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 978-0-521-46220-4 - Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine
 Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular
 Simon Ditchfield
 Excerpt
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

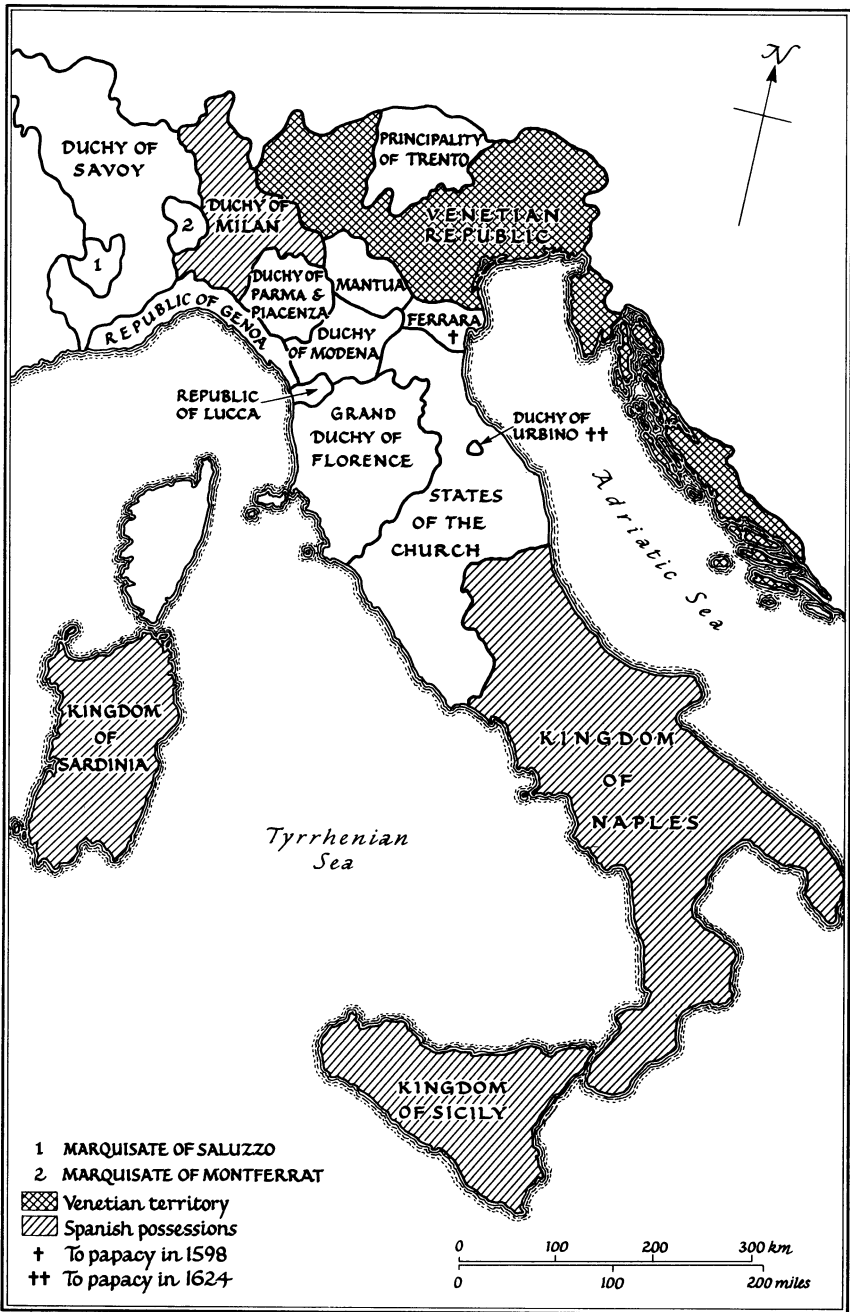
‘Nothing is real unless it is local.’
 (G. K. Chesterton)

