

## The Reformation of Catholic Festival Culture in Eighteenth-Century Austria

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When Friedrich Nicolai, a leading figure of the Berlin Enlightenment, visited Vienna in 1781, the novel experience of Baroque Catholicism made him feel that he was in a new world, one of which he strongly disapproved.

Ein Protestant glaubt, wenn er dergleichen Sachen sieht, in einer ganz neuen Welt zu seyn. Er hat von Jugend auf sich eingeprägt, der Dienst Gottes bestehe in Geist und Wahrheit; und hier findet er, daß man Ceremonien und Flitterstaat, Werkheiligkeit und Pfafferey für Gottesdienst ausgiebt.<sup>1</sup>

[When a Protestant sees such things, he thinks he is in an entirely newworld. Since his youth he has been convinced that God's service consists in spirit and truth; and here he finds that ceremoniers and tawdry ornaments, sanctity based on works and priestly mummeries, are passed off as service to God.]

He writes scornfully about the painted images of saints on whose heads people placed wigs made of real hair. He reports that whenever he crossed the bridge over the Tiefer Graben, he saw people kneeling before the image of St John Nepomuk, known as the Miracle-Worker.<sup>2</sup> Besides its bad taste and superstition, Viennese Catholicism was disorderly. He describes a church service:

So sehr auf der einen Seite in den Messen, die vielen Andächteleien, das Niederknien, Verzucken des Gesichts, Bekreuzen, Schlagen an die Brust, u. dgl. einen Protestanten befremden muß; so befremdend ist von der andern Seite, die wenige Stille, Ruhe und Andacht, die sich bey der messehörenden Versammlung findet. Ein *Hochamt* in einer großen Kirche in Wien ist wie ein Jahrmarkt: alles läuft untereinander, und man hört ein beständiges Sumsen.<sup>3</sup>

If on the one hand a Protestant must be repelled by the many pious practices, kneeling down, grimacing, crossing oneself, beating one's breast, etc., during mass; it is repellent, on the other hand, that one finds so little silence, rest and devotion among the assembly hearing mass. A high mass in a great church in Vienna is like a fair; everyone is running about, and you hear a continual buzzing.

Nicolai's impressions were somewhat superficial. He spent only three weeks in Vienna, from 9 to 29 June 1781, and he took some of his information from pamphlets. For by the time of his visit, Baroque Catholicism was already waning. Enlightened clerics had for years been combating what they considered the superstitious excesses of popular religion. Joseph II, assuming sole rule on the death of his mother Maria Theresia in 1780, had given a powerful impetus to Church reform. So Nicolai perceived only a little of the overwhelmingly rich festival culture of Austrian Baroque Catholicism, built up by the Counter-Reformation. It was not

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nicolai, *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz im Jahre 1781. Nebst Bemerkungen über Gelehrsamkeit, Industrie, Religion und Sitten*, 8 vols (Berlin and Stettin: no pub., 1783-7), v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolai, ii. 620.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolai, v. 58.

only the great festivals of the Church – Easter, Christmas, and Whitsun – that were celebrated, but also a number of festivals dedicated to the Virgin Mary and numerous saints. In the early seventeenth century almost a quarter of the year consisted of ‘Feiertage’. Festival culture linked the House of Habsburg closely to the Church by the Emperor’s participation in the Corpus Christi procession (still commemorated by Joseph Roth in *Radetzkmarsch*) in which the sacred Host was carried by a priest.<sup>4</sup> In addition there were processions to ward off the danger of plague or war, and pilgrimages to shrines such as Mariazell. These high visible celebrations strengthened popular piety in an age without widespread literacy.

Before discussing festival culture in more detail, some historical issues need to be critically addressed. Historians of religion have long questioned the conception of the Middle Ages as an ‘age of faith’. I follow the findings of the French historian Jean Delumeau.<sup>5</sup> While an informed and active Christianity existed in the towns, the country-dwellers took part in Christian rituals but also adhered to pagan practices which had been superficially Christianized, and which survived down to the nineteenth century. Thus a pre-Christian holy well was renamed St Winifred’s Well and was a licensed place of devotion.<sup>6</sup> Popular religion was practical and materialistic. People prayed not for spiritual blessings but for a good harvest, a happy marriage, recovery from sickness. Saints were imagined as people who had to be conciliated but might be punished: even from nineteenth-century France we hear of villagers whipping the images of saints who had not granted their requests.<sup>7</sup> God and Christ were often imagined in familiar terms. Many folk-tales, such as those collected by Franz Xaver von Schönwerth in a remote corner of nineteenth-century Bavaria, are humorous anecdotes in which either God or Christ jests with St Peter.<sup>8</sup> Death was often imagined in materialist terms as a transition to another place; food and possessions were sometimes left in graves so that the dead could enjoy them in the next world.<sup>9</sup>

In Catholic countries, the replacement of popular superstition with some degree of educated religion was the work of the Counter-Reformation. The Council of Trent, which met from 1545 to 1562, as part of its efforts to resist the Reformation, instituted a programme of missionary activity to teach the faithful and strengthen their loyalty to their religion. Historians have described a process of ‘confessionalization’, whereby churches defined their stance by confessional statements and ‘tried to make their confessional statements essential parts of the consciousness and sense of identity

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4 Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca: Ursprung und Entwicklung barocker Frömmigkeit in Österreich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1959), p. 25.

