrons. These included the 3500 ducats left for paintings, choir benches and other improvements to the *cappella maggiore,* and, of course, the Fini family's bequest for the church façade.[391]

[387] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Morosini, busta 12, chiesa di S. Moisè, no. 36, without pagination.
[388] Girardi quotes this document in his article but provides us with very little details to find the document listing it separately as a footnote and described only as a parchment from the Biblioteca Museo Civico Correr. Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 99, no. 8.
Auremo oversaw the majority of the rebuilding, being the parish priest from 10 February 1629 – 21 December 1641. Coleti, *Monumenta Ecclesiæ Venetæ Sancti Moysis*, 1758.
[389] ACP, San Moisè Profeta Obsoleta, '18 Agosto 1634: Prestito per la fabbrica della chiesa', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia', 1990, 115.
[390] Specific references to archival sources on the Scuola del Sacramento will be detailed later on in this section. There was great concern about the wall on one side of the church which was a crumbling pre-existing structure which needed 1000 ducats to secure it. ACP, San Moisè Profeta Obsoleta, '23 Giugno 1667: Prestito per la fabbrica della chiesa', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia', 1990, 116.
[391] Again further specific references to the Fini bequest will be given at more pertinent moments later in this section. The testament of Bonci stipulated that 3500 ducats were to be spent on improving the features of the *Cappella Maggiore* and a number of sources detail how that money was spent – or intended to be spent. ACP, Catastico, '26 Settembre 1681: Testamento Bonci', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia', 1990, 117.

THE REBUILDING PROJECT AT SAN MOISÈ

FLOOR PLAN AND INTERIOR

As Giulio Girardi ascertained, the 1630s church of San Moisè was constructed closely on the outline of the previous building (Figs 84, 85). The floor plan has the same external dimensions but changes were made inside. In the new building there are no large columns dividing the church into a nave and aisles and, more importantly, there is no choir taking up space in the nave and blocking the laity's view of the high altar. It is now well established that, in Venice, all such choirs and their often rich and elegant choir screens were removed during this period (except, of course, the magnificent example that remains at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari), and this matter will be examined in more detail when considering the refitting of the monastic church of Santo Stefano.[392] Instead, the interior of the new church was left empty of anything blocking the view of the high altar. The new church of San Moisè, like its predecessor, has only a limited number of chapels: there is a chapel either side of the high altar (on the left that of the Sacrament and on the right a chapel dedicated to St Anthony) but there are no others; its various side altars taking up little space and leaving the interior as one large square-shaped hall, similar to certain previous parish churches such as San Giuliano and San Martino. Both the high altar and those altars on the walls of the church are topped with thermal windows, while the two side chapels contain two each and small arched windows, situated either above or below further paintings, fill the spaces on the walls between the altars. The ceiling culminates in a painting depicting the *Apotheosis of Moses*. The sacristy, accessed next to the chapel to St Anthony, was a late addition, finished in 1709.[393]

Parish churches did not have the same need for as many chapels as monastic churches and, for them, a square format was also better suited for a number of other reasons, most importantly for preaching, which was becoming a major consideration for parish churches of the post-Tridentine age. As Mass attendance improved in the wake of the Catholic reforms, large auditorium-like hall churches, where all of the laity could hear and see the preacher clearly, became ever more important. In Venice, the newly rebuilt San Moisè was one of the earliest and most successful examples of this design, a church

[392] While this will be covered in more detail later, the most pertinent, and thorough, material on the removal of choir screens in Venice is the work of Paola Modesti: Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese parrocchiali veneziane fra Rinascimento e riforma tridentina,' 141-153; eadem, 'I cori nelle chiese Veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581', 39-65.
[393] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 30.

that Augusto Roca De Amicis argues brought 'great acclaim' ('a grande risonanza') to this style of building.[394]

Following on from the design of San Moisè, a number of other parish churches took up the square auditorium-like format. One was the little-known church of San Cassiano in the *sestiere* of San Polo. Work began on this church in the early seventeenth century and it was completed by 1663. In many ways it is a near copy of San Moisè and similarities, especially as regards size, are very striking. As at San Moisè, the hall-like interior is supplemented with three chapels at the far end, including one for the high altar, and it likewise houses a number of side altars, many of which are similarly topped with thermal windows, while the high altar is again supplied with side paintings (Figs 86, 87, 88). In fact, San Cassiano is very much a simplified version of the more-wealthy San Moisè. The main difference is that San Cassiano has four internal columns supporting an arched ceiling, which was richly decorated later in the century.

In the following century, the church of San Rocco, home to the Confraternity of San Rocco, was rebuilt in 1725 by Giovanni Scalfarotto. This church again features a large hall-like nave bordered with end-chapels and side altars (Figs 89, 90, 91). In this instance, the rather overpowering high altar in the presbytery houses an urn containing the relics of St Roch. Comparisons can also be made with the church of San Marcuola (1663-1736) and San Marziale (re-consecrated 1721) (Figs 92, 93). These churches, however, while square and auditorium-like in shape, have chapel configurations that are rather different from the standards set at San Moisè and show a new interest in experimentation.

The hall-like designs of San Moisè and the subsequent examples listed above were very much anticipated by the churches of San Zulian (otherwise known as San Giuliano) and San Martino, both of which were rebuilt by Jacopo Sansovino in the early sixteenth century. San Zulian was commissioned by Tommaso Rangone in 1553 in a second attempt to gain commemoration after his initial wish to have his portrait installed on the façade of San Geminiano - the church (demolished in 1807) once situated opposite San Marco – was thwarted by the Senate who refused all requests for personal memorials on the piazza (Figs 94, 95). Rangone will feature again later in this thesis as he is a clear precursor to Vincenzo Fini in his own self-aggrandising efforts for a memorial on a

[394] Augusto Roca De Amicis, 'Le chiese e le facciate commemorative,' 248.

public monument. San Zulian features a square plan with altars on the side walls, and like San Moisè, nothing interrupts the open space of the interior (Figs 96, 97). The presbytery, here, is much larger than its two companion side chapels, and most of the light comes from traditional arched windows that are typical of Sansovino, although a few larger thermal windows were added at a later date. Originally, therefore, the church was quite dark internally, the gloominess being deepened by the church's tightly packed location, very much in contrast to San Moisè which is filled with light.

San Martino is located in the quieter region of Castello, and was rebuilt by Sansovino from 1546. The church is actually a Greek-cross plan rather than a simple square (Fig. 98), and has chapels as opposed to side altars, but the sense of space and light (enhanced by the church's much less crowded location) anticipates the later church of San Moisè and was no doubt influential on it (Figs 99, 100). The building's rather simple and unassuming design is perhaps a reflection of it being situated in a poor quarter of Venice populated by workers from the Arsenale, but, as Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti posit, on the basis of a suggestion by Manfredo Tafuri, this simplicity could also be due to Sansovino's engagement, through his friends Lorenzo Lotto and Sebastiano Serlio, with church reform.[395] This, therefore, may have caused it to be regarded as prototype for subsequent churches embracing reformist ideologies. San Moisè, however, is more monumental in scale and outwardly much more extravagant in appearance, thus reflecting the contradictory priorities of its location and time.

That many parish churches would follow the example of San Moisè in their overall design is, perhaps, not surprising. It has been noted by other architectural historians that many churches from this later period followed similar compositional patterns. Augusto Roca De Amicis explains that a 'relatively homogenous group' of churches emerged that were of two key types: large, square-auditorium parish churches like San Moisè and rectangular churches with side-chapels of the monastic orders that were epitomised by the Redentore.[396] Innovation and experimentation with these common formats is occasionally seen, as in Giuseppe Benoni's Santa Maria del Giglio (built between 1679 and 1685) and, of course, in Baldassare Longhena's Santa Maria della Salute (constructed 1631-87), but these are exceptions to newly accepted traditions that were grounded in

[395] Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 143.
[396] Roca De Amicis, 'Le chiese e le facciate commemorative,' 248.

prevailing consensus. Clearly, therefore, these types were regarded as embodying ideal responses to the religious requirements of the age.

At the same time, the interior of San Moisè reflects a strong Palladian influence in its styling, as was the case also with San Nicolò di Lido. In fact, there are some notable similarities with San Nicolò, including the usage of pilasters rather than half columns. Also, like San Nicolò di Lido is the cornice with modillions, and the arrangement of the corners where the pilasters are paired and folded (compare Figs 16 and 101). The main difference is that, at San Moisè, there are pedestals beneath the pilasters, reminiscent of those at Santa Maria della Salute, San Giorgio Maggiore and San Francesco della Vigna, which created a more monumental effect, this, perhaps, being the aim of the architect in view of the church's location on the processional route to San Marco.

The barrel-vaulted ceiling is typical of many churches of this period, and departs from Sansovino's designs for San Martino and San Zulian which have ceilings that are flat. The decision to have a barrel-vaulted ceiling, however, may have also been influenced by debates of the time over the sound of choral music in churches. Sansovino's flat ceilings at San Martino and San Zulian, according Howard and Moretti, were ideal for the new *coro spezzato* music that Adrian Willaert had been producing.[398] San Francesco della Vigna was the first Venetian church - for which there is definitive documentary evidence - to feature a design which took acoustic considerations into account. While we have very little information regarding the musical practices at San Moisè, other than the fact that the church was an integral part of processions to San Marco, it is conceivable that the ceiling was barrel-vaulted for similar reasons.

THE HIGH ALTAR

Despite the rich interior, it is the magnificent sculptural high altar that captures attention on entry into San Moisè (Figs 102, 103). Indeed the altar epitomises the post-Tridentine trend for making the high altar the focus of the church interior, and for it to be visible and prominent during all religious services and church activities. As Borromeo had specified, careful attention was paid to the altar's height in comparison with the rest of the church.[399] There are three steps leading up to the main chapel and then a further

[398] Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice,* 159.
[399] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones*, 143-146.

three to the high altar itself. The stepped and raised access is not at all surprising and, indeed, the majority of churches from around this time have their high altar raised in very much the same manner – with at least six steps leading up to the altar itself. At San Moisè the visual effect of the altar is then heightened by the design of the altarpiece.

A monumental sculptural work in polychrome marble, the high altarpiece of San Moisè extends upwards almost to the ceiling, depicting the episode on Mount Sinai when Moses – the dedicatee of the church – received the two tablets with the Ten Commandments from God (Exodus 20:1-17) (Fig. 104).[400] Situated on and around the mountain, which is made of large blocks of burnt umber-coloured marble, are various figures, also of marble. At the very top is the figure of Moses who is pointing to one of the two black marble tablets which are inscribed with Hebrew. Above him, the figure of God also points to the tablet. Surrounding God are three angels playing on trumpets, proclaiming yet further the celebratory aspect of God's delivering of the Ten Commandments. Also surrounding God are a number of *putti* faces, two of which nestle against God's body. At the bottom of the mountain are other figures. Two in the centre lie sprawled out around a chest of chains and jewellery and represent the Israelites worshipping false Gods (Fig. 105). They are paralleled on the altar table below by a sculptural relief, perhaps by Meyring,[401] depicting the people that Moses had left when climbing Mount Sinai: the Jewish people who had lost their way and were idolatrously worshiping the golden calf. The two figures by the chest are joined by more standing figures either side. On the left are Aaron and Joshua and on the right is Moses's sister, Miriam, all supporters of Moses with a strong belief in God (Figs 106, 107). The mountain itself houses the relics of Saint Anthony, whose chapel is situated to the right of the high altar (Fig. 108). Behind the high altar is a gigantic fresco full of more trumpeting angels and other heavenly figures, many kneeling in prayer, an encouragement perhaps for the congregation to do the same and meditate on the spiritual connotations of the high-altar scene.

On the walls either side of the high altar are two enormous painted panels also depicting scenes from the life of Moses (Figs 109, 110). On the left is the story of Moses and the

[400] The Ten Commandments are repeated again in Deuteronomy 5:6-21.
[401] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 7.

Brazen Serpent (Numbers 21:6-9) by an unknown artist.[404] This event is then mentioned in the New Testament by Jesus himself (John 3: 14-15): 'Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'[407] On the right of the altar is a companion painting, by artist Girolamo Brusaferro, of the *Crossing of the Red Sea* (Exodus 13:17-14:29). This provides a message of forgiveness and redemption in showing God's intervention to stop the physical slavery of the Israelites, and is a precursor to the sacrifice of Jesus to end the spiritual slavery of sin. The Crossing of the Red Sea and the story of the bronze serpent were sometimes paired in Chapels of the Sacrament as Old Testament typologies representing the theme of salvation.[408] The wooden choir stalls beneath the paintings then depict further scenes from the life of Moses of suitable educative subject.

The altar and the sculptural decoration were completed by 1684 along with the wooden choir, although other works in the chancel came later, and, as a whole it provides a multi-faceted and multi-media experience. The sculptor of the high altarpiece, Heinrich Meyring, who came from Flanders, has already been mentioned in this thesis in relation to San Nicolò di Lido where he produced some of the internal sculptures. He often collaborated with fellow sculptor Giovanni Comino, a relative of Francesco Comino (the designer of San Pantalon), who worked with Meyring on the San Nicolò di Lido and Scalzi projects, as well as on little known projects for Santa Maria del Giglio and the Arsenale gates and commissions outside of Venice.[409] Meyring is most known, however, for his work on the façade of San Moisè, discussed later on in this chapter, and so it could be that he was commissioned by the architect of San Moisè, Alessandro Tremignon, to execute both the façade and the high altar, especially since he had begun his career as an apprentice in Tremignon's workshop.[411] Meyring's work, arguably, has more than just a touch of the Roman Baroque about it and this can be seen quite clearly in the San Moisè high altarpiece. His figures, especially the man lying at the bottom of the mountain with his chest of riches, are very muscular, and his compositions very

[404] Neither Costantini, Girardi nor any of the archival sources identify the artist of *Moses and the Brazen Serpent*.
[407] NIV, John 3: 14-15.
[408] The Crossing of the Red Sea has more commonly been associated with the sacrament of baptism but its connection with salvation stems from early Christian times. Whereas the Bronze Serpent has been more straight-forwardly associated with Christ's sacrifice. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 240-244.
[409] Douglas Lewis provides more detail on Giovanni – and indeed Francesco – Comino's repertoire in: Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice*, 45-46.
[411] Ibid, 46.

dynamic. The style and design are certainly unusual for Venice which traditionally opted for painted high altarpieces, and even Vittoria and Campagna's works for the Redentore and San Giorgio Maggiore do not have the same energetic quality. Even so, Meyring's work is in keeping with the new spirit of Counter Reformation church decoration, and provides a distinctive variation on the type of effect that church authorities were seeking to achieve.

Of note is the little-known connection with Antonio Gaspari and the high altar at San Moisè. It is Elena Bassi who draws our attention to the fact that Antonio Gaspari was originally considered for the high altar commission but, in the end, priest Andrea Tremignon left the project in the hands of his brother, the architect Alessandro Tremignon, who decided to work with Meyring.[413] Despite this, Gaspari produced some designs which would have created an even more monumental and sculptural altarpiece than Meyring's eventual work (Figs 111, 112, 113).

The rest of the church artistry is largely focused on more familiar subjects: three of the four peripheral altars contain references to the Virgin Mary. The Chapel of the Sacrament features two matching works on its side-walls, Jacopo Tintoretto's *Washing of the Disciples' Feet* and Palma il Giovane's *Last Supper*. In the chapel dedicated to Saint Anthony the altarpiece depicts the *Virgin and Child in Glory* which is perhaps by Tintoretto's son, Domenico,[414] and there are two companion paintings on the side walls, here the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* and the *Assumption of Mary into Heaven* by an eighteenth century artist called Domenico Beverenza.[415]

THE CHOIR AND ITS CONTEXT

As we have seen in this thesis already, one of the most common changes to church interiors during the Counter Reformation was the redesign of the choir area, and this applied to both parish and monastic churches. Retrochoirs, as they are now known, became abundantly popular in Venice's monastic churches, either in new buildings or the renovations of old ones. In the wake of Sansovino's San Francesco della Vigna came a growth, in monastic buildings, of choirs of young orphans, and new churches often

413 Elena Bassi, 'Episodi dell'architettura Veneta nell'opera di Antonio Gaspari,' *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte* 3, (1963): 62.
414 This is the assertion of Attilio Costantini and is not supported with specific evidence. Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 18.
415 Ibid, 20.

incorporated ceilings that strengthened acoustics, with retrochoirs providing remarkable aural additions to church architecture.[416] In parish churches, the situation was somewhat different since the demand for choirs was less pressing than in the large monastic communities where the daily hours were of key importance. As Paola Modesti has shown, even parish churches removed choirs that had previously been positioned prominently in front of the high altar.[417] At San Moisè, there had previously been a choir in front of the high altar, as Giulio Girardi's report on the pre-existing church has established.[418]

In the new church, as we see it today, the main chapel was designed with a small wooden choir affixed to its two side walls (Figs 109, 110, 114). As the choir was no longer in front of the high altar it would not have blocked the view of the laity attending Mass, and since San Moisè was a parish church there was no need for a full retrochoir so the solution of wrapping the choir around the walls of the *cappella maggiore* was thus the most appropriate and still facilitated good musical performances. Very few parish churches in Venice are provided with retrochoirs, an exception being the church of San Martino. This, however, is a late feature of San Martino's design, the construction of which continued into the late 1610s, with the high altar not being commissioned until 1618, and so the retrochoir was probably not part of Sansovino's project.[419] Despite early retrochoirs at San Giobbe and San Francesco della Vigna, they did not become popular in Venice until after Palladio's designs for San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore, and in the wake of the Council of Trent. Retrochoirs had been used since the late thirteenth century by the Observant Franciscans and this order was keenly involved in the reform process which makes the appearance of the retrochoir at San Francesco della Vigna understandable.[420]

THE CHAPEL OF THE SACRAMENT

Unlike San Nicolò di Lido, San Moisè has a dedicated Chapel of the Sacrament, as it had in its earlier configuration (Fig. 115). Indeed, despite the issues with the old church, the

[416] Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice,* 161.
[417] Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese parrocchiali veneziane fra Rinascimento e riforma tridentina,' 141-153.
[418] Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 98.
[419] Howard and Moretti do argue that the retrochoir *could* have been 'an integral part of Sansovino's design' but that it is likely that the choir was introduced after 1600, perhaps modelled on the nearby church of San Giovanni in Bragora where a retrochoir had recently been added. Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 143, 146.
[420] Ibid, 98-99.

Chapel of the Sacrament was one of the few areas of the church that did not present significant problems or criticisms in the various visitations. This was also the case with the other parish church in this study, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, which will be discussed further along in this thesis, where a Chapel of the Sacrament was installed relatively early on and was praised in the various visitations. In both parish churches it is very clear that the chapels were well maintained financially, and treated with great reverence by the parish priests and the local congregations who had set up confraternities for their upkeep.

Such approval is not surprising given that Venice was one of the first Catholic cities to have Chapels of the Sacrament included in its churches, and was doing so well *before* the Council of Trent.[421] It was already in the eleventh century that a focus on the Sacrament started to take shape. Long before the time of Martin Luther, Berengarius of Tours (1000-88) had disagreed with the Catholic Church that the Sacrament was the Real Presence of Christ; and other dissenters in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries caused the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 to confirm the doctrine of Transubstantiation, much in the way that the Council of Trent later reaffirmed it in the wake of Luther and Calvin in the sixteenth century.[422] Thus Trent, and the key voices of Catholic Reform in the sixteenth century, simply reconfirmed and promoted a movement that had already been established many centuries previously.[423]

Means of storing and revering the Sacrament had also been evolving since this early time. In Italy the first common form of storage was a small cabinet or tabernacle that would be fixed to the wall of either the sacristy or choir.[424] By the sixteenth century, these tabernacles were now commonly placed on the high altar but it was not long before even this location was thought to be inadequate to honour the Sacrament sufficiently and churches started dedicating whole altars – and even chapels - to the Sacrament, although many churches, such as S. Nicolò di Lido, still kept their tabernacles on the high altar.[425] Cope discusses the different types of tabernacle that could be found, and notes a particular change during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from small box-like

[421] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 2.
[422] Ibid, 8-9.
[423] The Eucharist was discussed during the thirteenth session of the Council of Trent. Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, 75-84.
[424] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 11.
[425] Ibid, 16.

tabernacles, which were viewed in conjunction with Eucharistic paintings in the sixteenth century, much like those that we see in many Venetian churches including San Moisè, to much more elaborate temple-like structures focusing on the adoration of the Host in many seventeenth century examples, such as the one we will be discussing later on in Santo Stefano.[426]

As with the development of the role of the Sacrament and the ways of storing it, the *Scuole* or Companies of the Sacrament came into existence long before the Counter Reformation. Indeed, they could be found even before the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264, with Italian records of such Companies dating back to the fourteenth century.[427] In Venice the first to be established was the *Confraternità del Corpus Domini* in 1385 and by 1539 there were at least seventy eight recorded.[428] At San Moisè, one such *scuola* was established in the late sixteenth century.[429] The lay confraternity took over complete control over the Chapel of the Sacrament and saw to the commissioning of the various art works and furnishings within it.[430] The design of the whole church was also important to them and the Scuola del Sacramento at San Moisè had a great deal of input into the construction of the new building. Indeed, before the new church had been commissioned they had decided that the chapel – at the very least – needed rebuilding, despite the lack of concerns from the various visitations.[431]

There had been a desire for an altar to the Sacrament long before the Scuola del Sacramento came into existence. In a mariegola entry from 1542 it was suggested by the Scuola del Venerabile – the *scuola* that preceded that of the *Sacramento* with regard to such works - that they 'should make a beautiful altar' ('debba far un bello altar') and that it should cost 50 ducats.[432] A specific Scuola del Sacramento was then set up in 1577 by

426 Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 18-25.
427 Ibid, 271.
428 Ibid.
429 A record of the *scuola*'s history can be found at the Archivio di Stato. ASV, Provveditori di Comun Reg. V.
430 In some churches the *Scuole del Sacramento* had control over more than one chapel and in a few cases – such as at San Giacomo dell'Orio - even their own *Banco del Sacramento* where the lay officials would meet. Along with the *Banco* and a Chapel of the Sacrament to the right of the high altar, San Giacomo dell'Orio has further sacramental imagery and ornaments in the old Sacristy, demonstrating that it was not uncommon to have more than one area – in this case three – dedicated to the Sacrament in Venetian churches. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 5.
431 Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 99-100.
432 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, '13 Gennaio 1542: Cappella della Scuola del Venerabile', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 112.

Vettor Dandolo, and this would have been responsible for the commissioning of Jacopo Tintoretto's *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* of the early 1580s and Palma il Giovane's *Last Supper* of 1585.[433]

When discussions were taking place in the early 1630s with regard to building a new church of San Moisè, the Scuola del Sacramento were very clear about their expectations for the new Chapel of the Sacrament, and they were to be consulted before any firm decisions were made about it.[434] The priests in charge of the church were equally concerned that the design of chapel should harmonise with the rest of the church but both groups were open and willing to compromise.[435]

In 1634, it was decided at the suggestion of Signor Piero Canova, to install a 'half moon window above the altar' ('mezza luna sopra l'altar') (seen in Fig. 115).[436] Indeed, both of the side chapels have thermal ('half-moon') windows above the altar and on the exterior-facing side wall, and so Canova's recommendation may have been taken on board in the chapel of Saint Anthony, as well, to give a greater uniformity. In November of the same year it was agreed to give Francesco Corenzato 1680 ducats for the building of the altar, including its steps and columns, as long as he followed the model and the agreements that they had all signed.[437]

By 1672 the altar had been designed and was in place and the two paintings of *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* and *The Last Supper* had been returned to their original positions (Figs 116, 117). The *scuola* was clearly happy with the work that had been completed and praised, in particular, the 'beautiful craftsmanship' ('bella manifattura') of the two angels

433 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 6 Maggio 1577: Cappella del Scuola del Venerabile (Santissimo Sacramento), cartolazione n. 13v, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 112.
434 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 17 Ottobre 1631: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n.36r-37v, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 113.
435 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 6 Marzo 1633: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n.116v, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 113.
436 ACP, Libro de Capitoli/ et Parte poste in essi / Della Scola / del Santiss.mo / in S. Moisè / 1667 / contrassegnato con il n.2) / 6 Luglio 1634: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n. 120r, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 114.
437 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 25 Novembre 1634: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n.39v, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 114.

overlooking the tabernacle.[438] By 1680 thoughts had moved on to the chapel's accoutrements, and silver candlesticks and silver vases were among the objects commissioned for the celebration of the Mass at a cost of around 450 ducats.[439] In 1705, 300 ducats were used on the floor and on refurbishing the marble and the steps up to the altar.[440] A further 100 ducats was paid in 1709 for further renovations of the marble, columns, the altar itself and the ceiling painting.[441] In 1737 the two paintings, identified clearly as by 'Giacomo Robusti detto il Tintoretto' and 'Giacomo Palma', were restored for a sum of 75 ducats.[442]

Being on the same level as the high altar, the Chapel of the Sacrament is reached via three marble steps, and it is also fronted by a marble balustrade. At present there is no gate, but the Chapel of St Anthony has one and Attilio Costantini confirms that one was still in place in the late 1990s.[443] The vaulted ceiling, now whitewashed, with a central *tondo* by Giovanni Battista Crosato of *The Eternal Father overlooking and blessing the world* (Fig. 118), has also been changed since it used to be stuccoed, again like that of the Chapel of St Anthony, and Martinelli asserts that it incorporated various painted elements by Antonio Bernardo Bolognese who also painted the ceiling of the Chapel of St Anthony.[444]

Three further marble steps take you to the altar which, in keeping with the other altars in the church, is made of polychrome marble, and is surmounted by a small marble tabernacle which, according to Costantini, is the shrine in which the host is kept (Fig. 119).[445] Behind the altar is a large polychrome marble altarpiece, which is very similar to the other altar frames in the church, and indicates that, although the Scuola del

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438 ACP, Libro de Capit / et Parte poste in essi / Pella Scola / Del Santissimo in / S. Moisè / (contrassegnato con il n. 3), 21 Luglio 1672: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n. 9r, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 114-5.
439 ACP, Libro de Capit / et Parte poste in essi / Pella Scola / Del Santissimo in / S. Moisè / (contrassegnato con il n. 3), 20 Gennaio 1680: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n. 37r, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 115.
440 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 28 Giugno 1705: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n.95r, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 115.
441 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 20 Luglio 1709: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n.100v, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 115.
442 ACP, Catastico / delle Leggi e Parti / Mariegola / e libri de capitoli / essistenti nella / SCUOLA del /VENERABILE/ di S. Moisè di Venezia / con suoi Indici, 31 Luglio 1737: Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, cartolazione n.125v, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 115.
443 Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 17.
444 Domenico Martinelli, *Il ritratto overo le cose più notabili di Venezia diviso in due parti*, (1705 edition), 1683, 25.
445 Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 17.

Sacramento largely had an overriding authority for the design of this chapel, they worked with the other confraternities and the parish priests to create a coherent church interior. Four large columns with gilded Corinthian capitals rest on a large marble base and are topped with a double pediment. Inside, a large marble tabernacle is framed with two smaller black-marble columns with gilded capitals that support a stone arch, upon which are resting the two angels that were so praised by the Scuola del Sacramento. The two angels are placed on a backdrop of gold and the smaller columns also have gold capitals, while the keystone of the stone arch is adorned with a golden putti head, which implies at least some attempt by the Scuola del Sacramento to distinguish their altar from the others in the church, and thereby stress the importance of the Sacrament.

The tabernacle itself is a magnificent marble and gold confection. Like those framing it, its four columns have gold Corinthian capitals and bases, and they are accompanied by two gilded niche statues and four gold statues on top of the pediment, while the large dome at the top is surmounted by a golden cross. The tabernacle is otherwise made of red-coloured marble, evocative of the Eucharist, which distinguishes it from the black and mottled purple marbles that accompany it, and enables the tabernacle to stand out from the multitude of features that surround it and provide the focal point of the whole chapel. At the centre of the tabernacle is a silver door into which the host could be placed although a smaller shrine on the altar below also serves this purpose.[446]

It was the smaller shrine on the altar itself that was the actual receptacle of the Host. It was quite common, when tabernacle designs became too large, to have a smaller receptacle on the altar in which the Sacrament was actually stored, the larger structure being largely ceremonial and the smaller one more generally used. While the tabernacle at San Moisè is not ten feet tall like the first tabernacle of this kind – the one commissioned for the church of S. Pier Maggiore in Florence and produced by Desiderio da Settignano – its ceremonial standing is emphatic.[447] It corresponds with the shrine below, which, on a much smaller scale is made of the same materials and a more simplified version of the

[446] The door appears to have two sides – or was otherwise replaced or restored in recent years – since a photograph from the Fondazione Cini's Fototeca archives shows the door embossed with a depiction of the host and chalice, while the door in today's photographs shows a depiction of the Resurrection.
[447] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 20.

design above, and includes a silver-gilded door featuring a small image of *Christ Carrying the Cross*.[448]

The tabernacle was erected in 1634 and designed in the style of Giulio da Moro who also created the tabernacle for the high altar at Santo Stefano (discussed in more detail later on) and the two have many similarities (Fig. 171).[451] This type of tabernacle – a hexagonal, freestanding structure – has its origins in the late-fifteenth-century and gradually evolved into the large structure that we see today in churches like San Moisè and Santo Stefano. The type is particularly common in Milan – and includes the example designed by Pellegrino Tibaldi in Milan Cathedral 1564-81 - which is where their popularity gained ground. The examples in Santo Stefano and especially San Moisè are, nevertheless, especially notable examples. In Martinoni's 1663 additions to Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, the chapel and the tabernacle in particular are highlighted for praise: 'The altar of the Sacrament is remarkable for the subtlety, and richness of the marbles, for design, for ornaments, and for the tabernacle, and also above that the marble with columns, and painted in various colours."[454]

The two side paintings, Tintoretto's *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* (Fig. 120) and Palma il Giovane's *Last Supper* (Fig. 121)*,* although painted for the previous Chapel of the Sacrament on this site, are still very important features of the succeeding one. Both works were of an innovative subject matter selected especially for a Chapel of the Sacrament. Maurice Cope, having recognised many different types of Last Supper used in Venetian Chapels of the Sacraments during the sixteenth century, identifies Palma il Giovane's *Last Supper* as the first Venetian example of a new type of Last Supper that he defines as a 'divine feeding' because it depicts a moment during which Christ is administering the sacred bread to the disciples.[455] The type is not so dissimilar to that

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[448] While the image is incredibly difficult to make out in the photographs, Costantini's description confirms the identification. Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 17.

[451] Cope does not explain why he believes the tabernacle is in the style of da Moro rather than by the artist himself and the artist is only otherwise identified as such by Lorenzetti. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 128; Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*, 487-88.

[454] 'L'Altare del Sacramento è riguardevole per la finezza, e ricchezza di marmi, per disegno, per ornamenti, e per il Tabernacolo, che vi poßa sopra pur anch'esso di marmi con colonne, e rimessi di varii colori.' Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare,* 1663, 112.

[455] While Cope's labels are helpful, this episode demonstrates the limitations of his approach: not all of the Last Supper paintings will fit neatly into one category or another. The Tintoretto is particularly pertinent here because it sits in that limbo stage towards the end of the time period when a Last Supper for a Chapel of the Sacrament might arguably be interpreted as focusing on Jesus's annunciation of his betrayal, and the beginning of the Trent encouraged focus on the consecration of the Sacrament. Although the composition

emphasising the consecration of the Sacrament, but it places greater stress on its administration. The intention is to promote and validate the doctrine of Transubstantiation that had recently been confirmed at Trent, and to remind the faithful of the importance of receiving the Sacrament at Mass.

Tintoretto illustrated the same type of *Last Supper* at San Giorgio Maggiore 1592-94, where it was combined with a *Falling of the Manna*, a typical companion piece to the *Last Supper*, but for San Moisè he depicted the *Washing of the Disciples' Feet*, doing so with a similar tendency towards mysticism that is seen in many of his other late works. He had himself painted this subject several times previously and had paired it with a *Last Supper* in several previous commissions. The subject was seen as an appropriate companion to the *Last Supper* because of its comparable theme. The event, which is recorded in John 13:1-17, comes as Jesus and his disciples were preparing themselves for their meal. The words spoken between Jesus and Peter bear repeating since their theological significance is essential for understanding the San Moisè painting and other representation of the subject by Tintoretto:

> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you will have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"[458]

Key, therefore, to the scene's popularity in Chapels of the Sacrament was the emphasis on purification: purification in preparation for receiving of the Sacrament and also the purification that comes from baptism, summed up by Jesus with the words "Unless I wash you, you will have no part with me."[459] In a departure from previous representations of the subject, it was Tintoretto who now who engaged far more with the divine meaning of the purification in his highly innovative portrayals of the subject.

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of the scene at San Moisè is very similar to many prior depictions of the Last Supper in Venice, Cope contends it is subtly different. Palma's *Last Supper* depicts Christ with his left arm embracing St John in a manner similar to previous depictions, but his right hand is shown feeding John a piece of the bread which he has just blessed. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 103, 127-128.

[458] John 13: 5-9.

[459] John 13:8.

Tintoretto's first representation of the subject was for the church of San Marcuola in the 1540s which was paired with a *Last Supper* that he painted in the same decade. This *Washing of the Disciples' Feet* is typical of his early religious paintings, unidealised and littered with details drawn from everyday life, this being, as Tom Nichols argues, a 'calculated response to the social range of [the *scuola*'s] membership.'[463] Tintoretto's subsequent *Washing of the Disciples' Feet* (1575-80) painted for the church of San Trovaso (where it is paired with an earlier *Last Supper* also by Tintoretto) shows an evolution from the San Marcuola work, since the emphasis has changed so that now Jesus and Peter are at the very front and centre of the painting, while the rest of the disciples are now displaying 'devotional attitudes'.[464] In his final renditions of the subject, those for Santa Margareta (1570s) and San Moisè, the dramatic intensity is then heightened by bold lighting that leaves just a few central figures illuminated. In the San Margareta version Christ and Peter are deep in discussion, which, as Cope argues, gives the impression of them discussing the significance of the moment.[465] The version at San Moisè is different yet again, in that the viewer is drawn not to Christ and Peter's discussion but to the actions of the disciples who surround them which, as Cope observes, display 'attitudes of prayer and devotion, as if witnessing some divine occurrence.'[466]

Understanding the trajectory of Tintoretto's various *Washing of the Disciples' Feet* is important for understanding the significance of the San Moisè version – and the relevance and importance of the scene for the church's Scuola del Sacramento. Not only is it clear – and has been argued by many scholars – that Tintoretto had a particular devotion to the various Scuole del Sacramento which resulted in works that 'possess an intensity of religious feeling' that was unmatched in Tintoretto's other commissions, but it also appears that his own religious devotion intensified over his lifetime.[467] That the patrons responded very favourably to Tintoretto's work is clear from the archival material quoted earlier. It is unlikely that the positioning of the two paintings changed when the chapel was redesigned in the new church. While Palma's *Last Supper* is less reliant on a specific position to interact with its viewers, Tintoretto's composition is much more attuned to the space in which it was to be situated. Thus Jesus and Peter are

[463] Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity,* London: Reaktion Books, 1999, 147.
[464] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 141.
[465] Ibid, 142.
[466] Ibid.
[467] Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity,* 147.

depicted at the far right of the canvas, in keeping with the painting being placed on a left-hand wall, as is the case now.