To borrow Benedetto Croce’s fundamental insight into historiography: all hagiography is contemporary hagiography. It is therefore hardly surprising to find that the saints’ *vitae* of a particular epoch tell us much about that period’s view of ideal religious practice. What is surprising, however, is the limited degree to which hagiography has been used as an instrument for the understanding of religion in the Early Modern period. This point has already been made by Jean-Michel Sallmann, who noted how much more attention has been devoted to sanctity in the Middle Ages, offering as possible explanations the fact that many trials of holy figures from the Early Modern period are still *in corso* and, perhaps more importantly, the Catholic Church itself has adopted a more cautious attitude towards the whole phenomenon since Trent.¹ In recent years, the work of Sofia Boesch-Gajano, Gabriella Zarri and others has done much to fill in the contours of this important field,² but there is still nothing on this period to equal in range and detail André Vauchez’ monumental study: *Le Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age* of 1981. What follows has no pretensions to fill that gap, but rather seeks to provide the framework for a clearer understanding of the

¹ J.-M. Sallmann, ‘Il Santo e le rappresentazioni della santità: problemi di metodo’, *Quaderni Storici*, 41 (1979), pp. 584–602. See now the same author’s major study: *Naples et ses saints à l’âge baroque (1540–1750)* (Paris, 1994) which unfortunately appeared too late to be consulted for this book.

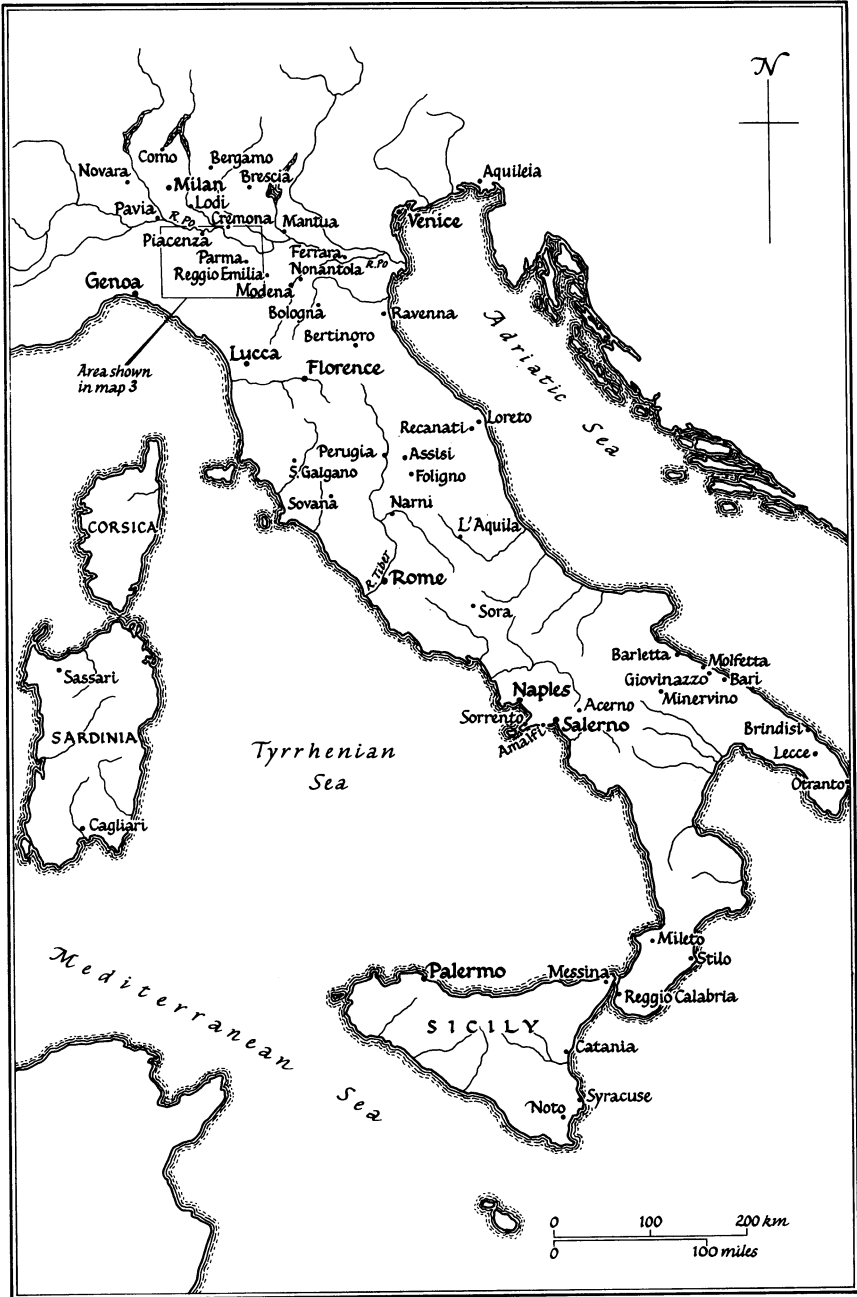
² See in particular the former’s article: ‘Dai leggendarî medioevali agli “Acta Sanctorum”’: forme di trasmissione e nuove funzioni dell’agiografia’ in *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, 21 (1985), pp. 219–44, with its extensive bibliographical references. Cf. *ibid.*, ‘Il culto dei santi: filologia, antropologia e storia’, *Studi Storici*, n.s., 23 (1982), pp. 119–36.

