

## The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism

A shared biblical past has long imbued the Holy Land with special authority as well as a mythic character that has made the region not only a revered spiritual home for Muslims, Christians, and Jews, but also a source of a living sacred history that informs contemporary realities and religious identities. This book explores the Holy Land (1517–1700) as a critical *place* in which many early modern Catholics sought spiritual and political legitimacy during a period of profound and disruptive change. The Ottoman conquest of the region, the division of the Western Church, Catholic reform, the integration of the Mediterranean into global trading networks, and the emergence of new imperial rivalries transformed the Custody of the Holy Land, the venerable Catholic institution that had overseen Western pilgrimage since 1342, into a site of intense intra-Christian conflict by 1517. This contestation underscored the Holy Land's importance both as a frontier and sacred center of an embattled Catholic tradition, and in consequence, as a critical site of Catholic renewal and reinvention.

Megan C. Armstrong is Associate Professor of History at McMaster University. A scholar of Early Modern European history in a global context, she is the author of *The Politics of Piety: Franciscan Preachers during the Wars of Religion, 1560–1600* (2004).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-83247-2 — The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism  
Megan C. Armstrong  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism

MEGAN C. ARMSTRONG  
*McMaster University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-83247-2 — The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism  
Megan C. Armstrong  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108832472](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108832472)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108957946

© Cambridge University Press 2021

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-83247-2 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-83247-2 — The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism  
Megan C. Armstrong  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

to Michael, Lori, Jack, and Patrick

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-83247-2 — The Holy Land and the Early Modern Reinvention of Catholicism  
Megan C. Armstrong  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## Contents

|                                                                                 |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>List of Figures</i>                                                          | <i>page</i> ix |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i>                                                         | x              |
| Introduction                                                                    | I              |
| <b>1 A Catholic Gateway to the Holy Land: The Custodia Terrae Sanctae</b>       | 26             |
| 1.1 A Venerable Pilgrimage Institution                                          | 28             |
| 1.2 Ottoman Rule                                                                | 39             |
| 1.3 A Shared Sacred Landscape                                                   | 42             |
| 1.4 Conclusion                                                                  | 66             |
| <b>2 Altars and Christian Precedence in the Holy Places</b>                     | 68             |
| 2.1 The Disputes over Altars                                                    | 71             |
| 2.2 Islamic Law and Christian Privileges                                        | 84             |
| 2.3 Christian Precedence, Sacred History,<br>and Religious and Political Change | 100            |
| 2.4 Conclusion                                                                  | 119            |
| <b>3 The Order of the Holy Sepulcher</b>                                        | 121            |
| 3.1 The Order of the Holy Sepulcher                                             | 123            |
| 3.2 A Spiritual Brotherhood                                                     | 127            |
| 3.3 Reformation Polemic and Knightly Treatises                                  | 147            |
| 3.4 The Knight As Spiritual Expert                                              | 162            |
| 3.5 Conclusion                                                                  | 180            |

|          |                                                                    |     |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>4</b> | <b>France, the Protector of the Holy Places</b>                    | 182 |
| 4.1      | The Dispute of 1661                                                | 185 |
| 4.2      | Turning the Custody “French”                                       | 197 |
| 4.3      | The Pursuit of Christian Hegemony                                  | 223 |
| 4.4      | Conclusion                                                         | 257 |
| <b>5</b> | <b>The Congregation of the Propaganda Fide</b>                     | 258 |
| 5.1      | The Expansion of Papal Influence                                   | 260 |
| 5.2      | A Catholic <i>Frontier</i>                                         | 280 |
| 5.3      | A Spiritual <i>Center</i>                                          | 295 |
| 5.4      | Conclusion                                                         | 300 |
| <b>6</b> | <b>A Franciscan Holy Land</b>                                      | 302 |
| 6.1      | Fraternal Conflicts, 1517–1700                                     | 305 |
| 6.2      | An Observant Sacred History                                        | 321 |
| 6.3      | A Franciscan Holy Land: Francis of Assisi                          | 325 |
| 6.4      | Apostolic Succession                                               | 336 |
|          | Conclusion. The Holy Land: Renewal, Revelation,<br>and Reinvention | 361 |
|          | <i>Bibliography</i>                                                | 368 |
|          | <i>Index</i>                                                       | 391 |



## Figures

|     |                                                  |                |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1.1 | Map, Custody of the Holy Land, 1670              | <i>page</i> 39 |
| 1.2 | Map, pilgrimage routes                           | 50             |
| 1.3 | Map, Jerusalem                                   | 61             |
| 4.1 | Painting, Marquis de Nointel at Jerusalem (1674) | 256            |