5 See Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation*, tr. Jeremy Moiser (London: Burns & Oates, 1977); *La Peur en Occident: XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1978); *Le Péché et la peur: La culpabilisation en Occident, XIII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1983). For an assessment of Delumeau’s work, see J.K. Powis, ‘Repression and autonomy: Christians and Christianity in the historical work of Jean Delumeau’, *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), 366-74.

6 Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 103; cf. Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire*, p. 165.

7 Judith Devlin, *The Superstitious Mind: French Peasants and the Supernatural in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 17-18.

8 See Schönwerth, *Aus der Oberpfalz: Sitten und Sagen*, 3 vols. (Augsburg: M. Rieger, 1857-59); Devlin, p. 23.

9 Devlin, p. 90.

of their followers', and co-operated with the state 'to create both religious uniformity and a wider popular identification with Catholic beliefs and practices'.<sup>10</sup>

The campaign to establish informed Catholic practice was very much geared to localities: 'the *international* devotional movement was realized in *particular* cults'.<sup>11</sup> Famous preachers such as Abraham a Sancta Clara and Procopius of Templin encouraged local religious customs. Many shrines, including wayside calvaries, sprang up during the Counter-Reformation. The cult of the Virgin predominated; it was promoted by Ferdinand II and by Procopius of Templin, and established at Mariazell, Maria-Taferl, Maria-Dreieichen, Maria-Rasing, and elsewhere. Other cults were those of St Joseph and a number of native saints: St Leopold, a twelfth-century Margrave of Babenberg, who founded Klosterneuburg; St Florian, St Coloman, and the spurious St Domitian.<sup>12</sup>

The promotion of local cults implies the active participation of local people and casts doubt on the extent to which religious reforms were imposed from above, as the concept of 'confessionalization' implies. Marc R. Forster argues that 'the local experience of Baroque Catholicism bears few marks of an elite-sponsored program of social discipline or modernization', and that, far from simply accepting a religious identity imposed on them from above, the rural and urban population helped actively to shape Catholic confessionalism, sometimes in directions unforeseen by the Church, e.g. in the 'explosion of pilgrimage piety between about 1680 and 1750'.<sup>13</sup> From time to time the Church itself tried to control popular piety by reducing the number of festivals. Even after the number of festivals was reduced by Pope Urban VIII (ruled 1623-44), almost one quarter of the year, if you include Sundays, was given over to festivals. By 1753 only fifteen days (not counting Sundays) were entirely devoted to festivals.<sup>14</sup>

If religious reform was generated from below as well as from above, we need to question the concept of 'popular religion' or 'Volksreligion'. A division developed only gradually between the culture of the elite and the culture of the people. If around 1500 'popular culture was everyone's culture: a second culture for the educated, and the only culture for everyone else', by the late eighteenth century popular culture, including popular religion, was widely despised as childish, superstitious, and primitive.<sup>15</sup> With the Romantic generation, however, the religion of the people would be rediscovered and praised as authentic, age-old, rooted in the soil, blessedly free from the shallow intellectualism of the university-educated middle classes.

Neither pre-Christian superstition nor Baroque Catholic practices were confined to the people. Both were shared by the elite. In the seventeenth century the Silesian aristocrat, Christoph Leopold Schaffgotsch, had a chapel built on the highest summit of the Riesengebirge, both to acknowledge his own acceptance of Catholicism

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<sup>10</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 317; Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 188.

<sup>12</sup> Evans, p. 189.

<sup>13</sup> Forster, pp. 15, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Franz Loidl, *Menschen im Barock* (Vienna: Krempel, 1938), pp. 49-50.1

<sup>15</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), p. 270; Christof Dipper, 'Volksreligiosität und Obrigkeit im 18. Jahrhundert', in *Volksreligiosität in der modernen Sozialgeschichte*, ed. by Wolfgang Schieder (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 73-96.

and to exorcise his estates from the mountain spirit Rübezahl.<sup>16</sup> In 1763 Katherina Euphemia Gräfin Fugger-Boos gave a picture to the shrine of Maria Steinbach, thanking Mary for saving her and her travelling companions from injury when their coach fell into a ravine.<sup>17</sup> Maria Theresia was deeply devoted to the Virgin. She made a pilgrimage to Mariazell immediately after her marriage in order to pray for the future of her dynasty, and she offered up her wedding dress.<sup>18</sup> She prayed the rosary to Mary every day, and retained a special clergyman, the 'Rosenkranzbeter', for this purpose.<sup>19</sup>