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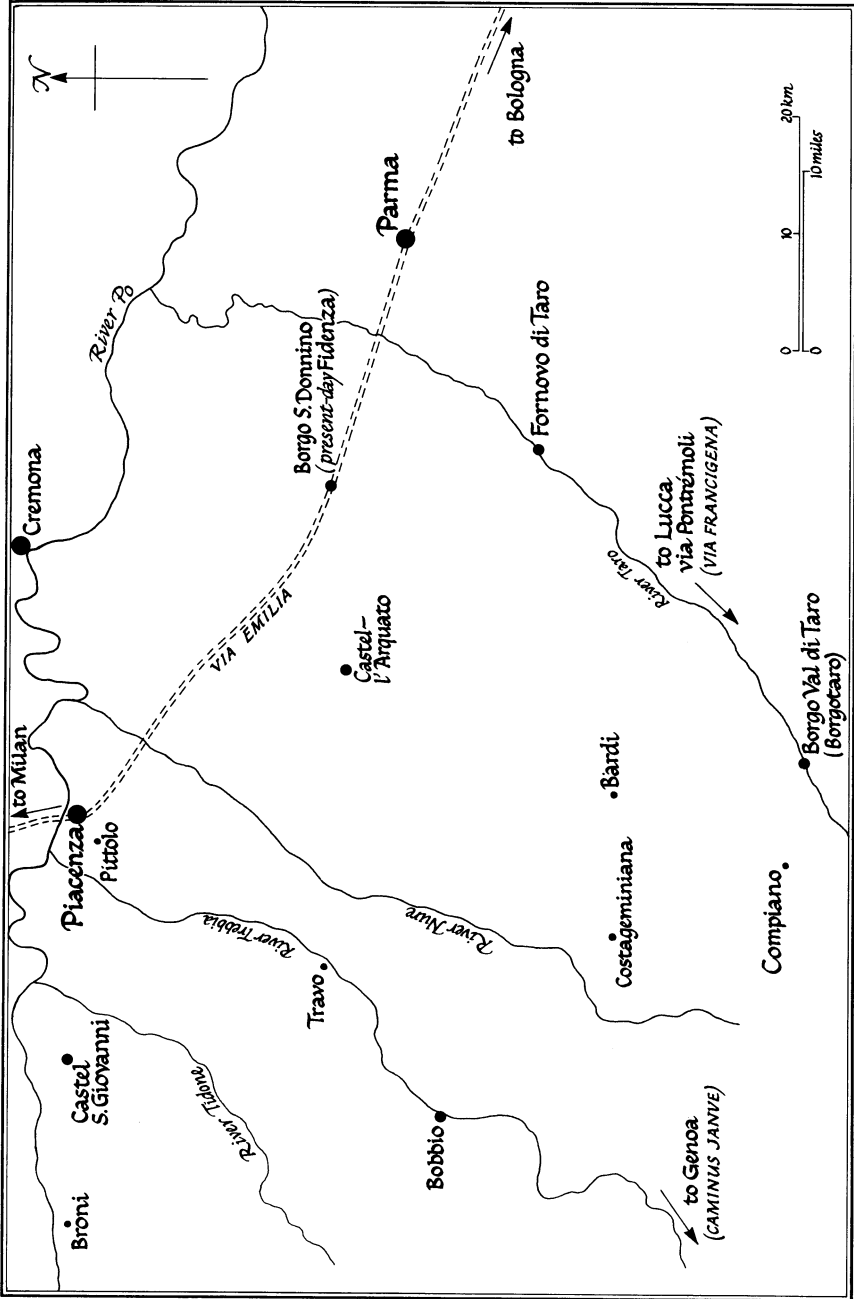
1. Tridentine Italy during the *Pax Hispanica* (1559–1713).