The Scuola del Sacramento, as well as clearly liking the two paintings and approving of the message they sent their parishioners, was deeply concerned about them being safely moved to the new chapel on its completion, and they had them restored when it was deemed practicable. This seeming conservatism was despite the *scuola*'s decision to have a large, Milanese inspired tabernacle as the chapel's focal point; and, later on, it did not succumb to seventeenth century trends for Chapels of the Sacrament to have their side paintings removed. Cope certainly concludes that by the turn of the seventeenth century and beyond, this well-established layout had become much less popular, and paintings were generally eschewed in favour of a more direct focus on tabernacles like those seen in many Milanese churches or Venetian churches such as the Gesuiti.[469] That the *scuola* chose to retain their paintings rather than install an even larger architectural shrine for the Sacrament is indicative of many things beyond the immediate financial implication of a much grander scheme. It suggests, for instance, that the *scuola* took seriously the discussions they had with the parish priests about keeping the chapel stylistically in line with the rest of the church. It also suggests that the *scuola* was closely attached to the two paintings, partly because of their particular imagery and partly because the artists were two of the most well-known of their day.

THE CHAPEL OF ST ANTHONY

While the *cappella maggiore* is abundant with messages that glorify the deeds of a biblical figure on a scale previously unseen in Venetian church decorations for that particular saint, the chapel on its right is much more conventional. This is dedicated to St Anthony and is similar in arrangement to the Chapel of the Sacrament (Fig. 122). Like its companion, it is approached from three steps and is separated from public access, not only by a polychrome marble balustrade, but also by a brass gate.[470] Like its companion, it also has a large central altar and accompanying altarpiece, which are raised by a further three steps from the white-and-red-tiled floor. The side walls have wooden panelling with two large paintings extending the full width, which makes them considerably larger than the Tintoretto and Palma il Giovane paintings in the Chapel of the Sacrament. Like

[469] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*, 25.
[470] Photos from the 1950s (now located at the Fondazione Cini Fototeca) suggest that neither chapels had gates at that time, although either, or both, may have had gates in the past.

the Chapel of the Sacrament it has three thermal windows, those at the rear and attached to the exterior wall being open and admitting natural light into the chapel, and the third, on the wall adjoining the *cappella maggiore*, being closed but providing a sense of uniformity to the interior. As in the Chapel of the Sacrament, the chapel has a circular ceiling painting, designed by Jacopo Guarana depicting the Virgin and Child with St Anthony kneeling before them (Fig. 123). The rest of the ceiling is richly stuccoed - attributed to an eighteenth century artist, Michelangelo Pelle, which differs from the Chapel of the Sacrament's now plain and whitewashed ceiling. This must have been a later development since Costantini claims that the Chapel of the Sacrament was also stuccoed at some point but that the stucco had been removed.[472] In what must have been an earlier incarnation, Domenico Martinelli in his *Ritratto* of 1683 describes both ceilings as being the work of Antonio Bernardo Bolognese, with the ceiling of the chapel of Saint Anthony painted with a moon surrounded by stars.[473]

The two large wall paintings are by a little-known artist called Domenico Beverenza. Costantini identifies him as an eighteenth century painter, but, in 1683, Domenico Martinelli already refers to Beverenza's two paintings and to the artist himself, and so they surely date from the seventeenth century.[474] The two paintings depict, on the right, the *Presentation of Mary in the Temple* and, on the left, the *Assumption of Mary into Heaven.* Both paintings have a further strip of canvas below, each divided into four small squares and depicting miraculous events from the life of Saint Anthony. Costantini claims that these are later additions to the chapel, but gives no basis for this supposition.[475]

The altar itself is a magnificent architectural structure with four polychrome columns supporting two separate pediments, the lower one triangular and the one above with a broken arch. The columns stand on square polychrome pedestals and are connected with a plinth with gold relief inlay, which proclaims it to be the home of St Anthony's relics ('reliquie sanctorum'). At the centre is the altarpiece which is a rectangular work with an arched top, and is framed by a marble arch creating a deep recess. The painting is attributed to Domenico Tintoretto and depicts the *Virgin and Child in Glory*. In front of the altar there is now a small niche containing a small image of St Anthony. The

[472] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 17.
[473] Martinelli, *Il ritratto overo le cose più notabili di Venezia*, 25.
[474] Ibid, 25-26.
[475] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 20.

architectural structure of the chapel was completed in 1641 but was not always dedicated to Saint Anthony. Its original dedication was to Santa Maria delle Grazie or the *Beata Vergine*, although it is likely that the dedication changed during the renewal of the church.[476]

SIDE ALTARS AND ALTARPIECES

It was not just the Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento that was proactive and engaged in the redesign of San Moisè: all of the smaller *scuole* and confraternities attached to the church also took a strong interest in the design of their new altars. Each of the side altars is framed by a white columned arch and a pair of white Corinthian columns to either side, like those at the entrances to the two side chapels. These arched frames give a sense of unity and coherence to all four walls. The coherence is further strengthened by similarities between the massive architectural altarpiece frames of all four side altars. The two altars on the left hand wall are made of four polychrome marble columns with broken arched pediments followed by symmetric scrolls above. Below, as in the side chapels, the columns are raised on beautifully designed marble inlaid bases, whose design corresponds with the altar below. For the two altars on the right wall, the set-up is very similar, however, both have broken arched pediments with a further triangular pediment above, and the marble used for the altar for the Confraternity of the Holy Cross is considerably darker in colour than the other altar marbles, which, on the whole, are made up largely of paler whites and reds, with just small pieces of black inlay.

On the left-hand side (Fig. 124), the first altar was commissioned by the Scuola di Fabbri in 1665 (Figs 125, 126). The altarpiece, painted by Antonio Molinari, has an upper half with the Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus sitting among gold-lit clouds, and a lower half with a group of saints consulting a sacred text. These include St John the Baptist, St Peter the Apostle, Bishop Eligio and Bishop Liberale, and, interestingly, St Carlo Borromeo, the architect of this period's church reform.[477] Closer to the Chapel of the Sacrament, beyond a small side door, is the altar of the Nativity of the Virgin which was the gift of the Scuola dei Ciechi in 1671 (Figs 127, 128). Its altarpiece depicts St Anne having just given birth to the Virgin Mary, who is accompanied by Joachim below God and his

476 Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia', 100.

477 As you see from the present day photos, an icon of the Virgin and Child is now affixed to the altar. While this is likely to be a sixteenth century piece, it was only positioned here in 1859. The image is an important one and gave this altar a reputation for Marian piety. Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 22.

angels in heaven. The altarpiece, which was previously attributed to Matteo da Verona, is now thought to be by Pasquale Rossi, a citizen of Vicenza who painted the work towards the end of the seventeenth century.[478] Indeed Coleti, writing in 1758, asserts that the work is by Rossi.[479]

On the right side (Fig. 129), the altar closest to the inner façade is that of the Virgin of Sorrows (Fig. 130). The altarpiece of the *Adoration,* painted by Giuseppe Diamantini (Fig. 131),[480] may not appear to be very well-suited to the altar's dedication, but it was once accompanied by the Carrara marble sculpture of the *Pietà* which can now be found near the church's entrance, this work being sculpted by A. Corradini in 1733 (Fig. 132).[481] The *Adoration* shows Mary holding the baby Jesus up so as to be seen, while the three Magi wait with their gifts in the background. Alongside the Magi we see images of Joseph and, more unusually, St Felix, who was the recipient of the altar's original dedication before the rebuilding in the seventeenth century. The final altar, that closest to the Chapel of St Anthony, was commissioned by the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, and the altarpiece depicts the discovery of the cross by Saint Helena (Figs 133, 134). The figures surrounding the cross include the sick and lame, along with a miraculously healed young man, who are being tended to by St Anthony Abbot and St Macarius, the Bishop of Jerusalem when the cross was found, and above, in the clouds, are St Anthony of Padua and St Francis of Paola.[482] For other paintings that decorate the church, there is very little information, although they were all, or mostly, produced long after the end date for this study.

The large ceiling painting depicts yet another scene where the lower half takes place on earth, in this case Moses making water flow from a rock while his people rejoiced around him. The upper half is a swirling mix of angels and clouds, streaming with golden light, with God in the centre, paralleling Moses actions (Fig. 135). The painting is by Nicolò Bambini who was a late-seventeenth/early-eighteenth-century artist, and the ceiling is likely to have been left whitewashed up to this point. At this earlier time, the interior would have been deliberately sparser. The sculptural high altar would have drawn the

[478] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 24.
[479] Coleti, *Monumenta ecclesiæ Venetæ Sancti Moysis*, 1758, 337.
[480] Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 22-24.
[481] Ibid, 22.
[482] The altar of the Holy Cross was also the home to a number of the church's relics, including fragments of bone from St Anthony and St Francis of Paola, both represented in the altarpiece, and fragments of the true cross. Coleti, *Monumenta ecclesiæ Venetæ Sancti Moysis*, 1758, 338.

eye, but the architecture would also have been more dominant, and it would have been easier to appreciate its aesthetic virtues, its clean lines, Classical features and white walls. In its early days, in fact, the church of San Moisè would have been the epitome of a Counter Reformation church, yet as with so many other Venetian churches it gradually became more decorated, and its interior image and aesthetic gradually became less purposeful.

THE PULPIT AND BAPTISMAL FONT

Situated half-way along the right hand wall and in between the altars dedicated to the Virgin of Sorrows and the Holy Cross, stands a majestic architectural construction of three levels, combining a marble baptismal font with a pulpit and a crucifix above (Figs 136, 137, 138). It is the work of sculptor Alvise Tagliapietra and was completed in 1783, so beyond this project's focus. However archival documents from the 1730s - when Giacomo Caleghari was parish priest - discuss the need to rebuild the baptismal font in brass and replace the wooden pulpit with one of Carrara marble, with the two combined together.[485] The result reflects Carlo Borromeo's argument that 'the pulpit [should be] suitably located in the body of the church in a prominent place where either the preacher or the reader can be seen and heard by all. [The pulpit] should not be very far from the main altar (if that can be done in harmony with the church's proportion), so that it is convenient for the priest who has to preach, as is required, during the Mass.'[486]

The 1783 design situates the font and pulpit within a gated space with a set of marble balustrades similar to those found at the front of the two side chapels. The marble font is framed by a small niche and is ornamented with gargoyles on the base and fitted with a huge copper lid. The pulpit above is held up by two marble columns which are then continued into the two upper layers in different forms. Flanking the pulpit they become pilasters with ornate scrolls, and up above they curve round to join each other to make

[485] ACP, Archivio Chiesa San Moisè: libro de' Capitoli/ et delle Parti / S. Moisè S. M. / n. VII, 23 Novembre 1730: Padre Giacomo Calegari decide di dare nuova configurazione al battistero cartolazione n. 74, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119.
ACP, Archivio Chiesa San Moisè: libro de' Capitoli/ et delle Parti / S. Moisè S. M. / n. VII, 22 Luglio 1731: Padre Giacomo Calegari decide di dare nuova configurazione al battistero e al pulpito, cartolazione n. 79, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119.
ACP, Archivio Chiesa San Moisè: libro de' Capitoli/ et delle Parti / S. Moisè S. M. / n. VII, 7 Febbraio 1731 More Veneto: Padre Giacomo Calegari decide di dare nuova configurazione al battistero e al pulpito apportando alcune modifiche rispetto ai due progetti iniziali, cartolazione n. 93-94, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119.
Coleti, *Monumenta ecclesiæ Venetæ Sancti Moysis*, 1758, 293.
[486] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 294.

an arch which frames the crucifix. The marble front of the pulpit has a sculptural relief depicting two figures representing the Old and New Law.[487] Among other features higher up is the dove of the Holy Spirit who presides from above.

THE MONUMENTAL MEMORIAL FAÇADE

The façade of San Moisè is unlike the one projected for San Nicolò di Lido, or any of the other Palladian-inspired façades that were built at the time (Fig. 83). Indeed it is strikingly different not only to these but also to every other Venetian façade either before or since. It has provoked controversy since its conception, as a result both of its secular subject matter which promotes the interests of an individual family above any religious message, and because of the rather garish nature of its decoration. As mentioned previously, there was a campaign in the nineteenth century to demolish the church completely and the ugliness of the façade was one of the most repeated justifications for those who campaigned for the church's destruction. Indeed Alvise Piero Zorzi's argument in favour of saving the church lay not in its beauty, since he refused to defend the 'depraved taste of that temple, which resembles more than any other the ravings of a crazy fantasy era of architectural decadence' ('il gusto depravato di quel Tempio, che ricorda più d'ogni altro i deliri d'una pazza fantasia nell'epoca della decadenza architettonica').[488] Instead, Zorzi argues that in Venice, 'even the ugly is… interesting' ('anche il *brutto è… interessante*') and that while it is easy to destroy what we no longer admire, he – clearly convincingly – argues that no century has the right to destroy the works of previous ones.[489]

As Zorzi, Ruskin and others have attested, it is hard to ignore the heavy 'Baroque' ornamentation of the façade of San Moisè: the strings of floral garlands, the sculptural busts of the Fini family, the numerous putti and statues, the decorated columns and much more. Barely a surface is left untouched. However the design of the façade underneath it is also relatively unusual for Venice. The structure is made up of three elements both vertically and horizontally. The lowest horizontal storey is also the largest, not only in comparison to the other two storeys individually, but also because it takes up over half of the building's height. It accommodates four fluted Corinthian columns with large pedestals that rise almost as high as the three doors placed in between them. The

[487] The figure on the left represents the Faith of the new church, and sits clutching the Cross in her left hand and a chalice with the Eucharist on top in her right hand; And the figure on the right represents Judaism, the religion of the Old Testament, and carries the two tablets of the law written in Hebrew.
[488] Zorzi, *Sulla demolizione della chiesa di San Moisè*, 6.
[489] Ibid, 7, 9.

three entrance portals are framed by a secondary order of pilasters which carry triangular pediments over the two outer doors. The central door (the only one in regular use today) has two pilasters similar to the outer doors, but it also has a further set of half columns rising up above the door and its large entrance arch. Very unusually for this period, since there is much guidance on the subject, there is no flight of steps leading up to the base of the façade. Borromeo stipulates that 'if the whole area of the place where the church is to be built is quite level … the approach to [the church] requires three steps or five at the most.'[490] While Palladio in *I quattro libri* stated that 'in case there be no elevated places, the floor of the temple is to be raised, as much as convenient, above the rest of the city.'[491] However, with San Moisè the floor level would have been established in the previous church and it would not have been possible for this to be raised in the new building.

Above the three entrance portals are busts and memorial plaques commemorating the three key members of the Fini family responsible for the facade's commission (brothers Vincenzo and Girolamo and Girolamo's son Vincenzo) (Fig. 139). A central obelisk over the main portal highlights the virtues of Vincenzo, noting his success in becoming one of the nobility, and a bust on top records his likeness (Fig. 140). At the base of the obelisk are four figures which Martin Gaier identifies as *Council, Honour, Virtue* and *Honesty.*[492] *Council* and *Honour* stand atop the dragons supporting the obelisk while the women *Virtue* and *Honesty* are at the two ends. Below are personifications of air and earth. The two busts for Girolamo and his son Vincenzo over the side portals are also flanked with virtue personifications (Figs 141, 142). Gaier goes on to argue that the obelisk is a 'quintessential' symbol of ascent and was chosen to represent the family's ascent to the Venetian nobility, which was indeed a great preoccupation for Vincenzo and Girolamo. [493] Gaier notes a similar obelisk belonging to the recently completed monument (1657) to Girolamo Cavazza in the church of Madonna dell'Orto by Giuseppe Sardi since Cavazza had also been ennobled in his lifetime.[494]

The obelisk recording Vincenzo Fini's achievements leads the eye beyond the row of flower garlands, and the entablature dividing the two levels, and up to the large thermal window which is the second level's defining feature (Fig. 143). The window is

490 Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 35.
491 Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture,* book IV, ch. I
492 Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 331.
493 Ibid, 332.
494 Ibid.

surrounded by two lounging sibyls and four other sculptures thought to represent the four cardinal virtues (Fig. 144).[495] The thermal window is positioned much like the one at Palladio's San Francesco della Vigna (Fig. 75), where, Stanislaw Wilinski argues, the thermal window was not practically but ideologically motivated, with its three sections complementing the tripartite divisions in the façade, and also suggestive of the divine symbolism of the number three, as espoused by local monk Francesco Zorzi.[497] In the form of a half circle, the thermal window is also suggestive of the full circle that represents the unity and infiniteness of God and the Trinity.[498] Such symbolism, therefore, could also apply to the S. Moisè facade. The second storey of the façade is again divided into three, but this time by simple pilaster strips. These are fronted with the sculptures of the virtues standing on bases of gargoyles. The thermal window and the panels in the outer bays are covered and surrounded with ornamentation. This level is rather disjointed and out of proportion compared with, say, the corresponding level on the façade of San Lazarro dei Mendicanti, completed just a few years later in 1673, which also has a thermal window but one better integrated into the composition as a whole (Fig. 77).

The final and attic storey of the façade is composed of a double pediment, further pilasters corresponding with the level below and more statues and ornamentation (Fig. 145). A large version of the Fini family crest sits in the centre while rising above is a smaller but higher pediment with a further figural ornamentation and topped with five sculptures. Gaier presumes that they are biblical figures but does not give specifics except for identifying the central figure as Moses, and neither does Attilio Costantini, who speculates that they might be prophets.[499]

There are no clear comparisons to San Moisè's façade. While it takes its thermal window from San Francesco della Vigna, the rest of the façade is very different, indeed it is not comparable to any of Palladio's facades. There are few similarities one can see with, say, the facades of Santa Maria di Nazareth (more commonly known as the Scalzi) and Santa Maria del Giglio but merely in that they have three levels with the bottom two divided by separate sets of columns and the final one consisting of a pediment (Figs 146, 147).

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495 Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano,* 331.
497 Stanislaw Wilinski, 'La finestra termale nelle chiese di Andrea Palladio,' *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 14, (1972), 330-331.
498 Ibid, 331.
499 Costantini, *Chiesa di San Moisè*, 4; Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano,* 330-331.

However both the Scalzi and Santa Maria del Giglio have wings and pairs of columns (rather than single ones) on each storey. The Scalzi façade was completed between 1672 and 1680, around the time that San Moisè's was being worked on while Santa Maria del Giglio was a quarter of a century later, so is less likely to have been an influence but may have itself been influenced by the completed San Moisè facade.

Sardi's earlier work, the façade of the early Renaissance church of San Salvatore, is more comparable (Fig. 148). Finished in 1663, the façade arguably suffers from the same imbalance of proportions as at San Moisè. At San Salvatore there are two defined levels with a small triangular pediment above. This small pediment, when combined with the significant size of the lower layer in comparison to the upper one, is what creates the sense of unbalance here. As at San Moisè, the elongation of the lower level seems excessive while the upper level seems stunted, especially with the pediment on the top being so small. The church lacks the decoration of the San Moisè façade except for the string of garlands below the entablature which divides the two sections. Instead, there is room for more traditional niches and windows, with a rectangular window in the centre of the upper level as opposed to a thermal one. San Salvatore is also a monument to an individual - the merchant Jacopo Galli – but it is far more sombre, with just a small bust to the patron located in the triangular pediment above the main entrance.

Another near contemporary is the façade of San Lazzaro dei Mendicanti and indeed there are many similarities with that of S. Moisè (Fig. 77). Entablatures divide the façade into three sections as at San Moisè, and there is a thermal window situated in the central level and a similar design for the central portal below. Otherwise, however, it is very different, drawing far more from its Palladian predecessors than San Moisè does. Here, the colossal half-columns run up through both of the lower sections, stopping only at the triangular pediment above. As a smaller building it has no need for side portals so its lateral walls are filled with windows which are complemented on the level above. One might also draw comparison with the more simplified design of the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni (Fig. 149). Here again, it is the proportions of the three storeys which are disjointed and the structure with the repetition of pilasters and the pedimented attic storey are similar.

The façade of San Moisè was presumably designed with the ornamentation intended from the very beginning, and its unusual and distorted proportions may be partly due to the sculptural features that it was required to include. The disproportionally tall lower section fits well with the space required for the memorialising busts and plaques to the Fini family. However, some of the other memorialising façades achieve this requirement more successfully. One might argue that Tremignon was attempting to be innovative in his design, but was so restricted by the demands of his patrons that the result may have pleased them but was in many ways unsuccessful, or that he was driven by youthful inexperience during the years well before 1683 when, as we have already seen, he proposed a rigorously Palladian design for San Nicolò di Lido. Until recently, it was assumed, due to the lack of research, that the S. Moisè façade was completed in or just after 1668, the date of Girolamo Fini's will,[501] which would put the venture at the beginning of Tremignon's career, suggesting therefore, that his inexperience did indeed account for the facade's bizarre composition. It may however, have been devised only later. Gaier believes that the design was conceived in the mid 1670s and certainly before 1681 when measurements were being taken in anticipation of the project commencement.[502] Domenico Martinelli, in his *Ritratto di Venezia* describes the façade as being almost completed and already adorned with forty statues, including those commemorating the Fini family, when his work was published in 1684.[503]

Part of the reason for the difference between this design and much of Tremignon's other work comes down to the patrons of the façade: the Fini family. Unfortunately, however, we have little archival evidence pertaining to the façade other than the will and testament of Girolamo Fini from April 1668. Inspired – supposedly – by the Holy Spirit, Girolamo's will documents his desire to preserve the family name for posterity and his agreement with the priests of San Moisè that the façade would be completed within the next ten years.[504] After an initial sixty ducats were given at the time the will was made, Girolamo would later give a further eight hundred to spend on the church fabric and

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501 Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 328.

502 'Hanno terminato che detta faciata debba farsi così sopra il campo, come sopra la calle e anco dalla parte del Campanile per quello potesse portarsi in for a per far essa faciata di marmori in tutto e per tutto giusto alle misure datteli dal Protto nostro.'
ASV, *Giudici del Piovego, Terminazioni,* busta 15, 2, fol 42r in Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 539.

503 Martinelli, *Il ritratto overo le cose più notabili di Venezia,* 24.

504 BMC, San Moisè notizie varie, '9 Aprile; 19 Aprile; Maggio 1668: Mansionaria e Testamenti di Girolamo Fini', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119-21.
This document has now been transcribed twice – in full by Giulio Girardi and in part by Martin Gaier: Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 536-539; Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119-121.

façade, since the exterior walls of the church were not yet completed and the priests were anxious to speed up the process, despite having also received a grant of one thousand ducats from the Patriarch in 1667.[505] Fini also stipulates in his will that he wished the façade to honour the 'Excellent Signor Procurator Vincenzo Fini, my brother', as well as himself and his own heirs.[506] His bequest was put to a Chapter vote and all six votes were recorded as in favour of the project.[507] Fini received approval for the façade in May 1668.[508] The testament then goes on to elaborate the locations of the busts and the inscriptions Fini wished to be inscribed with them.[509] A further amendment from 25 January 1684 stipulates Girolamo Fini's request to be buried in the church and a daily Mass to be said in perpetuity for his soul, with further money given to fund the sacristy as a result.[510] There is very little that pertains specifically to the design of the façade and this is an aspect that Girardi notes is a problem since it encourages speculation, more specifically that of Pietro Selvatico in 1847 who claimed that it was Tremignon – it is not clear as to whether this refers to Alessandro the architect or Andrea the priest – who persuaded Fini to 'squander almost all his heritage' with this 'culmination of every

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505 Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano,* 327.

506 BMC, San Moisè notizie varie, '9 Aprile; 19 Aprile; Maggio 1668: Mansionaria e Testamenti di Girolamo Fini', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119-21.

507 BMC, San Moisè notizie varie: '9 Aprile; 19 Aprile; Maggio 1668: Mansionaria e Testamenti di Girolamo Fini', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119-21.

508 BMC, San Moisè notizie varie: '9 Aprile; 19 Aprile; Maggio 1668: Mansionaria e Testamenti di Girolamo Fini', transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119-21.

509 Aedificato monumento in facia exteriori Ecclesia Divi Moijsis quod decorant […] simulacra rapresentatia Vincentium Fini Divi Marci Procuratorem in medio ipsum Hieronijmum a dextris altarum quoque Vincentium pariter Procuratorum Sancti Marci, a sinistris necnon constructo sepulcro idem Hieronijmus vivens etiam stemmate suo sepulcri simulacrumque Vincentii fratris: Posteri […] simulacra Hieronijmi, et alterius Vincentii seguenti inciso epigraphe. E primo supra Sepulcram.

> D.O.M. / Memor sui / Hieronijmus Fini / Certam Hanc Domum / Sibi, et Posteris / condi jussit / Anno Salutis / MDCLXXX

Subtus Simulacrum Vincentii Procuratoris Fratris in medio

> D.O.M. / Omne Fastigium / Virtute implet / Vincentius / Fini / Honore / ac Procuratoria / D. Marci Dignitate / Amplissimus / Tanto Fratri / Consilio, Eloquentia / Beneficentia / de Functis optime / merito / Hieronijmi Fratris / Pietas / Perenne / A: M: P: / Anno MDCLXXXIII / Obiit Anno MDLX / Aetatis LV /

Ad Simulacrum alterius Vincentii Procuratoris a sinistris

> D.O.M. / Vincentius Fini D: M: Procurator / Hieronijmi Filius / Vincentii Procuratoris nepos / Obiit Anno MD / Aetatis LXIII /

Ad Simulacrum Hieronijmi a dextris

> D.O.M. / Hieronijmus Fini / Vincentii D: M: Procuratoris Frater / Obiit Anno MDCLXXXV / Aetatis LXIV

BMC, San Moisè notizie varie: '9 Aprile; 19 Aprile; Maggio 1668: Mansionaria e Testamenti di Girolamo Fini,' transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 119-21.

510 BMC, San Moisè notizie varie: '25 Gennaio 1684: Mansionaria e Testamenti di Girolamo Fini, transcribed in Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 121.

architectural madness'. ('dilapidare quasi tutto il suo patrimonio… culmine d'ogni architettonica follia').[511]

Despite Fini's bequest and strict timetable a further one thousand ducats from the legacy of Signora Lucietta Tocheo was used to fund the façade's completion.[512] Even then, the façade was not completed until the 1680s and, as Gaier argues, the inscriptions accompanying the busts of the Fini family were added even later. He bases this on the fact that Martinelli mentions only the inscription on the obelisk in 1684 and that Luca Carlevarijs's etching of 1703 does not include the other inscriptions either, thus concluding that they were completed after 1703 (Fig. 150).[513] However, he does not acknowledge the inaccuracies in Carlevarijs's work – such as his depiction of the broken pediment at the top of the façade which is not shown as being placed in front of a further wall.

The façade at San Moisè is exceptional also in the way it aggrandises an individual and their family, with three of them commemorated in bust form and with memorialising inscriptions beneath. This display of the individual in a public place was increasingly frowned on by the Venetians and the Fini bequest marks one of the most blatant ways in which the rule was flaunted. This trend was arguably started by Tommaso Rangone in the sixteenth century. Rangone's determination to have his sculpted portrait installed on the church of San Geminiano facing onto Piazza San Marco was roundly dismissed but he was successful in such an aim at the nearby church of San Zulian, because he personally paid for the church to be rebuilt from 1553 (Fig. 95).[514] The Fini family later pushed constraints far further by having the whole family commemorated on a church façade in the heart of the San Marco district. So, after this it was not surprising when, a few years later, the church of Santa Maria del Giglio was ornamented in a similar way by Giuseppe Sardi as a result of the gift of 30,000 ducats left to the church from Antonio Barbaro.[515] In return, Barbaro stipulated that the façade should glorify the achievements of himself and his brothers, in particular their battle conquests and maps of the cities where these had taken place. The rest of the façade, much like that of San Moisè, depicts

[511] Pietro Selvatico, *Sull'architettura e sulla scultura in Venezia dal medio evo sino ai giorni nostri, studi di Pietro Selvatico per servire di guida estetica,* Venezia, Paolo Riapmonti Carpano, 1847, in: Girardi, 'San Moisè profeta a Venezia,' 101.
[512] ASV, *Notarile, Atti (Fabio Turrighello Lio),* busta 5062, fol 65v-r, in Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 539.
[513] Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 329.
[514] Brusegan, *Le chiese di Venezia,* 182-183.
[515] Ibid*,* 206-207.

a host of allegorical figures and elaborate ornament, along with the busts of Barbaro and his brothers, some of which were again produced by Heinrich Meyring.[516] Other church facades of the period – such as those of San Vidal and Santa Maria dei Derelitti (Ospedaletto) – also included busts of the patron who paid for them.[517]

This secular memoralisation grew in popularity throughout the seventeenth century as members of the nobility, and frequently *cittadini* whose fortunes had surpassed many in the nobility, were keen to leave a lasting legacy on the Venetian cityscape.[518] Howard Burns, argues that this desire also came about as a result of patrons gaining an increasing understanding of architectural texts:

> Architecture became an instrument for enhancing the prestige and goals of individuals, institutions and rulers, for rebuilding cities and rehousing not only great nobles but new classes of wealthy merchants and landowners. The *language* and methods of architecture became familiar, not only to architects, but to their employers and a wide urban 'publics opinion', increasingly informed by way of architectural books.[519]

Palladio's *I quattro libri* would have been an invaluable resource to such people, but, as a prominent printing centre, Venice was inundated with works by many other architectural authors such Sebastiano Serlio and Leon Battista Alberti. Many patrons – the Barbaro brothers in particular - wanted to create buildings that demonstrated their knowledge of contemporary architectural practice, although the Fini family were arguably more preoccupied with how that architecture could memorialise their family.

The Fini family's history is of particular importance in understanding their commissioning of the façade. The Fini were a merchant family from Cyprus and only came to Venice in around 1570 when Cyprus was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. As a new family, the Fini was debarred from Venice's Golden Book, and was not officially eligible for the nobility, even despite their standing in Cyprus. Emanuele Fini (Girolamo and Vincenzo's grandfather) made a fortune in Dalmatia for the Austrian Empire, becoming a baron. In Venice, his son Vincenzo became a lawyer and also

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[516] Brusegan, *Le chiese di Venezia,* 206-207.
[517] Augusto Roca De Amicis delves into some of the façades that promote individuals and their families and funerary monuments in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, while Martin Gaier provides a broad overview of all church façades. Roca De Amicis, 'Le chiese e le facciate commemorative,' 260-271; Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 2002.
[518] Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice*, 235.
[519] Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns, *Palladio*, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008, 374.

amassed riches. In 1649 Vincenzo Fini was the first of many Cypriots who had moved to Venice as a result of the Ottoman invasion, to request entry into the aristocracy by offering the *Consiglio Maggior* one hundred thousand ducats for a seat. There were many that disapproved of the move, which was successful, and Vincenzo was described disapprovingly by some in the Council as a 'man who loved his own interest' ('uomo che amava molto il proprio interesse').[520] Two years before his death, he offered a further sum of one hundred thousand ducats to be appointed *procuratore* (*de citra*) and in this endeavour he was also successful although the *Consiglio* stipulated that he should only give a 'contribution' of twenty thousand ducats.[521] Martin Gaier observes that a man who had earned so much money through his own endeavour likely horrified the *Consiglio Maggior* and that there would have been concerns about letting such a man buy his way into such a position of power since it arguably devalued the procurators' roles.[522]

Vincenzo's persistence and his contributions to the *Consiglio Maggior* were achievements that his brother Girolamo felt needed honouring, especially after Vincenzo's untimely death in 1660 (Girolamo would not die for another twenty-five years).[523] Girolamo was also proactive in attempting to secure social status for the family and, in 1662, he bought the Palazzo Flangini, a Grand Canal property for one hundred and twenty thousand ducats, while his son Vincenzo married Lucrezia Loredan and bought his own procurator position (*de ultra*) for fifty thousand ducats.[524] Vincenzo went on to be one of the forty-one electors of the next doge in 1694, a significant leap from his uncle's early days in Venice.[525] Before his death, Girolamo made sure that the phrase 'princeps Nobilitatis' had been inscribed onto the façade which, as Gaier argues, was so that no one would forget the position that the Fini family had reached.[526]

Up to this point, much of the architecture of the new church of San Moisè had conformed with the guidelines recommended by Cardinal Borromeo or with styles that had become popular as a result of reformist trends. Where, however, San Moisè differs from the normal expectations of this period is in its façade. As a monument dedicated to

[520] B.C.V, *Origine delle Famiglie, s.v. Fini,* in Gaier, *Facciate sacre e scopo profano*, 325.
[521] Ibid, 325.
[522] Ibid, 325-326.
[523] Ibid, 326.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid, 330.

the Fini family, the façade departs from Carlo Borromeo's careful stipulations, since he states clearly that

> The architect should see that in the religious decoration of the façade, according to the proportion of the ecclesiastical structure and the size of the edifice, not only that nothing profane be seen, but also that only that which is suitable to the sanctity of the place be represented in as splendid a manner as the means at his disposal will afford.[527]

Religious decoration is sorely lacking in the San Moisè façade and it is abundant with secular, or 'profane', imagery. The façade was constructed, however, very much towards the end of the period when the values of the Counter Reformation were at their peak. Milton Joseph Lewine argued that in Rome, this period had already come to an end in 1580 although the reality is far more complicated than this.[528] Even so, the point Lewine makes is valid, this being that, after a period of strict adherence to Counter Reformatory guidelines, there came a more relaxed 'climate of optimism' when Church leaders were less fearful of the threat of Protestantism and architects and sculptors felt more confident to be more decorative and playful in their designs.[529] And it is in this later period – which arguably took place at different times in different cities – that the façade of San Moisè falls. The design is what one might describe as 'High Baroque' and is in tune with the over-ornamented interiors being completed almost concurrently in the churches of the Gesuiti, Scalzi and San Nicolò da Tolentino.

[527] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones*, 63.
[528] Milton Joseph Lewine, *The Roman Church Interior, 1527-1580*, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1975, 3.
[529] Ibid, 3-8.

CONCLUSIONS

Unlike San Nicolò di Lido, which is arguably a textbook example of Counter Reformation architecture in Venice, San Moisè is a church where the compromises that naturally faced the ideals of the church reform movement are most obviously played out. The Fini memorial façade ignores both Venetian tradition and reform guidelines, and does so quite ostentatiously. It is undoubtedly a clear indication that by the late seventeenth century, the Counter Reformation was no longer a driving factor in Venetian church architecture, and it paves the way for the more 'Baroque' churches of the Gesuiti and the Scalzi.