## Acknowledgements

This book was a long time in the making. What began initially as a comparative study of three early modern Franciscan missions in diverse global contexts increasingly, inexorably became a study of the Custody of the Holy Land. I do sometimes regret having to leave aside Guatemala; all the evidence points to a fascinating world there that would have been wonderful to explore. However, the early modern Holy Land had its own ineffable character that drew me in, and it still exerts a powerful hold. Because this project has involved so many archives, side journeys, surprise discoveries, and welcome collaborations along the way, it is difficult to adequately pay tribute to every institution, scholar, and friend who has helped it come to fruition. To begin with, I want to give my sincere gratitude to Beatrice Rehl, my editor at Cambridge University Press. In addition to skilfully shepherding this manuscript through the many stages to completion at the press, she expressed interest and encouragement for this project at a very early and crucial stage of the writing process and has remained a vital source of encouragement and advice from that point to the present. I also cannot thank enough the readers of the manuscript for Cambridge University Press. They clearly spent a great deal of time poring over the text and provided excellent comments that have greatly improved its quality. I take full responsibility for any problems that remain.

I have also been very fortunate to receive financial support from a number of institutions, beginning with the University of Utah, which generously gave me a travel grant during my time there as a member of the history department. McMaster University, my academic home since 2005, has also generously provided research and conference grants to

*Acknowledgements*

xi

further develop the project in addition to a SSHRC grant that funded three years at archives in Italy, Spain, Israel, and France. Because this project took me to many archives, I worked with many archivists. In each place, they were unfailingly kind and patient: at the majestic archives in Simancas (it has a moat!), the National Archives in Madrid, the Archives Nationales in Paris, the Propaganda Fide in Rome, and the state archives in Venice. I had a special experience working in Jerusalem at the archives of the Custody of the Holy Land, which is still housed at the convent of the Holy Saviour that dates back to the sixteenth century. Every morning for several weeks, I walked through the Old City from the Jewish quarter to the via dolorosa and followed it to the convent to meet friar Cristoforo, the assistant archivist. It is hard to convey the profundity of the experience of being in the same places and walking in the footsteps of the early modern friars and to have a chance to talk each day to a member of the modern community. Father Narcyz Klimas, the archivist, was also unfailingly generous with his knowledge of the collection and its history. I am also grateful to Patrick DeLuca (GISP), GIS Specialist and Lecturer, School of Earth, Environment and Society, at McMaster University for producing my maps. This collective support has been enormously important to the success of this project and I cannot thank these institutions and specialists enough.

I feel equally indebted if not more so to the many colleagues who have shared their expertise and research and read and commented on chapters. To begin with, I thank my former colleagues (and dear friends) at the University of Utah, including Isabel Moreira, Janet Theiss, Becky Horn, Bradley Parker, Nadja Durbach, Raul Ramos, David Igler, and Susie Porter, for encouraging me to stretch my wings and move outside of France to think a bit bigger about the Catholic tradition, especially in global terms. Their dinner parties, I will add, remain unparalleled social events and my husband and I miss Utah deeply for that reason among many others. At McMaster in Canada, I have found wonderfully supportive colleagues as well. I thank Tracy McDonald, Juanita DeBarros, Virginia Aksan, Bonny Ibahwoh, Nancy Christie, Michael Gauvreau, and Stephen Heathorn, all of whom have read grant applications and chapters or just listened sympathetically when my chapters were not going well. It is hard to overstate the value of having colleagues in different fields who ask the big questions. For example, why does this matter? And what does *this* mean? I owe a special debt to Virginia Aksan, who, much to my chagrin, retired recently though is thankfully still in Hamilton and available for virtual cocktails. Ginny has been unfailingly

generous with her knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and her contacts with other Ottoman and Mediterranean scholars. It was through Ginny and her colleagues that I met Leslie Peirce, Molly Greene, Nathalie Rothman, Tijana Kristić, Eric Dursteler, Jacob Norris, Rob Clines, Gillian Weiss, Junko Takeda, Carina Johnson, Felicita Tramontana, and Ana Sekulic. Natalie Rothman put me on the trail of the Venetian *dispacci*, a wonderful piece of advice that led me not only to an amazing documentary base but also to other Venetianists, in particular Eric Dursteler, Sandra Weddle, and Roisin Cossar. I am deeply indebted to scholars who work on the Holy Land, including Adam Beaver, Zur Shalev, and Yamit Rachman-Schrire, who have generously shared their own research and ideas on Catholic engagement. In general, it has been a humbling but also exciting experience to be “schooled” on the history of an unfamiliar regime in an unfamiliar landscape, and I am grateful for the many conversations with these and other scholars over the last years at the RSA and the SCSC as well as in the archives. My hope is that this study does justice to the fascinating Ottoman context of the Custody, in particular, and at the very least doesn’t misrepresent it. If I failed to do so, then fault lies entirely with me because these scholars have been unfailingly generous and rigorous.