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2. Italy: location of principal towns mentioned in text

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3. The Duchy of Parma and Piacenza

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functions of hagiography in the period *circa* 1550–1700 and to suggest various uses that might be made of this seriously underexploited source for our comprehension of broader issues such as the implications of Tridentine reform at a local level; the origins of recognizably ‘modern’ historical method and, albeit in a tentative fashion, for the part such writing in Italy played in laying the foundations of national history writing.

The tripartite structure of this book reflects the belief that written accounts of sanctity, which is to say hagiography, cannot be properly understood without reference both to the reform of liturgy and to developments in history writing during the period. This close connection between liturgy, sanctity and history was fully appreciated by Benedict XIV, who as an erstwhile *promotor fidei* responsible for examining candidates for canonization at the Congregation of Rites (1712–28) and as author of an historical study of the subject still unrivalled today for its scope and depth – the four-volume *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione et Beatorum Canonizatione* (1734–38) – was in a particularly good position to judge. When he established a chair in ecclesiastical history at the Collegio Romano in 1742, he also founded one in the study of liturgy. This book attempts to rehabilitate Benedict’s fundamental insight.

Focus is provided by Pietro Maria Campi of Piacenza (1569–1649) who dedicated his long life to writing about and defending the liturgical, ecclesiastical and historical traditions of his home town. The printed remains of his efforts present an interpretative challenge typical of the age in which he lived. For seemingly undigested chunks of documentary erudition sit cheek by jowl with sections containing: a treatise on the origins of Piacenza ascribed to a contemporary of Cicero that failed to convince even many of his peers, let alone more recent critics; a history of the Campi family, which by way of arguments drawn from etymology worthy of Isidore of Seville in full flight, traced his ancestors’ descent to a son of Noah; as well as a brief treatise of mind-boggling legal complexity which sought to prove the Piacentine origins of Christopher Columbus. Finally, Campi dedicated a significant part of his energies and writings to a lost cause: the attempted canonization of the only Piacentine Pope, the thirteenth-century Gregory X. How is one to make any sense of such a farrago of erudition and fantasy whose only apparent unifying thread was a strong sense of *campanilismo*; patriotism for his city and its church?

By emphasizing the primacy of scripture as the model for ecclesiastical practice, the Reformers put the Catholics on the defensive. This was particularly apparent in the cult of saints and the structure of church

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hierarchy, where scriptural precedent was weak. Roman Catholics were therefore forced to take issue with the Reformers, and they did so using the weapon of history that had been unsheathed by the Protestants with the publication of the *Magdeburg Centuries* (1562–74). The importance of the magisterial Catholic reply – the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1588–1607) of Cesare Baronio – has long been recognized.³ In it, some 14,000 columns of text published in twelve folio-size volumes were organized with painstaking chronological thoroughness in support of a two-word thesis: *semper eadem* – ever the same; that is to say, to demonstrate the continuity the Roman Church had always professed with its apostolic origins.