The piety inculcated by Baroque Catholicism included a culture of rituals and festivals, which became more elaborate from 1650 onwards. The day, the week, and the year were structured by religious rituals. On Sundays, before Mass, salt and water were blessed to symbolize man's inner purification from sin. Wine, fruit, and vegetables, houses and wells were blessed. The shape of the day was marked out by bell-ringing. Church bells at 11 a.m. told people to stop work and go home for lunch; at one p.m. they reminded them to return to work. Bells in the evening would toll the knell of parting day, as in Gray's *Elegy*. Sundays and holidays would be preceded by bells on the evening before, and their end would again be marked by bells.<sup>20</sup>

The liturgical year included not only the Feast of the Circumcision on 1 January, Epiphany on 6 January, Easter, Ascension Day forty days after Easter, Corpus Christi, and Christmas, but also a five of festivals celebrating the life of the Virgin Mary: her Purification on 2 February (Candlemas), her Annunciation on 25 March, her Assumption into heaven on 15 August, her Nativity on 8 September, and her Immaculate Conception on 8 December.<sup>21</sup> There were also many saints' days and a host of blessings, many of them laid down in the *Rituale Romanum* (a product of the Council of Trent, first published in 1584 and reissued in revised form in 1614). There was the blessing of wine at the feast of St John, of candles at Candlemas, of ashes on Ash Wednesday, of palms on Palm Sunday, of the Easter lamb, eggs and breads on Easter Sunday, of herbs on 15 August, the day marking the Assumption of the Virgin, and at various times the blessing of devotional objects such as rosaries and crucifixes.<sup>22</sup>

From about 1650 onwards local communities put more energy into organizing festivals, pilgrimages, and processions, many of them associated with the cult of the Virgin. Her cult had both enthusiastic popular support and the support of successive Emperors. Ferdinand II, who had been educated in the Jesuit school at Ingolstadt and there become a member of the Marian sodality, called her his 'Generalissima' and required his officers to revere her as the commander-in-chief of his armies.<sup>23</sup> In 1647 Ferdinand III formally placed Austria under Mary's protection. At Mariazell the cult of the Magna Mater Austriae had been established since the twelfth century, but the church was enlarged and reconsecrated in the seventeenth century, when Leopold I, intensely devoted all his life to the Virgin Mary, built up its importance. He is known

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<sup>16</sup> Evans, p. 392; on belief in Rübezahl, see ib., p. 385.

<sup>17</sup> Forster, p. 99.

<sup>18</sup> Ludwig Hüttl, *Marianische Wallfahrten im süddeutsch-österreichischen Raum* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1985), p. 157.

<sup>19</sup> Coreth, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Ludwig Andreas Veit and Ludwig Lenhart, *Kirche und Volksfrömmigkeit im Zeitalter des Barock* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956), p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> See the list in Loidl, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Veit and Lenhart, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> P. Wilhelm Lamormaini, *Ferdinand II. Ein Tugend-Spiegel für alle Stände* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1857), p. 34; Coreth, pp. 49-51.

to have visited Mariazell nine times; the journey was laborious, lasting on average ten days.<sup>24</sup>

The word 'Wallfahrt' could mean procession as well as pilgrimage. Processions were important communal rites. By going round the parish church, through the village, or round the boundaries of the parish, they symbolically defined the village's physical space.<sup>25</sup> Religious confraternities celebrated the day assigned to their patron saint; farmers walked in procession in honour of St Leonhard and St Wendelin, wine-growers honoured St Urban, and the men who transported barrels of wine by land and on rivers honoured St Nicholas.<sup>26</sup>

The most elaborate procession was on Corpus Christi, a festival associated particularly with the Habsburg monarchy. The Habsburgs practised public eucharistic devotion centring on Corpus Christi processions, which was reanimated under Charles V and Ferdinand I. The Corpus Christi procession that Nicolai saw on 14 June 1781 was much less splendid than in the past, since the banners, which needed sixteen or twenty people to carry them, had been forbidden.<sup>27</sup> A Josephinist pamphleteer, Joseph Richter, writing in 1784, gives a critical description of 'Fronleichnamsumgänge'. He tells how people used to get up early and put on their best clothes; guildsmen gathered round their guild banners, the cost of which (often 5 or 6,000 Gulden) would, the author says, have been better spent on the sick and orphans; each banner represented the guild's patron and its symbol, and needed ten or twelve strong young men to carry it; they dressed in guild uniforms which, Richter says, would have looked fine at a ball but were hardly suited to a religious procession. Some guilds hired a band of fiddlers who played marches. And the procession was repeated every day for a week. Richter maintains:

Wenn aber diese Prozessionen ohne wichtige Beweggründe angestellt, und ohne Ursache gehäufet werden; wenn sie überdieß den arbeitsamen Bauer und Bürger in seinen Geschäften hemmen, zu Ausschweifungen den Weg öffnen, und endlich in Maskeraden und Possenspiele ausarten, so verdienen sie, wie die übrigen Misbräuche, die Geißel der Satire.<sup>28</sup>

[But if these processions are undertaken without sufficient reasons, and multiplied without cause; if they also hamper the industrious farmer and townsman in his work, open the way to dissipation, and finally degenerate into masquerades and farces, then, like other abuses, they deserve their scourge of satire.]