In addition to these colleagues, I owe thanks to so many others including Allyson Poska and Gerhild Scholz Williams who, in the course of many conversations over the years, usually over a glass of wine, have pushed me to think more deeply about what I am doing and why, both in terms of research and as a historian more generally. The same is true for Craig Harline and Brian Catlos, whose rich conversations helped me think through my project from very early on and for Alison Forrestal, whose own work on the Lazarists and conversations on the nature of mission have been immensely formative upon my thinking about the Franciscans for many years. It was through participation in a multiyear project organized by Alison, Sean Smith, and other colleagues at NUI Galway that my thinking about the Holy Land as a Catholic frontier took concrete form, and it led to an article included in a subsequent collection of essays edited by Alison and Sean, *The Frontiers of Mission: Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism* (2016). More recently, Karen Melvin and Ana Sekulic have become delightful fellow explorers of the Franciscan tradition. It has been illuminating to bring the early modern friars of New Spain, Bosnia, and Jerusalem into conversation with one another. Doing so has only reinforced my conviction that it is helpful to think about this religious group as an international

*Acknowledgements*

xiii

community and network inasmuch as we think of Franciscan convents as local institutions.

One of the most satisfying parts of the present project has been to retain a scholarly connection with early modern France even though it has moved geographically to a very different place. My journey to the Holy Land began in Paris, when I discovered a cluster of contracts involving a pilgrimage confraternity, the Order of the Holy Sepulcher, affiliated with the Franciscan Grand Couvent. These men went to Jerusalem as did some of my French friars and so I followed them. From the very beginning, as well, I have relied upon the continuing expertise and rigor as well as friendship of colleagues who work on early modern France. My generation grew up with a plethora of mentors including Mack Holt, Jim Collins, and Barbara Diefendorf, who were rigorous and supportive in equal measure. As a young scholar, the sight of their raised hands was both encouraging and nerve-wracking because the questions were never easy. Now they are friends who are no less demanding and rigorous, and I am grateful for that. I feel just as grateful for the continuing support and friendship of a cohort that has been developing since the dissertation days. With regard to this project, I am indebted in particular to Eric Nelson, who has read everything I have published and who has more generally been a wonderful partner in crime exploring the many dimensions of early modern Catholicism. Sara Chapman Williams, who I have known from the very beginning, has also read chapters and significantly shaped my thinking about La France “outremer.” Brian Sandberg, Marco Penzi, Stuart Carroll Kay Edwards, Tom Worcester, Andrew Spicer, Jotham Parsons, and Michael Breen, all dear friends, have been a ready and opinionated group of commentators. Finally, forming a “virtual convent” with Sara Beam, Penny Roberts, Virginia Reinburg, and Hilary Bernstein was a stroke of brilliance. While we have been consistently poor at adhering to the vows (which involve among other things limiting administrative work), this reading group has helped massage a hodgepodge of writings into a coherent book. It has become an invaluable support system in the process.

It has not been easy completing this book in the middle of a pandemic. A persistent sense of anxiety, of the unknown, however, is something we can share with people living in the sixteenth and seventeenth Mediterranean since they too were experiencing profound and disruptive change firsthand. One can only hope that our modern experience of global disease will lead us to find pathways to transformative change that will deal with the pressing concerns of climate change, poverty,

authoritarianism, racism, and religious intolerance among others. As this pandemic makes clear, thinking and planning as a global community is more important than ever for promoting peace, equality, economic security, and a healthy planet. Finding consolation in the power of positive, transformative change has helped me manage a much more personal tragedy, the loss of my dearly beloved brother Michael. He passed suddenly and unexpectedly in the summer of 2019 and our family hasn't been the same since. He left behind two young sons and a wife, his soul mate Lori. He was a very good person (with a wicked sense of humour) who believed in the innate goodness and worthiness of all people, and so it is a source of some solace to know that he is now with our mother who was much the same way. Michael's passing has made me immeasurably grateful for my family and friends, pets (two dogs and three cats), my career as a historian, and the privilege of living in a stable and beautiful place like Canada. I feel so fortunate to have been handed such wonderful parents, Jack and Noreen, siblings Michael, Gillian, and Tom, and equally wonderful in-laws in the Opekar family. My husband Alex makes every day a lively adventure, culinary and otherwise, a gift in itself. This book, however, is dedicated to my brother Michael and his family, Lori, Jack, and Patrick, because they embody the spirit that is needed more than ever: love, respect, compassion, humour, and optimism.