Considerably less attention has been devoted to the enormous range of related material published on sacred history during the same period,⁴ and even less on the connections between this literature and its religious, social and political context.⁵ This book therefore aims to provide the context within which the various genres of *historia sacra* should be situated. The latter include: martyrologies (in the sense of annotated calendars); saints' lives (both collective, based on region or religious order) and individual (either separately published or in the form of liturgical readings); histories of liturgy and of canonization; as well as studies of Early Christian archaeology. Parts I, II, and III are dedicated to the three related themes of liturgy, sanctity and history; or more specifically, hagiography as liturgy; hagiography as history; and ecclesiastical historiography. Chapter 10, *inter alia*, looks at the use made of *historia sacra* in the context of a canonization trial; while chapter 12 seeks, by considering the unjustifiably neglected work of Ferdinando Ughelli (1596–1670), to assess the cumulative achievement of all the genres embraced by the term *historia sacra* and relate them in a provisional manner to such wider issues as the origins of 'modern' historical method and Italian national history writing.

Pietro Maria Campi stands as representative of the many local

³ The classic treatment still remains: P. Polman, *L'Élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVIIe siècle*, Gembloux, 1932, pp. 213–34 (on Flacius) and pp. 527–38 (on Baronio).

⁴ Useful introductory orientations are provided by E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, IL/London, 1981), pp. 445–78. Cf. S. Bertelli, 'Storiografi, eruditi, antiquari e politici' in E. Cecchi & N. Sapegno eds., *Storia della letteratura italiana* (v, Milan, 1967), pp. 319–414.

⁵ But see now P. M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1993); H. Kamen, *The Phoenix and the Flame: Catalonia and the Counter-Reformation* (New Haven/London, 1993), in particular pp. 131ff., and S. T. Nalle, *God in La Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuencia, 1500–1650* (Baltimore, MD/London, 1993).

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counterparts to Baronio who were active during the century and a half after the Council of Trent. Following Carlo Borromeo's instruction to bishops, in his Third Provincial Synod of 1573, that they should: 'diligently collect together the names, character and pastoral actions of their predecessors',⁶ these local antiquarians dedicated themselves to the recovery of historical precedent; not only as norms for the ecclesiastical discipline of their own churches but also in order to vindicate their local devotional traditions. The focus provided by the examination of Campi's career and writings therefore considerably facilitates our appreciation of the fundamental relevance of local ecclesiastical erudition to an understanding of what was perceived by contemporaries to be at stake for individual churches in Tridentine reform.

The investigation of these intra-Catholic tensions, as opposed to Protestant-Catholic polemic, has indeed become a unifying theme of much recent scholarship relating to the Catholic Reformation within Italy. However, the current orthodoxy as expressed, among others, by Giuseppe Alberigo, Paolo Prodi and the late Eric Cochrane, who see the tension in terms of the local churches versus Rome and diocesan Tridentine reform as having being wrecked by the Papacy post-1600, is not without its problems.⁷ For as Agostino Borromeo, Dermot Fenlon and Anthony Wright have convincingly shown, the customary impediments to the missionary initiatives of the Tridentine church were, on the whole, erastian rather than Roman in nature.⁸ The degree of collabora-

⁶ *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis* (Milan, 1582), f. 46v.

⁷ G. Alberigo, 'The Council of Trent' in J. W. O'Malley ed., *Catholicism in Early Modern History: A Guide to Research* (St Louis, MO, 1989), pp. 211–26 and *ibid.*, 'Carlo Borromeo between Two Models of Bishop,' in J. M. Headley & J. B. Tomaro eds., *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Washington DC/London/Toronto, 1988), pp. 250–63; P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna, 1982), pp. 249–93 and E. Cochrane, *Italy, 1530–1630* (London/New York, 1988), pp. 106–64.

⁸ A. Borromeo, 'Le controversie giurisdizionali tra potere laico e potere ecclesiastico nella Milano spagnola sul finire del Cinquecento', *Atti dell'Accademia di San Carlo. Inaugurazione del IV anno accademico* (Milan, 1981), pp. 43–89; *ibid.*, 'Archbishop Carlo Borromeo and the Ecclesiastical Policy of Philip II in the State of Milan' in J. M. Headley and J. B. Tomaro eds., *San Carlo Borromeo*, pp. 85–111; D. Fenlon's review articles of P. Prodi's *The Papal Prince* (Cambridge, 1987) in *The Scottish Journal of Theology*, 44 (1991), pp. 120–7 and of J. W. O'Malley ed., *Catholicism in Early Modern History*, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 (1992), pp. 102–4; and A. D. Wright, 'L'ideale borromaico del sacerdozio e la tradizione milanese', in *Studia borromaica*, 2 (1988), pp. 7–48; *ibid.*, 'San Juan de Ribera and Saint Charles Borromeo: the Counter-Reformation in Spain and Italy Compared' in B. Vogler ed., *Miscellanea historiae ecclesiasticae*, 8, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, fasc. 72 (Bruxelles/Louvain, 1987), pp. 364–72; and *The Counter-Reformation: Catholic Europe and the Non-Christian World* (London, 1982).