However the interior of San Moisè *does* serve as a good, perhaps the best, example of Counter Reformation architecture for Venice's parish churches. Of its predecessors such as San Zulian and San Martino, and its imitators including San Rocco and San Cassiano, San Moisè's auditorium-like interior is most balanced in terms of the composition of its classical elements and in the positioning of its chapels and altars. The subjects of the altarpieces themselves are perfectly appropriate for the time and it is interesting that the Scuola del Sacramento chose to include their old side paintings of the *Last Supper* and the *Washing of the Disciples' Feet* in their new design, eschewing the new trend towards monumental architectural tabernacles and instead keeping the visual stimuli of the paintings, which would no doubt have continued to provoke suitable contemplation and meditation on the Sacrament from their viewers.

Meyring's high altar, while unusual for Venice, is demonstrative of the church's engagement with designs from further afield, and it would not have looked out of place in Bernini's Rome. Such comparisons would merit further study since they further strengthen our knowledge of the reciprocity of ideas between Venice and the other Italian states.

As with San Nicolò di Lido, the transformation of the new church of San Moisè tailed off after the beginning of the eighteenth century, with but a few artistic commissions since. Again, this means that the church is almost entirely the same as it was when its original design had been fully completed and we can clearly see what those original intentions were. This is not the case for the two renovated churches of Santo Stefano

and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, as the next section of this thesis will demonstrate. For both of the following churches the renovations of the sixteenth and seventeenth century were but one, albeit transformational, phase, in the long history of the two individual buildings. As such the considerable effects of the Counter Reformation on these two churches have since contended with attempts at reviving other aspects of these churches heritages and both are not as cohesive as they once were. However, both Santo Stefano and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli will demonstrate that during the window when the ideals of the Counter Reformation were at the forefront in Venice, both rose to the opportunities and challenges provided by the reform movement and changed their church fabric quite dramatically and with great commitment.

PART TWO: RETROFITTING AND RESURGENCE: OLDER CHURCHES RESTORED

CHAPTER THREE

SANTO STEFANO

INTRODUCTION

'One of the most characteristic and notable Venetian churches' is how Giulio Lorenzetti describes the church of Santo Stefano,[530] and, indeed, the church is richly decorated; abundant with treasures and well-known and loved throughout the city. Its central location, directly en-route from the Accademia to San Marco (as with San Moisè which is further along the route to San Marco), means that Santo Stefano is one of Venice's more popular churches – not only in terms of visitor footfall and community loyalty, but also in terms of academic study. The church has a long history and the iteration of the building we see today distinguishes the church as a Gothic masterpiece rather in the vein of its contemporaries, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and Santi Giovanni e Paolo. While those two churches are, perhaps, better known, and were the fruits of a more distinguished corpus of patrons and artists (including many doges and painters such as Titian and Canova), Santo Stefano holds its own in some ways as their equal, being for example especially distinguished by its remarkable ship's keel ceiling; the largest and most majestic of its kind in Venice.

Since this study takes in both newly built and restored churches during the Counter Reformation period it would be remiss to ignore the great Gothic churches that were such an integral part of Venice at that time and are such vital conduits to the city's past. Each of the three large churches comes with both positives and negatives for this sort of study. Santi Giovanni e Paolo underwent a great deal of structural reshaping during the seventeenth century, with many chapels, the high altar, the presbytery and numerous windows undergoing similar treatments to those of Santo Stefano. However, as the resting place of many of the city's doges, it was felt that this factor would prove to be too much of a distraction from the issues of the period that this study wishes to highlight. The Frari also underwent certain changes but not of the same magnitude as at Santo Stefano or Santi Giovanni e Paolo. Many of the Frari's key features including the high altar with Titian's *Assunta* remain the same, and the building is the only one in

[530] Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*, 508.

Venice to retain its magnificent Gothic choir and wooden choir screen. While conflicts of interest during this period are not to be ignored – indeed the chapter on San Moisè focuses on the issue of the lay commission of the façade of this importantly positioned parish church – too much focus on these detracts from another of this thesis's main goals, which is to track the variety and scale of the possible changes in church design that took place. Santo Stefano, while also the subject of disagreements and disputes over the changes made to its design and appearance, represents a more complete example of the types of alteration that Gothic churches – in particular ones as large as these three – went through during the Counter Reformation period.

This reasoning is also consistent with my determination to avoid focusing on the most well known churches as examples of new builds: Palladio's Redentore or San Giorgio Maggiore. These churches are referred to frequently throughout this text, but so much has been written on them to the detriment of lesser-known buildings, which also illuminate the effects of the Counter Reformation's on the city of Venice, and help fill gaps in knowledge. Santo Stefano is clearly not unexplored in the way that San Nicolò dei Mendicoli is, but it is certainly not researched to the same extent as the Frari and Santi Giovanni e Paolo. Santo Stefano also complements San Nicolò as a much larger – and slightly younger – church (in addition to their parish and monastic differences), which gives this study some scope in identifying changes that were made on account of the building's size.

Other Gothic churches such as the Madonna dell'Orto or the Carmini would have merits for such a study and indeed, at the Carmini in particular, a great deal of renovation took place, which is still extant and affects much of the church's fabric. This church, moreover, is barely touched on in academic literature and the archives are very poorly catalogued.[531] Both churches, however, are significantly smaller than Santo Stefano and have more in common with San Nicolò dei Mendicoli in that respect. Santo Stefano, therefore, provides the opportunity to focus on a larger, more monumental church and the issues relating to this.

[531] It is acknowledged that the Carmini would greatly benefit from this study but it was determined that the amount of time and dedication needed to do justice to properly research the Carmini's archives would prove too large an undertaking for this project and would detract from the main focus of this thesis. It would instead merit from separate study.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

With its position, scale and local popularity, Santo Stefano has encouraged a number of publications. As with the other churches in this study, many of these are pocket-sized guides to the building, such as *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione* from 1996 which provides a basic guide to the church's art and architecture.[532] An earlier guide from Antonio Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* from the 1970s is far more detailed.[533] It runs through the entirety of the church's history documenting all of the key events and changes made to the church. In particular, Niero devotes a long section to listing, albeit only with brief elaboration, the dates of the various renovations that took place in the seventeenth century.[534] Observing that this work took place after the conclusion of the Council of Trent, he surmises that the new liturgical requirements may have been the cause of the changes, although this is not an issue he delves into with much detail.[535] The book concludes with the renovation at Santo Stefano after the flooding of 1966 and the work undertaken at the church that helped reveal aspects of the building's history that were missing or unclear previously. Niero's work also demonstrates the wide range and completeness of the archival material available – one of the reasons that Santo Stefano is such an accessible church to study. Indeed, many other historians have made use of the rich archival resources for the church, both before and after Niero's work.

One of the first studies based solely on the church of Santo Stefano is Ferdinando Apollonio's *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano* which was published in 1911 - again in the wake of a recent restoration.[536] The book, initially, goes through every feature of the church from the façade to the choir; from the altars to every notable funeral monument and tomb. Further on in the book Apollonio describes how Santo Stefano became a parish church after the suppression of the Augustinian Friars in the early nineteenth century. He recounts 'recent' renovations – including the frescoes in the *cappella maggiore* and the *campanile* – as well as documenting the celebrations for the new organ and other activities that took place in the early twentieth century. As an archpriest of San Marco, Apollonio's detailed compendium comes from a reliable and knowledgeable source. Not only is the writing thorough, but the book also provides photographs from the period

[532] Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, Andrea Gallo, and Ettore Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione*, Venice: Marsilio, 1996.
[533] Antonio Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 1978.
[534] Ibid, 18-28.
[535] Ibid, 18.
[536] D. Ferdinando Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 1911.

comparing parts of the church before and after recent renovation, and with reconstructions based on archival descriptions and features that are now missing.

Despite their age, both Apollonio and Niero's texts are far more thorough and substantial than certain more recent publications, in particular Federico Moro's *La Chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano* from 2014 which is full of abundant praise for the building and is rich with high quality photographs.[537] However it adds little to our knowledge of the building; each section being frustratingly brief and providing little information that Apollonio, Niero or others have not already given. Like many authors who write broad histories of Venetian churches, Moro's view of the seventeenth-century amendments is disparaging and he states that 'the effects are often questionable' ('[g]li effetti sono spesso discutibili').[538] One of the few highlights of the book, however, is a reconstruction of the old choir, removed in the seventeenth century, which was produced by a group of researchers in 1997.[539] In other regards, however, Moro's information is inaccurate or misleading and he does not appear to have drawn any material from the thesis of Caterina Novello which is arguably one of the most accurate and thoroughly researched accounts on the church to date.

Novello's is one of two doctoral theses from the late 1990s which were produced under the guidance of Paola Rossi. The first, Debora Tomaello's *La Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dale origini alla fine del XVI secolo* lays the groundwork – both artistically and structurally – for her colleague's later, more pertinent thesis.[540] Novella's thesis, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII*, is a crucial source for this present study.[541] Novello gives an account of the reconstruction of the presbytery, the new high altar and other new altars, as well as of other additions to the church, and she provides much further detail in an exhaustive catalogue of artistic works, both those that remain extant in the church and those that are now lost. Novello's account of changes made to the building is still not perfect and its structure means that there are important gaps, for example, concerning the installation of the church's thermal windows.

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[537] Federico Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, Venice: Marcianum Press, 2014.
[538] Ibid, 52.
[539] Ibid, 104-105.
[540] Debora Tomaello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dale origini alla fine del XVI secolo,' PhD thesis, Università Ca' Foscari, 1996/97.
[541] Caterina Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' PhD thesis, Università Ca' Foscari, 1999/2000.

While much of Apollonio, Niero and Novello's research stems from the archives, important information also comes from an invaluable record of the church's history left by Padre Agostino Nicolai in the eighteenth century: *Memorie manoscritta sopra la chiesa e monastero di S. Stefano in Venezia* held at the Biblioteca Correr (with a later copy at the Archivio Curia Patriarcale).[542] Nicolai, an Augustinian friar of the church, wrote about many facets of Santo Stefano's history including details of the many significant funerals that took place, the way Mass was celebrated in the church, a list of relics held there and documents pertaining to the consecration of the church. Along with these many, varied, notes, Nicolai provides a detailed description of each area of the church that confirms and strengthens the work of Apollonio, Niero and Novello. Information provided by Nicolai has been used by some of the above authors, including Novello, and will be used frequently throughout this thesis as well.

A recent addition to the texts based on the church itself is *Gli Agostiniani a Venezia e la chiesa di Santo Stefano,* the results of a conference held in 1995 to celebrate the anniversary of Santo Stefano's dedication.[543] One chapter in particular, Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel's 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: il patrimonio artistico', looks at the friars' commissions for the church throughout its history.[544] Chiari Moretto Wiel's chapter is thorough, focusing on the painted works, and proves to be a useful accompaniment to Novello's thesis, providing much extra background that this chapter will make use of. That there is so much literature on the church of Santo Stefano is the result of centuries of careful scrutiny of relevant documentation on the church. This now mostly resides in the Archivio di Stato, with some more modern records and photographs conserved in the Archivio Curia Patriarcale.

With the depth and breadth of both archival material and academic analysis already available, the choice of Santo Stefano might seem an unusual one for this particular study. Indeed, the other chapters focus more on either unearthed archival material or

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542 BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII).

543 Istituto veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, *Gli Agostiniani a Venezia e la chiesa di Santo Stefano: atti della giornata di studio nel V centenario della dedicazione della chiesa di Santo Stefano*, Venice: Canal & Stamperia Editrice, 1997.

544 Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' in *Gli Agostiniani a Venezia e la chiesa di Santo Stefano: atti della giornata di studio nel V centenario della dedicazione della chiesa di Santo Stefano*, edited by Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, Venice: Canal & Stamperia Editrice, 1997, 237-287.

material that has not yet been fully explored. The aim of this thesis, however, is to provide a broad investigation into the impact of the Counter Reformation on Venice's churches, and this task still remains to be undertaken in the case of Santo Stefano, which provides a prime example of a church that was extensively restored during the period in question and was governed by a monastic body that, while not as proactive as the Cassinese Congregation, were also enquiring and were typical of the older monastic orders during this time.

SANTO STEFANO: A HISTORY

As we have now seen, a detailed history of the church of Santo Stefano has been written many times over. For this reason, the following section will mainly document the changes that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries chronologically, before we examine and analyse some specific changes in detail in the following sections.

Followers of the Rule of Saint Augustine are thought to have had a presence in the Venetian archipelago since 1002, where they built a monastery on what was a small island, later to be known as the plague island of Lazzaretto Vecchio, just off the Lido.[545] Around 1264-74, the newly formed order of friars known as the Augustinian Hermits,[546] and it moved closer to the heart of the city, and constructed an initial church, just a few years after the Franciscans and Dominicans arrived and started building their own churches.[547] The dating of the current church of Santo Stefano is still a topic of contention. It was founded in 1294 and, according to Francesco Sansovino, was finished in 1325.[548] However, structural analyses of the building contradict this testimony and date much of the existing fabric to the fifteenth century, suggesting a complete overhaul of the 1325 church began not long after it was originally finished so that only elements of the original building remain. Most recent authors agree with this conclusion and for some the debate has moved on to a consideration of the previous building's size and positioning, although Moro is the most ambiguous.[549]

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[545] Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 23.
[546] The Augustinian Hermits were officially recognised through two papal bulls by Pope Innocent IV which were announced on 16 December 1243 and united the various communities around the continent which followed the Rule of Saint Augustine. Ibid, 25-28.
[547] Ibid, 23.
[548] Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 128.
[549] Umberto Franzoi and Dina di Stefano, *Le Chiese di Venezia,* Venice: Alfieri, 1976, 333; Moro, *La Chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 21, 51; Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* 10; Chiari Moretto Wiel, Gallo and Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione*, 11.

It is clear that the building we see today is one that was largely completed in the fifteenth century and was the result of a number of bequests and donations that were made to the church in the early part of the century. Nicolò Zorzi left money in his will of 1407 and further large amounts were given in 1423 and 1437 for the building of the new church.[550] The internal windows of the nave date from the second and third decades of the fifteenth century, while the ship's keel ceiling was installed at some point in the fifteenth century's third and fourth decades (Figs 151, 152).[551] The column capitals are stylistically typical of the early fifteenth century, although some comparable examples are also found from late in the fourteenth century.[552] The large, tripartite exposed-brick façade was later adorned with a portal likely designed by the workshop of Bartolomeo Bon or even by the master himself, sometime between 1415 and 1430 (Fig. 153).[553] The interior has a central nave and two aisles, but, unusually for the time, has no transept between the nave and the presbytery (see Fig. 154 for a floor plan). The nave is distinguished from the aisles by twelve large alternating red and white Verona marble columns, each individually decorated with a variety of symbols and materials. Wooden beams cross between the arches, between the aisles, and above the columns over the nave, coordinating with, and drawing the eye towards, the ship's keel ceiling above. The walls of the nave are covered with Renaissance frescoes which were restored in the twentieth century. A swathe of diamond lozenges spread across the walls and these are bordered with a strip of painted foliage along the arches, with each arch topped by a half-length figure of a saint (Figs 155, 156).[554] A further, more magnificent row of foliage surmounts the arch that marks the end of the nave and the beginning of the presbytery. Above, the diamonds and foliage make way for painted rosettes, just below the ship's keel ceiling. This ceiling design is rather unusual, with San Giacomo dell'Orio, a near contemporary of Santo Stefano, providing the only other example in Venice. Inspiration for the ceiling, however, may have come from the church of the Eremitani in Padua or from San Fermo

[550] Chiari Moretto Wiel, Gallo and Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione*, 11.
[551] As will be elaborated in a later section of this chapter, it is not exactly clear when the thermal windows at Santo Stefano were inserted. Antonio Niero includes them in seventeenth century renovations to the church but is unable to date them either. While Novello suggests that two thermal windows – no longer extant – were placed in the presbytery during the renovations to the high altar. Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 12; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 19.
[552] Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 10-12.
[553] For more information on the façade and the portal see: Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 37-38; Chiari Moretto Wiel, Gallo and Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione*, 12-13; Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 12.
[554] For the full list of saint identifications see: Chiari Moretto Wiel, Gallo, and Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione*, 17-18.

Maggiore in Verona.[555] In the fifteenth century the presbytery was enlarged to run across a canal to the rear, forcing gondoliers to paddle beneath the building, and to be prohibited from using the canal during Mass (Fig. 157).[556]

Around the mid fifteenth century, guilds and confraternities started to form, and their altars and chapels began to proliferate in the church, to sit alongside those also commissioned by lay patrons.[557] In the 1440s German bakers established an altar which depicted the Virgin Mary along with saints Catarina and Barbara; while in 1454 the Scuola dei Calafati, which was made up of workers at the Arsenale, created an altar for their patron, St Phocas.[558] In 1441 the Molin family commissioned an altar to St Jerome with a polyptych designed by Antonio and Giovanni Vivarini who went on to produce the panels for another altar dedicated to St Monica. Further altars were dedicated to St Nicholas of Tolentino and St Nicholas of Myra, the latter being the patronage of another group of Germans, this time a shoemakers' guild.[559] The list continued to grow throughout the fifteenth century and soon the interior of Santo Stefano was filled with a multiplicity of altars that were all designed differently and commissioned for different purposes.

The choir, thought to be the work of Antonio Gambello,[560] occupied two bays of the nave and is thought to have been not unlike the one at the Frari, with ornate wooden stalls, which were ornately carved and shielded from view by a large marble screen, upon which were situated twelve life-size statues. Francesco Sansovino identifies the statues as the twelve Apostles and it was he who first associated the work with Gambello.[561] A reconstruction, produced in 1997 and based on recent research, shows its likely layout (Fig. 158).[562]

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555 Ibid, 17-18; Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 59.
556 BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
557 Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 14.
558 Ibid.
559 Ibid.
560 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 253.
561 Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 128.
562 The drawing is the result of a combined effort from Julia Etzel, Kristian Kaffenberger and Ulrich Petzold from the University of Bamberg, and Professor Schuller and Elisabetta Devoti. It was most recently published in Federico Moro's book. Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 104-105.

The situation changed in the late sixteenth century after the conclusion of the Council of Trent in 1563. Santo Stefano, however, reacted to the reforming impetus much later than some of the other churches in this study. While San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was reshaping its interior and updating its Chapel of the Sacrament, the friars at Santo Stefano waited until long after the completion of Trent and the circulation of such pamphlets as Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones* before beginning their own architectural and artistic transformation. Reform to the church, in fact, only took place after the Apostolic Visitation of 1581 when many amendments were recommended. Yet, despite the slower start, once the Augustinians began their renovations they undertook them with vigour, reshaping the presbytery, creating a new high altar and tabernacle, removing the choir, adding in a host of thermal windows, covering the frescoes in the nave and redesigning all of the altars in marble and replacing many of the worn altarpieces.

The report of the Apostolic Visitation is, as with the other churches, of use here because Santo Stefano was visited numerous times by the bishops Lorenzo Campeggio and Agostino Valier.[563] Interestingly, praise was given not only to the layout of the church with its three naves and its ship's keel ceiling, but also to the magnificence of the choir.[564] The report confirms the high altar's dedication to the saints Stephen and Augustine and highlights the existence of a 'tabernacle magno et m<ult>o honorifico' which was located on the high altar.[565]

The report from the Apostolic Visitation also record the altars in the church at the time, listing them in order clockwise from the high altar. First to the right was the chapel dedicated to St Augustine. The altar in the chapel is described as '*portatile*' which meant that the altar was a sacred stone slab which was portable and could be affixed to un-consecrated altars to allow for the celebration of the Eucharist. This suggests, according to Novello, that the existing altar in the chapel of St Augustine was not consecrated and that the portable altar was being used instead.[566] The report then goes on to list twelve

[563] Unlike the parish churches where the archives are kept in the Archivio Curia Patriarcale, the only record of the Apostolic Visitations for the monastic churches of Venice is kept at the Archivio Segreto Vaticano. Città del Vaticano, ASVat., *Arch. Nunz. Venezia II,* 2422, f. 14. This reference comes from Novello. Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 6.
[564] This observation comes from Caterina Novello who has had the opportunity to study the Apostolic Visitation records for Santo Stefano in detail. Ibid.
[565] Novello's research is the most thorough here and she has not been able to ascertain if any of the tabernacle described by the Apostolic Visitation was incorporated into the tabernacle we see today. Ibid, 8-9.
[566] Ibid, 9, no. 7.

further altars on the walls of the church: five are listed on each of the side aisles and two were located on the *controfacciata* or inside façade wall. On the right side, following on from the Chapel of St Augustine, is the altar dedicated to St Nicholas (St Nicholas of Myra), followed by the altar dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin which was cared for by the Confraternità dei Pistori.[567] Following on from these two altars is a small altar dedicated to the Cross, an altar to St Jerome and an altar dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of both Mary and Saint Anne. The Visitation notes that all of these altars are properly adorned and decorated.[568] The counter-façade accommodated altars dedicated to St Stephen and St James, both of which are recorded as using portable altars for the Mass, as in the Chapel of St Augustine.[569] On the left side of the church, starting from the façade, altars are recorded as being dedicated to St Catherine, the Annunciation, St Nicholas of Tolentino, St Monica and St Mark.[570] The altar to St Mark is identified by Francesco Sansovino, in the first edition of his guidebook, as being painted by Giorgio Veneziano.[571] Finally, the side chapel to the left of the high altar was dedicated to John the Baptist with a further altar del Crucifix in the Chapter room and an altar to San Raffaele Arcangelo in the Sacristy.[572]

This outline of the position of the altars during the late sixteenth century is particularly helpful for us since one of the recommendations of the Visitation was that some of them should be removed.[573] One of the altars that was definitely removed was the altar dedicated to the Cross on the right aisle because its location was deemed to be too close to the altar to St Jerome.[574] The two altars on the inner façade dedicated to St Stephen and St James were also removed (with the one to St Stephen set up elsewhere in the church while the one to St James disappeared completely) because of the concerns that, to celebrate Mass at either of these altars, the celebrant would have to turn his back to the high altar where the Tabernacle was located.[575] However, records show that both the altars to St Stephen and St James were still *in situ* well into the eighteenth century and the

[567] For more information on the Confraternità dei Pistori and their altar see: Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 9.
[568] Ibid, 9-10.
[569] Ibid, 10-11.
[570] Ibid, 10-12.
[571] Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 129.
[572] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 12.
[573] Ibid.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Ibid, 13.

altar dedicated to the Cross was still in place in 1616.[576] Indeed, the altar to St Stephen was extensively renovated in the late 1580s by the Zorzi family, yet it was not moved during this time, and it is unclear why they were reluctant to move it for so long.[577]

Other guidance from the Apostolic Visitation included a request to remove all wooden urns, various stipulations pertaining to the decoration of the altars, and a recommendation to whitewash the church walls and repave the nave.[578] It is clear, however, that not all of these recommendations were followed through, and, while the repaving and whitewashing did happen, this was not until 1626 and 1630. Of the churches in this study, from the records we have available, it seems that the parish priests of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and San Moisè took the recommendations of the Apostolic Visitation far more seriously than the monastic orders. This may be because certain patriarchs of the time may have been more responsive to the dictates of their Roman superiors and may have encouraged the local priests to go through with the Visitation recommendations. It may also be the case that the friars at Santo Stefano may have listened more carefully to their superiors in the wider Augustinian body rather than their colleagues in Venice. Despite the long wait before enacting much of the Apostolic Visitation's recommendations, Santo Stefano, nevertheless, underwent a significant renovation process during the early seventeenth century, which is the focus of this chapter. It is, therefore, useful to list all of these renovations in chronological order before going on to examine them in greater detail.

First on this agenda, in the early 1610s-20s, was the presbytery which was subject to a significant reshaping. The old choir was removed and elements redistributed throughout the church: the choir stalls were moved to behind the high altar while the screen was dismantled and was used to line the presbytery walls. The high altar was then moved forward to allow for its expansion and obviate the need for gondoliers to avoid the canal route below during Mass. The high altar was also redesigned with an enormous new architectural structure in the form of a three-arched screen across the presbytery, which draws attention to the massive sculptural tabernacle and altar table below. Later on, in the early 1620s, a new sacristy was built. The entire church floor was replaced in 1626 and limewash was used to cover the interior wall frescoes in 1630, which complemented

576 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 13-14.
577 Ibid, 14.
578 Ibid, 13.

the thermal windows that were inserted into the clerestory and façade of the building. It was only after all of the large structural changes that the altars and chapels were redesigned. Beginning with individual altars in the mid seventeenth century, the renewal continued long into the eighteenth century. A new marble pulpit was finally installed in 1727 although this was destroyed less than a century later when a new organ was completed. Santo Stefano did not escape the proclamations of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century and became a parish church like many others. Its nearby companion, Sant'Angelo was closed in 1810 and was demolished in 1837 with many of its altarpieces and features moving to Santo Stefano.[579] The Chapel of the Sacrament, the redesigned baptistery and the Chapel of St Michael all contain fittings from Sant'Angelo, including the baptismal font.[580]

A restoration begun in 1849 by M. Piccini, the parish priest of the time, included the removal of the balustrade surrounding the high altar and the acquisition of Tintoretto's *Last Supper*, among other works for the sacristy.[581] In 1900, one of Piccini's successors as parish priest, Francesco Paganuzzi, proposed a far more extensive restoration of the church during which the whole of the building's skeleton – the walls, ceiling and roof – was renovated.[582] As with many of the other churches in this study, this decision was further galvanised by the fall of San Marco's campanile in 1902, which was especially pertinent for Santo Stefano since its own campanile was in a state that caused great concern. Indeed many called for it to be taken down completely but it was Paganuzzi who preserved and restored it.[583] It was during repair work to the roof that the frescoes, which had been covered up in 1630, were rediscovered, and a decision was made to uncover them completely and restore them to their former glory.[584] In November 1903 work was undertaken on the façade to remove the two thermal windows, which had already been closed up in the eighteenth century, and replace them with two mullioned windows which were presumably thought to be more in keeping with the mullioned windows either side of the portal.[585] The thermal windows of the clerestory remained in

[579] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 51-52.
[580] Acquisitions from Sant'Angelo will be mentioned throughout this chapter but for more information on the works as a whole and on the destruction of the church see: Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 114-118.
[581] Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 32-34.
[582] Ibid, 34.
[583] Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 33-34.
[584] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 9-10.
[585] Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 34.

place although they were now accompanied by lancet windows which were also rediscovered and reopened during this extensive period of renovation.[586]

The result, for the exterior of Santo Stefano certainly, is somewhat chaotic, with some lancet windows opened and others bricked-up; and with some thermal windows open and others walled up. Further discord is caused by the presence of a large area of decaying white plaster which marks the remnants of a long eroded fresco of the *Madonna with Child and the saints Joseph, Catherine, Nicholas of Tolentino, Antonio and Sebastian* that was painted probably by Girolamo (or Gerolamo) Pellegrini sometime in the early eighteenth century (Fig. 159).[587] A second fresco of *Madonna with saints Augustine and Monica* was painted by Pietro Liberi sometime before 1664 inside the lunette of the main door of the church and is also no longer to be seen (Fig. 160).[588] This diversity of styles and different types of brick is further hindered by damage to bricks on the lower levels due to particularly high *acque alte* as can be seen in Fig. 161 when tide water even entered the church and flooded the base level of the interior.[589] The interior, too, is now a somewhat un-cohesive mix of styles with much that was coordinated in the Counter Reformation period now melded together with the rediscovered frescoes, reopened lancet windows and the addition of various features from the suppressed church of Sant'Angelo.

With an ancient and prestigious history, the Augustinians were in many ways typical of the older monastic orders. Most monasteries were neither really strong nor really lax in their adherence to the various rules and regulations of monastic life and the demands of the liturgy. Compared to the Cassinese Congregation, the Augustinians were not vigorous reformers, nor as innovative and cohesive in architectural matters, but it was a successful, widespread community and the original Catholic home of Martin Luther before he nailed his ninety-five theses onto the doors of All Saints' church in Wittenberg in 1517. There had, however, been notable reforming figures in the order including Egidio da Viterbo who was a key participant of the Fifth Lateran Council of 1512,

586 Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 3.
587 Moro claims the attribution confidently while Novello is more cautious in her recommendation. Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 45-46; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 278.
588 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 279.
589 During the flood of 1966 the water reached 2 feet high inside the church and this aggravated pre-existing erosion in the walls and degraded the marble of the altars to the point where a serious restoration was required. *Venezia Restaurata, 1966-1986: la campagna dell'UNESCO e l'opera delle organizzazioni private,* Milan: Electa, 1986, 164.

Girolamo Seripando, Taddeo da Perugia and Tommaso da Villanova.[591] This last is of particular interest to this study since, after his death in 1555 and his eventual canonisation in 1656, the Augustinians at Santo Stefano seriously considered venerating him in their church by creating an altar in his honour. Such reforming figures in the order who were honoured with sainthood were considered useful role models for the friars and their congregation. Reformist initiatives were taken up by the order before the Council of Trent was concluded, and some of the order's key figures were eventually called upon by Carlo Borromeo to participate in the Council of Trent.[596]

[591] David Gutiérrez, *Gli Agostiniani dal protestantesimo alla riforma cattolica (1518-1648)*, Storia dell'ordine di Sant'Agosto, Vol. II., Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum S. Augustini, 1972, 1, 141-162.
[596] These included Zaccaria da Milano, Girolamo da Bassano and Luigi da Bergamo. Ibid, 90.

THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RENOVATIONS

One of the first, and most significant decisions made by the friars was to completely overhaul the presbytery. The ancient choir was dismantled and the whole presbytery was redesigned, with the high altar area moved forward and a new, enormous architectural high altar installed. This redesign was first envisaged in 1610 when the friars decided that the choir was cluttering the church and that removing it from its position in front of the high altar would increase the space in the apse and allow better access to, and use of, the church's side door.[597] On 24 September 1613, the Senate gave the friars four hundred ducats with which to commence the work. In 1620 another thousand ducats were contributed by the noted Maritime General, Lorenzo Venier, who had a history of donating to Santo Stefano since he had already given the church a silver thurible and an ancient chalice.[598] Further money was requested from the doge in December of 1628 when the Augustinians admitted that the interior of their church was old and falling apart.[599] Also in the early part of the second decade, Prior Iseppo Colombina encouraged the friars to give their own contributions towards the rebuilding of the presbytery and some have their financial commitments recorded in the form of inscriptions on various parts of the presbytery, as will be detailed later on.[600] These donations allowed the Augustinians to create the complex presbytery arrangement that we still see today. To overhaul the church in such a monumental way was a clear demonstration of the Augustinians' engagement with the architectural and theological debates of the age, and it is significant that the friars decided to commit to this as one of the first projects in Santo Stefano's renewal.

CHOIR REMOVAL

The original grand structure, considered to be the masterpiece of Antonio Gambello, contained ornately carved choir stalls and a monumental wood and marble choir screen decorated with sculptures, ornamental inlay and columns (Fig. 158). Despite the praise for its quality, however, it was a problem for the apostolic visitors in 1581, and was therefore one of the most pressing features that needed removing. The initial decision about the choir's future came on 8 January 1613 when the fathers agreed on a model for

[597] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 24-25.
[598] Ibid*,* 25.
[599] Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 18.
[600] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 17.

the new choir, deeming it to be a great honour to God.[602] Soon after this agreement, the old choir was dismantled, and the majority of the structure would be reused in the new design. The choir stalls, which were arranged in two levels, one for the fathers and the other for their lay brothers, were moved to the back of the high altar where they were screened off by a new screen of three large arches behind the high altar (Figs 162, 163). It is unclear whether the screen was built before the choir stalls were moved, or vice versa, but for the choir stalls to have been moved at all, some significant restructuring would already have happened, since the high altar needed to be moved forward enough to leave enough the space behind it for the stalls. Nicolai's 1751 account includes a transcription of a document in which the Augustinian fathers requested the use of a lectern with a bronze eagle, which had come to Venice from the city of Candia and had been reserved in the sacristy of San Marco.[603] On receipt of the eagle lectern it was to be situated in the new choir, although it is now located in the main nave (Fig. 164).

The new design, however, has some shortcomings. From inside the retrochoir, the bases of the arches are too high for the friars to be able to see much of the high altar, and although they are able to see the magnificent tabernacle with its eight sides, they are unable to engage fully with the Mass, unlike at San Nicolò di Lido where the high altar has a window allowing the friars to partially see through to the celebrant (Fig. 17). The new arrangement, however, demonstrates the growing importance of the laity to the Catholic Church as a result of the Counter Reform process. The inconvenience to the friars comes at the visual benefit to the lay congregation of the church, who were no longer ostracised from the deliverance of the Mass and the partaking of the Eucharist, and were instead, the centre of interest.

The large marble choir screen that caused the laity's previous exclusion from viewing the Mass was taken apart and large panels were used to line the two walls of the presbytery (Fig. 165). This decision indicates a resourcefulness on the part of the friars and an understanding of the artistic quality of the choir screen. Instead of destroying the choir screen completely (unlike some contemporaries) they made the Gothic structure a

[602] 1612 *more Veneto.* ASV, *Santo Stefano,* busta 4, reg. 2, 'Libro delle proposizioni del Convento di S. Stefano 1578-1615', c. 116v, in Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 15.

[603] 'Letter D. Decreto della Eccellentissimo Senato, in vigor di cui vien data alli Padri di S. Stefano L'Aquila di bronzo, che dalla Città e convento di S. Salvatore di Candia era stata trasportata in Venezia. 1630: 18 Ottobre in Pregadi,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.

feature in their newly redesigned presbytery. Although they were keen to adhere to the Church's guidance on de-cluttering the nave in front of the high altar, they were not willing for their previous architectural heritage to be completely lost, and so they came to a satisfactory compromise. In this respect, Santo Stefano is very similar to the other retrofitted church in this study, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. Like the Augustinian hermits of Santo Stefano, the parish priests of San Nicolò were keen to remodel their churches but also felt it of great importance not to rid their churches completely of the earlier architectural accomplishments that formed strong parts of their collective community identity.

Novello notes that the impetus for removing the choir was likely to be as a result of the liturgical developments stemming from the Council of Trent which placed the ceremony of the Eucharist, and the need for the faithful to be able to see and engage in that ceremony, at the very heart of the Church's ministry.[604] This view is confirmed by Paola Modesti, whose research into the removal of Venice's choirs, begun in the early 2000s, provides us with the most wide-ranging account of this practice.[605] As her research documents, the majority of extant churches in Venice at the time of the Apostolic Visitation, with the notable exception of the Frari, had their choirs removed following the Apostolic Visitation, from which it may be inferred that the Visitation was the impetus for their removal.[606]

A retrochoir was an integral feature of the new church of San Nicolò di Lido, while the choir at San Moisè was also removed with the redesign and wrapped around the sides of the new presbytery. San Nicolò dei Mendicoli similarly responded to the demands of the Apostolic Visitation and remodelled the church's choir. Thus, it is not a surprise that one of the first, and momentous changes to take place in Santo Stefano was the removal of the front choir and its magnificent marble choir screen and its replacement by the old choir stalls in a new setting.