Processions were accompanied by lavish eating and drinking. We have a report by the Talvogt (local administrator) of Kirchzarten in the Breisgau on the so-called Stöcklebauernprozession which went every year on the Sunday before Easter from the Kirchzartner Tal to St. Trudpert in the Breisgau. Although the procession was said to have been introduced to implore God to bless the crops and avert bad weather through the intercession of St Trudpert, the Talvogt thought the present state suggested rather divine punishment:

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<sup>24</sup> Hüttl, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> Forster, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> Veit and Lenhart, p. 131.

<sup>27</sup> Nicolai, v. 67.

<sup>28</sup> [Joseph Richter], *Bildergalerie katholischer Misbräuche*. Von Obermayr (Frankfurt and Leipzig [no pub.], 1784), pp. 211-12.

Wenn aber dessen heutige Beschaffenheit eingesehen wird, so sollte man glauben, dass Gott durch diesen Bittgang eher zur Rache als zur Barmherzigkeit sollte gereizt werden; denn heutzutage ist die Andacht dabei sehr gering, hingegen wird desto mehr gefressen und gesoffen und, wer weiss, was die ledigen Burschen, welche die grösste Zahl der Bittgänger ausmachen, in den Nachtherbergen und auf der Rückkehr, wo sie zerstreut und ohne Aufsicht sind, für Mutwillen und Ausgelassenheit treiben?<sup>29</sup>

[If you examine its present state, however, you might think that the purpose of this penitential procession was to excite God's revenge rather than His mercy; for today it includes very little devotion, but there is all the more eating and swilling, and who knows what wilful and unruly antics the unmarried young men, who form the majority of the penitents, get up to in their quarters and on the return journey, where they are scattered and unsupervised?]

The one and only time he took part in the procession, the Talvogt continues, he witnessed such 'Fress- und Saufeifer' (gluttony and boozing) that he wanted to ask the government to ban the procession, but was advised that if he were known to have recommended its abolition, his life would not be safe. The procession was officially changed, on his advice, into a procession on Monday of Holy Week to the wonder-working statue of the Virgin Mary in Freiburg Cathedral; but even this change was so unpopular that it had to be imposed by force.

Pilgrimages may be seen as processions on a grand scale. They required sometimes arduous journeys and introduced a different dimension of religious life. Victor and Edith Turner describe the pilgrimage as an example of liminality), in which the 'passenger' or 'liminar' moves from a stable cultural state through an unfamiliar, ambiguous dimension and back to classified mundane social life. Pilgrimage removes one from everyday conflicts, pressures, and occasions of sin. If long and hazardous, it is itself a penance. Near its end, it is circumscribed by symbolic structures (buildings, images, statuary, sacralized features of the topography). The trials of the journey have made the pilgrim unusually susceptible to such impressions. Approaching the final altar has a 'transformative' effect.<sup>30</sup>

The major pilgrimages were to shrines of the Virgin Mary. Cults of Mary often developed at places where she was supposed to have appeared or performed a miracle, e.g. where her image had shed tears. They attracted large numbers: early in the seventeenth century, over half a million pilgrims visited Andechs in Upper Bavaria annually; at Maria Dreieichen in Lower Austria there were around 40,000 pilgrims in 1740.<sup>31</sup> Nicolai mentions the church of Mariataferl near Linz, 'auf einem hohen Berge, wohin noch immer jährlich an 100,000 Menschen mit Wallfahrten die Zeit verderben'.<sup>32</sup> Pilgrimages also allowed people to confess their sins to a priest who did not know them. Large numbers received communion: at Mariazell, 61,000 in 1689, 104,000 in 1692, and 188,000 in 1725.<sup>33</sup>

Pilgrims made sacrifices at shrines, bringing money, farm produce, and valued personal possessions such as bridal wreaths, thus testifying to the importance of the

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<sup>29</sup> Fritz Geier, *Die Durchführung der kirchlichen Reformen Josephs II. im vorderösterreichischen Breisgau* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1905), p. 190.

<sup>30</sup> Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Hüttl, p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> Nicolai, ii. 547.