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tion between reforming bishops and Rome has accordingly been seriously underestimated. As Fenlon reminds us in a striking example, taking issue with Alberigo, far from depriving the episcopal charism of its proper expression when Rome posthumously commemorated S. Carlo Borromeo as a cardinal rather than a bishop, it was precisely by exploiting his authority which derived from the former title that S. Carlo used papal support to advance the episcopal reformation of Milan in the face of local vested interests. It is more helpful, perhaps, to view intra-Catholic tension in terms of two different visions of the Church that could *both* exist at a diocesan level: that pre-Trent permitting considerable local variation and that post-Trent intent on the regularization of devotional practice. This can be clearly seen from the account of the revision of Piacenza's Proper Offices offered in chapter 3 where the protagonists of the debate, though following rules laid down by Rome, were both canons of Piacenza cathedral: its leading historian, Pietro Maria Campi and the diocese's chief theologian (*canonico teologo*), Daniele Garatola.

In addition, Campi's career and writings testify to a high degree of local support, both lay and ecclesiastical, for efforts to integrate aspects of devotional practice peculiar to the *Ecclesia piacentina* into the new Tridentine order. Among the factors which occasioned Campi's composition of his individual saints' lives examined in chapters 5 to 10, the hand of the Bishop of Piacenza or those of his lieutenants – whom one might have expected to be the natural champions of such local foci of devotion – are conspicuous by their absence. Instead, they were commissioned in every case either by the institutions which were custodians of the saint in question's body or by noble families who hoped to enhance their own prestige by helping to promote local cults. In other words, Campi's career conveys a strong element of local cooperation with Rome in a common enterprise to purify the Church. This impression is further confirmed in chapter 10 where not only was the attempt to get Pope Gregory X canonized regarded from the beginning as the responsibility of the Town Council rather than of the town's bishop, but that such patronage as Campi succeeded in attracting was provided almost exclusively by the ruling Farnese family in the figures of Cardinal Odoardo and, after his death, of Duke Ranuccio I's widow, Margherita Aldobrandini, *la Duchessa madre*.

The support Campi enjoyed from the Farnese family can, however, only be properly understood within the context of the history of that dynasty's links with the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza. The most important fact to remember is their relatively recent nature. For the Farnese had only been installed as rulers since 1545 when Pope Paul III, in a dramatic move bitterly contested by the Habsburg Emperor

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Charles V, made a part of the papal states into a personal fiefdom by installing his own son Pier Luigi as Duke. The strength of Habsburg opposition is to be explained, above all, by Piacenza's strategic geographical location astride the most vulnerable section of the land corridor which connected Spanish possessions in Southern Italy with their protectorate Duchy of Milan. At the major crossing point of the Po, seventy kilometres south of Milan at the intersections of three long-established trade and military routes: the *Caminus januae* to Genova via the Val Trebbia; the Via Francigena leading to Rome via Pontremoli and Lucca through the Appenine Val di Taro; and the Via Emilia from Milan and on to Bologna and the Adriatic coast; Piacenza was too important to be left to the Piacentines. Don Ferrante Gonzaga, Governor of Milan, in a letter to his counterpart at Alessandria referred to Piacenza as: 'the door and key to the route from Italy to Spain and vice-versa'.⁹ Moreover, its proximity to Protestant communities in Switzerland and the Grisons which harboured refugees and disseminated anti-Catholic propaganda, made its secure control in orthodox hands imperative, as evidenced by the serious outbreak of heresy in the city during the 1550s.