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[604] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 16.
[605] Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese parrocchiali veneziane fra Rinascimento e riforma tridentina,' 141-153; eadem, 'I cori nelle chiese veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581,' 39-65.
[606] An appendix to Modesti's article on Santa Maria della Carità lists the majority of churches and a description of what happened. Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581', 60-65.

THE NEW HIGH ALTAR AND TABERNACLE

Conceived in conjunction with the rearrangement of the choir was the redesign of the high altar space (Fig. 166). In his account of Santo Stefano's history, Padre Nicolai provides a transcript of a note recording the Augustinians' request for a financial contribution to the rebuilding effort from the Senate in 1613.[607] He also makes reference to the extension to the presbytery in the fifteenth century which had resulted in the bridging over a canal, which inconvenienced gondoliers, causing them to avoid the route while Mass was taking place. This, as Nicolai makes clear, was one of the reasons why the Senate decided to assist the Augustinians whose proposal was to move the high altar forward and fit the retrochoir behind, thus resolving the issue with the gondoliers.[608]

Scholars have long debated the identity of the creator of the new high altar due to some confusion arising from the *Memoria* of Padre Morotti, an Augustinian friar at the church during this period, who recorded that the altar was the work of 'Ser Anzolo Paizza'.[609] It is widely thought that the name 'Paizza' was a mistake or at least an abbreviation for the name 'Panizza' and that Morotti was possibly referring to Anzolo Panizza.[610] While Anzolo Panizza is indeed one of the most likely candidates, Padre Nicolai, one of the earliest writers on the church, declared it to be the work of Anzolo's brother, Alvise Panizza, although his reasoning for asserting this is not given.[611] His claim, however, is supported by Giulio Soravia, almost a century later in 1825, who also determined that the altar was the work of Alvise Panizza.[612] Tommaso Temanza is one of the earliest writers (1778) to attribute the altar design (and accompanying statues) instead to Girolamo Campagna.[614] Antonio Niero, agreeing with this identification, also attributes the wooden statues of St Mark and St Clare of Montefalco to Campagna, arguing that

607 'Letter C. Decreto dell'Ecc.mo senato, in vigor di cui si danno 400 ducati di limosina al nostro convent per la nuova fabbrica dell'altar maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
608 'Letter C. Decreto dell'Ecc.mo senato, in vigor di cui si danno 400 ducati di limosina al nostro convent per la nuova fabbrica dell'altar maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
609 ASV, *Santo Stefano*, b. 24. Proc. CCCLXIII, c. 44r, quoted in Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 20.
610 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 265; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 20.
611 'Altare Maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
612 BMC, Ms 3686, *Materiali preparati per la descrizione della chiesa di Santo Stefano,* Giulio Soravia, 1825, 49.
614 Tommaso Temanza, *Vite de' più celebri architetti e scultori veneziani che fiorirono nel secolo XVI,* Venice, 1778, 524.

there are stylistic comparisons that can be made with Campagna's known work.[615] The most recent work by Moro attributes the high altar to both Girolamo Campagna and Alvise Panizza, but he makes only a brief statement on the matter and provides no sources to support his claim.[616]

The more diligent recent accounts of the church's history provide a more thorough analysis and explanation of these matters. Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel acknowledges the claims for Girolamo Campagna and Alvise Panizza but also puts forward a further name, the lesser-known Antonio Puzo, who is recorded by the friars as someone who had made designs and templates for the altar.[617] The most measured account, however, is that of Caterina Novello, who augments Chiari Moretto Wiel's research with her own. Novello agrees that the work has elements of stylistic unity with Girolamo Campagna's other output and that this should not be discounted in the identification of the creator despite there being no support from archival documents.[618] She also tackles the debate between Anzolo and Alvise Panizza. Along with Morotti's description of the stonemason Anzolo 'Paizza' she provides a further document from 23 September 1620 where Anzolo is recorded as promising to initiate work in November and finish the project within two years.[619] However, Alvise Panizza's name is also documented since it is listed on the receipts for payments made in February 1623 and April 1628.[620] Despite the death of Anzolo by December 1624, she argues that he was in charge of the altar design but that Alvise was likely to have assisted with the project.[621]

In response to Chiari Moretto Wiel's claim that Antonio Puzo was integral to the commission, Novello diligently returned to the archives that Chiari Moretto Wiel used herself. She argues that, due to the poor handwriting of the friars, Chiari Moretto Wiel mistranslated the passage and rather than reading 'maestro Antonio quondam Francesco Puzo,' as Chiari Moretto Wiel had it, the sentence reads 'mi Ant.o q. Franc.o proto'.[622]

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615 Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 18.
616 Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 96.
617 ASV, *Santo Stefano,* busta, 24, proc. CCCLXVI, c. 25 in Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' in *Gli Agostiniani a Venezia e la chiesa di Santo Stefano,*' 265.
618 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 21.
619 ASV, *Santo Stefano*, busta 24. Proc. CCCLXIII, c. 27r in Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 22.
620 ASV, *Santo Stefano*, busta 24. Proc. CCCLXIII, c. 28-30 in Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 22.
621 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 22.
622 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 265; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 23.

Novello thus argues that all we have to go on is the first name, 'Antonio' and she lists possible contenders who were working in Venice at the time and who might have been referred to here in particular, Antonio Sardi and Antonio Smeraldi.[623] Her conclusion was that it is not probable to assume that either Antonio was involved in the early stages of the high altar commission since this would have been too early in either of their careers for the Augustinians at Santo Stefano to have risked commissioning them for such a grand project, but that either could feasibly have been part of the project by its completion in 1620.[624] She also notes the likelihood of Campagna being connected to the planning stage of the project – as a noted and well respected name who would, unlike the young Antonios, have been deemed appropriate for this significant commission.[625] Known for both his sculptures and his architectural high altarpieces, Campagna would indeed have been a fitting choice, and one commissioned at other, equally respected monastic churches including San Giorgio Maggiore and San Lorenzo. Indeed, Niero and Novello compare the stylistic qualities of Campagna's known work with that at Santo Stefano.[626]

Novello, understandably, despite some strong stylistic comparison, leaves the matter inconclusive. However, it seems likely that over the course of the project, a number of figures were involved and that no one hand oversaw the entire commission. The scale of the project and the length of time taken to complete it meant that it is almost inevitable that more than one hand can be identified in the design. There were also individual artisans who can be identified as being the author of specific statues, the candelabras and the altar table as we shall now see as we look at the design of the high altar and the surrounding presbytery.

A three-arched screen separates the high altar from what is now the retrochoir. The base is a stone wall with two doors topped with triangular pediments, one underneath each of

[623] Novello's investigation into the two possible Antonios – Sardi and Smeraldi – is very thorough and takes into account that both are the son of a Francesco, which may have been what the archival source was alluding to. Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 24-25.
[624] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 28.
[625] Ibid, 29.
[626] Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 18, 78; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 29-31.

the side arches to allow access to the retrochoir.[628] The three arches, in stark contrast to the rest of the church, are structured with four black marble columns with Corinthian column heads, a dentilled cornice running above and a triangular pediment over the top of the central arch, which is also the largest of the three (Fig. 167). Situated in the keystones of the two smaller arches are two cherub heads, while the central arch is adorned with a female head, all likely to have been designed by Anzolo Panizza, according to Caterina Novello.[629] Each of the four columns has a painting at the base: the left column depicting the *Judgement of Solomon,* the second column *Martyrdom of St Sebastian,* the third *Rest on the Flight to Egypt,* and the fourth column the *Adoration of the Shepherds*.[630] These works are earlier than the rest of the high altar and have been speculatively attributed to Felice Brusasorzi.[631]

In the windows of the two side arches are two large wooden statues standing on ornate marble pedestals inlaid with geometric designs. These have been identified as St Mark in the left arch (Fig. 168) and St Clare of Montefalco in the right (Fig. 169) and some scholars have either speculated (Niero) or asserted confidently (Moro) that they are the work of Girolamo Campagna, despite there being no archival evidence to prove this.[632] Caterina Novello casts doubt on that attribution and argues that, instead, they are the work of unknown artists who specialised in wood, perhaps Francesco Terilli.[633] San Marco is a clear attribution; with his book and lion identifying him without doubt. However Padre Nicolai identifies the female statue as St Monica, as does Apollonio and later Niero, while Chiari Moretto Wiel, Moro and Novello have assigned the identification as St Clare.[634] Both saints – Monica and Clare of Montefalco - are

[628] The gates that we see on the doors to the choir today, with their wrought iron design allowing in light and a brief glimpse into the choir, are a product of the twentieth century. Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 268.
[629] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 164-165.
[630] For further information on the paintings see: Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 187-189.
[631] Ibid.
[632] Niero, as part of his argument for Campagna's involvement in the overall altar design, identifies them as likely to be by Campagna. Apollonio does not attempt an attribution. Federico Moro blithely assumes the attribution to Campagna without question while Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel merely acknowledges the attribution commonly given but does not make a judgement either way. Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia*, 24; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 267-268; Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 97; Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 18.
[633] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 32-33.
[634] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 24; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 267-268; 'Altare Maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, 18; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 32-33.

associated with the Augustinians and both would not be out of place wearing the monastic habit that adorns the statue, so both attributions are plausible. Novello's argument for St Clare of Montefalco focuses on the youthfulness of the face and the fact that the left hand looks like it used to support something, perhaps a cross - a symbol of Christ's passion that Clare was associated with.[635]

A further four statues line the tops of the columns: St Stephen on the left, the Virgin of the Annunciation and the Archangel Gabriel atop the two central columns, and St Augustine on the right (Fig. 170). Novello believes these to be fifteenth-century works, which were possibly originally incorporated into the old choir.[636] Moro attributes the statues to the workshop of Antonio Rizzo, while Chiari Moretto Wiel argues that they are the work of an anonymous fifteenth-century stonemason.[637] The Virgin is of course integral to the Catholic faith and there are many altars and altarpieces dedicated to her in Santo Stefano, while the two saints – Stephen and Augustine – symbolise the Augustinian order and the church's specific dedication to Stephen.

In the window of the central arch is the tabernacle, which is a monumental affair, larger than the two statues and their bases (Fig. 171).[638] The Augustinians had been placing the Holy Sacrament on the high altar in Santo Stefano at least since 1595, thus demonstrating a clear engagement with the priorities of the Council of Trent and it is the tabernacle for the Sacrament that becomes the overarching focus of the new high altar.[639] For it is a gigantic tabernacle that replaces a traditional altarpiece and takes centre stage underneath the centre arch in a magnificent architectural construction. The tabernacle is built around a central octagonal section with black marble columns holding up the pediment above, these matching the supporting ones of the frame of the screen. Above the triangular pediment is a further section topped with a golden metal dome and a number of miniature statues - again designed to complement the statues of St Mark and St Clare in the next-door arches. The statue at the top of the tabernacle is a bronze sculpture of the Redeemer and the others adorning various levels of the tabernacle

635 Novello expands on the history of the two statues and her reasoning for the attribution of Santa Chiara. Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 173-178.
636 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 32.
637 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 267; Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 97.
638 More details of the tabernacle's commissioning can be found in ASV, *Santo Stefano,* b. 24, proc. CCCLXVI, c.25v. Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 168.
639 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 265.

include four Old Testament prophets, six angels, a rendition of St Francis and one of St Nicholas of Tolentino, all argued, tentatively, by Novello to be the work of Girolamo Campagna.[640] Part of the tabernacle had been completed by 1610 with a donation from Fra Agostino Fasolo, and a further donation from another Augustinian, Giovanni Ferro (also named Federico), allowed the columns to be added.[641] On the side of the golden dome is the inscription 'Thomas Bezzi designavit anno 1708', which can no longer be seen but was recorded by Nicolai in the eighteenth century.[642]

A smaller, more usable tabernacle is located on the high altar, designed by Benedetto Corbarelli (Fig. 171).[643] Bernardo was part of the famous Florentine family which included brothers Francesco and Domenico, who worked predominantly in Padua on churches like Santa Giustina and whose talent lay in creating lavish designs of inlaid marble.[644] The project was approved by the fathers in July 1656 and Corbarelli was commissioned to design a marble inlay depicting the *Martyrdom of St Stephen*, which is signed and dated as being completed in 1656.[645] It was Giovanni Ferro who once again contributed financially towards the altar table and his donation is gratefully noted on an inscription on the altar rail M. F. JOANNES. FERRVS. VENETVS. P. MDCLVI (Fig. 172).[646] Two bronze candelabra sit either side the high altar and Moro identifies both to be from the school of Alessandro Vittoria.[647] Perhaps this comes from Apollonio, who also lists the candelabras as such.[648] However, Chiari Moretto Wiel is quite clear that while the one on the left is school of Vittoria, the one on the right is 'a weak replica' ('una debole replica') from 1617.[649]

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640 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 166-172.
641 'Altare Maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico, 267.
642 'Altare Maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 33.
643 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 44.
644 Ibid.
645 ASV, Santo Stefano, busta 4, reg. 3, 'Libro delle proposizioni del Convento di S. Stefano 1651-1673', c. 21r e v in Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 44, 179-182.
646 'Altare Maggiore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 43-44.
647 Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 95.
648 Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 26.
649 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 268.

The four coats of arms, also made of marble inlay, which adorn the foundations of the four columns of the arched screen, are also believed to be the work of Benedetto Corbarelli, but perhaps at a later date than his completion of the altar table.[650] The coats of arms depicted are those of (from the left): the Augustinians, the papacy, the Republic of Venice and the Ferro family, highlighting once again, Giovanni Ferro's significant contribution to the church.[651]

The whole project is thought to have started in the 1610s and taken at least a decade to complete.[653] As one of the first completed pieces of Santo Stefano's massive renovation project of the seventeenth century, and with the choir now removed to behind the high altar, the new presbytery complex would have made a significant impact, both on the friars and their lay congregation as a work so in tune with the prevailing trends for high altars but so different to the rest of the gothic church. The church was shaped by its distinctive gothic arches and columns and was still filled largely with old altarpieces, wooden altar tables. The walls – at this stage – were still abundantly decorated with diamond shapes, floral motifs and noted saints, while light was still coming from gothic lunettes and oculi, all resting underneath the ornate wooden ship's keel ceiling. Within this space, the new presbytery would have stood out - even clashed with the predominantly gothic interior as it was then. However, it sent a message that the Augustinians were committed to reforming their church and it was not long before the rest of the space was also dramatically changed.

The result is quite unlike almost any other high altar in Venice at the time, drawing, as it did, influences perhaps from further afield, like Milan where such architectural, tabernacle-focused high altars were becoming popular. In some ways it is like that of Santi Giovanni e Paolo which was redesigned between 1620 and 1656 by Mattia Carneri and Baldassare Longhena (Fig. 173).[654] At Santi Giovanni e Paolo the large tabernacle sits in a singular arch with numerous columns supporting it. It works well for the design

650 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 44.
651 Ferro is by no means the only Augustinian acknowledged for his contributions to the high altar. In 1712 padre Agostino Corniani commissioned a marble balustrade with wrought iron doors to close off the presbytery, however the structure was removed between 1847 and 1852 and replaced by a wooden railing. Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 52; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 86; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 267.
653 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 30.
654 For more information on the high altar at Santi Giovanni e Paolo see: Giuseppe Pavanello, *La basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo: Pantheon della Serenissima,* Venice: Marcianum Press, 2012, 384-387.

of the church but Santo Stefano's is arguably more impactful, with the architectural component more monumental, silhouetting the tabernacle more distinctively by placing it right in the heart of the central arch and leaving more space around it to allow it to be the main focus of the piece. Both pave the way for later examples such as the Gesuiti and the Gesuati (Figs 174, 175).

LIMEWASH WALL COVERING AND FLOORS REPLACED

A key feature of Palladio's newly built churches of San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore were their stark white interiors (Figs 176, 177). Although, as previously discussed in Chapter One, San Giorgio Maggiore initially had red frames to its arches, this did not change the overall appearance very significantly (Figs 26, 27, 28). This was a trend that could be seen taking shape earlier in the sixteenth century with churches such as San Salvador, (Fig. 178) Santa Maria Formosa (Fig. 179) and San Francesco della Vigna (Fig. 180) all enjoying much cleaner lines (whitewashed walls and either grey or pure white marble columns) than their recent Gothic counterparts. San Nicolò di Lido and San Moisè were also rebuilt with brilliant white interiors, as were other contemporary examples such as the Salute and San Pietro di Castello.

Gothic-built churches, in comparison, were typically covered in frescoes. Arches were covered with foliage and either Venetian or biblical symbols, such as at Madonna dell'Orto or San Nicolò dei Mendicoli; while at Santo Stefano and the Frari great swathes of wall were patterned with decoration. At Santo Stefano, the lozenges were made to suggest that they were made from bricks, much in the way the Palazzo Ducale was designed. Santo Stefano's arches were topped with frescoes of hermit saints (Figs 155, 156). On viewing the church today, this is the scene that greets your eyes. However, in 1630 all of this decoration was covered up when the Augustinians decided to paint the walls with a limewash. (Figs 181 and 182 are old photographs showing how this would have looked when in place). In part, this was believed to sanitise the church as the city was in the grip of the virulent plague epidemic that prompted the building of the Salute just a few years later.[655] However, one might also see this as a chance for the Augustinians to shed their dark, cluttered Gothic image and, especially in conjunction with the thermal windows which were opened during this period, to create a light, bright atmosphere more in keeping with the newly-built churches of the time, and with the

[655] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 9.

prevailing mood of the Counter Reformation which inspired these new designs. Indeed, the Apostolic Visitation stipulated that the church interior needed whitewashing and the floors should be fixed.[656] While the connection has been made with the timing of the limewashing corresponding with the outbreak of the plague, it is likely that the church had been considering covering the walls following the advice given during the Apostolic Visitation and that, although it was the plague that finally triggered that process, discussions had long taken place over the state of the walls and the need to cover them.

In the restorations of the early twentieth century, the team repairing the roof of the church discovered the frescoes underneath the layers of lime and the decision was made to take off the limewash and to restore the frescoes fully (Fig. 183 shows the results half way through this process).[657] This was one of many decisions made at the time to bring the church back towards its Gothic origins, shifting the emphasis away from the many additions made in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Max Ongaro's report notes that ancient lancet windows in the aisles were reopened at this time to allow more light to highlight the newly restored frescoes and further repairs were made to the façade, perhaps this being the moment that the two thermal windows situated there were closed (Figs 184, 185, 186).[658] Indeed, Apollonio who was writing close to the time of the discovery was overjoyed at the good fortune of the discovery and the opportunity to 'return… the beautiful church to its original state' ('rimetere… la splendida chiesa nel suo primiero stato').[659] The decision to restore the frescoes is arguably the reason why they are still so well preserved. The Franciscans at the Frari also appear to have covered their walls in a limewash, as attested to by Giuseppe Borsato's 1828 work *Visita del conte Leopoldo Cicognara al monument di Antonio Canova* (Fig. 192). The use of limewash suggests that this reimagining of the gothic church interior was a widespread feature of Venetian churches during the seventeenth century.

In a further attempt to echo the newly built Palladian churches, the church's floors, in 1626, were repaved with large slabs of red and white Verona stone to replace the ancient

[656] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 13.
[657] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 9-10; Max Ongaro, *Cronaca dei restauri, dei progetti e dell'azione tutta dell'Ufficio Regionale ora Soprintendenza dei Monumenti di Venezia (in seguito alla relazione va dell'Ufficio Regionale),* Venice: Istituto veneto di arti grafiche, 1912, 37.
[658] Ongaro, *Cronaca dei ristauri,* 37.
[659] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 1911, 10.

bricks which were at that stage in a very poor condition.[660] The floors were extensively renovated in the 1970s as part of the conservation that took place after the flood of 1966 broke through into the interior of Santo Stefano and caused considerable damage to the floor and the low lying monuments in the church (as can be seen in Fig. 161).[661]

INSERTION OF THERMAL WINDOWS[663]

One of the main ways that the internal – and external – space of Santo Stefano was changed, after the redesign of the presbytery area, was with the insertion of thermal windows into both the church's sides and façade. This was yet another dramatic shift away from the traditional gothic building and resulted in the removal of the traditional gothic lunettes and oculi that can be seen adorning many churches in Jacopo de' Barbari's 1500 *Map of Venice*. However, this was very much in keeping with the alterations made to the windows of other Gothic churches at this same time.

One of these churches was Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Various representations of Venice – especially Jacopo de' Barbari's map of the city of 1500 – give us a good indication of what the Frari would have looked like on its original completion (Fig. 187). De' Barbari's depiction of the church is not entirely accurate since he omits the original windows along the clerestory which *are* included in Matteo Pagan's *Bird's Eye View Plan* from 1599 (Fig. 188). Official restorations in the early twentieth century also verify the existence of such windows, since one was discovered boarded up in the nave.[664]

In 1640 these original clerestory windows were replaced by five thermal windows on both sides.[665] Giovanni Merlo's *Bird's Eye View Plan* of Venice from 1660 shows the Frari with only three thermal windows along the clerestory (Fig. 189), which may be the result of space limitations in his expansive plan, but five thermal windows can clearly be seen in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographs, which give us the best indication of how the Frari would have looked with its thermal windows in place (Figs

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660 BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
Work continued on the floor until 1756. Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 284.

661 Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 87.

663 Elements from this section originate from my MA essay 'Thermal Windows: A Study into the Mentalities Behind Their Proliferation and Subsequent Decline Throughout Ecclesiastic Architecture in Venice'. The findings from my MA have been significantly developed on in this thesis.

664 Ongaro, *Cronaca dei ristauri,* 83.

665 Ibid.

190, 191). Further documentation is provided by Giuseppe Borsato who used the interior of the Frari as the backdrop for his work depicting Conte Leopoldo Cicognara and his companions viewing the monument to Canova (Fig. 192). The work not only gives us an idea of how the thermal windows would have looked from inside the church, but it also – as already noted - suggests that the interior of the Frari, like that of Santo Stefano, was at this time, also covered in a limewash which whitened the interior and heightened the intensity of the light admitted by the thermal windows.

The lighting of the church and, in particular, of Titian's *Assunta* were key concerns for the friars in their desire to fit the church with thermal windows. A letter from 29 March 1650 records the friars asking permission to install two more thermal windows to better illuminate Titian's high altar.[667] The lighting of the *Assunta* had been a common criticism or concern for art historians. In 1550 Giorgio Vasari complained that the painting was barely visible and this anxiety has been echoed in following centuries.[668] The thermal windows remained until a restoration of the Frari, which took place between 1902 and 1915 in reaction to the collapse of the Campanile of Saint Mark's in 1902. Photographs from 1908 show that the windows had been taken out by this time and replaced with double lancet gothic windows (Figs 193, 194). It is instructive to note that the aim of the restorers was to 'return the church to its original appearance'.[669]

As for Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice's other large Gothic church, Jacopo de' Barbari's map again proves a useful source for understanding the history of the changes made to its windows (Fig. 195). It clearly indicates the presence of gothic windows at the level of the clerestory, and small oculi on the wall beneath. Eighteenth-century prints, including a rare depiction of the interior, show the thermal windows *in situ* (Figs 196, 197, 198). The thermal windows, unlike those at the Frari, were replacements not for the Gothic clerestory windows but instead for the small circular windows lighting the side-aisles.

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667 The full Italian translation is: 'Permissione di far poner due quadri grandi e Banchi per adornamento della Cappella Maggiore; e di poter far due finestre a modo di mezze lune per illuminare la Palla dell'Assunta'. Venice, Archivio di Stato, Archivio dei Frari, Tom. I, N. 61, quoted by A Scolari, 'La chiesa di S.ta Maria Gloriosa dei Frari ed il suo recente restauro,' in *Venezia: arte e storia,* edited by Biblioteca Museo Correr, Milan: Alfieri & Lacroix, 1920, 165.

668 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists,* translated by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 494-495.

669 The full text in Italian is: 'Per la tema che avesse a mancare luce, ma più ancora per ritornare alla chiesa l'aspetto suo originario, furono aperte tutte le finestre delle navi laterali che stanno sopra altari o monumenti, lasciandole vedere per quel tanto che permettevano altari e monumenti.' Ongaro, *Cronaca dei ristauri*, 84.

This was an unusual decision, since most of the newer churches generally had their thermal windows at the level of the clerestory, although sometimes with extra ones below positioned in chapels to illuminate their altarpieces more effectively, as at San Nicolò di Lido. The thermal windows at Santi Giovanni e Paolo were also installed quite late on compared with the other churches - the first ones dating from 1690.[670] These windows were then replaced by triple gothic windows at some point between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. They can be seen in two photographs from the collection of Washington's Library of Congress and in an archival document sketching out the process (Figs 199, 200, 201). They were then replaced once again, however, with oculi during the restoration of the church that took place in 1922 after the building was bombed during the First World War. While there is a paucity of documentary information, the church itself serves as the best source of evidence, with its history of window changes literally impressed into its surface. When looking at the exterior of the building today it is clear from the brick colour where the different sets of windows used to be located (Figs 202, 203).

The smaller church of the Carmini, hidden away in Dorsoduro, was also fitted with thermal windows in the seventeenth century, but, unlike the Frari and Santi Giovanni e Paolo, still retains them today (Fig. 204). The church is hemmed in on all sides by buildings, which is far more characteristic of Venice than the situation for Santi Giovanni e Paolo, the Frari and even Santo Stefano, which are unusual in bordering vast campos which allow more light to flow freely into the church interiors. De' Barbari's depiction of the church is sadly unrevealing about the state of the church before the seventeenth century and there are no thorough restoration records, as there are for some other churches. An account from the Scuola di San Liberale in 1734, however, records the thermal windows as having been inserted between 1623 and 1635.[671] Amusingly, the account also records that the windows improved the brightness of the church so much that members of the Scuola dei Carmini recorded an increased dislike of a particular altar because the improved illumination had revealed 'many important errors, disproportions and defects', with the result that a commission was set up to remedy the situation.[672]

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[670] ASV, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, busta D, XXXV, n. 182 cc. Ir-v.

[671] The document of 1734 is recorded in *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Carmini: arte e devozione,* but the authors do not reference its location so we have to rely on their transcription of it. Lino Moretti and Simona Branca Savini, *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Carmini: arte e devozione*, Venice: Marsilio, 1995, 14.

[672] 'Dopo che la chiesa diventò più luminosa con l'apertura delle finestre nella navata centrale (1734), l'altare non piacque più ai confratelli: mostrava "moltissimi importanti errori, sproporzioni e difetti... con

Sadly, De' Barbari and other map makers show Santo Stefano end-on so we are unable to determine the type of window that adorned the clerestory before the five thermal windows were added on each side (Figs 186, 205). Early twentieth century restorations, however, uncovered some ancient lancet windows in the aisles, some of which were then reopened (Figs 184, 185, 186).[673] These windows must have been closed in the seventeenth century when the thermal windows were installed. The thermal windows would have provided a more effective light source, while the lancet windows would have looked out of place sitting alongside them. Thermal windows were also an outward sign that a particular church was a modernising one, determined to be compared to the new churches being built around it, rather than with those of an earlier epoch.

Photographs included in Apollonio's book and ones now stored in the Fondazione Cini's fototeca, show what the exterior of Santo Stefano would have looked like, with the thermal windows lining the clerestory and with the two thermal windows on the façade (Figs 184, 206, 207). These two windows are no longer in place since they were removed during the renovations of the very early twentieth century and replaced with large lancet windows (Figs 208, 209). Yet as at Santi Giovanni e Paolo, the new brick used to fill the window voids contrasts with the older material and shows quite clearly where the thermal windows were originally located. The facade itself would have been like that of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in featuring a pair of thermal windows, which we can see from the eighteenth-century images of both churches. Most newly-built churches with thermal windows featured just one on the façade as a central motif, much like the large round windows to be seen on the façades of Gothic churches, such as the Frari. The facades of Santi Giovanni e Paolo and Santo Stefano are, therefore, unusual in this respect, and it may well be that one church influenced the other. While Santo Stefano's dates are not known, the rest of the restoration work was taking place early in the seventeenth century, so it is very possible that the Augustinians inspired the Dominicans, who only installed their thermal windows in 1690.

In addition to the clerestory and façade windows, Novello notes that two further thermal windows were opened in the presbytery, and argues that they were inserted

indecenza et indecoro della religione, della città e della scola": si nominò una commissione per studiare ii rimedi, ma pare che poi non si sia fatto nulla.' Ibid, 20-21.
[673] Ongaro, *Cronaca dei ristauri*, 37.

during the renovations to the high altar area in the early seventeenth century.[674] These were removed again in the twentieth-century restorations but are just distinguishable in a photograph depicting the funeral of Umberto I, which was held in the church on 31 August 1900 (Fig. 210).[675] Again, their existence can be confirmed through the very faintly contrasting shade of brick seen on the building's exterior (Fig. 211). Novello's argument that they were inserted during the general presbytery restorations rather than at a later date suggests that the other thermal windows in the clerestory and façade might have been conceived around the same time. As with the rest of the changes to the presbytery, the insertion of these two thermal windows, bringing a more direct and brighter light into the altar area, signalled a dramatic shift away from the original Gothic appearance of Santo Stefano, and a statement of intent about the new direction of the church. Indeed, this is not dissimilar to the concerns at the Frari about inserting such windows to increase the visibility of Titian's high altar.

At Santo Stefano the increased internal lighting, combined with the cleaner and brighter walls after their lime-washing, would have made the church a clear echo of the recently-built examples designed by Palladio. Indeed it was Palladio who introduced the thermal window into Venice after having seen many examples, both ancient and modern, in Rome. Thermal windows originate in the ancient Roman *thermae* or baths, which Palladio would have known well from his visits to the city in the 1540s and 1550s, and he writes about them in his small guidebook *L'antichità di Roma* which was first published in 1554.[676] In Venice, Palladio's earliest thermal window is that found on the façade of San Francesco della Vigna. Since a singular thermal window does not assist much with the building's illumination, Stanislaw Wilinski put forward the theory that it was, instead, intended to represent spiritual illumination. The window's division by mullions into three segments would correspond with the tripartite division of the rest of the façade, which therefore implies a strong connection to the Holy Trinity.[677] It might also be the case that the spiritual values to be found in a circle - of unity, infinite essence, the completeness of God – could also be interpreted with the use of a semi-circle as well.[678] In *I quattro libri,* Palladio states that

[674] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 19.
[675] Ibid.
[676] Hart and Hicks, *Palladio's Rome: A Translation of Andrea Palladio's Two Guidebooks to Rome*, 28-32.
[677] Wilinski, 'La finestra termale nelle chiese di Andrea Palladio,' 330.
[678] Ibid, 331.

> [I]n the case of churches, they must above all consider the dignity and grandeur of God, who must be prayed to and worshipped since He is the ultimate good and perfection; it is supremely appropriate that everything dedicated to Him should be made to the highest level of perfection of which we are capable.[679]

Palladio intended every element of his religious buildings to have a spiritual meaning and that the building as a whole should honour God.[680] The thermal windows in the façades of Santo Stefano and Santi Giovanni e Paolo can thus be seen to have been partly motivated by similar theological intentions. Both churches already had features in the centre of their façades, so pairs of thermal windows would be employed to create balanced compositions. They would have admitted extra light into the interior of Santi Giovanni e Paolo but not so much into Santo Stefano, since the façade is largely in shade. Yet in both buildings they could still have conveyed a message of spiritual illumination.

When Palladio was finally commissioned to produce a complete church for Venice, the Benedictine church of San Giorgio Maggiore, he broadened his scope and used many thermal windows – lining the clerestory and directing light onto various side altars and chapels. The quality and amount of light were key issues for Palladio at San Giorgio Maggiore and he knew that these would affect the colour of the interior and the overall atmosphere of the church.[681] The literal whiteness of the church walls, brought about in large part by the Istrian stone used, was also achieved by the amount of light being projected into the church. This whiteness could then be interpreted also as a spiritual purity, something that church architects were keen to promote in the post-Tridentine age. Some of Palladio's thermal windows at San Giorgio – those in the first and third bays of the nave and those in the aisles - have only their central aperture open, with the other two remaining closed (Fig. 49). Due to the position of the windows chosen for this task, the light is directed more accurately into the centre of the church, placing the emphasis there.[682]

At the Redentore, Palladio's positioning of thermal windows can be seen as a deliberate tactic. Here, the thermal windows help to draw a distinction between the transept and

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679 Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, 213.
680 Wilinski, 'La finestra termale nelle chiese di Andrea Palladio,' 331.
681 Ibid, 333.
682 Ibid, 334.

the presbytery with the high altar and monk's choir, delineating – along with the domed chancel in the centre – the three different areas of focus for the church: the congregational and processional space of the nave, the ceremonial area beneath the dome, where the Doge and fellow dignitaries would sit during the *Festa* in July, and the monastic heart of the monks' choir.[683]

Once Palladio had introduced them, thermal windows exploded in popularity in Venetian church architecture, and they can be seen in almost every new church built after the Redentore, including, of course, San Nicolò di Lido and San Moisè. However, it is their use in existing churches like Santo Stefano, the Frari, Santi Giovanni e Paolo and the Carmini that is particularly interesting. While a very practical and outward exhibition of an existing church's desire to conform to the new illuminating spirituality of the Counter Reformation, their insertion would have often been a very time-consuming and difficult to manage task. Indeed, it may be that Santo Stefano's complex ship's keel ceiling provided an additional hindrance to the insertion of the thermal windows there. Yet in all four of these churches the task was still undertaken, and it transformed not only their interiors but also their exteriors, and would convey powerful messages about the churches' priorities. Despite being situated in old churches in a changing city, these thermal windows show their church communities keenness to modernise. They show how far the churches would go to distance themselves from the time when a desire for dark, mysterious interiors was ascendant, and when religious life was deliberately imbued with mysticism and opaqueness. The Counter Reformation, by contrast, called for churches to become much more transparent, both literally and figuratively, in the ways used to communicate their religious messages to the faithful, and this meant making major changes to buildings. Like more accessible high altars, thermal windows were an integral part of this new transparency: they provided both a literal and spiritual illumination into the hearts of these churches, opening them up to the laity who were now to be more included in holy ritual.

CHAPELS AND ALTARS

The situation with the altars at Santo Stefano is in some ways particularly complex. After the Apostolic Visitation, when a record of all of the altars was made, many changes took place in the seventeenth century. In the aftermath of Napoleon's church suppression

683 Wilinski, 'La finestra termale nelle chiese di Andrea Palladio,' 336.

some altarpieces went missing, while others were taken from the nearby church of Sant'Angelo and installed in Santo Stefano. No recent author explains all of this fully, and even Apollonio's detailed account of the altars that were present in 1911 is not complete, either because he missed some of the newer altars (from other churches) or because they were not there when he was writing. Nor does he mention all of the long-lost altars such as the *altar della croce* for which we have very little information. To attempt to clarify the situation, this section will first remind the reader of the order of the altars that were in place at the time of the Apostolic Visitation. It will then look in detail at the changes that took place in the seventeenth century, starting with the first altar seen upon entering on the right hand side of the church, followed by the others along the right aisle, the two either side of the high altar, and then consider those in the left aisle in a return to the entrance. In detailing the alterations to each altar in the seventeenth century, this section will also include brief information about any further changes to the altars which bring about the situation we see today. To help understand the changes made a number of floor plans have been provided. Fig. 212 details the layout of the altars as recorded by the Apostolic Visitation, Fig. 213 details them afterwards once renovations had taken place, while Fig. 214 records them as they are today with additions from Sant'Angelo and elsewhere.[684] Fig. 215 shows the altars today on the right side of the church with Fig. 216 and Fig. 217 showing closer groupings. Fig. 218 shows the altars on the left side of the church with Fig. 219 a closer image of two of those.