<sup>33</sup> Hüttl, p. 48.

cult of the Virgin in helping them weather the difficulties of daily life. 34 Sometimes the pilgrim offered up an image of a saint, his or her 'Namenspatron', thus strengthening the chain of mediation between himself, his patron saint, Mary as chief of all saints, Jesus, and God.<sup>35</sup> Then as now, religious merchandise was on sale. Pilgrims took devotional objects home with them: consecrated pictures, crosses, rosaries, medals, bottles of holy water from the well near the shrine, 'Schluckbildchen' or tiny images of the Virgin to swallow when ill, and even 'heilige Längen', i.e. pieces of paper supposedly corresponding in length to Mary's height (193 cm) with prayers written on them.<sup>36</sup>

Within Christianity, the Turners distinguish 'medieval' pilgrimages (Compostela, Walsingham, Cologne, Altötting, Częstochowa), originating in 500-1400, from modern, post-Tridentine pilgrimages which reveal fervent personal piety of participants and are closely but ambivalently involved with mass technical culture (including communication and transportation). '[A] tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist.'<sup>37</sup> On the way to his destination, the pilgrim stops at each way station to pay his devotion and prepare for the climax at the central shrine, but after it 'his attitude is now that of a tourist rather than a devotee', able to relax and enjoy himself.<sup>38</sup> By the eighteenth century, pilgrimages to Austrian shrines had this semi-touristic character. The provision of board and lodging for the pilgrims was profitable for local economies.

Nicolai's travel book includes an appendix on pilgrimages, beginning: 'Alle Wallfahrten sind bey der vorgegebenen Andacht zugleich eine Art von Lustreise'.<sup>39</sup> [All pilgrimages are a kind of pleasant excursion under the pretext of devotion.] From his account, hostile though it is, it is clear that pilgrimages were carefully organized. First they pray the psalter (a rosary with 150 beads); then a Jesuit litany; then they sing a pilgrims' hymn:

Nun langt jeder Wallfahrter nach seiner Bierflasche, oder Weinflasche, nach Krapfen und Wespennestern (Kuchen mit kleinen Rosinen), nach seinen Wecken (zugespitzten Hausbrod), und Kaiserfleisch (geräuchertem jungen Frischlingfleisch oder Schweinfleisch), und läßt sich herzlich schmecken. Nun wird die Gesellschaft natürlich munter; man spaßelt oder plumpwitzelt, redet auch wohl grobe Zoten, lacht, gähnt, nickt, schläft. Wenn der Mönch, der die Wallfahrt führt, und der auch weidlich mit zu zechen pflegt, ein Zeichen giebt, so fängt alles wieder mit dem Rosenkranze und mit dem Psalter von vorn an; und wenn das vorbey ist, gehts wieder ans Essen, Trinken und Schlafen.<sup>40</sup>

[Now each pilgrim reaches for his bottle of beer or wine, for *Krapfen* and wasps'-nests (cakes with little raisins), for his *Wecken* (pointed bread) and *Kaiserfleisch* (smoked meat from young wild boars or pork), and starts tucking in. Now of course the company grows merry; people joke or make crude jests, besides telling dirty jokes, they laugh, yawn, nod, sleep. If the monk who leads the procession, and who

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34 Hüttl, pp. 84-86.

35 Hüttl, p. 90.

36 Hüttl, p. 93.

37 Turner and Turner, p. 20.

38 Turner and Turner, p. 22.

39 'Nachricht von Wallfahrten' in Nicolai, ii. 35-46 (p. 35). This is not an eye-witness description but a digest of various written accounts.

40 Nicolai, ii. 35-36.

does his full share of tippling, gives a sign, they all start praying the rosary and the psalter once again, and when that is over, it is back to eating, drinking and sleeping.]

Each parish has a special day noted down at the place of pilgrimage on which its members are expected. The poor walk, the rich go in coaches, well supplied with choice provisions. Assembled at the place of pilgrimage, the company go in procession to the church, carrying crosses, banners, lanterns, and portable statues of the saints. At the church, bells are rung, and sometimes small cannon are fired to welcome the pilgrims. The priest and his attendant clergy either go to meet the pilgrims, or await them at the church door holding censers. The pilgrims first confess and are absolved of all their sins, even grave ones that would normally require the attention of the Pope. When several groups arrive on the same day, there is a huge throng, and confessional booths are set up along the roads outside the church. In the church, at the altar-rail, the throng is even greater. Sometimes two police officials have to walk ahead of the priest, keeping the congregation at bay with curses and sometimes with blows from their sticks. A monk gives an address on the miraculous powers of the image preserved here; another clergyman reads out a list of all the miracles it has worked in the past year, and which pilgrims are instructed by their confessors to report. After the service, the clergy entertain the leaders of the pilgrim parties, and the pilgrims eat and drink in the inn, and buy lots of devotional objects. They then, according to Nicolai, return to the families and fields which they have neglected while out enjoying themselves.