All these factors contributed towards making Piacenza a low-pressure zone politically speaking and therefore subject to repeated external interference. Taking just the half-century preceding the arrival of the Farnese: from 1499–1512 the town was under French rule; from 1512–1515 subject to direct Papal control; while from 1515–1521 it was again under French rule. The Papacy took over once again from 1521 until 1545 when Paul III transferred it to the personal control of his son. On the latter's assassination in 1547 the town came under Imperial-Habsburg jurisdiction until Ottavio Farnese regained his father's Duchy by the Treaty of Ghent with King Philip II of Spain in 1556. But this did not mark a complete Farnese return to power, for a clause of the treaty obliged Ottavio to maintain a Spanish garrison in Piacenza's castle, a state of affairs which obtained until 1585, besides demanding the presence of Ottavio's son Alessandro at the Spanish court as a further guarantee of Farnese good behaviour. A more insidious, additional limit on their power was presented by the fact that several of Piacenza's leading families had been cultivated during the course of the sixteenth century by the Valois and Habsburgs. The Scotti had a tradition of service to the French crown in return for favours and the Landi had their hold over their state within a state centred on the strategically vital Val di Taro, Val di Ceno

⁹ 'La porta et chiave d'Italia a Ispagna e di Spagna ad Italia.' This is quoted in F. Chabod, *Storia di Milano nell'Epoca di Carlo V* (Turin, 1971), p. 214 and n.1. Cf. M. Rizzo, 'Centro spagnolo e periferia Lombarda nell'Impero Asburgico tra cinque e seicento,' *Rivista storica italiana*, 104 (1992), pp. 315–48.

and Compiano strengthened by an imperial confirmation of 1551. Thus when the Farnese regained Piacenza and Parma, they did so as Spanish Habsburg vassals and at the price of respecting particularist forces that would threaten their control of the region on into the seventeenth century, as evidenced by the anti-Farnese conspiracies of 1582 and 1610.

The particular nature of the Piacentine context should remind one that when talking of Tridentine Italy – the *Pax Hispanica* notwithstanding – the varied character of local conditions throughout the peninsula must never be forgotten. Such an awareness of the heterogeneous nature of Early Modern Italy also informs the choice throughout this book of the verb *regularize* to describe the process of Tridentine liturgical reform. For it conveys its fiercely juridical character without assuming the degree of homogeneity implicit in such a verb as *standardize*. Though the papal bull *Quod a nobis* proposed the revised Roman Breviary of 1568 as the only model universally valid in the Roman Catholic Church unless there was a pre-existing rite of at least 200 years standing, there remained alternative breviaries belonging to religious orders as well as to several local churches of which Milan was the most prominent (besides Rome itself) in the Italian peninsula. Furthermore, and of special relevance for this study, there also existed variations in the form of local saints' offices to be recited on their feast days that enjoyed validity solely within a particular diocese. These were collected together as Proper Offices (*Officia propria*) and often bound like an appendix to the Roman liturgical books; a relative invisibility which perhaps goes some way to explain their almost total neglect by scholars. As we shall see, the regularizing impulse of Trent – facilitated and reinforced by the availability of printing – provoked a renaissance in this liturgical sub-genre just as it did with *historia sacra* in general, as each diocese sought to have their local saints' offices approved by Rome.

It is thus preferable to see the Tridentine reformation less in terms of centre versus periphery, than as an attempt by Rome to particularize the universal (by staffing their parishes with priests trained to a minimum standard by the new episcopal seminaries); and to universalize the particular (by ensuring that local devotions operated within guidelines policed, after 1588, by the Sacred Congregation of Rites).¹⁰ Such an

¹⁰ It is in such a context that one should also regard Urban VIII's measure of 23 March 1630 which required formal status of sanctity for those elected patron saint of church, confraternity, village, city, region or country. See Benedict XIV, *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, III, liber IV, pars II, caput XIV (Opera omnia, vol. 4, Prato 1840, p. 532). This measure was confirmed by Alexander VII on 27 September 1659. Cf. J.-M. Sallmann, 'Il Santo patrono cittadino nel '600' in G. Galasso and C. Russo eds., *Per la storia sociale e religiosa del Mezzogiorno*, vol. II (Naples, 1982), pp. 187–208.