At the time of the Apostolic Visitation the first altar on the right was dedicated to St Stephen, the church's patron saint. This was problematic because its location on the *controfacciata* required the celebrants to have their backs to the high altar. On the church's right-hand wall, stood the altar of the Immaculate Conception, an altar dedicated to St Jerome, one to the Cross, one to the Assumption of the Virgin and a final one to St Nicholas of Myra. In the sacristy was an altarpiece dedicated to the Archangel Raphael while the chapel situated to the right of the high altar was dedicated to St Augustine. The chapel on the left-hand side was dedicated to St Joseph but is recorded as having an altar to St John the Baptist inside. The altars on the left-hand side of the church were dedicated to St Mark, St Monica, St Nicholas of Tolentino, the Annunciation and St

[684] The base floor plan for all three layouts comes from Novello. The additions of the altar names and placements are all this author's own.

Catherine, although this latter attribution, as we shall see, is inconsistent with other reports. On the *controfacciata*'s left side was an altar to St James, which was again moved due to its inappropriate positioning. The only other altar listed at the time of the Apostolic Visitation which disappeared without any replacement was the dedicated to the Cross, as it was too close to the altar of St Jerome.[685] This may have been removed when the altar of St Jerome was swapped for the altar to St Monica, to allow greater prominence to the newly repositioned altar.

The first altar on the church's right hand wall at the time of the Apostolic Visitation was then dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Mary and Saint Anne. This, however, is one of the few references to this dedication, and it appears to have been replaced with an altar to St Anne. Nicolai writes that the altar to St Anne replaced one to the Madonna in Canton which had been commissioned in 1437 by Giacomo Bernarbò de Catenacci, a wealthy silk merchant who had moved to Venice from Montepulciano.[686] He further attests that Bernarbò de Catenacci had wanted the floor in front of the altar for his tomb and that his coat of arms could still be seen at the altar.[687] Yet, in the Apostolic Visitation, the altar is identified as celebrating the Immaculate Conception,[688] so it is possible that this dedication superseded a previous one to the Madonna in Canton. What is clearer is when the change to St Anne took place. On 16 February 1709 the Congregation of St Anne, which had been founded just a short time before on 25 January 1706, submitted a request for their own altar.[689] They were determined to 'rebuild the altar at their expense, corresponding in architecture, if not in the preciousness of the marbles to the opposite one that of Blessed Virgin of the Girdle, making it more majestic and noble...'; because 'in its ancient structure it is confined and low that it does not fill the space in the side up in the corresponding wall of the chapel itself, such as that of the Blessed Virgin of the Girdle'.[690]

685 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 12.
686 'Altare di S. Anna,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
687 'Altare di S. Anna,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
688 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 10.
689 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 276.
690 'riedificare da nuovo esso altare a loro spese, corrispondente nell'architettura, se non nella preziosità dei marmi a quello dirimpetto che è della Beata Vergine della Cintura, renderlo più maestoso e nobile… nell'antica sua struttura è ristretto e basso che non riempie lo spazio nel laterale ne l'alto nel muro corrispondente della cappella stessa, com'è quello della Beata Vergine della Cintura'. Ibid.

The resulting altarpiece *Nativity of Mary* was produced by Nicolò Bambini in 1709 and remains *in situ* (seen in Figs 215 and 216). A signed model by Bambini still survives in the Pinacoteca Querini Stampalia and the painting is considered to be one of Bambini's more significant works.[691] When the altarpiece was redesigned the previous altar structure made from wood was itself replaced, as previously noted, with one made of marble.[692] Novello argues that the theological content of the painting brought together the combined interests of the Augustinians, who had always shown dedication to Mary and her mother Anna, and the Congregation of St Anne, a devout group of women who used the two biblical figures as their inspiration.[693]

The second altar on the right at the time of the Apostolic Visitation was dedicated to St Jerome, but this was soon replaced with one to St Monica, which was previously the fourth on the left. The altar to St Monica was moved some time between 1708 and January 1734 when records suggest that the *Martyrdom of St Stephen* was now located on the fourth altar.[694] The design of the new altar to St Monica was based, as many were, on the altar to Madonna of the Girdle, which was one of the first to be renovated.[695] According to Chiari Moretto Wiel, the new altar to St Monica was paid for by Padre Giovanni Stefano Facchinelli who also devised the iconographic programme.[696] The altarpiece – *St Monica visited by an angel* - was produced by Gianantonio Pellegrini and has since been lost. Novello believes that this may have followed Santo Stefano becoming a parish church in 1810, with Apollonio recording that the altarpiece of St Monica was moved to the church of San Samuele.[697] However, Novello also reports that she was unable to discover the painting's current whereabouts, suggesting that it had since moved from San Samuele.[698] Two marble statues to *Moderation* and *Constance* created during the redesign of the altar have also gone missing, being last recorded in 1824.[699]

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691 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 276; Novello, 'La Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 122.
692 Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 12.
693 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 121.
694 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 276.
695 Ibid.
696 Ibid, 277.
697 Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 13; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 275.
698 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 275.
699 Ibid, 277.

The altar to St Jerome, which was replaced by that dedicated to St Monica, is thought to have been moved first to the refectory and then to the church of San Samuele.[700] The original altar to St Monica was replaced with one depicting *St Luigi Gonzaga, St Anthony Abbot and St Francis Saverio*, painted in 1775 by Giuseppe Angeli and which came from the church of Sant'Angelo, and is the work that we see in place today (seen in Figs 215, 216).[701] Two marble *putti* which accompanied the original altarpiece also remain *in situ* today. Both are believed to be the work of Heinrich Meyring, author of some of San Nicolò di Lido's sculptures and the San Moisè's façade.[702]

The third altar on the right also underwent several transpositions. The one listed as being the third on the right during the Apostolic Visitation was a small altar to the Crucifix. This appears to have been located near the side door to the *campo* and was apparently removed because it was too close to the altar to St Jerome.[703] It is not clear, however, what happened to this altar. When Nicolai was writing, the altar was then dedicated to St Catherine, but the Apostolic Visitation records this as the dedication of the first altar on the left side of the church.[704] Novello believes that the Apostolic Visitation's record of the altars is incorrect, and indeed, attempting to piece together the situation has been problematic, suggesting that there may have been certain errors in past documentation.[705] Apollonio also states that the altar to St Catherine had been in place on the right side of the church from the outset, and this was established and looked after by the confraternita dei Pistori, a group of German bakers.[706] Three statues had adorned this altar: the *Virgin, St Catherine* and *St Barbara*.[707] The Germans had then redesigned their altar in the late sixteenth century, having it fitted with marble rather than wood and, although it was praised by Nicolai, it was not yet complete when he was writing, and not as richly ornamented as the altar of St Steven located opposite.[708] Throughout these accounts a pattern emerges of a concern to coordinate redesigned

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[700] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 13.
[701] For more information on this altarpiece see: Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 123-126.
[702] For more details on the *putti* see Novello: Ibid, 127-129.
[703] Ibid, 12.
[704] 'Altare di S. Caterina V. e M.,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[705] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 9-10, no. 8.
[706] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 13.
[707] Ibid.
[708] 'Altare di S. Caterina V. e M.,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 13-14.

altars with companion altars on the opposite side of the church - a practice which began with the altar of the Cintura (the first on the left-hand side) which was one of the earliest to be renovated. However, at some point after Nicolai was writing, the dedication of the altar to St Catherine was changed, and the altar became dedicated to the Immacolata.[709] The resulting altarpiece, still *in situ* today was produced by Jacopo Marieschi between 1752-1755 and depicts *The Immaculate Virgin with Sts John of Nepomuk and Lucia* (seen in Figs 215, 217, 220). St John of Nepomuk had been canonised in 1729 and his cult had flourished in Germany and Venice, making him a perfect role model to be included in this altarpiece.[710]

The next altar on the church's right side, which is dedicated to St Augustine, is often referred to as Sant'Agostino *nuovo* because it was conceived of long after the altar to St Augustine located in the chapel to the right of the high altar, now known as Sant'Agostino *vecchio*. Nicolai records that this altar was redesigned many times, with it first being dedicated to St Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra.[711] According to Nicolai, the original altar included a wooden carving of the saint, before the whole structure was upgraded in 1460 by Marchioness Mocenigo who desired that the altar be rebuilt in a more decent form.[712] In 1628, Luigi Ferro, '*conservatore*' of the monastery, was tasked with maintaining the altar since he had offered to renew it and continue its dedication to St Nicholas.[713] Marcantonio Celesti was brought in for the work in 1636 but the promised restoration did not take place.[714]

After the canonisation of Giovanni da Facondo in 1690 the friars contemplated removing the altar to St Nicholas, which, not having been restored as promised, was now out of keeping with all the modernised altarpieces inside the church, and replacing

[709] The altar appeared to change dedication once more since it was recorded, in the visitation of Patriarch Monico on 26th November 1837, that the altar referred to was that of San Raffaele arcangelo. The altarpiece remained in place, as attested to by Paoletti's observations in 1839, while Apollonio refers to an altarpiece by Giuseppe Boldini. However this has since been moved and the original Marieschi altarpiece is the one that remains, with the dedication back to that of the Immacolata. Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 138.
[710] Ibid, 137.
[711] 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[712] 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[713] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 268.
[714] Ibid.

it with an altar dedicated to the newly canonised Augustinian saint.[715] It was agreed that the altar needed to be renovated and Nicolai praises the fine marble and the four columns that eventually framed the new altarpiece.[716] At this point there was further discussion over the altar's dedication, and it was agreed that instead of dedicating it to St Nicholas of Myra or to Giovanni da Facondo, it would be dedicated to St Augustine.[717] This decision, however, was not without its criticisms, since many friars were reluctant to sever the church's connection with the Bishop of Myra, while others did not understand the need for yet another altar to St Augustine.[718] Nevertheless, despite the division, Nicolai diplomatically records that the reasons for the change in dedication were so 'strong, just, and conceivable' ('forte, giusto, e plausibile') that it 'shut the mouth to such critics and justified the result of the execution of said work' ('chiuder la bocca a siffatti Critici, e giustificare in conseguenza l'esecuzione di detta opera').[719] The altarpiece produced was by Giustino Menescardi and has as its subject *St Augustine casting out the heretics.*[720] There is some dispute over its dating; with Chiari Moretto Wiel attributing it to around 1736-43 and others arguing that it was instead produced between 1743 and 1755, with the work definitely in place by 1768.[721] A wooden statue of St John of Facondo was commissioned in 1691, and was observed by Nicolai as wearing the black habit of the Augustinian order.[722] This had been removed by the first half of the eighteenth century when the altar was dedicated to St Augustine (seen in Figs 215, 217).[723]

Moving on from the right-hand side of the church takes us to the chapel to the right of the high altar. This is the present Chapel of the Sacrament, but was previously the Chapel of St Augustine which, during the Apostolic Visitation, held the altar of

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715 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 274.
716 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
717 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
718 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
719 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
720 For more on the stylistic features of the altarpiece see: Novello, 'La Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 140-144.
721 Novello expands on the issue in greater detail and argues that Menescardi may have completed the altarpiece while also working on those for the Scuola Grande dei Carmini between 1749-1753. Ibid, 142-143.
722 'Altare nuovo di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
723 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 272.

Sant'Agostino *vecchio*. Nicolai records the chapel as having belonged to the Lezze family who, at their own expense, had furnished it with a marble altar.[724] Between the fifth and seventh decades of the seventeenth century, the decision was made to renew both the end chapels. The one on the right was given to the newly created Scuola di Santa Chiara da Montefalco, with a painting by Pietro Liberi of *The Trinity, St Augustine and St Clare of Montefalco* being completed for it in 1660.[725] Today that work is to be found in the main sacristy.[726] Nicolai also noted that there were two further paintings in the chapel but it is not clear what has happened to them since his time.[727] The present Chapel of the Sacrament now holds many works that come from the church of Sant'Angelo (Fig. 221).[728]

The chapel to the left of the high altar also has a complicated history. It was first dedicated to St Joseph, as recorded by Nicolai, who also observed that a painting by Palma il Vecchio of the saint was donated to the chapel by Marino Zorzi.[729] However, after the canonisation of St Thomas of Villanova in 1658, the Augustinian fathers took the chapel back from the Zorzi family and decided to renew the altar themselves.[730] An altarpiece to St Thomas of Villanova was was painted by Antonio Triva in 1661 to emphasise the importance of this 'luminous star of the Augustine Order' ('lucidissima stella dell'Ordine Agostiniano').[731] Apollonio records the altarpiece as having been moved to the church of San Maurizio but Novello's enquiries suggest that the work has since been lost.[732] Yet again, the chapel has since been reassigned and is now the Cappella di San Michele and is adorned with further works from the church of Sant'Angelo (Fig. 222).[733]

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724 'Altare antico di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
725 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 272; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 245-248.
726 For more information on the painting see Novello: Ibid, 245-248.
727 'Altare antico di S. Agostino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 272.
728 For more information on these works see: Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 151-163.
729 'Altare di S. Tommaso da Villanuova,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
730 ASV, Santo Stefano, busta 13, proc CXXXVIII, c. 1, in Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 272.
731 'Altare di S. Tommaso da Villanuova,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
732 Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 16; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 270-271.
733 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 191-192.

Before we reach the altars on the left side of the church, we find the current baptistery of the church, recorded in the Apostolic Visitation as being a chapter room with an altar to the crucifix.[734] The room became the baptistery after the church acquired Giulio del Moro's baptism font of 1592 from the suppressed church of Sant'Angelo.[735]

The first altar on the left, following the present-day baptistery, is that of the Calafati – a group of Arsenale workers who, despite having a chapel in the church of San Martino and an altar in the church of Sant'Anna, also maintained an altar at Santo Stefano.[736] Nicolai suggests that they obtained the altar in 1454 and dedicated it to St Mark and St Phocas.[737] This original altar was likely to have been made of wood and had a painted panel by Giorgio Veneziano as its focus.[738] It is not clear what, if any, restoration took place between this point and 1726, when the altar was criticised for being 'desolate and dilapidated, in a state not able to be celebrated when not repaired' ('desolato e cadente, in stato da non potervi celebrar quando non sij riparato').[739] This meant that the fathers had to issue the Calafati with an ultimatum to renovate their altar.[740] A new marble altar was built in 1733. Framed inside four marble columns was a painting by Girolamo Brusaferro of the *Madona with Child and saints Mark, Phocas and Peter* (See Figs 218, 219).[741] A record of all of the expenses incurred by the Calafati in the completion of their new altar is listed in their *mariegola.*[742] This helpfully provides the names of the stonemason, Giuseppe Garibuolo, and the architect who supervised him, Giorgio Massari, along with the sculptor of some of the altar's figures, Giovanni Marchiori.[743] Novello records the details of a small cherub which accompanied the altar, also possibly produced by Marchiori.[744]

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734 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 12.
735 Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 16.
736 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 278.
737 'Altare di S. Marco e di S. Foca,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
738 'Altare di S. Marco e di S. Foca,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
739 ASV, Santo Stefano, busta 9, proc XXXXIX, c. 6, in Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 278.
740 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 278.
741 'Altare di S. Marco e di S. Foca,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
742 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 278.
743 BMC, *Mariegola dei Calafati,* cl. IV, n. 214, c. 304. 21 febbraio 1738 in Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 279.
744 For more iconographic details about the cherub sculpture and Brusaferro's altarpiece see: Novello, 'La Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 199-203.

The altar to St Stephen was, as we know, originally located on the *controfacciata* of the church and this was something that was strongly disapproved of by the Apostolic Visitation because it meant that celebrants would have their backs to the church's high altar.[745] The altar, however, was not moved until 1733 when it was repositioned in the left aisle as the second altar along from the side chapel to San Giuseppe, and replacing the altar to St Monica which moved over to the right side of the church. While on the *controfacciata* the altar to Santo Stefano was connected to the Zorzi family and the 1588 funereal monument to Antonio Zorzi can still be seen on the interior façade today.[746] However, there was also a *scuola* dedicated to St Stephen which maintained the altar, and which had been an active presence in the church since 1299.[747]

As with the other new altars, Nicolai reports that a new marble altar with a column either side and cornices above was presented with 'noble perfection' ('nobile perfezione').[748] The altarpiece, Antonio Foler's *Martyrdom of St Stephen*, comes from the late sixteenth century and was probably moved with the altar when it was displaced. Either side were positioned two marble statues, of *St Francis of Paola* and *St Peter of Alcantara*, which are now missing but were recorded *in situ* in 1825 (see figs 218, 219).[749]

The central altar on the left wall of the nave is dedicated to St Nicolas of Tolentino, and it is one of the few altars that has stayed in place throughout its time in the church (Fig. 218). St Nicholas of Tolentino was yet another important saint for the Augustinians, and was canonised in 1446 by Pope Eugenius IV.[750] The altar was particularly significant for the church, because, in 1577, Pope Gregory XIII had given it intercessory privileges to free souls in purgatory, much like a similar altar at San Gregorio in Rome.[751] Nicolai records the letter from Pope Gregory as Letter B in his manuscript,[752] the privilege being

[745] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 13.
[746] 'Altare di S. Stefano,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[747] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 17.
[748] 'Altare di S. Stefano,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[749] 'Altare di S. Stefano,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 274.
[750] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 1911, 18.
[751] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 262.
[752] 'Letter B,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.

most unusual, and the altar's fame was increased further when its miraculous powers were demonstrated on 20 December 1557. Panettini blessed during the saint's feast day festival were considered to have been responsible for defeating the terrible fire that ravaged the Palazzo Ducale in 1577.[753]

This altar, originally built in the fifteenth century, provided a precedent for the later discussions about dedicating altars to more 'modern' Augustinian saints. It had originally been granted to the Corbelli family in 1441 and the family coat of arms could be seen on a gravestone recorded by Nicolai as being in place close to the altar.[754] The altar, as surveyed by the Apostolic Visitation, was described as 'a respectful marble mantle' ('pallam marmoream honorificam').[755] However, after the events of 1577, the altar's popularity meant that the friars were able to persuade the Corbelli family that the need to refurbish the altar was pressing. Thus the new marble structure and altarpiece we still see today, the *Coronation of the Virgin,* was produced by a figure in the circle of Jacopo Tintoretto.[756] In 1704, Count Osvaldo Corbelli committed to further redesigning the altar in order to demonstrate his family's continued commitment and devotion to the saint.[757] His attempt to renovate the altar was so ambitious that the priests requested permission from the Magistrato della Salute to remove funereal monuments that were obstructing the renovation of both this project and the altars of St Steven and St Mark further up the aisle.[758] Nicolai concludes that Corbelli's aim was to make the altar proportionate to that of the Madonna della Cintura opposite, and equally majestic.[759] It is not clear how the marble altar looked before these renovations but it is clear that the *Coronation of the Virgin* was retained, with the a miraculous image of St Nicholas being situated in a niche in the centre of the altar and two statues of St Paul and St Jerome positioned either side.[760] In Nicolai's account of this altar much space is given over to explaining the importance of San Nicolò da Tolentino, not only to Venice but in

753 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 262.
754 'Altare di S. Niccola da Tolentino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
755 Novello, 'La Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 11.
756 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 262.
757 'Altare di S. Niccola da Tolentino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
758 Nicolai transcribes the letter – Letter A – in his manuscript. BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
759 'Altare di S. Niccola da Tolentino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
760 'Altare di S. Niccola da Tolentino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.

particular to this church.[761] Thus it is no surprise that this is one of the building's more magnificent altars and that the friars and the lay patrons went to such great lengths to enhance its design.

The next altar, that dedicated to the Annunciation, also has a long history and again has remained in the same place (Fig. 218). The Apostolic Visitation noted that it had originally been granted to the German Calegheri brotherhood in 1483 and they were still in charge of the altar when Nicolai was writing.[762] The altar was renovated after that of St Nicholas of Tolentino in 1708, when a wooden structure was replaced with a marble one which included two marble columns either side, and also statues of Joachim and Anne that are now lost but were *in situ* when Nicolai was writing.[763] Novello attests that they were removed from Santo Stefano after it became a parish church in 1810.[764] The altarpiece featured carved wooden figures of the Virgin Mary and Archangel Gabriel, but again the current location of these is unknown and was so when Apollonio was writing in the early twentieth century.[765] A marble statue of *Padre Eterno,* created around 1708 by Heinrich Meyring, was placed at the crown of the altar. Novello makes a convincing case for the work's similarities to the statue of God produced by Meyring for San Moisè.[766] The altarpiece was replaced with the one we see today, the *Lamentation of Christ taken down from the Cross* by Teodoro Mattenini in the nineteenth century, which came from San Vitale.[767]

The altar frame remains today and it is regarded highly as it represents a development of the typical construction of altars, such as the one to St Nicholas of Tolentino which has a marble altar base with two marble columns on either side supporting a broken pediment with a further triangular pediment affixed to the wall above.[768] The altar of the Annunciation, however, is more advanced. The altar table remains the same but instead of two columns either side of the altarpiece there are two pilasters backed onto the wall

[761] 'Altare di S. Niccola da Tolentino,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[762] 'Altare dell'Annunziata,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Novello, 'La Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 11.
[763] 'Altare dell'Annunziata,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[764] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 273.
[765] Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 20.
[766] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 208.
[767] D. Ferdinando Apollonio, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia,* 20.
[768] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 275.

with, on either side, a single column in front of them supporting the top of a much larger cornice and marble pediment that extends out from the wall to rest on the columns.

The final altar on the left aisle, that closest to the main door, is the altar of the Cintura (the Virgin's girdle), and this sits fittingly next to the grand 'Rococo' altar to the Annunciation (Fig. 218). While the Annunciation altar was one of the last to be renovated, the altar of the Cintura was one of the first, and it set the precedent for most of the altars that followed it. The altar was formerly known as the altar *della Croce grande* but was recorded by the Apostolic Visitation as being the altar to Santa Caterina which, as previously discussed, appears to have been a mistaken identification. Nicolai records that the attribution changed from the *Croce grande* to *della Cintura* when a Brotherhood of the Cintura, or Scuola di Centurati, was created in 1581.[769] Nicolai also records the altarpiece (still *in situ* today) as having been painted by Leonardo Corona and having the subject *Madonna of the Girdle with saints Augustine, Monica, Stephen, Nicholas of Tolentino and William of Aquitaine* (Fig. 223).[770] Chiari Moretto Wiel argues that the altarpiece must have been completed by 1591 and that the monumental new marble altar structure was created towards the middle of the seventeenth century, after an initial reconstruction of the high altar had taken place.[771] It was at the altar of the Cintura that the characteristic marble altar table structure with an altarpiece above framed by two Corinthian columns supporting a broken pediment was established, and then influenced the altars to St Nicholas of Tolentino and St Anne (Fig. 224).[772] The altarpiece was accompanied by two wooden statues of *St Sebastian* and *St Roch* which were completed for the confraternity in 1644, but these were removed to the main sacristy by 1825 and have since been lost.[773]

There was one further altar that was present at the time of the Apostolic Visitation but was then removed in the eighteenth century because it did not conform to the rules laid down by the Church after Trent nor to the advice given by the Apostolic Visitation. Listed in the Apostolic Visitation as the altar of St James, it was, like the altar of St

769 'Altar della Cintura,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 263.
770 'Altar della Cintura,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
771 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 263.
772 Ibid, 269.
773 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 267.

Stephen, on the *controfacciata* and was therefore a great concern because of the way celebrants were forced to have their backs towards the high altar.[774] The altar to St Stephen was not moved to the left aisle until 1733, but the altar to St James was removed altogether in 1744.

Nicolai records this altar as actually being dedicated to the Madonna of the Snow but also features St James and St James the Less, and that it was paid for by Giacomo Suriani, a doctor from Rimini between 1488 and 1493.[775] Instead of being a painting, the altarpiece took the form of a bronze panel depicting the Madonna and the two saints, and was one of four altarpieces mentioned by Sanudo in 1493.[776] It is thought to have been the work of Giovanni Buora.[777] Nicolai observed that the altar had become redundant due to its position, and it was also getting in the way of new expansive installations such as that of the neighbouring altar of the Cintura.[778] Letter I of Nicolai's meticulous transcription of relevant documents details the acceptance of this decision by two of the Suriano family – Tommaso Querini Suriano and Pier Maria Contarini Suriano – to the Prior of Santo Stefano, giving the friars permission to remove the altar.[779] The letter explains that the aim was to make the area more spacious and give more room to the altar of the Cintura, and the Suriani stipulated that, during the removal of the altar table, no harm should come to the sacred images or the steps leading up to the altar. They even highlighted the fact that the prescriptions from the Council of Trent had meant that the altar had not been in use for quite some time, which demonstrated that the friars had been carefully adhering to those rules and that the Counter Reformation was a key factor in their decision. The altar was demolished in 1744 and the bronze

774 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 13.
775 'Altare disfatto – della Madonna della neve, e de due SS. Appostoli Giacomo maggiore, e Giacomo minore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 255.
776 'Altare disfatto – della Madonna della neve, e de due SS. Appostoli Giacomo maggiore, e Giacomo minore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination; Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 255.
777 Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 256.
778 'Altare disfatto – della Madonna della neve, e de due SS. Appostoli Giacomo maggiore, e Giacomo minore,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
779 'Letter I,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.

altarpiece was affixed to the wall until 1847-52, when it was moved during a restoration to the right aisle between the sacristy door and altar to St Augustine.[780]

FUNERAL MONUMENTS

One of the areas that the Counter Reform movement was most emphatic about was that lay patronage should be scaled back and that monuments to individuals should be discouraged. In Venice, the Redentore is perhaps the most prominent example of a church that is free from lay patronage. All of the artworks were commissioned by the friars and represented a coherent scheme throughout the church. At San Nicolò di Lido we will also see that there were few lay influences, while at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli lay patrons helped fund new artworks but did not request significant glorification for doing so. San Moisè, of course, was quite different and the Fini family's take over of the façade was perhaps one of the most blatant attempts to disregard the guidelines not just from Trent, but also from the Venetian republic itself, which also found such displays to individual memory distasteful.

At Santo Stefano, as we have seen, the majority of altarpieces were either supervised by the friars or run by *scuole* or confraternities, with only a few in lay hands, and many of those were taken over by confraternities during the period in question. However, rather as Santi Giovanni e Paolo continued its tradition as the final resting place for the majority of the city's doges, so Santo Stefano also maintained its history of celebrating significant figures in Venetian life.[781] Bartolomeo d'Alviano was an important Venetian general in the early sixteenth century and he was buried in Santo Stefano.[782] However, in 1628 the wooden tomb d'Alviano in which had been buried was deemed to be in a poor condition and in 1633 Baldassare Longhena and Girolamo Paliari completed a new funeral monument, having been given 500 ducats by the Venetian Senate to fund the project.[783] The monument was originally placed by the side door on the right aisle of the church but was moved, in 1743, to just above the cloister door on the left aisle where it is still located.[784] D'Alviano is sculpted in full military dress and is framed by an arch

[780] Suriano's tomb, also believed to be by Giovanni Buora, is still *in situ*. Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico, 256.
[781] For more on funereal monuments in Santo Stefano see: Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 69-71; Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 55-73.
[782] For more on Bartolomeo d'Alviano's achievements see: Moro, *La chiesa di Santo Stefano: gotico veneziano*, 127-136.
[783] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 268-269.
[784] Ibid, 268.

supported by two stone pilasters with a further blue and white marble pilaster either side, upon which a cornice runs above (Fig. 225).[785]

A further monument to Doge Francesco Morosini was requested from Antonio Gaspari in 1660 as part of the redesign of the left aisle, which underwent a major transformation as a result of the renovations to the altars of the Cintura and of St Nicholas of Tolentino.[786] Gaspari produced a design not just for a tomb but for an entire chapel to be built in the Morosini's honour (Fig. 226).[787] The chapel would have been built just beyond the altar of the Cintura on the left-hand side of the church, reaching to the door of the cloister and would have been roofed with a distinct dome.[788] The chapel would contain the Morosini family tombs as well as decorative pyramids, trophies and a bust of the Doge which had been sculpted by Filippo Parodi and which at the time resided in the Morosini palace.[789] Elena Bassi argues that the chapel project would have been similar to the work being undertaken in 1708 on the altar of the Immaculate Conception, the first on the right aisle.[790] The project, however, did not reach beyond the planning stages, because in 1693 Doge Morosini requested that he be buried at the side of the high altar, and after his death his heirs did not pursue the project, and his grave ended up in the floor at the centre of the nave.[791] Further designs were produced by Gaspari for a monument to the Peloponnese (Figs 227, 228, 229).[792] Other monuments were also designed and produced by a variety of artisans throughout this period and demonstrated that the rituals for honouring the dead were still very much in place.

THE NEW MARBLE PULPIT

As at San Moisè and many of the churches mentioned in this study, a new pulpit was one of the later additions to the church, long after the Counter Reformation movement had lost its sway. Despite preaching being integral to the popularity of churches in the period, it is unclear why pulpits were often left until late on in the renovation or rebuilding process. Until 1727, when it was replaced with a magnificent marble

785 For more information on the commission see: Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 193-198.
786 Chiari Moretto Wiel, Gallo, and Merkel, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano: arte e devozione*, 17-18.
787 Bassi, 'Episodi dell'architettura Veneta nell'opera di Antonio Gaspari,' 68.
788 Ibid.
789 Ibid.
790 Ibid.
791 Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 220-224.
792 For more details see: Bassi, 'Episodi dell'architettura Veneta nell'opera di Antonio Gaspari,' 68-69.

construction, the pulpit at Santo Stefano was a wooden one.[793] The stonemason Alvise Tagliapietra was commissioned by Padre Giovanni Antonio Vianelli and the resulting pulpit was placed near the altar of San Nicolò da Tolentino.[794] The pulpit must have been quite large because Nicolai criticised its size, saying that it compromised his enjoyment of the church.[795]

Unfortunately, barely twenty years after the pulpit was completed, it was dismantled and its various components were used in the redesign of the church to enable the insertion of a new organ and corresponding choir in 1752.[796] The organ, which was originally at the bottom of the left aisle, was moved over the side door on the right hand side of the church.[797] The new organ, however, was later destroyed during the renovations of the church in the early twentieth century.[798] Little, too, is known about the baptism font used during the seventeenth century and the one *in situ* today in the old chapter room (now baptistery) comes from the church of Sant' Angelo when it was suppressed in 1810.

[793] Chiari Moretto Wiel, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano: Il patrimonio artistico,' 282.
[794] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 86.
[795] 'Organo nuovo, sopra la porta laterale, che da il passaggio nel campo,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[796] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 86.
[797] Nicolai describes the previous location of the organ as well as providing an account of its renewal. 'Organo nuovo, sopra la porta laterale, che da il passaggio nel campo,' BMC, Mss Cicogna 1877, *Memorie manoscritta sopra la Chiesa e Monastero di Santo Stefano in Venezia,* padre Agostino Nicolai (meta sec. XVIII), without pagination.
[798] Novello, 'La chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia: vicende artistiche dei secoli XVII e XVIII,' 87-88.

CONCLUSIONS

While Santo Stefano is better known as one of the city's most identifiable Gothic churches, it, nevertheless, is significantly shaped by the extensive renovations of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These are integral to understanding the church and assessing its engagement with the serious reforms that were taking place in the Catholic Church and this connection has not been fully described and analysed until now.

The order of the church's renovations is particularly significant. The first upheavals occurred in the presbytery, with the high altar and choir being dramatically transformed. It means that we can provisionally conclude, that making the Mass accessible to the laity was the most pressing priority for the Augustinian friars. Attendance at Mass, which prior to the reforms was something that most citizens attended just a few times a year, rose significantly during this period and the churches that were redesigned or rebuilt to better engage the laity with Mass were the beneficiaries of this uptake.

The redesign of the presbytery was followed by a re-laying of the church floor and by painting the interior walls with a lime wash to cover the ornate earlier frescoes. It is likely that the thermal windows were added around this time as well. Such a decision suggests that once the Augustinians had tackled one of the most pressing areas of reform – involving the laity more in Mass – their next move was to update the general fabric of the church to better complement this new presbytery arrangement. In addition, this move brought Santo Stefano much more closely in line with the newly-built churches of the city and away from its Gothic contemporaries.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the redesign of the altars and chapels of the church came much later in the century, with the renovations of many spilling over long into the eighteenth century. Partly, this will have been an issue of finances – it is clear that for the serious renovations of the presbytery the friars requested and received much aid from the Venetian State. Such a project, followed shortly after by an equally expensive task of repaving the floor and inserting thermal windows into the already complicated ceiling, would have drained the monastery's finances. Partly, it will have also been due to the various confraternities each with their own individual demands, as well as the friars' own

indecision over dedicating new altars to modern Augustinian saints and hesitation about moving those inappropriate altars on the *controfacciata*.

The various arguments that took place regarding the commissioning of new altars to recently canonised Augustinian saints – in particular St John of Facondo and St Thomas of Villanova – show the friars engaging with another key aspect of the reform doctrine; by using saints as exemplars of good works, which was particularly relevant when they came from the church's order. This was a feature seen at San Nicolò di Lido as well. Unlike San Nicolò di Lido, however, Santo Stefano was clearly very much engaged with numerous *scuole* or confraternities which were integral to the church's functions. In this way, it parallels San Nicolò dei Mendicoli more, where the parish were equally, if not more, involved in the running of the church, as we shall see in the following chapter. Despite the slow start, the renovations at Santo Stefano amount to a complete overhaul of the Gothic church, concealing, although rarely completely destroying, the original Gothic features. The church was transformed into one that truly engages with the architectural necessities of the age and fulfils this brief arguably more successfully than its contemporaries.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAN NICOLÒ DEI MENDICOLI

INTRODUCTION

This study finishes in the west with the restored parish church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, which is situated at the furthest corner of Dorsoduro. Now quiet and relatively unassuming, San Nicolò was for many centuries a thriving parish church, at the heart of Dorsoduro life and, in particular, of the community of the Nicolotti, which was composed predominantly, of fishermen. The church has a very long history that stretches from the seventh century, and visitors today are often struck by its mishmash of different styles, in particular by its Byzantine heritage, and its distinction for being one of just a few churches in the city (the most notable being San Giacomo di Rialto) that has a porch - albeit a twentieth-century reconstruction. It is singled out by Hugh Honour as being 'one of the most appealing [churches] in Venice.'[799] Its location and its featuring of so many architectural styles, however, have contributed to the building's scholarly neglect. It amalgamates and blends many, and in that sense it is representative of other Venetian churches, such as San Giacomo dall'Orio and the Carmini.