These practices were open to many objections. The official Church was uneasy about mass movements such as large-scale pilgrimages and to cults stemming principally from popular enthusiasm. 'From the late seventeenth century on, all shrines owed their existence to popular enthusiasm', according to Forster, often inspiring unease in the official Church.<sup>41</sup> The picture of 'bleeding Mary' at Bergatreute in Swabia was thought to bring stillborn babies back to life long enough for a priest to baptize them, and very many such emergency baptisms were held around 1700, to the disapproval of the Clerical Council at Constance.<sup>42</sup> The shrine of the 'Schmerzhaftes Mutter Maria' (Mater Dolorosa), whose eyes were said to move, at Steinbach in Upper Swabia was first visited by pilgrims in 1730; the Clerical Council wanted to suppress it, and appointed a commission of inquiry, which ended up supporting the cult (a sign that elite and popular piety did not differ widely).<sup>43</sup>

The real assault on what was now seen as popular religion came from clergy inspired by the Catholic Enlightenment. The reformers were often influenced by Jansenism, which, originating in seventeenth-century France as a theological movement stressing man's need for God's free grace and the inefficacy of human works, developed into a broad movement opposed to the Baroque cults of saints and the Virgin Mary promoted by the Jesuits; they preferred a simple liturgy in a bare hall, focusing on an unadorned altar, and presided over by the parish priest, whose role they considered much more valuable than that of monastic orders. In urging austerity and inwardness, they agreed with the well-known historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1760), who in *Della regolata divozione de' Christiani* (1747) condemned processions, pilgrimages and festivals as leading to disorder and impiety; church services should be orderly, with beggars and animals excluded from services; devotion should be inward, focusing on the word of Scripture rather than images,

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<sup>41</sup> Forster, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup> Forster, pp. 96-97.

<sup>43</sup> Forster, p. 100-01.



under the guidance of well-educated parish priests. Muratori's influence extended far beyond Italy, making him one of the key figures of the Catholic Enlightenment.

Muratori says there are too many festivals, especially for people who have to work hard for a living. 'La molteplicità delle feste di precetto torna in evidente pregiudizio ed aggravio di chi s'ha da guadagnare il pane colle arti e colle fatiche delle sue braccia'.<sup>44</sup> [The great number of obligatory festivals becomes harmful and burdensome for anyone who has to earn his bread by the skill and labours of his arms.] In December 1742 alone there were twelve feast-days, soon followed by the feast of the Circumcision and by Epiphany. This is a great burden for poor people. Anyone who is seen working or opening a shop on a feast-day will have fingers pointed at him and be said to be lacking in piety. But cannot one show respect for the saints without taking a whole day off work?

Sicchè, tirati i conti, si troverà che poco più o poco meno per tre mesi di ciascun anno tanto i frustici che gli artisti ed altra povera gente si astengono, o, per dir meglio, s'hanno da astenere dal lavorare e dal guadagnarsi il pane, né si può soddisfare ai tanti bisogni della campagna, per arare, seminare, raccogliere fieni, mietere, battere il grano ecc., se si abbattono le feste in quelle giornate che maggiormente sarebbero opportune alle faccende e fatiche.<sup>45</sup>

[Therefore, if you add it all up, you will find that for approximately three months out of every year the farmers, artisans, and other poor people abstain or rather have to abstain from working and from earning their bread, nor can they complete all the tasks of the countryside, ploughing, sowing, making hay, reaping, threshing, etc., if the festivals are held on the days that would normally be most suitable for their business and their toil.]

Moreover, farmers in eighteenth-century Austria could ill afford the time, since they were often obliged to perform 'Fronddienst' for their superiors. The Enlightener Joseph von Sonnenfels in his periodical *Der Mann ohne Vorurteil* describes the misery of the rural population. He puts into the mouth of a peasant an account of how, when they come back from ploughing their own fields, the judge, accompanied by soldiers, requires them to do their 'Frohnfahren', even if they and their cattle are weary, and if an ox collapses from exhaustion.<sup>46</sup>

From about 1750, Muratori and the Jansenists found many sympathizers in the Austrian Church. Johann Joseph Trautsohn, who corresponded with Muratori when in the service of the prince-bishop of Passau, became Archbishop of Vienna in 1750, and in 1752 issued a pastoral letter condemning priests who relied on images, cults, relics and processions for the propagation of Christianity instead of preaching about Christ and the doctrines of the faith. Cardinal Migazzi, who succeeded him as Archbishop in 1757, wrote a preface to the German translation of Muratori's book, published in Vienna in 1762. Trautsohn urges priests to concentrate on the Word of God, the teachings of Christ, on faith, hope, penitence, the love of God and one's neighbour, and not on miracles, dispensations, saints, or confraternities:

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<sup>44</sup> *Della regolata divozione de' Christiani* (extracts) in *Opere di Lodovico Antonio Muratori*, ed. by Giorgio Falco and Fiorenzo Forti (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, n.d. [1965?]), p. 941.

<sup>45</sup> Muratori, p. 944.

<sup>46</sup> [Joseph von Sonnenfels], *Der Mann ohne Vorurtheil. Eine Wochenschrift*, 3 vols (Vienna: Trattner, 1765-7), II/1, 1. Stück, dated from '...stein den 31 May 1766', p. 419.

