Negotiating the Sacred: Spirituality and Reform in the Age of Enlightenment in the Republic of Venice

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Abstract
The continuing resilience, significance, and variety of religious culture in the age of the Enlightenment in the Republic of Venice are the overarching themes of this dissertation, which consists of a series of case-studies. Though the stories examined here are diverse and cover several aspects of devotions, practices, and beliefs, they all grew out of negotiations that took place at all levels. Each chapter showcases negotiations of the sacred among secular authorities, the clergy and their flocks, bishops and inquisitors, higher office holders in the Roman Church and in local branches of the Inquisition, and various members of ecclesiastic institutions. Together, these represent a more complicated religious Enlightenment than usually envisioned. Negotiations of the sacred unfold against the background of unapologetic quests for the miraculous and divine manifestations. Hence, the pursuit of modernity, which is still seen as the hallmark of the Age of Reason, actually never was very far removed from the sphere of religion and consciousness of the spiritual world. The examination of so many varied aspects of devotion, practices, beliefs, and the numerous uncertain attempts to constrain them within more rigorous boundaries (or to remove them from popular control) during the eighteenth century ultimately confirms that we – "moderns" – are the children of the Enlightenment in more complex ways than we might imagine.

Keywords
Religious Enlightenment; Popular Devotion; Republic of Venice; Sacred Heart; Exorcism; Eighteenth Century Inquisition; Miracles; Negotiations of the Sacred; Cult of the Saints

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Historians place the Enlightenment in Europe (with a strong emphasis on France) during the late 17th and the 18th centuries, or, more comprehensively, between the Glorious Revolution in 1688 and the French Revolution of 1789. It represents a phase in the intellectual history of Europe and also programs of reform, inspired by a belief in the possibility of a better world, that outlined specific targets for criticism and programs of action. What led to the Enlightenment? What were the most important ideas of the Enlightenment? It was thought during the Enlightenment that human reasoning could discover truths about the world, religion, and politics and could be used to improve the lives of humankind. The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in 18th-century Europe. The goal of the Enlightenment was to establish an authoritative ethics, aesthetics, and knowledge based on an "enlightened" rationality. The movement's leaders viewed them. The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in 18th-century Europe. The goal of the Enlightenment was to establish an authoritative ethics, aesthetics, and knowledge based on an "enlightened" rationality. The movement's leaders viewed themselves as a courageous, elite body of intellectuals who were leading the world toward progress, out of a long period of irrationality, superstition, and tyranny which began during a historical period they called the Dark Ages.