In the context of my study into the effect of the Counter Reformation on Venice's churches, however, San Nicolò is a very instructive example, and it was often in the vanguard of churches making reforms both to their clergy and their building. In fact, the church was significantly altered during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is ideally suited to demonstrating the kinds of changes that were made. While it covered many of the features that were integral to its Byzantine and Gothic heritage San Nicolò retained a clear sense of its parochial and Venetian identity. The refurbishment has parallels with that of many other older Venetian churches which were renovated during the same time. In particular, the heavy wooden panelling covered in gilded carvings and statues that were fixed onto the Gothic arches and the instructional sequences of paintings that were positioned above it are also features of the neighbouring church of Santa Maria del Carmelo (typically known as the Carmini) which drew much inspiration from San Nicolò.

[799] Hugh Honour, *The Companion Guide to Venice*, London: Collins, 1965, 163.

This chapter will look in detail at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and the changes made to it during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It will begin with a brief history of the church to situate these changes in the context of the church's evolution over the centuries leading up to the Counter Reformation. It will then highlight and discuss the roles of the local community, and, in particular the Nicolotti, who were vocal advocates for the renewal of this church. The chapter will then document and examine the changes that were made to San Nicolò during the period of reform, linking these especially to visitation records from various Venetian patriarchs and the Apostolic Visitation of 1581. Comparisons will be drawn in particular with the changes that took place at Santo Stefano, but also with the nearby church of the Carmini where the renovations that occurred were strikingly similar to those at San Nicolò.

As a parish church, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was amply documented by the patriarchate of Venice. Thus the archives at the Archivio Curia Patriarcale have much material on San Nicolò as it does on most other parish churches. Records are limited for the Medieval period, but from the Renaissance onwards, there is much more, including an early visitation undertaken in 1525, and many others from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the impetus for church reform was at its peak. Other sources available for the church include a pre-1550s inventory, land records from 1621, and some account books from three periods in the seventeenth century: 1611-24, 1638-57 and 1673-79.

Supplementing this rich vein of archival material, there have been four twentieth-century publications on San Nicolò's history and art works. The oldest is a brief, yet informative, pamphlet by Giuseppe Bettanini published in 1935.[800] The most significant volume is Rosolino Scarpa's *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. Dalle origini al restauro compiuto dal "Venice in Peril Fund" nell'anno 1975,* which was published in 1976.[801] The book is invaluable for the amount of detail it contains, which was a consequence of the author being a priest at San Nicolò, thus having unparalleled access to the building and of his overseeing the Venice in Peril restoration of the church in the 1970s. Among its many merits is the use of parish archives and its discussion of the appearance of the

[800] Giuseppe Bettanini, *La chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli in Venezia,* Noale, 1935.
[801] Rosolino Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: dalle origini al restauro compiuto dal 'Venice in Peril Fund' nell'anno 1975*, Venezia, 1976.

original church. In the 1990s, San Nicolò was the subject of a concise and comprehensive guide written by Andrea Gallo and Stefania Mason Rinaldi detailing its history and artworks,[802] and this was followed a few years later by another one written by Andrea Gallo: *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: Guida Storico-Artistica.*[803] The most recent contribution is an article by Thomas Worthen on San Nicolò's soazoni, which provides excellent context to the wooden cladding and painting scheme that was put in place in the church in the late sixteenth century, and supports my argument of the community oriented nature of the parish and their embracement of reform.[804] Some of the source material for these twentieth century works comes from Francesco Braccolani's *Breve notizia della fondazione dell'isola di San Nicolò de Mendicoli* which was first written in 1664 and republished in 1709.[805]

EARLY HISTORY

San Nicolò dei Mendicoli's history begins in the seventh century when the first church was built on the island of Mendigola, one of seven small islands which made up the *sestiere* of Dorsoduro.[806] Scarpa considers it possible that the site was originally that of a large-scale residence, perhaps that of the tribune of Dorsoduro.[807] In the early phases of Venetian governance each of the districts was represented by a tribune, and these tribunes then came together to elect an overall leader – an early form of the role which went on to become that of the Doge.[808] It is Scarpa's belief that this building was later converted to military purposes once the role of the tribune became redundant as Venice's political system evolved.[809]

Scarpa's military connection with the location is not entirely surprising given that the original settlers of Mendigola are thought to be Paduans who had fled there to escape the

802 Andrea Gallo and Stefania Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, Venice: Marsilio, 1995.
803 Andrea Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, Venezia: Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1998.
804 Thomas Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' in *Celebrazione e autocritica: La Serenissima e la ricerca dell'identità veneziana nel tardo Cinquecento*, edited by Benjamin Paul, Rome: Viella, 2014, 253-283.
805 Francesco Braccolani, *Breve notitia della fondatione dell'isola di San Nicolò de' Mendicoli, e di molte altre cose à quella appartementi*, Venice: 1709.
806 Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 7.
807 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 27-28.
808 Ibid, 27.
809 Details revealed during restorations and excavations undertaken by the Venice in Peril Fund in 1972 support aspects of Scarpa's argument and even suggest that the earliest structure had many similarities with the Bouleuterion of Miletus. Ibid, 31-32.

Longobards.[810] Its location on the eastern edge of the Venetian islands meant that it was both a gateway and a barrier to the city, and that its defence was particularly important. The location was very similar to that of the church of San Nicolò di Lido which, as my previous chapter elaborated, was built alongside the military garrison based there because of its position on the edge of the Lido; the fortress and church being required to provide both military and spiritual protection from invasion by sea. On Mendigola, however, the military structure was converted early on into a church, which was dedicated to the martyr, San Lorenzo.[811] This original church would have been a simple wooden structure, and it was destroyed by fire in 1105. The new church was eventually, however, dedicated to San Nicolò. It was, of course, San Nicolò di Lido which took the honour of holding some of the saint's relics, but San Nicolò dei Mendicoli would go on to host the remains of San Niceta and dedicate an altar to Santa Marta to reflect the church's longstanding relationship with the nearby convent of Santa Marta. The cults of all three saints would feature prominently throughout the history of the church.[812]

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

It is unclear exactly when, during that early medieval period, the church was given its new dedication to St Nicholas. Such a dedication, however, would have appropriately reflected the maritime focus of the area, both in terms of its defensive position, and also as regards the importance of fishing to the local community. Scarpa notes that this local community would have played a key role in the rebuilding of the church, especially in the sourcing of materials and transporting them by boat.[813] There is little obvious evidence of this early building, except for the remnants of old capitals, carrying Byzantine arches and still bearing the shields and heraldry of prominent local families.[814] Scarpa provides a sketch in his book, to give an idea of what the church may have looked like around 1200,

[810] Bettanini, *La Chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli in Venezia,* 3.

[811] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 34.
The earliest history of the church is to an extent rather hazy and not all of the sources, including some of the most recent, mention the original dedication to San Lorenzo. While Scarpa's work is one of the oldest available, it is also by far the most detailed in its account of the church's history. As previously noted, Scarpa was also the most familiar with the church, being a priest at San Nicolò for many years before his death in 2009. He played a role in Venice in Peril's restorations of the church in the 1970s which uncovered many elements which have helped to piece together the history of the church in more detail.

[812] Andrea Gallo provides some more information on both San Niceta and Santa Marta and the ways they were venerated in the church of San Nicolò while Rosolino Scarpa goes into great detail regarding San Nicolò's role in the building of the convent and church of Santa Marta and the connection they had with the nunnery throughout the following years. Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 27-30; Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 52-56.

[813] Ibid, 42.

[814] Ibid, 42.

which depicts the façade with a portico not unlike the one that exists today (compare Figs 230, 231). It is shown standing alone with no adjoining buildings (unsurprising since the area would have been much less crowded in the thirteenth century than today) but, otherwise, the basic shape and structure have not changed significantly. One key difference, however, concerns the windows. Scarpa keeps the central round window and the unusual lancet window above it, but does not include the two rectangular windows, that can be seen today on either side of the oculus, which are clearly much later insertions. The first porch was built over in 1473 when rooms were built for two nuns – Sofia Veneziana and Agnese Ungaro – who had chosen lives of poverty and prayer and had been granted this space to allow them to carry out their calling.[815] This space then remained in private use until the twentieth century.

Another sketch by Scarpa imagines the interior of the church as it may have existed at this early time (Fig. 232). This has a spacious nave lined bordered by columns and arches, while a further image (Fig. 233) shows the difference between the few Byzantine arches which can still be seen in San Nicolò and the later Gothic ones which became the predominant style in the church. The first of these drawings also appears to show a low dividing wall in the nave with a wooden crucifix above it, presumably to suggest the position of an iconostasis and a separation in front of the high altar, which could well have been how the interior was originally arranged. This iconostasis is also believed to have housed a *coro aperto,* the term given by Paola Modesti to describe a choir in the body of the nave in front of the high altar, as the one at San Nicolò would have been.[816] It is likely to resemble the remnants that can still be seen at San Giovanni in Bragora and would have been situated on the high altar side of the iconostasis.[817]

There are many parallels between such a reconstruction and Torcello's cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta (Fig. 9) and similar buildings of the period such as Santa Maria della Grazie in nearby Grado (Fig. 234). Most of Venice's churches at this time would have looked similar to these but many have been rebuilt or substantially altered subsequently. San Nicolò dei Mendicoli is one of the few churches where some of the original Byzantine features still survive. The arches that Scarpa represents are still in place with

[815] Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello,* Padua, 1758, 416; Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 11; Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 15.
[816] Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese parrocchiali veneziane fra Rinascimento e riforma tridentina,' 144.
[817] Ibid, 145.

their ancient columns and family crested capitals, but with newer wooden cladding and other adornments affixed to them during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The dividing screen is likely to have remained until the Apostolic Visitation of 1582 when it was advised that the barrier should be removed and the altar made more visible (Fig. 235).[818] These changes will be discussed in much greater detail later on in the chapter. Comparisons can also be made with what we know about the medieval church of San Nicolò di Lido where there was also probably a porch on the external façade (seen in Fig. 5) and a similar iconostasis inside.

Scarpa also points out that the Medieval church would have been filled with light, unlike the present dark building which is enshrouded by the many buildings that have grown up around it.[819] Parishioners would have entered the building, as Scarpa shows, via the original porch and the three doors opening onto the church's nave and flanking aisles.[820] Inside the Byzantine columns and arches would have led up to the iconostasis.[821] Later on, a few chapels would have been added, particularly on the south side of the church.[822] The campanile is believed to have been built in the late twelfth century and it resembles several other bell towers built in Venice around the same time; such as San Giacomo dall'Orio, Santa Maria della Misericordia and San Zaccaria.[823] Scarpa's images of the church, are indeed grounded in reasonable assumptions as to the original layout of the medieval building and are much informed by the excavations and research of the 1970s, which brought to light much that was previously unknown.[824] Naturally Scarpa was also influenced by the church's structure today and he must be broadly correct that it was added to and amended rather than fully reconstructed.

It was after an earthquake on 25 January 1347 that a decision was made, during the subsequent restoration, to update San Nicolò in the Gothic style, which included removing the Byzantine columns nearest to the apse and replacing them with Gothic arches, as well as painting bright friezes around the nave arches.[825] Hugh Honour draws attention to the unusually 'squat columns of the nave, with heads too big for their

[818] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241r.
[819] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 42.
[820] Ibid, 43.
[821] Ibid.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 11.
[824] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 30.
[825] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 18; Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 254.

bases,'[826] highlighting one of the more unfortunate consequences of this decision. The bright friezes can still be seen underneath a few arches, which were remodelled to reveal them in the early twentieth century (Fig. 236). Other examples of such friezes can be seen in the church of Madonna dell'Orto which was restored to its original Gothic appearance in the late 1960s (Fig. 237).[827]

THE RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE PERIODS

The beginning of the sixteenth century brought new changes to San Nicolò. In 1504, the church underwent some significant restoration after an earthquake caused much damage.[828] A couple of years later, in 1506, San Nicolò announced the formation of a *Confraternite del Santissimo Sacramento* or Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The confraternity's *mariegola* asserts that the group received the blessing of both Doge Leonardo Loredan and Patriarch Antonio Surian (or Soriano).[829]

San Nicolò had its earliest recorded patriarchal visitation in 1525 when Patriarch Gerolamo Querini visited the church on 11 November. His visit took note of the Chapel of the Sacrament, the baptistery (the current Chapel of the Visitation) and the sacristy, and also provided an inventory list of the books owned by the church.[830] By 1581, Francesco Sansovino notes some restorations that had taken place in recent years, which we can assume included the wooden refurbishment of the interior walls, but he also laments how the church and its paintings had deteriorated over time.[831] In his additions to this publication of 1663, Giustiniano Martinioni describes further restorations and, in particular, the array of new paintings produced by Leonardo Corona, Francesco Montemezzano, Alvise del Friso and others.[832]

The dramatic change in the church's fortunes in between the writings of Sansovino and Martinioni comes down, to a significant extent, to that crucial catalyst for change in so many of Venice's churches of this time – the Apostolic Visitation of 1582[833] – but

826 Honour, *The Companion Guide to Venice*, 163.
827 Ashley Clarke and Philip Rylands, *Restoring Venice: The Church of the Madonna dell'Orto*, London: Elek, 1977.
828 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58.
829 Ibid.
830 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite antiche 1461-1558, busta 1, S. Nicolò, no. 15, without pagination.
831 Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, Venice, 1581, 87.
832 Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 243.
833 Although many of Venice's churches were seen in 1581 when the Apostolic Visitation started, San Nicolò is one of those recorded as having been visited in 1582.

changes had begun at San Nicolò even before then. Sometime between 1525 and 1582 the Chapel of the Sacrament was moved from its unrecorded original location on the south wall to the left of the presbytery so that it could be in a position of greater prominence.[834] It was also in the 1550s that Scarpa believes discussions took place with regards to commissioning new paintings for the church and although they were not actually completed until the 1580s and 1590s they would eventually cover the entirety of the nave's walls and ceiling, the aisles and the housing of the organ.[835] From Sansovino's 1581 account and the report from the Apostolic Visitation it does not appear that the nave paintings were properly in place before the late sixteenth century, although most, if not all, of them had been installed by the time of the 1591 visit of Patriarch Priuli, who comments on their beauty.[836] Over the next few years, further patriarchs – including Patriarch Zane and Patriarch Vendramin – also commented on the painting scheme approvingly.[837] Some of the wooden cladding was also in place by 1580 but in the clerestory, the gilding and decorative entablature, known as *soazoni*, would come soon after the Apostolic Visitation.

It is likely that the Apostolic Visitation of 1582 brought changes to San Nicolò that were more structural. As we shall see in more detail later, the report proposed replacing the old iconostasis with a more open structure, allowing clearer vision and freer access for the laity between the nave and the high altar. It also advised that the floors and ceilings needed repair, that old wooden altars needed replacing with brick and marble ones, the main crucifix needed replacing and that a baptismal font should be made in accordance with the latest guidelines.[838] A number of subsequent visitations by Venetian patriarchs were also undertaken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Presided over by Patriarchs Trevisan on 28 April in an unrecorded year sometime before 1590, Priuli on 29 September 1591, Zane on 5 September 1604, Vendramin on 29 July 1612, Tiepolo on 5 December 1620 and Morosini on 24 June 1646. The conclusions and actions resulting from these visitations will also be discussed in more detail later on.

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[834] The Chapel of the Sacrament moved again in the eighteenth century to the third chapel along the right side of the church. Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58e.
[835] Ibid.
[836] This is translated further on in this chapter. ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 171v.
[837] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination; ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Vendramin, busta 8, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 13, without pagination.
[838] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fols 171r-175r.

Even despite the many changes that occurred as a result of the visitations, it was concluded in 1619, that the church's structural framework was in a very poor condition, the result, mainly of the poor weather and flooding that so frequently damaged the building over the course of its history. This was not aided by the plague of the 1630s which ravaged Venice and left dead many priests and parishioners, and led to a serious fall in building maintenance. Such was the disrepair that concerns were raised that the priests' houses had become uninhabitable, and in 1649 following a successful petition to Patriarch Morosini, Baldassare Longhena was sent to San Nicolò to give the church guidance over building new houses.[839] These various problems presumably explain the great length of time between the brief visit of Patriarch Tiepolo in 1620 and that of Patriarch Morosini in 1646, when the church was still in a state of disrepair. However, by Martinioni's time, the majority of these problems appear to have been resolved, or at least, were not significant enough to tarnish his glowing account of some of the church's new pictorial highlights.[840]

SAN NICOLÒ IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND THE IMPACT OF NAPOLEON

After the major renovations to San Nicolò dei Mendicoli during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the subsequent period was much quieter as regards building works – not with respect to the parish's ever resourceful and proactive community as will be noted later. The lull, however, was ill-omened since, as Scarpa reports, in the 1740s it came as a great surprise to the parish that the church was found to be unstable and threatening to fall down.[841] New parish priest, Alvise Ferro organised the construction of at least two buttresses, the first in 1744 and a second a few years later, to stabilise the church, although this was to the detriment of the old sacristy which had to be demolished as a result (Fig. 238).[842] Nor did the church remain long without further structural issues, for in 1751 it was reported by the proto Tomadelli that 'the wall behind the altar of St. Elizabeth had fallen because it had no foundation' ('il muro dietro l'altare di S. Elisabetta era caduto perché non aveva fondamenta').[843] The wall was later rebuilt, the chapel restored and a new window was put in place, but the episode put a strain on the church's limited financial situation.[844]

839 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 61.
840 Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 243.
841 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 70.
842 Ibid.
843 Ibid, 71.
844 Ibid.

Money was frequently a cause for concern for the parish priests. The church was located in an extremely poor area of Venice and did much for the community. This created loyalty from the community to the church and encouraged financial donations towards its upkeep. The priests were themselves passionate contributors to the church, one of them, Zuane Piccoli, donating a significant proportion of the money for the new Chapel of the Sacrament. The chapel - a notable Venetian Baroque construction full of marble and stucco - was built in 1761 by one of Venice's then-most-popular stonemasons, Pietro Fadiga (Fig. 239).[845] The initiative, however, moved the Chapel of the Sacrament from its previous position to the left of the presbytery, to a position on the right of the church, directly across from the side door where a new façade was soon to be built. The initiative was also beset with problems, as it was soon discovered that the new chapel was built on an area of the cemetery where there were problems with sewage, which delayed its use for a further six years.[846] The new chapel was finally consecrated by Patriarch Bragadin in 1761, and he visited the church again in 1767 when the chapel was finally ready for use, to consecrate three new or restored altars – the current altar of San Nicolò, the altar of Madonna della Provvidenza (the new name for the old Chapel of the Sacrament) and a new altar of St Anthony.[847]

In 1761, while the new Chapel of the Sacrament was being built, the church commissioned a new façade (Fig. 240). Somewhat unusually, this façade adorns the church's northern side, rather than the front of the church to the west. The northern side, however, had been the church's main entrance since the fifteenth century, and an entrance on the left side is a common feature in Byzantine churches of the Adriatic, and can also be seen in other Venetian examples such as San Giacomo dell'Orio and the church of Santa Maria e San Donato on the island of Murano.[848]

Built as usual out of Istrian stone, the façade of San Nicolò is located approximately half way down the church's northern wall, although the placing of the windows either side is not fully symmetrical with the façade, and accords with the interior layout. Compared with other façades designed in Venice at this time, the San Nicolò façade, which is largely

[845] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 71-72.
[846] Ibid, 72.
[847] Ibid, 74.
[848] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 16.

undocumented, is rather understated. The design is generally Palladian and features Corinthian pilasters on either side with an entablature on top supporting a broken triangular pediment. Two niches sit either side of the door and a third is placed much higher, on a ledge separating the tallest third of the façade from the bottom two. The whole façade is unbalanced, and there are no obviously comparable façades from which it might have drawn particular influence.

The façade has three statues: the Virgin Mary at the centre, with St John of Nepomuk below to the left and a now headless statue of St Anthony of Padua to the right. St John of Nepomuk was a fourteenth-century martyr who was drowned by the King of Bohemia, and his cult became very popular during the Counter Reformation, since it was believed that his martyrdom was the result of his insistence that he would not reveal any information to the king that had been obtained during confession, and so testified to the sacredness of the confessional.[849] The cost of the façade came under suspicion and the priest – Zuane Piccoli – found himself in court over the matter.[850] The façade was built to align with the new Chapel of the Sacrament which is clearly visible across the nave. The altar of the chapel again features an image of the Virgin Mary and a statue of St John of Nepomuk who is shown this time contemplating the crucifix.[851]

Following Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Venice in 1797, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was supressed and made part of the parish of the nearby church of Sant' Angelo Raffaele. The building was left to decay for many years, and Scarpa reports on much of the damage that occurred at this time due to the neglect.[852] This neglect continued for the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond. It was in the early twentieth century that the church was finally restored, in particular with the insertion of a new porch on the church's western façade.[853] Old photographs from the early twentieth century show what the western face of San Nicolò was like before the porch was added (Figs 241, 242). A decaying and crumbling building, probably a private residence (long evolved from the early building for the two nuns who had lived there in the 1470s), had been built on one

[849] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 16-17.
[850] Each saint is accompanied by a motto which Tassini argues Piccioli chose to stress his innocence. For Mary: 'Sine labe concepta', for S. Antonio di Padova: 'Si quaeris miracula' and for S. Giovanni Nepomuceno: 'Dixi secretum meum mihi'. Giuseppe Tassini, *Curiosità Veneziane: ovvero origini delle denominazioni stradali,* Venice: Edizione Scarabellin, 1933 (first published Venice 1863), 484-485.
[851] Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 15.
[852] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 79-81.
[853] Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 11.

side, and the round window that Scarpa believed to have originated in the medieval times had been closed up.

The porch was constructed in 1919 under the direction of Gino Fogolari and Ferdinando Forlatti (Figs 243, 244).[854] It probably replicates one there in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[855] At that early time porches were very common, although today the only remaining original porch in Venice is that of San Giacomo di Rialto (Fig. 245). The porch is now the main feature of the church's western façade, and the oculus above, although still closed, is now more prominent than before. The rectangular windows, opened when the oculus was closed to make way for the organ, are still jarring but are a reminder of the church's complex history and its mix of styles.[856]

SAN NICOLÒ MORE RECENTLY

Since the building of the porch, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli then experienced a revival in its fortunes, although there have still been concerns over structural issues. A plan conceived in the early 1940s to take down all of the private buildings still surrounding the church, so as to ease some of the strains and pressures on the structure, was permanently postponed as a result of the Second World War.[857] (Fig. 246 is an old photograph which demonstrates how much the church is hemmed in by other buildings). Between 1952 and 1966, San Nicolò underwent a number of restoration projects with funds from the *Soprintendenze ai Monumenti e alle Gallerie*. The money available was limited, but it was enough to restore the roof, paint the interior walls, and secure the loosened beams in the sacristy.[858] The money was supplemented by donations from parishioners, one of which financed the restoration of the chapel of Madonna della Provvidenza, demonstrating that even in the twentieth century the generous community of San Nicolò was still very much thriving.[859]

However, the disastrous flood of 1966 brought even more damage and decay to the church. San Nicolò had suffered problems with flooding throughout its history, but the inundation of 1966 was one of the worst for the church, with water rising to 70cm

[854] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 31.
[855] Gallo and Stefania Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 11.
[856] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 16.
[857] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 81.
[858] Ibid, 82.
[859] Ibid, 82.

inside, leaving salt deposits that badly damaged the wooden furnishings.[860] Yet Scarpa – who was of course the parish priest – would see the flood as the beginning of a 'great and exciting rebirth' for the church.[861] In 1972, San Nicolò was chosen by Venice in Peril – set up, like many similar organisations in response to the 1966 flood - to be fully restored from the foundation.[862] Work began quickly on 10 April 1972, starting with the rebuilding and insulation of the bottom three meters of the church's perimeter walls to prevent further tide damage.[863] The restoration then involved taking up the church's floor, which resulted in the discovery of old walls, thresholds, floor slabs, altar *predelle* and more from the earlier stages of the church's history.[864] Work included the major overhauling of the roof, the renovation of the organ, the insertion of a new heating system to prevent condensation, an overhaul to the lighting and electricity, and the careful restoration of the church's wooden statues and altars.[865]

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

It was the name of the island on which San Nicolò was built, 'Mendigola', which was then incorporated into the name of the church, 'dei Mendicoli' meaning 'of the beggars' and 'Mendicoli' often used interchangeably with 'Mendigola' in some of the older texts.[866] Although the origins of the island's name are uncertain, it is believed that it was inhabited by some of the poorest people in Venice hence the name 'Mendicoli'. The Nicolotti – as they became known - are probably best known for their recurrent feuding with the Castellani, but what is less known is their dedication to their church, despite the poverty of their community as a whole. Scarpa frequently remarks on their commitment to the church, and on the many occasions when funds from members of the community solved the problems that the church was facing.[867] In his guide to Venice, Giulio Lorenzetti reiterates that the church of San Nicolò was 'one of the most loved by the poor people.'[868] A number of charitable organisations were set up by the Nicolotti and many

[860] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 82-83.
[861] Scarpa's full statement: 'Ma sarà solo l'inizio della grande ed entusiasmante rinascita.' Ibid, 83.
[862] Ibid, 83-84.
[863] Ibid, 84.
[864] Ibid.
[865] Ibid, 85.
[866] Bettanini, *La chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli in Venezia,* 4.
[867] One of many such examples throughout Scarpa's text comes during the eighteenth century with the testament of Francesco Zancarolo demonstrating through his bequest his dedication to the church. Scarpa stresses again and again that despite the poverty of San Nicolò parishioners, they were always very generous to the church. Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 70.
[868] Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*, translated by John Guthrie, 2nd ed., Trieste: Edizioni Lint, 1994, 559.

donated their wealth to the church on their deaths; often used to benefit the fishermen and the poor women of the neighbourhood.[869] The community of San Nicolò was also instrumental in the setting up of the nearby convents of Santa Marta and Santa Teresa.[870] In 1474 a Scuola della Visitazione di Maria, was established at the church which worked closely with the Scuola di Santissimo Sacramento on the restoration of parts of the church in the 1500s.[871] In all there were four confraternities – those of the Sacrament, the Visitation, the Cross, and St Nicholas, all probably often working together and influencing each other's decisions.[872] The confraternities all worked together and were praised by parish priest Salomon Lando who wrote in 1604 that the four *scuole* had 'in all their poverty, in around twenty-six years have spent twelve or thirteen thousand ducats in beautifying the church and maintaining their altars.'[873]

Central to the Nicolotti community and to the life of the parish of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli was the figure of the Gastaldo *grande* who was otherwise known as the 'doge of the Nicolotti' (Fig. 247).[874] The name Gastaldo was initially given to the seventh-century representative or tribune, of the *sestiere* of Dorsoduro and the title and role continued until Venice's fall to Napoleon in 1797.[875] The Gastaldo was elected at the church through a closed meeting of parishioners and a representative of the Venetian government.[876] Wearing a ceremonial outfit, the Gastaldo would play a role in many Venetian festivities, including Venice's marriage with the sea. Presiding over one of the key gateways into the city, the Nicolotti and their Gastaldo were given great respect and were allowed their own ceremonial banner which was hung with that of the Republic,

869 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 51-52.
870 Francesco Sansovino's guidebook, with Martinioni's additions, provides more information about the situation of both Santa Marta and Santa Teresa during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Rosolino Scarpa also goes into detail regarding the role of San Nicolò in the construction and support of both convents. Both convents and their churches were suppressed by Napoleon and their facilities repatriated for other uses. Sansovino, *Venetia Città nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 269, 277; Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 66.
871 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 50.
872 Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 27.
873 Translation by Thomas Worthen. ACP, Visite parrocchiali Zane, no. 27, in Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 254.
874 For more on the Gastaldo see: Braccolani, *Breve notitia della fondatione dell'isola di San Nicolò de' Mendicoli*, 12-22, 25-32; Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 27.
875 Ibid.
876 Scarpa provides a list of all of the known incumbents of the role of Gastaldo from 1140 to the final Gastaldo in 1830. Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 88.

and the small column outside San Nicolò carrying a sculpture of the lion of St Mark was commissioned in honour of that role (Fig. 247).[877]

The laity was important in the running of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and it is important to remember that it was only in Venice that the local community were allowed to elect their own parish priests.[878] Despite the poverty of the area, the funding for the church came from this community, many of whom gave individually, funding the *mansionarie* of the priests, and projects organised by the church's *scuole*. Unlike at San Moisè where rich parishioners showed their dedication to the church by commissioning elaborate, self-aggrandising monuments, the less wealthy Nicolotti had their contributions recorded only in the church archives.[879]

Arguably, the Nicolotti community at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, could be seen in the same way that Marc Forster claims we should see the communities of the rural German Bishopric of Speyer. Forster uses the example of Speyer to demonstrate that historic assumptions that communities were resistant to change, and especially in places like Germany, were 'infected with Protestantism', are incorrect.[880] The situation is naturally far more complicated, but what we are left with is the understanding that we cannot assume that reform was merely a top-down initiative, forced upon the reluctant parishioners at the bottom of the ladder, to be met with much resistance.[881] The choices of the San Nicolò community to install a succession of clearly reform driven priests, and their proactive engagement in the *scuole* suggests that the Nicolotti too can be seen as a community where reform was welcomed and encouraged.

[877] Scarpa details the privileges that the Nicolotti received which included special rights pertaining to fishing and the sale of fish. Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* part 1: 27, part 2: 13-17.
[878] Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 130.
[879] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 31.
[880] Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720*, 19.
[881] For more on this topic see: Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750*; Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation,' 706-720.

THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RENOVATIONS

Understanding the history and community of the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli is key to understanding the renovations that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the motivations behind them. These transformations, as we have seen, began in the middle of the sixteenth century, being perhaps triggered by the discussions that were taking place at the Council of Trent. They were then spurred on with further guidance by the Apostolic Visitation of 1582 and continued through to the end of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century. The six further pastoral visitations up to 1646, also gave pertinent advice to the church. Although San Nicolò has been altered since the seventeenth century, in particular with the new façade and the moving of the Chapel of the Sacrament, these changes have been very limited, meaning that the majority of the initiatives carried out during the time of the Counter Reformation can still be seen in the church today.

Unlike any of the other churches in this study, San Nicolò had made great strides towards improving the church long before the Apostolic Visitation of 1582. The new Chapel of the Sacrament was completed, some of the woodwork had been installed and the painting scheme for the church was at the least into the discussion phase. However, the Apostolic Visitation was still a significant event and was likely to be the catalyst for many of the changes that took place afterwards. The visit was an occasion of great ceremony, and the church was fully lit, with the bells ringing and the organ playing, as the delegation arrived.[882] Once inside, those involved began with a viewing of the baptismal font, the high altar - dedicated to St Nicholas - and then the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.[883] The choice of these as the most important sites in the church, reminds us of how integral they were to the reform movement. Once these sites had been inspected, the rest of the church was surveyed. After the completion of the inspection, the visitors made a number of recommendations which were listed clearly at the end of their report. These included removing the current iconostasis and replacing it with something less obstructive, mending the floors and ceilings, replacing wooden altar tables with marble ones, and building a baptism font which conformed to the new rules.[884] As the most important recommendations from the Apostolic Visitation, this

[882] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 238r.
[883] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 238r.
[884] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241r-v.

chapter will start by focusing on these issues. It will then consider other areas that were of general concern during the Counter Reformation period, including the renovation or rebuilding of the church organ, and the commissioning of coherent painting schemes which adhered to the guidelines outlined in the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent.[885]

THE REMOVAL OF THE ICONOSTASIS AND STRUCTURAL ADDITIONS TO THE NAVE

As now noted, one of the principal recommendations from the Apostolic Visitation was that 'the whole wall intersecting the church is to be removed' ('totus paries intersecans ecclesiam amoveatur') and a choir was to be made in the main chapel ('e fiat chorus in capella maior) thus opening up the space and preventing the view of the high altar from being blocked.[886] The replacement is the three-arched screen that we see today with two sets of three miniature columns raised on plinths which hold the wooden structure overhead (Fig. 249). Above the screen the wooden crucifix was placed and accompanied by wooden statues: Mary on one side of the crucifix, St John on the other, each followed by an angel and, at the end, an urn. The whole structure is then framed with a wooden arch that reaches the ceiling (Fig. 250).

The screen provides a fitting break between the main nave and the apse and the open nature of the arches of the screen mirror the rest of the arches that distinguish the nave and aisles (Fig. 235). While the screen separates these areas of the church, they are still joined visually. The laity seated in the nave can clearly see the high altar and can engage with the ceremonies that take place there. This was indeed the likely intention of the new screen and such a set up helped allay one of the central concerns of the Counter Reformation, that the laity should feel more engaged with the liturgy.

Borromeo observed that a crucifix, like the one we see at the top of the screen at San Nicolò, should be set up 'under the arch of the main chapel' and if that were not possible it 'may be hung directly under the trabiated ceiling while attached to the wall which is above the same arch outside of the main chapel; or again, it may be placed on the top of the gate of the railed enclosure of the chapel.'[887] The design and positioning of the

[885] Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, 233-236.
[886] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fols 241r-v.
[887] Borromeo's views stemmed from those of Guglielmo Durando (known in the English as William Durandus) who wrote a treatise (dated around 1280) on symbolism in church architecture, a copy of which

crucifix was, therefore, one of the key concerns for the Apostolic Visitation. The visitors felt the original small painted crucifix should be replaced and the new, more magnificent one was repositioned on top of the new construction.[888] This re-siting and redesigning of the crucifix seems likely to have been part of the move to have the laity more actively involved in the rituals of the Mass. Seated in the nave, and seeing the large crucifix looming up in front of them would have reminded them of, and encouraged them to meditate on, the sacrifice that Christ made for the world. This theme was of central importance to the Church during this period of reform, and it was also the reason behind the new focus on the tabernacle of the Eucharist and the desire to have it placed in a more prominent position. Furthermore, just below the crucifix is an image of two angels holding a chalice which is unquestionably representative of Christ's blood; reiterating the themes of the Eucharist yet again, leaving parishioners in no doubt of the lessons they were meant to be learning. Both the new choir screen and the new crucifix were paid for by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.[889]

The wooden cladding of the new screen matches that covering the other arches in the nave, which was then gilded and ornamented with wooden sculptures (Figs 235, 251). The keystone of each arch is marked out by an angelic golden face, while the wooden sculptures positioned on top of each column depict the four evangelists and the apostles.[890] The apostles in particular were chosen, according to Andrea Gallo, as the 'custodians and authoritative mediators' of the '*mysterium salutis*' or mysteries of salvation.[891] These figures are very similar to those above the main screen and it is likely that they were all created at the same time, as part of a coherent scheme, although their sculptors remain unknown.[892] The Gothic columns holding up the arches were also painted with gold, the remnants of which can still be made out today. The entablature running above the arches has an ornamented frieze of dentils and modillions and is again

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was in Borromeo's own personal collection. In relation to the importance of crucifixes, Durandus stated: 'In many places a triumphal cross is placed in the midst of the church to teach us that from the midst of our hearts we must love the Redeemer…. But the cross is exalted on high to signify the victory of Christ.' Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones*, 145-146.