Es wird auch vorthailhaft seyn, von der Verehrung der Gnadenbilder, von Wallfahrten, Ablässen, und Bruderschaften (nämlich nach Beschaffenheit des Ortes, und der Zeit) zu sprechen, doch so, daß derley Gegenstände weder auf eine übertriebene Art angepriesen, noch durch schwache Beweisthümer, zweifelhafte Offenbarungen, unterschobene Wunderwerke, und solche Geschichten unterstützt werden, die den unvorsichtigen Zuhörer nicht von der Sünde abhalten, sondern im Bösen bestättigen, und vermögend sind, ihn zu einer Irrung zu verleiten, daß er sich einbilde, er möge leben, wie er will, so werde er dennoch selig werden, wofern er nur diesen oder jenen Heiligen verehere, dieses oder jenes Bild oft besuche, in diese oder jene Bruderschaft sich einschreiben lasse.<sup>47</sup>

[It will also be useful to speak about reverence paid to images, about pilgrimages, indulgences and confraternities (depending on the place and the time), but in such a way that such things are neither praised immoderately, nor supported by inadequate evidence, dubious revelations, fraudulent miracles, and such stories, which do not deter the careless auditor from sin but confirm him in evil, and are capable of leading him into error so that he thinks he can live as he wishes and still go to heaven so long as he reveres this or that saint, often visits this or that image, joins this or that confraternity.]

Joseph initially forbade all pilgrimages outside Austria, on the mercantilist principle that they took money out of the country. On 11 April 1772, as co-regent, he forbade all pilgrimages lasting more than one day even within Austria, making an exception only for Mariazell. On 21 March 1784 he ordained that only two processions might take place a year, these only on exceptional occasions and with official permission; they must not be held on working days, but on Sundays or 'Feiertage'. This prohibition applied also to Mariazell. It caused anger, especially in Tirol. Joseph was obliged to visit Mariazell in person to appease people. Mariazell was not assailed in the 1780s; an inventory of its possessions was taken, but the commissioner, Gubernialrath Johann von Buset, advised preserving the church 'bis durch Verbreitung der Aufklärung die Meinung und der Hang, durch Verehrung der Muttergottes gerade in dieser oder jener Statue oder Bild vorzügliche Gnaden erhalten zu können, nach und nach schwinden wird' [till thanks to the spread of Enlightenment, the belief that special grace is available by revering this or that image of the Virgin gradually fades away].<sup>48</sup>

The tradition of religious drama also fell victim to enlightened reformers. Drama, in the hands of the Jesuits, was a popular and successful medium of religious proselytization.<sup>49</sup> The Jesuits, who controlled the Monarchy's universities and most of its *Gymnasien*, especially encouraged students to act dramas. These were usually about the lives of the saints, especially local saints such as Johannes Nepomuk in Prague; stories from the Old Testament; and Greek and Roman history and mythology. There was a special genre known as the *Kaiserspiel* which glorified the House of Habsburg as the defender of Catholicism. These plays were performed in

47. 'Hirtenbrief des hochwürdigsten Herrn Johann Joseph Erzbischofs zu Wien, Reichsfürsten, Grafen Trautsohn von Falkenstein, an die Geistlichkeit, besonders an die Prediger seines Kirchensprengels' [1752], in *Der aufgeklärte Reformkatholizismus in Österreich*, ed. by Peter Hersche (Bern and Frankfurt a.M.: Herbert Lang, 1976), pp. 9-15 (pp. 11-12).

48 Quoted in Adam Wolf, *Die Aufhebung der Klöster in Innerösterreich 1782-1790* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1871), p. 139.

49 James Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 65-8.

Latin, but as most of the audience did not know Latin, there were spectacular effects which everyone could enjoy. 'The audience of one performance in Graz was awed when an effigy of Jezabel, filled with raw meat, blood, and bones prior to the performance, was torn to pieces by a pack of dogs before its very eyes.'<sup>50</sup>

Such dramas seemed contrary to educated taste. When performed by local communities, they were considered to give rise to disorder, drunkenness, and brawling. So in the late eighteenth century the authorities cracked down on them.. A historian of Carinthia tells us: '

Im Jahre 1770 z.B. dürften die Bürger von Gmünd ihr traditionelles 'Letztes Gericht' nicht mehr spielen, nachdem sich schon 1764 die Völkermarkter 'Fasten-Tragoedie-Bruderschaft' vergebens gegen das wenig stichhaltig begründete Verbot ihres 'Christileidenspieles' gewehrt hatte; es wurde ihr 'für alle Zeiten verordnet, daß solche Tragödie abgetan werden solle'.<sup>51</sup>

[In 1770, for example, the townsfolk of Gmünd were no longer allowed to perform their traditional 'Last Judgement', after the people of Völkermarkt had in 1764 tried in vain to resist the poorly justified prohibition of their 'Play of Christ's Suffering'; it was ordained that 'such a tragedy should be abolished for all time'.]