888 Worthen also refers to this and provides a transcription: the 'crucifixum pictum' was to be replaced with a 'Crucifixus magnus in frontispicio' and also 'Totus paries intersecans Ecc[lesi]am amoveatur, et fiat chorus in Capella maior; quae sepiatur columnis decentibus ut factum est in nonnullis Ecclesijs.' ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241r-v in Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 256.

889 Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 256.

890 Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 29.

891 Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 19.

892 Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 29.

embellished in gold (Fig. 252). Such a decorative scheme of entablature was referred to in Venetian documents as *soaze* or *soazoni*.[893]

The date 1580 is carved into the wooden cladding and suggests that the wooden framework was complete before the Apostolic Visitation, but the decorative entablature (*soazoni*) would come afterwards, with the new crucifix.[894] These alterations were implemented before the majority of the new paintings but when these arrived they were framed appropriately with their own wooden gilded frames, topped with angel heads, and bordered by pilasters, with a further entablature at the very top of the nave wall (Fig. 253). Not only is the whole scheme architecturally coherent, but in Patriarch Priuli's 1591 visit to the church he states that he was 'pleased to see the whole church gilded, and ornate with very beautiful paintings' ('piacere di vedere tutta la chiesa indorata, e ornate di quadri di pittura molto belli').[895] Priuli also went on to praise the *scuole* for their success, reiterating just how important the confraternities were to the success of this, and many other, projects.[896] Not all of the work was complete by this date – a *Baptism of Christ* by Alvise del Friso was not installed until 1592 for example – but the woodwork, *soazoni* and the majority of the artworks can be assumed to be in place given Priuli's comments.[897]

The woodwork originally took in the apse beyond the screen and the aisles, and was complemented with additional paintings in the aisles with the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament paying for the work to the left aisle since it covered the Chapel of the Sacrament; and the right aisle was paid collectively by the confraternities of the Visitation and the Cross.[898] However the renovations of 1903-14 removed the paintings and wooden cladding from the choir and the aisles and reopened the Gothic arches that had been hidden beneath.[899] (Figs 254, 255, 256, 257, 258 show various stages of their renovation and how they look today). Some of the removed entablature was taken to the Accademia where it sits above Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi*.

San Nicolò was not the first Venetian church to have such an entablature put in place but it was arguably one of the most comprehensive and cohesive (before the twentieth

[893] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 257.
[894] The date is accompanied by the name of a worker, Zuane Darconin. Ibid, 255, no. 9.
[895] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 171v.
[896] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 171v.
[897] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 259.
[898] Ibid, 257.
[899] Ibid, 260.

century renovations). Thomas Worthen documents the *soazoni* schemes in other Venetian churches and asserts that a cornice, likely painted to give the effect of stone, was put in place at San Cassiano in the 1520s and again, the project was commissioned by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.[900] The early scheme is particularly unusual and, despite the lack of documentation remaining, is the earliest example of a Scuola del Sacramento showing an interest in the wider church outside of their altar or chapel and banco, with very little evidence of these *scuole* doing this elsewhere in Venice before the middle of the century.[901] In 1566, a painted wooden *soaze* was put in place by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in San Barnaba and more work was undertaken to expand the *soaze* at San Cassiano between 1578-9.[902] While most examples are no longer extant due to subsequent church renovations, San Giacomo dell'Orio has the earliest surviving example, albeit in a reduced form (Fig. 259).[903] As far as Worthen is able to ascertain, it does not appear that any of these examples were accompanied by paintings and pilasters, unlike San Nicolò where the scheme is more all-encompassing with these additional elements.[904] After San Nicolò, *soazoni* were put in place in San Basilio (Fig. 260), San Simeone Profeta, San Polo (Figs 261, 262) and San Giuliano.[905]

The technique is most comparably used in the nearby church of the Carmini, a church which also struggled with many of the same problems that San Nicolò did (Figs 263, 264, 265). The Carmini was also a relatively poor church, and again had only one of its sides free from other buildings. Despite being a little larger than San Nicolò, the interior similarities between the two churches are striking. Between 1595-1604 the arches of the nave are clad with much the same sort of wooden panelling, and are similarly gilded and embellished with wooden sculptures. In this case, the sculptures are of prophets, saints and historical figures who were connected with the Carmelite order. These sculptures are then flanked by pairs of angels and they are held up by harpies on the left side and crouching half-human-half-monsters on the right.[906] Above the arches is then a similar sequence of paintings, bordered by pilasters and an upper entablature. There are but few

[900] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 261.
[901] Ibid.
[902] Ibid, 261-2.
[903] Ibid, 262-4.
[904] Ibid, 264.
[905] Ibid, 264-7.
[906] Lino Moretti and Simona Branca Savini, *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Carmini: arte e devozione*, Venice: Marsilio, 1995, 13-14.

differences, except at the Carmini the ornamentation is richer, with gilded rosettes lining the undersides of the arches and figural busts protruding from the pilasters.

Despite being a monastic church, it was the Carmini's confraternities that were integral to the commissioning of the interior woodwork, and in particular, the Scuola dei Carmini.[907] Since there was no Scuola del Sacramento, as in parish churches, the individual confraternities at the Carmini appeared to have acted independently of each other and this can be seen in the variations in the woodwork as it appears that each confraternity commissioned the *soazoni* covering the parts of the nave and aisles which were closest to their own altar, often using different craftsmen to their neighbours.[908]

Unlike San Nicolò, the size of the Carmini, allowed for the insertion of a row of thermal windows in the clerestory on both sides of the nave, above the paintings and also above the neighbouring buildings.[909] The majority of these windows are still open today but the Carmini is still rather a dark church. It is clear that, given the circumstances of the church, this was likely to be a great improvement on its pre-renovation interior. Although San Nicolò's smaller size meant that such high-level windows could not be introduced, there were some installed in the surrounding chapels, which are of some benefit to the internal lighting.

The insertion of the windows in the Carmini happened later in the seventeenth century (between 1623 and 1635), and the painting scheme there dates from the 1660s but the wooden cladding was added at around the same time as the cladding in San Nicolò.[910] Lino Moretti and Simona Branca Savini conclude that the Carmini cladding was put in place in the early 1590s, and it is known that the friars consulted with San Nicolò when determining the quality of gold to use in their design.[911] The painting scheme at the Carmini can also certainly be argued to have been inspired by the one at San Nicolò, since it was completed many years later. Lorenzetti describes the wooden panelling and

[907] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 268.
[908] Ibid, 269.
[909] This feature of the Carmini's interior has already been expanded upon during the chapter on Santo Stefano.
[910] Moretti and Branca Savini, *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Carmini: arte e devozione*, 14.
[911] Ibid, 13; Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 269.

its accompaniments at San Nicolò as giving the church a 'characteristic and charming effect' before observing the undeniable similarities between the two churches.[912]

San Nicolò's wooden cladding, and in particular the gilding of it, was to become a defining feature of the church. The eighteenth century historian, Francesco Braccolini described the church as the 'templum auri' or 'golden temple'.[913] The gilding also had the advantage of preventing the church from appearing too dark and the arches too heavy and imposing. Instead, the gold would have glittered when hit by sunlight and provided an economic way to brighten the church. A bright, light-filled interior was an important feature of post-Trent church architecture; however San Nicolò's decision to clad the church in wood rather than stone (or painted to resemble stone) was not as unusual in this context as it first seems. Indeed, Thomas Worthen argues that it was particularly significant that their brief period of popularity coincided with the period when the Counter Reformation was at its most dominant in Venice, and that *soazoni* were an 'expression of parochial devotion'.[914]

Worthen sees the Venetian engagement with the Counter Reformation taking two distinct phases. The first was with the patriarchate of Patriarch Trevisan (1559-90) who, as earlier discussed, attended sessions at Trent and attempted to produce reform that was in keeping with Venetian values.[915] Following the Apostolic Visitation in 1581, Worthen believes the Venice's reform moved into a more 'Roman phase' but that Trevisan felt no need to implement the Apostolic Visitation's recommendations so it was not until Priuli took up the patriarchate in 1590 that this happened.[916] It is unsurprising, therefore, that *soazoni* became popular during Trevisan's leadership and that this popularity tailed off towards the end of the century.

Soazoni were a very Venetian phenomenon and are linked to the early development of *scuole* dedicated to the Sacrament in Venice, long before the Council of Trent. Once confraternities of the Sacrament began expanding their remit beyond their chapels they began to pay particular attention to the nave and the crucifixes or roods that were placed above the apse, as they did at San Nicolò. *Soazoni* provided a framework of entablature to

[912] Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*, 560.
[913] Braccolani, *Breve notitia della fondatione dell'isola di San Nicolò de' Mendicoli*, 34.
[914] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 270.
[915] Ibid.
[916] Ibid, 270-1.

accompany the crucifix and connect it harmoniously with the rest of the church interior, further enhancing its significance.[917] Similar entablatures could be found in the *scuole grandi* of San Marco and the Misericordia.[918] More distinctly, however, they echo the abundance of decoration in the church of San Marco, with gilded wood, carvings and paintings rather than stone panelling and mosaics (Fig. 266).[919] Thus, installing *soazoni* and their accompanying decorations allowed Venetian churches to project the message that they were modernising, while at the same time paying homage to their Venetian heritage.

It is significant that the only monastic church to renovate its interior with wood and *soazoni* was the Carmini. The larger monastic churches like Santo Stefano and the Frari chose to whitewash their interiors instead, making their brickwork resemble the white stone interiors of Palladio's new churches, themselves monastic churches as well. As we have already seen, the larger Gothic churches such as Santo Stefano had the advantage of spacious interiors, which were then further illuminated with the insertion of thermal windows in the clerestory. Santo Stefano, as with the Frari and Santi Giovanni e Paolo, also had the benefit of being situated in a large campo with few other buildings to obstruct light entering the interiors. San Nicolò, by contrast, was a much smaller church, with a narrower interior, and a lower ceiling with little room for additional windows. The small accompanying campo was heavily intruded upon by buildings constructed over the centuries, and by the time of the sixteenth-century alterations, only the church's northern side was free of other buildings (Fig. 246).[920] Combining the limewash with the additional light from the thermal windows created an even more powerful visual comparison with newly built stone and marble churches. Worthen argues that San Nicolò, and other parish churches that chose to clad their interior with wood and gilding, did so in 'an implicit criticism… of such contemporary, well-lit, monumental and open churches as San Giorgio Maggiore. San Nicolò's décor was at the service of an older ideal, one going back to San Marco itself, an ideal that surely seemed more holy to the parishioners who had it made.'[921] Worthen's theory is that schemes like that at San Nicolò offered an

[917] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 272-3.
[918] Ibid, 270.
[919] Ibid, 272.
[920] Today San Nicolò is free from buildings on two sides of the campo – the façade side and the porch side. Until the rebuilding in the early twentieth century, the porch was of course, the home to female religious communities and other residences were built up around it.
[921] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 272.

alternative, yet equally devoted, interpretation of the ideal Counter Reformation church interior, to that being offered by churches like San Giorgio Maggiore or the Redentore.[922]

The limewash that covered Santo Stefano's interior was put in place during the 1630s after the great plague of 1630-31.[923] The redecoration of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli took place many years previously: between the 1580s and 1590s. As such, San Nicolò had taken on board the call to reform and modernise much earlier than many of the monastic churches. Here, Worthen's argument about the modernising impetus of San Nicolò as a result of its early use of *soazoni*, complements the other arguments I am making here about San Nicolò's role as a proactive and innovative example of reform. Despite its size and weak financial situation, San Nicolò was in the vanguard of these reforms rather than at the rear. That said, *soazoni* only experienced a brief period of popularity in Venice, between the 1560s and 1610s, and even in the 1580s San Trovaso was already redecorating in the Palladian style.[924]

It is clear that the structural amendments to the interior of San Nicolò met with approval since both Patriarchs Priuli and Zane commend them in their visitations.[925] Much work and money was poured into reshaping and refitting the church's interior, clearly with great success. It is a good example of how diligent and responsive the priests and parishioners of San Nicolò were to the desires of the wider Catholic Church during this period of reform. However, while these renovations, on the surface looked excellent, foundationally, there was a lot wrong with the structure of San Nicolò as the priests discovered in 1619 when the church appeared to be on the brink of collapse.[926] It is perhaps a reminder that for small, poorly financed churches, fulfilling the demands of the Counter Reformation came at a cost – that areas of fundamental structural concern to the church's fabric were put aside temporarily while the church was superficially changed to meet the new requirements.

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922 Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 278.
923 Antonio Niero, *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 1978, 20.
924 Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 278.
925 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 171v; ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination.
926 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 63.

NEW ALTAR AND CHAPEL ARRANGEMENTS

The positioning of the altars at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, and the materials used, were of great concern to the Apostolic Visitation. Those of St Nicholas and St Niceta, which were located in the centre of the church near the iconostasis (disrupting the view of the high altar) were to be moved to the sides, and those, including the altar of St Nicholas, which were made of wood were to be replaced because wood was no longer considered an acceptable material.[927] In his *Instructiones* Carlo Borromeo stated very clearly that 'altars should not be made out of wood but rather of stone or bricks.'[928] He was also concerned that the placement of altars should be carefully considered so that 'a priest celebrating [Mass] at one altar will [not] be hindered or disturbed by one celebrating at the other.'[929]Another of his demands was that altars should not be constructed on the internal wall of the façade (as we also saw at Santo Stefano) because this was typically the wall that faced the high altar.[930] At San Nicolò all of the altars were moved either to chapels next to the high altar, or to chapels on the church's right side. The left side – the internal wall of the façade – was left free, although it now accommodates the altar dedicated to St Martha which was brought to the church after the Napoleonic suppression. The organ was moved to the back wall, the wall actually facing the high altar. Despite the facade being located on the church's left wall, it is the back wall which would, of course, require the celebrant to turn his back to the high altar, and it is of note that no altars were placed on either wall for many years following the visitation. (Fig. 267 shows the location of all of the altars and chapels after the Apostolic Visitation while Fig. 268 shows the location of the altars and chapels today).

As they did with the recommendations for reshaping of the nave, the priests of San Nicolò continued to listen to the guidance of the Apostolic Visitation and undertook an extensive renovation of the church's altars. Later patriarchal visits comment on the progress made in this area. To get a better understanding of all the various improvements that were made, it is helpful to consider each of the altars in turn to explain the changes that were made to them.

927 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241r.
928 Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 187.
929 Ibid, 175.
930 Ibid, 178.

The altar of St Niceta was one that was given particular attention by the Apostolic Visitation. Although it was built of stone, its position in the centre of the church, supported by the iconostasis, was a problem for the visitors who requested the 'transfer the altar of S. Niceta to the side walls' ('e trasferatur una … altare S. Nicheta ad parietes laterales').[931] It was therefore moved in 1583, around the same time as the moving of the altar of St Nicholas, placed in the middle chapel on the right side of the church (Figs 269, 270). Scarpa observed that this chapel was one of the weakest parts of the church in 1619 and was the subject of concerns about its structural stability.[932]

Patriarch Priuli's visit of 1591 praises the chapel, stating: 'The neighbouring chapel and altar of S. Niceta is found in good condition, and thick with decorations, in which it is celebrated with a portable altar' ('In vicino vi e la capella, e altare di S. Nichetto ritrovato in buono stato, e con debiti adornamenti, nel quali si celebra con altare portatili').[933] He observed that the body of St Niceta was 'placed inside a marble chest and situated in honour on the altar' ('il corpo di santo Nichetta posto dentro con deposito di marmo, e collocato honorevolmenti sopra l'altare').[934] Priuli also notes that the chapel of S. Niceta 'conserved all the other relics' of the church ('conservatio poi tutti le altre reliquie') with many being stored in glass jars ('vasi di vetro').[935] Patriarch Zane's 1604 visit also mentions the relics, and both Priuli and Zane observe that not all are confirmed as genuine.[936] The correct veneration of authentic relics was a point that was raised in the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent along with the guidance about sacred images and the care and veneration of relics was one of the main preoccupations of the visitations.[937] Inauthentic relics were seen to be 'uselessly honoured by the faithful.'[938] Carlo Borromeo also took the veneration of relics very seriously, and, as Evelyn Voelker noted, he would organise the most grandiose of processions and ceremonies when genuine relics were being moved between churches.[939] Borromeo had particular

[931] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241r.
[932] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 63.
[933] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 172r.
[934] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 173v.
[935] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 173v-174r.
Patriarch Zane also confirms this situation in 1604. ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination.
[936] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination.
[937] Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, 234.
[938] Ibid, 234.
[939] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 220.

instructions, too, regarding the placement of full bodies of saints, like that of San Niceta: 'For this purpose it is correct to have a marble or at least a solid stone chest or ark that is well polished inside and that has a pyramidal cover of the same material. This chest containing the carefully placed sacred bodies should be positioned within the altars or underneath them.'[940]

That San Nicolò had possession of the relics of St Niceta, which were acquired from the city of Mamistra (formerly known as Mopsuestia), was a testament to the status now accorded to the saint in the church. Sadly, many of the documents relating to the translation and cult of St Niceta were burnt for sanitation reasons during the plague of 1576, but we still know a fair amount about the saint's importance to the San Nicolò parishioners.[941] Remaining documents show that the church was connected with the cult of St Niceta from at least 1237.[942] Popularity for this fourth-century martyr was such that his image is depicted on a column in the nave dating from 1364 along with St Nicholas (Fig. 271), while the recovered Byzantine frescoes in the apse appear to show St Niceta's martyrdom, and the name Niceta, as the baptism records show, was a particularly popular one with parishioners.[943] Francesco Braccolani, in 1709, attests to the importance of San Niceta as someone who had performed good works and now protected the poor souls of the parish who would always be able to pray to him.[944]

The stone chest in which the urn with the relics of St Niceta was placed has three compartments which were attributed by Marco Boschini to 'school of Titian' (Fig. 272).[945] These compartments are horizontally divided and show scenes from the saint's martyrdom.[946] These include the saint being burnt at the stake, the golden light guiding Niceta's friend Mariano to the location of his miraculously preserved body, and the body being carefully processed to a church specially built for it. The Golden Legend had stated that the body was miraculously protected and attempts to take it from its final resting place would fail, but despite this, a Venetian ship was able to take some of the relics away and deposit them at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, thus securing the church's right to house

[940] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 207.
[941] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 27.
[942] Ibid, 27.
[943] Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 18; Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 35.
[944] Braccolani, *Breve notitia della fondatione dell'isola di San Nicolò de' Mendicoli,* 34-35.
[945] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 27.
[946] Ibid.

them.[947] This, therefore, made the saint very special to the parishioners of San Nicolò since they felt that their role as custodians of the relics of San Niceta was divinely blessed. Until 1619, when the relics were moved due to the structural problems affecting this part of the church, the chapel also held a painting by Alvise del Friso of the *Baptism of Saint John*, likely located there because of the chapel's proximity to the recently moved baptismal font.[948]

At times, the cult of St Niceta was of equal importance to that of St Nicholas at the Mendicoli, and the other key figure was St Martha whose cult became so strong that a separate, yet connected, monastic community was established nearby in the Middle Ages.[949] In 1583, when the altar to St Niceta was moved, the *scuola* to St Nicholas was given permission to use the cappella maggiore and the fifteenth century wooden gilded statue of the saint was moved to its current position on the high altar (Figs 273, 274).[950] This location made the sculpture of the saint a focal point of attention, yet despite its prominent position, complaints were made in 1705 that a lack of light in the apse prevented people from being properly able to view the altar and sculpture, and a skylight was proposed but never realised.[951] The walls of the apse had previously been painted by a follower of Veronese with the stone architecture and figures which we can still see the faint remnants of today (Figs 275, 276); while Alvise del Friso, who produced many works for the church, also painted an *Annunciation* fresco on the wall above the apse (Fig. 277).[952] However the *Annunciation* was partly covered up just a few years later by the ceiling painting of *St Nicholas in Glory*.[953]

Other altars specifically mentioned by name in the Apostolic Visitation also include the altar of the Holy Cross and the altar to St Bernardino. Again, there were concerns over their positions at the front of the church, corresponding with Borromeo's stipulation that altars should not be placed against the interior walls of façades.[954] 'All the things which

[947] Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 18-21.
[948] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58h.
[949] Although the altar to St Martha was also completed in the seventeenth century, it was originally located in the church dedicated to the saint. Although Sabellico claimed that the distance between San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and St Martha was so short that it was could be covered by a arrow shot from a bow, it was a separate church and treated separately by the Apostolic Visitation, therefore it will not be considered in great detail in this thesis. Ibid, 56.
[950] ASV, Provveditori di Comun, reg Z, Matricola della Scuola di San Nicolò in San Nicolò, fol. 152r-v.
[951] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 65.
[952] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 255.
[953] Ibid, 258.
[954] Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 178.

are a hindrance to the church, shall be removed, among the present the altar of the Holy Cross and S. Bernardino' (Omnia qua ecclesiam impediunt, amoveantur, presentim inter altare S. Crucis e S. Bernardini).[955] The wooden altar of San Bernardino ('altare Bernardini ligneum') was also required to be 'made in stone and brick' ('fiat lateritus … lapidea').[956] Little else is known about the altar of St Bernardino although records from the early sixteenth century attest that it was commissioned by the Cagnolini family who had a wooden altar installed in the saint's honour.[957] Scarpa claims that the St Bernardino altar was demolished in 1583, and there is certainly no such altar extant in the church.[958] The Cagnolini family was all but extinct by the end of the sixteenth century so it is likely that the priests at San Nicolò made the decision to have the altar removed.[959] The sixteenth century saw many churches requiring altars to conform with overall systems, as was first seen in Sansovino's San Francesco della Vigna and even more extensively in Palladio's Redentore. It may well be that the altar to St Bernardino did not fit with the priests' aim for a more cohesive interior.

Few of San Nicolò's patrons were rich enough to commission their own altars, apart from the Balbi family.[960] Since 1500, at least, there was a chapel (next to the new chapel of St Niceta and closest to the porch wall of the church) named after the Balbi family, and it was this chapel to which the altar of the Holy Cross was moved.[961] The chapel was renamed the *cappella della Croce* although today it is now called the Chapel of the Addolorata (Fig. 278). In 1591 Patriarch Priuli praised 'the very beautiful painting and all of the decorations' ('la pallo molta bella e con tutti li debiti adornamenti'), noting that the altar had been moved as instructed by the Apostolic Visitation ('detto altare rimanovere da quel loco, conforme la visita apostolica').[962]

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955 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241v.
956 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol. 241r.
957 San Bernardino was a Franciscan priest from Siena who was a fervent and popular defender of the Catholic faith. He had visited Venice on many occasions to preach and when Bernardino died in 1444 he was quickly canonised (in 1450) thus explaining his popularity in Venice in 1500 when the altar was built. Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 48.
958 Pieces of wood on which were painted San Bernardino's recognisable attribute of a tablet monogrammed with IHS have been found in the sacristy and thus arguably come from the original altar. Ibid, 48, 58d.
959 Ibid, 48.
960 The Balbi family are listed continuously throughout the history of San Nicolò. At least one family member became a priest – Bartolomeo Balbi, in the 1530s - and a Costanza Balbi left a legacy in 1395 'pro restauratione et aptatione' – for the church's restoration and adaption. Ibid, 46, 87.
961 Ibid, 45.
962 ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fols 171v-172r.

Priuli's visit also indicated that the Chapel of the Visitation, located on the right side of the main altar, had now been restored (Fig. 279).[963] This certainly demonstrates that the priests of San Nicolò were working hard at creating a much more homogenous church interior and following the new guidelines from the Apostolic Visitation. The *scuola* of the Visitation had been set up at San Nicolò in 1474 and had become an active and integral part of the Mendicoli community.[964] The altar located there is now made of marble but the gilded wooden altar that Priuli would have seen remained until the eighteenth century, when it was unintentionally destroyed during the work done to have the new buttresses constructed.[965] It is unclear why the wooden altar was not replaced after the Apostolic Visitation in accordance with the Visitation's specific guidance on the subject, but it is very possible that finances played a part in this decision. The chapel also holds two sixteenth-century wall sculptures, one of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, and the other of St Elizabeth and the infant John the Baptist, as well as a painting by Alvise del Friso (who produced much of the new painted work in the church) of the *Assumption of the Virgin.* As well as being a chapel dedicated to the Visitation, this chapel was also the location of the baptismal font, until a new font was built in the early seventeenth century.[966]

The final chapel of note is the *cappella del santissimo sacramento,* or the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, which, as with the Chapel of the Visitation, had its own confraternity, founded in 1506.[967] The suitable positioning of the Sacramental tabernacle was of course of key importance to the Church during this period as we have already discussed and the Eucharist's theological and practical significance was stressed during the thirteenth session of the Council of Trent.[968] Patriarch Querini's early visitation of 1525 mentions inspecting the chapel, which at the time was along the south wall.[969] It was then moved at some point before 1581 to the current Chapel of the Madonna della Provvidenza next to

[963] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol. 172r.
[964] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 50.
[965] At this point an eighteenth century sculpture of St Anthony of Padua (sculptor unknown) was transferred into the chapel and the chapel is sometimes referred to as the chapel of St Anthony. Ibid, 72.
[966] Ibid, 50.
[967] Ibid, 58.
[968] Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, 75-84.
[969] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58b.

the high altar and, as mentioned earlier, replaced in the eighteenth century by the new chapel on the right hand wall next to the chapel for St Niceta.[970]

The Chapel of the Sacrament was one of the first areas visited by the Apostolic Visitation and the location was then noted as suitable.[971] Further visitations mainly focused on the chapel's ornaments – the lamp (observed by Priuli as maintained through donations from the parish – 'si mantiene da elemosine di parochiali'), the silver furnishings and, of course, the tabernacle.[972] The Apostolic Visitation's records show that the priests were 'maintaining the tabernacle on the altar' ('conservatis in altari … tabernaculo') being in the Chapel of the Sacrament during the Apostolic Visitation and described as being made of stone, with silver gilding on the inside, during the visitation of Morosini (il tabernacolo di pietra… d'argento dorato di dentro dipinto di dentro').[973] Significantly, none of the patriarchal visitations, including the Apostolic Visitation, required any major changes so the chapel's repositioning must have been regarded as a commendable decision. Its early installation, however, was part of a distinctly Venetian phenomenon, as Maurice Cope has established and as has been discussed in a previous chapter.[974] Thus a dedicated Chapel of the Sacrament was established at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli much earlier than one might expect, and demonstrates the great importance placed on the role of the Sacrament already in Venice and counters the argument – put forward by Cope himself – that Venice was the 'most independent of the church of Rome, the most dangerously Protestant city'.[975]

THE NEW BAPTISMAL FONT

One of the pronouncements from the Apostolic Visitation was that San Nicolò needed a new baptismal font to be designed in accordance with rules ('fons baptismi, ut in regulis').[976] These rules are not conveyed in the Visitation notes, while Carlo Borrmeo's

[970] The *scuola*'s banco, which had been installed at the site of the old chapel in 1553, was also moved in 1595 to sit next to the new chapel. Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 254-5.
[971] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol. 238r.
[972] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol. 171v; ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination; ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Morosini, busta 12, chiesa di S. Nicolò, no. 7, without pagination.
[973] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol. 238r; ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Morosini, busta 12, chiesa di S. Nicolò, no. 7, without pagination.
[974] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*.
[975] Ibid, 2.
[976] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite apostoliche, busta 1, chiesa di San Nicolai de Mendicolis, fol 241r.

Instructiones largely focuses on the different types of baptistery appropriate for larger churches but not one as small as San Nicolò, so we can only speculate as to what they meant.[977]

Patriarch Priuli's visit of 1591 took in the location then of the font in the left aisle near the *cappella della visitazione* when it was described as having a pyramidal lid ('il coperchio piramidali'), likely to be this one seen in Fig. 280.[978] Priuli's account does not explain whether the font had been modified in any way since the Apostolic Visitation, but further records and visitations suggest it was still unsuitable, and was therefore, perhaps, unchanged. Records from 1592 attest to 255 ducats being given for the creation of a font which was also when Alvise del Friso was commissioned to paint an image of St John the Baptist to accompany it on the wall outside the Chapel of St Niceta.[979] The font itself was located outside the chapel by the time of Patriarch Zane's visit in 1604, and it was recorded as having been 'nobly made with its marble columns' ('fabricato nobilmente con le sue colonne di marmo') suggesting that this was the new font and that it had been installed during the period between the two visits (Fig. 281).[980] Zane's words, and the fact that the font is not mentioned again in any detail in later visitations, suggest that it was now deemed acceptable. Today the two fonts are placed close to each other in the left aisle of the church but with the newer marble font in a more prominent position still in front of the chapel of St Niceta.

THE CHURCH ORGAN

The wooden panelling that can be seen covering the arches of the nave, also cover the church's organ which is situated on the back wall, leading out to the porch (Fig. 282). The organ itself was replaced in the eighteenth century, but the wooden carvings and painting panels, which were commissioned during the renewal of the organ in the late sixteenth century, have not changed.[981] Massimo Bisson argues that the organ was

[977] There were three styles of baptistery that Borromeo gave directions for – first a separate building like those seen at Pisa, Florence and Parma, and then two types that could be included in the body of the church. Voelker, *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones,* 247-281.
[978] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol. 173v.
[979] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli*, 58h.
[980] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination.
[981] Massimo Bisson, 'La collocazione dei cori e degli organi nelle chiese Veneziane del Cinquecento: tendenze innovatrici e conservatrici negli anni della "controriforma",' in *L'architecture religieuse Européenne au temps des réformes: héritage de la Renaissance et nouvelles problématiques*, edited by Monique Chatenet and Claude Mignot, Paris: Picard, 2009, 277.

previously situated along one of the side walls of the central nave but the new organ, redesigned in 1580, was placed on the back wall, facing the high altar, leaving a gap in the nave which would have been fixed when the iconostasis was removed and the wooden cladding was installed.[982]

The paintings on the organ loft were painted by Carletto Caliari and depict the story of St Martha, who, as already discussed, was an important saint for the Nicolotti, with the parish maintaining close relations with her nearby convent. The panels depict miraculous scenes from Martha's life, with the central panel telling the tale of Marta's victory over the legendary Leviathan-type monster of Tarascona.[983] The dating of Caliari's works is not fully clear, although it is likely that they were completed some time between 1570 and 1596.

A source from 17 November 1588 refers to the purchase of material for the organ doors, which are no longer *in situ,* with Scarpa lamenting their loss since they were covered in saintly scenes.[984] The outside of the doors portrayed San Nicolò receiving his bishop's robes, while the inside contained representations of Lazarus, Martha and Mary Magdalen.[985] (Massimo Bisson reconstructs their appearance in Fig. 283). The organ doors and some of the other panels on the organ structure were painted by Alvise dal Friso, another artist who worked frequently at San Nicolò and whose contribution to the larger painting schemes in the church will be analysed in more detail further on. The choices of paintings which clearly depict important works and noble deeds from the lives of saints with a personal connection to the church, is unsurprising in this climate of treating saints as exemplars of how Christian people should live good lives.

THE NEW PAINTING SCHEMES

When originally completed, the paintings at San Nicolò took in not just the ceiling and walls of the nave and the organ where they can still be seen today but also the aisles and around the choir.[986] There is some dispute as to when the paintings were conceived, if,

[982] Bisson, 'La collocazione dei cori e degli organi', 277-278.
[983] Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 29-30; Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 17-18.
[984] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58g.
[985] Domenico Martinelli, *Il ritratto overo le cose più notabili di Venezia diviso in due parti*, (1705 edition), 1683, 365.
[986] An artistic analysis of the paintings is the main focus of the two pocket-sized books on the church of San Nicolò that were produced by Stefania Mason Rinaldi and Andrea Gallo in the 1990s. While Scarpa

of course, they were all conceived together. Scarpa argues that the initial thoughts came in the 1550s, the result of the walls having recently been covered over with limewash, and before the wooden cladding was installed.[987] He notes that in 1554, priest Maria Pinardo wrote that the economic situation of the church was of great concern.[988] This being the case then the commission of a substantial painting scheme just a year later in 1555, would seem like a foolish decision; yet it is Scarpa's belief that the priest was concerned that, with the removal of earlier frescoes, the congregation could no longer read the 'mysteries of the faith' on the church walls, and thus their spiritual education was significantly lacking.[989] Pinardo therefore commissioned a whole corpus of new paintings to aid the spiritual wellbeing of his parishioners, clearly deciding this was more important than bolstering the church's ailing financial situation and that, as ever, the community would eventually find a way of funding this scheme. However, if a scheme were conceived in the 1550s, it is clear that the paintings themselves came much later and one can assume that the details would have evolved over that time.

The paintings were not mentioned in the Apostolic Visitation of 1581 so it is highly unlikely that they were in place by this time. However they are mentioned, and commended, by Patriarch Priuli during his visit of 1591. He claims that he was 'pleased to see the whole church gilded, and ornate with very beautiful paintings' ('piacere di vedere tutta la chiesa indorata, e ornate di quadri di pittura molto belli').[990] While a few years later in 1604, Patriarch Zane Zane records that the church 'is adorned with many vague and devout paintings' ('è adornata di molte vaghe et devote pitture').[991] They are then mentioned again by Patriarch Vendramin in 1612 who states 'the church is reduced in a very beautiful shape with beautiful and vague paintings under the attic and above' ('la chiesa è ridotta in assai bella forma con belle et vaghe pitture sotto il soffita di essa et sopra.').[992] Some of the works are mentioned by Carlo Ridolfi in his *Le Meraviglie dell'arte*

takes his reader on a tour of the church as it would have been in 1664, listing much of the missing work. Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 1995; Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: guida storico-artistica*, 1998; Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58h-58j.

[987] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58f.

[988] Ibid.

[989] Ibid.

[990] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Priuli, busta 5, chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, fol 171v.

[991] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Zane, busta 7, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 27, without pagination.