The people tried hard to retain their plays. In 1807 the people of Obermühlbach wanted to perform their 'Passions Komödie' (Passion Play]) but were threatened so severely with fines and corporal punishment so severely that they gave up their plans and surrendered the play-books. The people of Hörzendorf, however, performed their play one Sunday afternoon, but the actors were arrested, taken to Klagenfurt, and punished, the men by cleaning the streets in chains for up to a week, the women by being imprisoned with only bread and water for twenty-four hours.<sup>52</sup>

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In 1849 the Carinthian priest and poet Vinzenz Rizzi, priest and poet of Carinthia, in 1849, lamenting the narrow Enlightenment which banished plays and other diversions – 'jene halbe schale Aufklärung, die so aufdringlich die ganze Welt mit ihren ewigen Wundern in ein nüchternes Rechenexempel verwandeln will' [that shallow, half-hearted Enlightenment that is so determined to turn the whole world with its eternal wonders into a dry arithmetical exercise].<sup>53</sup> It is tempting to think that the Enlightenment had turned a once colourful religious culture into grey uniformity with its ideas about virtue, hard work, and economy, and ushered in the regime of work-discipline that E.P. Thompson has described as essential for industrial capitalism.<sup>54</sup> Some historians have indeed seen this process of enlightenment reform, together with the other reforms introduced by Joseph, as a movement towards social discipline ('Sozialdisziplinierung') in all walks of life.<sup>55</sup> It was certainly a major change in

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<sup>50</sup> Melton, p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> Erich Nussbaumer, *Geistiges Kärnten: Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte des Landes* (Klagenfurt: Kleinmayr, 1956), p. 221.

<sup>52</sup> Nussbaumer, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Nussbaumer, p. 222.

<sup>54</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38 (1967), 56-97.

<sup>55</sup> See Gerhard Oestreich, *Geist und Gestalt des frühmodernen Staates* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1969).

outlook, in which a culture based on visual objects was superseded by one based on the word, communal worship by individualism, and in which a higher value was placed on order, regularity, rationality, and self-control. It was part of what we loosely call modernization.

There is no point in trying to draw up a balance-sheet of gains and losses. But an imaginative historian can recapture something of what such a change felt like for the people destined to undergo it. Some particularly interesting reflections on the change of outlook induced by religious reforms come from the historian Rebekka Habermas, writing about the spread of Enlightenment in eighteenth-century rural Bavaria. She thinks 'Sozialdisziplinierung' too narrow an explanatory concept, because it is confined to the perspective of the ecclesiastical elites.<sup>56</sup> Rather than this concept, we should envisage a widespread change of mentality. Habermas explores the emotional aspects of this change. The assault on pilgrimages deprived the Virgin Mary of her mediating function and installing the secular ruler in her place. People's worldly fortune was henceforth dependent not on the mediation of the Virgin but on obeying the commands of the secular ruler. It was not prayer to the Virgin, but obedience to the enlightened ruler, that could secure one's physical and emotional well-being. The enlightened ruler could certainly provide his people with much more concrete benefits than the Virgin Mary could, but in doing so he deprived people of a symbolic language and symbolic actions that enabled them to articulate their fears and hardships. 'Der gemeine Mann geht damit einer affektiv besetzten Beziehung verlustig, ohne die er allen Gefahren des Alltags vermeintlich schutz- und hilflos ausgeliefert ist.'<sup>57</sup> [The 'common man' thus loses an emotionally charged relationship, without which he feels himself exposed helplessly and without protection to all the dangers of everyday life.] In the long run this made him more master of his own fate; but in the short run he felt deprived of something valuable. Since belief in the miraculous was denied any practical effect, it became a useless relic of the past, and pilgrimages and processions lost their meaning. The jollifications that accompanied them were now forbidden, reclassified as dissipation and debauchery, as wasteful and even criminal behaviour. The sense of community expressed through these communal practices was lost when they were presented as dangers to the virtue of the individual, while the simplified Church calendar weakened the structure of the year and made it less varied and more homogeneous. For the history of consciousness, Habermas considers this an epochal change: 'Einen tieferen Einschnitt, der nicht nur für einige Wallfahrten das Ende bedeutete, haben staatliche und kirchliche Politik, trotz mancher Veränderungen, in den letzten Jahrhunderten nicht erlebt.'<sup>58</sup> [The politics and Church and state, despite many changes, have in the last few centuries experienced no deeper break, one which brought an end to more than just a few pilgrimages.]

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<sup>56</sup> Rebekka Habermas, *Wallfahrt und Aufruhr: Zum Wunderglauben im Bayern der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Campus, 1991), p. 210.

<sup>57</sup> Habermas, p. 119.

<sup>58</sup> Habermas, p. 122.