[992] ACP, Archivio Segreto, visite pastorali di Vendramin, busta 8, chiesa di S. Nicolò dei Mendicoli, no. 13, without pagination.

published in 1648, when attributing some of them to specific artists.[993] They are then mentioned in guidebooks throughout the centuries, starting with Martinioni's additions to Sansovino's *Venetia nobilissima et singolare* of 1663.[994]

None of the patriarchs specify what paintings they saw so it is not entirely clear as to what aspects of the scheme were complete by the time of their visits. Once complete, the paintings originally covered the space above the nave arches, the nave ceiling, the doors and underside of the organ, and the walls of the presbytery. Most were painted by three artists - Alvise del Friso (1544-1609), Jacopo Palma il Giovane (1548-1628) and Leonardo Corona (1561-1605), with del Friso also working at the nearby church of the Carmini.[995]

The paintings mostly recount the story of St Nicholas, and the life and passion of Christ, with scenes from the life of St Martha depicted on the organ covers (as already detailed in an earlier section). The most striking is of course the enormous central ceiling tondo depicting *The Glory of St Nicholas* painted by Francesco Montemezzano, who was active in Venice between 1584 and 1602, which suggests this was one of the pieces that was commissioned later although it may have been envisaged from the outset (Figs 284, 285). It clearly draws influence from Veronese's scenes from the *Life of Esther* at San Sebastiano (1556-7) (Fig. 286), Tintoretto's monumental ceiling compositions at the Scuola di San Rocco (1564-87) (Fig. 287), and Palma il Giovane's *Apotheosis of St Julian* at the church of San Giuliano (1585) (Fig. 288).[996]

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[993] Of the artists working at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, Ridolfi has biographies for Francesco Montemezzano, Leonardo Corona and Jacopo Palma il Giovane.
Leonardo Corona: 'In San Nicolò grande sopra l'una delle porte rappresento nostro Signore, che asiso sù l'asino se n'entra in Gerusalemme, e nel soffitto il Santo detto, che appare ad alcuni marinara abbattuti della furia de' venti.'
Francesco Montemezzano: 'Et in San Nicolò grande mirasi di lui in gran tondo il Santo Vescovo, che se ne và in Paradiso, e recinse tutto lo spatio del soffitto con belle architecture.'
Jacopo Palma il Giovane: 'In San Nicolò sopra le cornice vedesi il Santo Vescovo multiplicar miracolosamente il grano.'
Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte, ovvero, le vite degli illustri pittori Veneti e dello stato*, Vol. 2, Rome: Società Multigrafica Editrice, SOMU, 1965 (first published Venice, 1648), 103, 140, 184-185.
[994] Sansovino, *Venetia citta nobilissima et singolare*, 1663, 243.
[995] For more on the biographies of Alvise del Friso, Palma il Giovane and Leonardo Corona see: Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura Veneziana del Seicento*, Vol. 1., Venice: Alfieri, 1981, 22; 31-37; 48-49.
[996] Art historians – such as Peter Humfrey and Marie Louise Lillywhite - have already discussed these and other artists in relation to the Counter Reformation and the effect it had on their work. Some general reading on the subject includes: Humfrey, 'Altarpieces and altar dedications in Counter-Reformation Venice and the Veneto,' 371-387; Peter Humfrey, 'Veronese's High Altarpiece for San Sebastiano,' in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, edited by John Martin and Dennis Romano, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, 365-388; Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610', 2013.

Writing in 1648, Carlo Ridolfi described the painted architecture surrounding the central apotheosis scene as 'beautiful', and it also frames the tondo in a way seen in many ecclesiastical buildings at the time.[997] Perhaps this was also a nod by the priests to the sort of architecture that was condoned by the reform movement. The paintings flanking the central panel, and probably dating from the same time, are two rectangular panels by Leonardo Corona depicting *St Nicholas Saving the Sailors* and *St Nicholas Ordering a Tree of Pagan Worship to be Cut Down.* The first is a clear demonstration of Nicholas's saintly powers, and it recalls Tintoretto's *Saint Mark Rescuing a Saracen from Shipwreck* from 1562-66. The other painting was inspired by Veronese's *Cycle of San Nicolò della Lattuga* from 1582.[998]

A row of six paintings line each wall of the nave walls (Figs 289, 290). The scheme is a Christological cycle with the left wall depicting scenes from the life of Christ, the *Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, The Circumcision of Jesus, Baptism of Jesus, Prayer of Jesus in the Garden,* and *Kiss of Judas,* all painted by Alvise del Friso, and the right wall scenes from his passion, *Christ before Pilate, The Flagellation, Christ Carrying the Cross,* and *The Crucifixion,* all from the workshop of Veronese, as well as *The Deposition of Christ* by Alvise del Friso and *The Resurrection* by Jacopo Palma il Giovane. Naturally, the scheme brings to mind the Christological cycle at the Redentore, although, with the paintings at San Nicolò in place by 1591 and probably conceived long before, it is unlikely that the Redentore's works, which were commissioned in 1588, were of much influence.[999]

Of those completed but no longer extant, we do have some records. Fig. 277, for example, shows what remains of Alvise del Friso's *Eternal Father and the Annunciation* which was largely covered by the ceiling painting *The Glory of St Nicholas.*[1000] Further missing paintings are listed by Scarpa during his description of what a walk around the church would have looked like in 1664.[1001] Upon entering the church and turning left, Scarpa lists a *Marriage at Cana* and *Mutiplication of the Loaves* by del Friso in the left aisle, followed by a *Pool of Bethesda* by Corona, a further work by del Friso of the *Agony in the*

[997] Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte,* 140.
[998] Gallo and Mason Rinaldi, *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: arte e devozione*, 35.
[999] Tracy Cooper highlights the payment document for the altarpieces at the Redentore from 1588 and Ridolfi's assertion that Paolo Veronese started work on his *Baptism of Christ* in the same year. Tracy Cooper, *Palladio's Venice*, 252.
[1000] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 258.
[1001] Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58h-58j.

Garden.[1002] Corona provided an *Entry into Jerusalem* for the space above the entrance to the then Chapel of the Sacrament, with a further *Christ in Glory* by del Friso close by.[1003] Down the other direction of the left aisle works included the *Sacrifice of Abraham* (del Friso), *Cain and Abel* (Corona), and *Melkisedek's Sacrifice* (Corona).[1004] The right aisle contained further works including *Moses Drawing Water from a Rock* along the wall where the present Chapel of the Sacrament now is*, Crossing the Red Sea* (del Friso) which was situated above the door to the present sacristy, and other scenes including the Virgin Mary and the Holy Cross decorated the ceiling.[1005] Scarpa's account, based on his analysis of various guidebooks and other records, demonstrates that during the seventeenth century the church really was covered with paintings throughout almost all of the walls and ceilings and would surely have made an impressive visual impact on the church's parishioners.

Prior to the completion of the scheme at San Nicolò, there was a slowly growing movement in Venice towards commissioning paintings, both on altars and elsewhere in the church, that were more relevant and worked cohesively together. On the related subject of altarpiece dedications, Peter Humfrey's discussion of the Apostolic Visitation concludes that, as a whole, in Venice there was 'little attempt to make the various altar dedications in a particular church conform to any coherent overall pattern.'[1006] He goes on to highlight that, in 1581, there were far fewer altarpieces dedicated to Christ than elsewhere in Italy.[1007] This limited engagement with Christ was manifested not just in altarpiece dedications but with altarpiece subjects as well, although Humfrey's data on that subject only goes up to 1530.[1008] He agrees, however, that this pattern changed as the sixteenth century progressed, and in particular when the Council of Trent stressed the importance of the Eucharist.[1009] This meant that paintings involving Christ, and especially the theological messages implied in his teachings and the symbolism of his death, became more prevalent. The paintings at San Nicolò mark this change, as do other works from after the mid-century, such as the many depictions of Christ by Tintoretto in the Scuola di San Rocco.

1002 Scarpa, *Notizie della chiesa e parrocchia di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,* 58i.
1003 Ibid.
1004 Ibid.
1005 Ibid, 58j.
1006 Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 64.
1007 Ibid.
1008 Ibid, 65.
1009 Ibid, 74.

Humfrey also attests to the growing popularity for paintings that covered not just the altars but also the walls and ceilings of church interiors as well, which increased further after the publication of the decrees from the Council of Trent in 1564.[1010] What also became prevalent was the move away from lay-directed commissions towards more didactically coherent schemes such as those seen at the Redentore or San Sebastiano. The Redentore's altar commissions are the most coherent both architecturally and thematically in Venice, while the San Sebastiano paintings took on more scope in terms of location, these including Veronese's ceiling paintings from the *Life of Esther* (a story was often seen as a suitable equivalent to scenes of the Virgin), his scenes of St Sebastian's impending martyrdom in the chancel and actual martyrdom above the entrance portal, his frescoes including an *Assumption of the Virgin* in the cupola which are no longer extant, and his high altarpiece depicting the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints,* which again feature St Sebastian.[1011]

Marie-Louise Lillywhite's recent research also draws our attention to the old sacristy at San Giacomo dall'Orio where, in 1575, Palma il Giovane (who, of course, also worked on the Christological cycle at San Nicolò) was commissioned to complete a number of works with strong theological themes.[1012] The sacristy paintings tell stories from the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ's crucifixion and the significance of the Eucharist.[1013] Lillywhite states that:

[1010] Peter Humfrey, *Painting in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995, 187.

[1011] The altarpieces for the side chapels in San Sebastiano do not cohere with this iconographic programme. For example, Titian provided a *Saint Nicholas Enthroned* for the chapel founded by jurist Niccolò Crasso and the other altarpieces are similarly concerned with saints related in some way to the family commissioning the altarpiece. The high altarpiece is also a lay commission, that of Lise Querini Soranzo and the altarpiece depicts saints which are the name saints of various members of the Soranzo family. Originally commissioned in 1559, Humfrey believes that the actual production of the painting did not take place until about 1564-65. While it includes saints that were important to the lay family who commissioned it rather than the dedication of the church as a whole, the way those saints are depicted does show consideration of the new reforming guidelines as outlined in the decrees of the Council of Trent which were published in 1564 and which stipulated that saints should be represented in a way which made them examples to the faithful. The design of the altarpiece frame also coheres with the architectural patterns throughout the rest of the church. At the same time Humfrey argues that 'it illustrates the continued resistance to the full rigor of that reform in defense of traditional patrician privilege,' which, considering its dating is not surprising. The work clearly is adapting to the guidelines but still remaining true to the priorities of the Soranzo family. Humfrey, 'Veronese's High Altarpiece for San Sebastiano,' 365-388.

[1012] Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610,' 59-91.

[1013] Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610,' 64.

> By way of the careful visual links made between the old and new order, in which the Old Testament is used to prophesy the institution of the sacrament in the New Testament, the iconography and choice of subject matter are used as weapons against ignorance and doubt and through this confirm Catholic doctrine regarding the Eucharist.[1014]

Through its scenes from Christ's death and resurrection, San Nicolò's painting scheme could certainly be argued to be attempting to achieve this same goal.

Paintings covering the nave walls were still quite rare in Venice during this period, although they were more popular elsewhere. While the San Nicolò scheme was being completed in the 1580s and 1590s, other comparable examples were being produced in San Basilio, Santa Sofia, Santi Apostoli, and San Giuliano, the only other church where the scheme, another Christological cycle, remains in place (Fig. 291).[1015] It is likely that the San Nicolò scheme is the earliest.[1016] Worthen attributes this development to schemes already in place in the *scuole grandi* and in the Doge's Palace which was richly decorated following the fires of 1574 and 1577 (Fig. 292).[1017] He goes on to suggest that churches like San Nicolò which copied the all-encompassing scheme of the Doge's Palace may have done so as a 'kind of patriotic celebration, a declaration that such adornment befits an organization that is truly Venetian.'[1018] Whether the priests and confraternities of San Nicolò saw it quite that way remains to be seen, although Worthen reminds us that the Nicolotti did have a connection with the doge as a result of their *gastaldo grande* and his integral role in Venetian ceremonies, therefore seen as a 'local reflection of the doge' and thus allowing for the church of San Nicolò to become a similar reflection of the Doge's Palace.[1019]

The parish priest at San Giacomo dell'Orio – Giovanni Maria da Ponte - can also be compared with the parish priest at San Nicolò who, at the time of the scheme's commission, was Maria Pinardo. Lillywhite observes that it was growing increasingly popular during this time for Venetian priests to take on the redecoration of their churches – both commissioning new works and paying for them - themselves, as Carlo

[1014] Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610,' 64-65.
[1015] Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 275.
[1016] Ibid, 276.
[1017] Ibid.
[1018] Ibid.
[1019] Ibid, 276-7.

Borromeo was doing in Milan.[1020] As previously discussed, the Balbi chapel at San Nicolò and the altar dedicated to San Bernardino were lay commissions, but such commissions became increasingly side-lined, and the majority of the church's pictorial choices would soon be made by the priests. They were no doubt supported by the local community and the community's views of such initiatives were solicited and listened to by the church, but the final decisions would have been made by the parish priests.

The example set at San Nicolò with its scheme of paintings around the walls of the nave was again copied by the Carmini in the 1660s, many decades after the San Nicolò group was put in place. Instead of a Christological cycle the Carmini's cycle focused on scenes from the lives of Carmelite saints.[1021] (Figs 261, 262) The Carmini also commissioned Giovanni Lambranzi to produce ceiling paintings depicting the Apotheosis of the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and scenes from the life of the prophet Elijah. The ceiling paintings were removed in 1815.[1022] For a church with such funding problems as San Nicolò it is particularly interesting that it was at the forefront in its adoption of painting schemes that covered the walls and ceilings of the nave, as well as the aisles, and that followed a Christological narrative. It shows how proactive, forward-thinking and open-minded the priests and laity at San Nicolò were.

[1020] Lillywhite, 'The Counter Reformation and the Decoration of Venetian Churches 1563-1610,' 60-61.
[1021] For more details of the Carmelite scheme see: Moretti and Savini Branca, *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Carmini: arte e devozione*, 28-30.
[1022] Moretti and Savini Branca, *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Carmini: arte e devozione*, 14.

CONCLUSIONS

In its heyday in the early seventeenth century, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli would have been a cohesive, confident promulgator of a distinctly Venetian approach to the Counter Reformation. Like many of the churches in this study, San Nicolò does not retain all of these innovative features so the impact today is perhaps less than it once was, now balancing Byzantine, Gothic and Baroque styles together, with varying degrees of success. Despite its backwater location, San Nicolò played an important role as one of the first churches to fully adopt the values of the Counter Reformation and redesign its interior to accommodate them. The lack of well-known, well-off patrons was negated by the collective efforts of the whole community and, in particular, the various *scuole* that were essential for this radical renovation to take place.

The Chapel of the Sacrament, commissioned and built in the mid sixteenth century, could not be faulted by the Apostolic Visitation and the vast painting scheme that followed received repeated praise from multiple patriarchs. For a church of its size and financial situation, surprise at the amount of paintings is only compounded by the amount of other changes that took place in such a short time frame. Taking a different approach to Santo Stefano and some of the city's other Gothic churches, San Nicolò did not aim for a white, bright interior to emphasise its size and literal and spiritual openness. Instead, the church applied a gold adorned wooden cladding centering around the new iconostasis and crucifix, that had distinct parallels with the interior of San Marco and the Doge's Palace. The result still achieved a much more open interior than before, with light glittering in gold rather than shining with bright marble.

We can also posit some conclusions about what San Nicolò can tell us about both the role of the patriarch during this period and also the role of local communities. The numerous visitations throughout the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, demonstrate the extent of patriarchal involvement in the affairs of each of the city's parish churches. The patriarch and his team were very active during this time and were vocal in their reshaping of the Venetian Church: both each church individually and the system as a whole. The patriarchal, and in particular, the Apostolic, visitations, clearly played a significant role in the reformation of San Nicolò and the many other parish churches throughout the city. It suggests that, while the Venetian government carefully

chose patriarchs who they believed would put their interests above those of Rome, many of the reform recommendations made by the patriarchs, which no doubt would have been approved of those higher up in the Church, were commonly agreed both in Venice, and elsewhere, to be of importance to church development.

The successes of San Nicolò not only come down to the leadership of the patriarchs but also to the determination of the parish priests. We must remember that one of the most contentious issues between Venice and Rome was the fact that Venice allowed her citizens to elect their parish priests. This feature is no doubt integral to the relationship of those priests at San Nicolò and the local community that they served. They were able to persuade families with claims to altars to give them up and to encourage those who could, to contribute financially to the church as a whole.

However, what cannot be forgotten is that the parishioners and their confraternities were equally vital to the success of the reformed church of San Nicolò and their contribution can be summed up in this, albeit exaggerated, line in the records of the *scuola* of the Blessed Sacrament, from 1619, praising 'those excellent men, our forefathers, […] have made this Church distinguished, that the fame of her beauty has spread through almost the entire world' (li nostri bonissimi homini antenati […] hanno fatto questa Chiesa cosi honorata, che quasi per tutto il Mondo è sparsa la fama di sua bellezza').[1023]

[1023] ASV, Provveditori di Comun, reg. AA., fol 213, in Worthen, 'Soazoni, or the Venetian reformation of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,' 260.

CONCLUSIONS

> We must not, of course, assume that the publication of the Tridentine decrees early in 1564 had a more instantaneous effect on the character of religious imagery than it did on other areas of religious life. Over the past two generations historians have taught us that the Counter Reformation (if it is still legitimate to use that term) was a very gradual process, beginning well before Trent and enduring long after it; and similarly, we have learned that the decrees were implemented in different diocese with widely varying degrees of speed and efficiency, depending on the energy and commitment of the local bishop and on a range of other local circumstances…. We should [also] have learned that works of art are themselves informative historical documents.[1024]

In his assessment of Veronese's high altarpiece for San Sebastiano, Humfrey's words on the effect of the Counter Reformation on artworks could also justifiably apply to the rest of the rest of the church as well. Art historians have long engaged with the implications of the Counter Reformation on Venetian religious artworks and now this thesis tackles the topic in depth for the first time with regard to Venice's ecclesiastical architecture. The gradual process of change is clearly seen in the four examples examined here. Each of the four churches also demonstrate the different levels of swiftness with which changes were carried out and the impact that the various ecclesiastic and community bodies connected with each church had on the time frame, and the extent and significance of the changes that took place. While other factors, of course, influenced the changes implemented to each of the churches considered — some of which, especially matters relating to patronage, were touched on in this thesis — we are still able to offer some provisional conclusions about the extent to which the churches examined demonstrate a clear engagement with the Counter Reformation movement; what is more, these findings are likely to be applied equally successfully to the majority of Venice's other churches.

One of the key questions that this thesis asked was what exactly were the changes that took place at each of the four case study churches. Using a mix of previously untapped archival material, photographs and secondary sources, and an all-encompassing approach focusing on architecture but not ignoring the material and artistic changes, this thesis has established quite clearly what the changes were for each individual church and parallels can be drawn between them to show how typical those changes were throughout the

[1024] Humfrey, 'Veronese's High Altarpiece for San Sebastiano,' 369.

city. Whether the church was fully rebuilt or the skeleton kept intact, there were fundamental changes to the approach of all of the key facets of a church's architecture and its interior arranagement in all four of the examples. The floor plans of the newly built churches of San Nicolò di Lido and San Moisè are typical of the prevailing styles for both monastic and parish churches at this time. San Nicolò di Lido's rectangular layout with the space for side chapels and connecting corridors throughout the building harks back to the Redentore most obviously but also San Francesco della Vigna and San Giobbe. While San Moisè is a large square site with altarpieces situated on side walls, ideal for the traditions of preaching that were prevalent in Venice's parish churches.

While San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and Santo Stefano did not have the advantage of restructuring their layouts in the same way, in all four examples, the restructuring of the high altar was a particular cause for concern, given the renewed importance placed on the Sacrament and the Mass by the Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent. At Santo Stefano and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli all internal structures that blocked the laity's view of the high altar were removed (Santo Stefano's choir) or redesigned (San Nicolò dei Mendicoli's iconostasis). Santo Stefano's high altar was also entirely rebuilt in the prevailing architectural style (as at Santi Giovanni e Paolo and echoed for decades to come with later examples including the Gesuati and the Scalzi) while San Moisè's sculptural approach to the high altar was unusual in Venice it harks towards the work of Gian Lorenzo Bernini and the Roman Baroque. San Nicolò di Lido's high altar also drew influence from further afield and the whole church was designed around making sure access to the high altar was never impeded.

Significant attention was also placed on the Chapel of the Sacrament, with major restructuring work being committed at both San Nicolò dei Mendicoli and Santo Stefano in particular for this aspect of the church interior. The choices made at San Moisè by the vocal Scuola del Sacramento here have also revealed much about the importance of this feature both the monastic communities and parish *scuole* groups. That there is typically more archival material on the Chapel of the Sacrament than almost any other aspect in each of these four churches, supports the much earlier findings of Maurice Cope on Venetian Chapels of the Sacrament that attest to the importance of this site for Venetians from early on in the period of reform.[1025]

[1025] Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century*.

The Byzantine and Gothic tendencies towards darkness and excessive decoration are countered by the inclusions of large windows, typically in the Palladian thermal style, and clean white interior walls with classicising columns, cornices and barrel-vaulted ceilings. At the newly built churches of San Nicolò di Lido and San Moisè the interiors take much from prevailing Venetian examples such as the Redentore, San Giorgio Maggiore and San Francesco della Vigna. Santo Stefano echoes these churches as much as possible with the constraints of the brick wall already in place by removing the frescoes, covering the walls in a limewash and updating the windows. It is only at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli where the effect is significantly different. The response by churches like San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, the Carmini, San Giuliano, San Giacomo dall'Orio and many others, to clad their churches in wooden panelling, using gilding and paintings to bring colour, as well as light, into their interiors, demonstrates a very different approach to prevailing architectural aesthetic of the Counter Reformation. This alternative design and its prevalence in many Venetian parish churches in the late sixteenth century shows that the work of Palladio was not the only one of influence in the city. It also demonstrates that there is a significant gap in our understanding of the prevailing trends outside of Palladio's oeuvre and influences and there is much more to be learnt from restored churches in particular.

Regarding façades, it is only the new ones at San Moisè and San Nicolò di Lido that are of relevance to this study, although it should not be forgotten that additional thermal windows were added to the façade of Santo Stefano. While San Nicolò di Lido's façade is incomplete, the material available does lean towards a Palladian style of façade which was typical of many, although not all, of the façades in the city at the time.[1026] San Moisè's façade is the anomaly here. The ornate self-aggrandising façade was certainly the most dramatic of a series of facades in this vein in Venice, but it is not typical of the type of façade common to the post Council of Trent environment where such profane displays were frowned on.[1027] It instead reminds us that while the intentions of the parish might

[1026] Douglas Lewis expands on this highlighting Longhena's influence, as well as that of the Roman Baroque. Lewis, *The Late Baroque Churches of Venice,* 4, 14-15.

[1027] Coleti attests to the popularity of memorialising tributes inside San Moisè – crested gravestones, plaques and sculptures – as was the case for many Venetian churches. In Santo Stefano Baldassare Longhena's monument to Bartolomeo d'Alviano is one such contemporary example. Despite the disapproval of such practices from the Reform movement, and Venice's own concerns as a city which discouraged individuals from self-aggrandisement, the practice remained popular throughout this period. The façade of San Moisè however took the practice to a new level and honoured a whole family on a

have been to follow the guidelines more closely, financial woes would have made generous individual bequests an attractive solution. It shows a different approach to that of San Nicolò di Lido which appears also to have run out of funding for this crowning feature. At San Nicolò it is feasible that they may have decided that it was better to have no façade at all rather than one that included profane elements or was not in keeping with the stylistic intentions of the Cassinese Congregation. Indeed, the monks at San Nicolò did appear to have retained control of all of the other aspects of the church and it is likely that they wished to do the same with the façade. At San Moisè, perhaps the church's location on many processional routes meant that a bare façade would have been more noticeable and embarrassing than a façade that did not truly reflect how closely San Moisè had followed the reform movement elsewhere within their new church building.

The numerous voices involved in each church demonstrate that responding to the demands of the Counter Reformation was not easy and there were many competing influences at play here. Chief among them were the Venetian patriarchs and the monastic communities, however the small *scuole* and the effects of individuals such as the Fini family cannot be discounted either. The actions of the *scuole* exemplify the argument that runs through this thesis, which is that church reform was not solely realised on a top-down basis, imposed on churches and their communities from above; rather, it was often the communities themselves that were listening to recommendations, were aware of debates being conducted at the time, and were instrumental in driving reform for themselves as a result.

Many of the patriarchs were zealous reformers and made their mark in theological scholarship and architectural renewal. Their greatest success may perhaps be San Pietro di Castello, but the consistent renovation and rebuilding of the majority of Venice's parish churches attests to their wide ranging involvement with the city's architectural reform. The patriarchal visitations throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries further strengthen this point. Patriarchal visitations were not undertaken before 1525 (with Patriarch Querini) and it is only after the Apostolic Visitation that they begin to

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monumental scale. The effusion of the floral decoration only enhances, rather than detracts, from the fact that this façade is a glorification of the Fini family: brothers, Vincenzo, Girolamo and son Vincenzo in particular. It is hard to ignore the fact that despite the careful diligence taken in designing the interior, the exterior of San Moisè completely goes against all reforming guidance. Niccolò Coleti, *Monumenta ecclesiæ Venetæ Sancti Moysis: ex ejus tabulario potissimum, atque aliunde, ac secundum antistitum seriem, deprompta digesta, hodiernoque illius præsuli, Joanni Baptistæ Moscheni dictata*, Venice: Sebastianus Coleti Typographus, 1758.

take place regularly with each successive patriarch visiting the majority of the city's parish churches during their tenure. The patriarchs were in tune with the changing religious climate and engaged with each parish church individually to help facilitate the necessary changes.

San Nicolò di Lido's close relationship with the rest of the Cassinese Congregation demonstrates the communication between Venice and elsewhere, and reminds us that monastic bodies in Venice adopted various responses when determining how similar their buildings should be to those surrounding them in Venice, and those belonging to their order elsewhere in Italy. San Nicolò di Lido contains many Cassinese features (which by then were the norm for many new churches) as well as many Venetian ones given the size of the church which suited a framework more like the Redentore than San Giorgio Maggiore. The monks wrote frequently to their superiors asking for permission to rebuild the church and updating them on the progress of the work. The Carmini, on the other hand, renovated with a very Venetian design with its use of the wooden framework, gilding, paintings and *soazoni*. At the Carmini, as at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, it was the local parish *scuole* that were predominant in decision making. It was the Scuola del Sacramento at San Nicolò that prompted the reforms at the church, long before the Apostolic Visitation and the regular patriarchal visits of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

It is only at San Moisè where there is more of a divide between the ideals of the reform movement and the desires of individuals. On the one hand, the church's *scuole,* especially the Scuola del Sacramento, were very proactive in the rebuilding of the church, working with a sense of community and shared values. On the other, the Fini family, while generous in their financial donations, were single-minded in their intentions for those donations. Their desire for a family memorial on a church façade is very much against the intentions of the Counter Reformation which condemned such profane gestures. Compromise was a necessity of the reform movement and the example of the façade at San Moisè is a stark reminder of it. In Venice, this need for compromise was famously anticipated years beforehand with the trial of Paolo Veronese on account of his problematic *Feast in the House of Levi* originally conceived as, and called, a *Last Supper.*[1028]

[1028] David Chambers, Brian S. Pullan, and Jennifer Fletcher, eds., *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 232-236.

The verdict of the Inquisition – to amend and rename the painting rather than destroy it and imprison Veronese – attests to the understanding of the authorities in charge of enforcing the decrees of the Council of Trent that to expect perfection from a broad and diverse Church was impossible, and that accommodations could be made. Despite the firm issuance of the decrees from Trent, not even Borromeo was able to enact either those or his own written reforms perfectly throughout his diocese. The *Instructiones* acknowledges that dilemma in some ways by providing a variety of alternative options for churches depending on their size, location and other local factors. Even his flagship project – Milan Cathedral – was not immune to the necessity of compromise.[1029] In Venice, as we see in these chapters, concessions and compromises were vital for keeping the various groups connected to each church satisfied and as a result, each response is unique and interesting.

It is also clear that by the time the San Moisè façade was conceived, the impetus for the Catholic Church's reform was declining in Venice and other factors were becoming more pressing. The church paved the way for a more relaxed attitude to ecclesiastical design, and in contrast to the clean, simple interiors of San Nicolò di Lido and the Redentore, it hints at the extravagant, ornate style that would characterise the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Venice and elsewhere in Italy. The rich interiors of the Scalzi and Gesuiti, and the Barbaro family tribute on the façade of Santa Maria del Giglio, are but a few of those later examples.

The chapters on the restored churches of Santo Stefano and San Nicolò dei Mendicoli highlight that there is much more to be learnt about renovation in Venice during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – a time when such renovation was at its most pivotal and enduring in Venice. San Moisè and San Nicolò di Lido both draw from Palladio's churches but are also not mere copies of his prototypes. These examples barely scratch the surface of the many under-researched churches in Venice that equally exemplify the reality of church building during this time. This is why establishing the histories of these churches has been so integral to this study and will be important to further works in this field. The work here demonstrates many similarities of approach

[1029] The façade of the cathedral was one of the main challenges for Borromeo and, despite his and Pellegrino Tibaldi's attempts, a final design was not determined during his lifetime. Rudolf Wittkower, George R. Collins, and Margot Wittkower, *Gothic versus Classic: Architectural Projects in Seventeenth Century Italy*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974, 33-64.

throughout Venice, using examples like the Redentore and San Francesco della Vigna which have been well researched, and others, like the Carmini or San Cassiano which are still in need of further research not just into the effects of the Counter Reformation but the influences throughout their histories.

Given the use of artists like Heinrich Meyring and Cosimo Fanzago, as well as the clear connections and communication between Venice and Milan, the findings of this thesis suggest that there is much to be gained by expanding our knowledge of Venetian church architecture in comparison to Milanese, Roman and even Florentine architecture of this period. Despite the distinct differences between the architecture of these cities, it would be instructive to gain a better understanding of the commonalities of the reform movement that transcended city heritages and were almost ubiquitous throughout architecture produced in the main years of the Counter Reformation period.

Studies into the effects of the Counter Reformation in other Italian cities are long established. Indeed, two of the most foundational examples are two of the oldest. In 1975 Milton Joseph Lewine published his thesis on the interiors of newly built Roman churches and oratories during the period from the Sack of Rome in 1527 to the founding of the church of Madonna de' Monti in 1580. Lewine argues that this latter church epitomises the most appropriate solutions to all of the problems faced by church architects during the previous fifty years, as well as pointing to a new strand for future architectural development.[1030] Lewine's study naturally focused great attention on the Catholic Church's reform movement, and the effect on church architecture of the doctrines that came out of the Council of Trent. Rome, as the heart of the Catholic Church, was also the heart of the reform movement and Lewine's research helps us to understand how that was translated into the city's churches. While all of the buildings have been subsequently amended over the centuries, Lewine worked to reconstruct the original appearance of these churches built during the most pivotal period of the Church's reforming efforts and also to track the change in style from 1527 when the invasion of Rome by Charles V prompted the Church to become more stringent and rigorous in its activities, believing the Sack to have been a punishment for poor morals, up to 1580, when standards started to relax and evolve in a new direction.

[1030] Lewine, *The Roman Church Interior, 1527-1580*, 2-3.

Just a few years later, in 1979, Marcia Hall published *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce, 1565-1577*. Hall's study looked at the phenomenon of church renovation in the context of the Counter Reformation.[1031] Like Lewine, Hall draws attention to the fact that the need for reform had been considered and practical restructuring of existing ecclesiastical architecture had been implemented by some of the more committed branches of the numerous religious orders – such as the Cassinese Congregation – long before the Council of Trent was convened.[1032] However, many were waiting for the results of the Council of Trent before rushing into expensive improvement projects and Duke Cosimo de' Medici, Hall's example, was one such person. Soon after Trent had finished, however, Cosimo committed to renovating the churches of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce in Florence and commissioned Giorgio Vasari to supervise the work, which included the removal of the rood screens and the resituating of the monks' choirs behind the high altars, rebuilding the nave chapels and the installation of new painted altarpiece cycles.[1033] Cosimo's approach was similar to many others and a burgeoning industry of church restoration grew up during the period to ensure that the older churches became compliant with the main requirements of the reform movements.[1034]

As Lewine demonstrates, Rome was a hive of building activity before, during and after the Council of Trent. A bellwether for the Catholic Church, the action in Rome was soon being copied throughout the Catholic heartlands of Europe and missionary locations beyond. Marcia Hall's study draws our attention to the fact that not only were new churches being built, but older churches were being renovated so that they too, could, as much as was possible within the limits of their original structures, adhere to the new Counter Reformation requirements for churches. Rome, with churches like the Madonna de' Monti (1580) or the Gesù (1568-80), and Milan with examples including San Barnaba and San Vittore al Corpo, are seen to be the heart of the reforming

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[1031] Marcia B. Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce, 1565-1577*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1979, 1.
[1032] Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce, 1565-1577*, 3.
[1033] Ibid, 1-15.
[1034] Although she made excellent headway into bringing church renovations during the Counter Reformation to academic attention, Hall's study does have its limitations. She does not go into much detail into the wider reform movement that was taking place in Florence at the time and does not adequately explain where these churches fitted in with the rest of the city's response to the Counter Reformation. Hall also makes limited observations about new churches being built during the period, which surely would have been relevant in influencing Vasari and Cosimo's decisions at Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce.

movement. However, as Hall demonstrates, smaller cities were also integral to the movement and Venice was one of those cities. While the Counter Reformation's effect on Venetian architecture has not been discounted before now, neither has it been fully appreciated. It is also the case that connections between Venice and these other cities have not been explored. Indeed, even Palladio's experiences and influences from his time in Rome, nor his communication with Martino Bassi on the subject of the Milan cathedral façade, have been unpacked fully to consider how much they shaped his (and therefore inevitably many other Venetian architects) approaches to designing reform driven architecture.[1035]

Thus, it is through the lens of the Counter Reformation, one of the most transformational factors in society at the time, that we can best approach future research into the history of Venice's churches during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This era is marked by church transformation – both the old, as we have seen with San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, Santo Stefano and similar examples such as San Giacomo dell'Orio and the Carmini, and the new, as with San Moisè, San Nicolò di Lido and San Cassiano. While each of these churches is tied either to the parish system or a monastic body in Venice, each is also unique, with their own histories and communities which affect their previous and current architectural decisions.

This thesis makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how Venice approached this important religious juncture by demonstrating how typical Venetian churches responded, highlighting the areas of unity and those of individuality. It opens the door to further studies by demonstrating how rich a vein this field of research is and how much more there is to uncover. Ultimately, it turns the focus away from the works of Palladio or Longhena, and highlights Venice's more typical parish and monastic buildings and the networks of communities that surround them. Almost every church in the city was transformed during this period, and while the Redentore and Salute are indeed magnificent buildings, alone they cannot tell us everything about Venice's

[1035] Palladio wrote two guidebooks during his time in Rome: *L'antichità di Roma di M. Andrea Palladio, raccolta brevemente da gli auttori antichi, & moderni* and *Descritione de le chiese, stationi, indulgenze & reliquie de Corpi Sancti, che sono in la città de Roma* which were published in 1554 and followed his trips to Rome between 1541 and 1554. For a translation and analysis see: Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks, trans. & ed., *Palladio's Rome: A Translation of Andrea Palladio's Two Guidebooks to Rome*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
Palladio was consulted on the design for the façade of Milan cathedral along with Giorgio Vasari and Vignola, although it was Pellegrino Tibaldi's design that Borromeo believed fully epitomised his reforming vision for church architecture. For more on Palladio's engagement with that project see: Andrew Hopkins, *Italian Architecture from Michelangelo to Borromini,* Thames and Hudson: London, 2002, 75.

ecclesiastic climate during the Counter Reformation. The real story of Venice's churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries comes from the ordinary every day monastic and parish churches with their small communities, unique rituals and specific points of pride.

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