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Pour une histoire de l'expérience: le laboratoire médiéval

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To cast a stone and unburden the soul. The experience of deliverance from sin in rituals of indulgence in early sixteenth-century Italy

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Texte intégral

1. Introduction

- ¹ In 1530, during the pastoral visitation to the churches of his diocese, the bishop of Verona, Gian Matteo Giberti (1495-1543), granted eighty days of indulgence to anyone who threw an equal number of stones on their way to the parish church of Lavagno¹. The bishop entrusted the bull to the local Corpus Christi fraternity, whose members



were then appointed to introduce and establish the practice among the village and neighboring communities².

² This was not, for early sixteenth-century Italy, the only case of a ritual that was supposed to shorten the stay of the souls in purgatory in exchange for the execution of prescribed procedures that involved the use of stones. In his *Descrizione di tutta l'Italia*, published in 1525, the inquisitor Leandro Alberti (1479-1552) witnessed numerous pilgrims wearing « all kinds of stones around their necks [...] for their vows and devotions » along the path to the shrine dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel on Mount Gargano in southern Italy³. When pilgrims reached the top of the mountain, they loosened the burden and hung the stones on the branches of trees growing near the shrine. The completion of the pilgrimage granted them a plenary indulgence, which implied the removal of every punishment for the sins they had committed⁴.

³ This article aims to reconstruct the web of meanings that shaped the experience of people who participated in the two rituals, which, to the author's knowledge, are the only reported example for Italian Catholicism of practices of indulgence in which the use of stones produced deliverance from sin.

⁴ In late medieval Europe, the combination of the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences exerted a significant impact on the understanding of Christian beliefs and practices⁵. Purgatory was described as « the defining doctrine of late medieval Catholicism » in Eamon Duffy's seminal work on pre-Reformation England⁶. The image of « a cult of the living in the service of the dead » still provides an accurate explanation for many of the religious practices that Christian believers performed in the hope of improving the conditions of souls in the afterlife⁷. The performance of a ritual stipulated by an indulgence indeed guaranteed a reduction in the time souls had to spend in purgatory to expiate for their sins before being admitted to heaven. The religious practices stimulated by indulgences were numerous and varied : from the recitation of a sequence of prayers in front of specifically prescribed altarpieces to the simple act of bowing the head each time the priests pronounced the name of Christ during mass⁸. After the Reformation, the doctrine of purgatory continued to shape the religious practices of people in Catholic territories. The existence of a third realm in the afterlife was confirmed by the Council of Trent and proclaimed as a dogma of the Roman Church. However, despite the increasing efforts in recent years to understand religious experiences from the perspective of practices, the function of indulgences still awaits a more thorough investigation for those parts of Europe that remained Catholic, Italy in particular⁹. Robert Swanson, one of the leading authorities on the subject, even argued that practices related to the earning of indulgences seem to constitute a taboo area in the historiography of early modern Catholicism. The fact that, on the contrary, the rituals of indulgence have always attracted considerable interest and have been extensively studied for the period before the Reformation in the historiographical tradition of Protestant countries apparently supports his assertion that the reluctance to study the subject on the Catholic side has been historically motivated by confessional reasons¹⁰.

⁵ As Swanson explains, the working of indulgences was a matter of both theory and practice¹¹. In fact, the factual comprehension of the function and power of indulgences stemmed from the « uncontrolled » interactions between theological teachings and popular practices that occurred in everyday religious experience. A number of thorough studies have already considered the theoretical dimensions of the medieval and early modern theological debate on the subject, and yet the lack of a history of practice still limits the understanding of indulgences within religious experience. I therefore offer a contribution to the study of a neglected topic in the field of Catholic religious practices. Deriving from an indulgence, the rites of Lavagno and of Mount Gargano allowed the



believers to exercise power over an otherworldly reality, by enabling them to reduce the torment imposed on sinful souls in purgatory. The possibility attributed to these rituals to change the fate of souls was made manifest by the use of stones. The spiritual results of the rituals were achieved, and conditioned, through the instrumental handling of this specific material support. Because of their physical qualities, the stones were considered suitable for evoking in the sensitive experience of believers the burden that sins created on souls in the afterlife. The inherent heaviness of the stones made them appropriate to represent sins in purification rituals.

- 6 The ambiguous role of material objects in the representation of transcendent meanings and spiritual values for late medieval Christian practitioners has been extensively analyzed by Caroline Walker Bynum. Recently, Bynum addressed a list of challenging questions that inevitably compel us to reflect on how the assignment of religious attributes affected the comprehension of material reality : « What can it mean for chastity to be a garment, for a prayer to be a rose, for a tooth to be a person, for a bit of bread to be the body of God ? »¹². I will thus proceed by proposing an analysis that follows a similar question : what did it mean, in terms of lived experience, to represent deliverance from sin through the throwing of a stone ?

2. The experience of casting stones

- 7 The experiences of wearing stones around the neck with the purpose of getting relieved of their weight at the shrine, or the gesture of casting them along the way to a church, formed the culminating part of the sacrament of confession that enabled believers to get rid of their sins. Confession was a ritual process consisting of three stages. The first step of the sacrament required the penitent to experience a change of heart and the willingness to reject and atone for past sins, followed by a state of sorrow. The need for such a genuine conversion to penance was known as *contritio* and was considered a decisive emotional change for believers who wished to undertake the sacramental process. As the second step, the penitents had to confess their sins to a priest (the *confessio*). Since the absolution imparted by the priest at the end of confession did not save the penitent from the punishment inflicted by God on souls in the afterlife, it was crucial for the penitent to perform a series of duties in order to mitigate the divine penalty¹³. Indulgences contributed to the completion of this third and last step of the sacramental process, known as *satisfactio*. The granting of indulgences by the Church established which devotional practices and rituals held the power to guarantee divine benevolence and absolution. The ability to infuse material practices with such power built on the papal claim that the Pope and his representatives possessed the authority to transfer the merits that Christ and the martyrs had acquired through their earthly sufferings¹⁴. The practices related to sacred places and objects that were designated as receptacles of indulgences were believed to grant access to fractions of this spiritual treasure and thus to earn a partial or even total pardon from God¹⁵.

- 8 Even after Martin Luther confronted the Roman Church regarding the ritual system based on indulgences and the flourishing economic interests connected to it, countless devotions continued to spread throughout the Italian peninsula, drawing on the treasury of merits. This was the case of the unusual religious habits that the arrival of some unprecedented bulls of indulgence propagated among the people of Venice in 1531, as noted by the chronicler Marin Sanudo in one of his diaries. The novelty consisted of what Robert Swanson calls « devotional pardons »¹⁶, meaning the granting of a reduction of the purgatorial stay in exchange for the recitation of a series of prayers ; namely, in this case, « 3 paternostri e 3 ave Maria »¹⁷. While the number of



pilgrims who arrived in Rome for the Jubilee year of 1525 drastically decreased, in part as a consequence of the diminished appeal of the spiritual benefit of the plenary indulgence proclaimed for the solemn occasion to the European population after the outbreak of the Reformation, and while also in other parts of Europe, as Elizabeth Tingle evidenced for France, episcopal *curiae* suspended the issuing of new indulgences, the granting of those same spiritual rewards apparently did not cease in the Italian dioceses¹⁸.

- 9 In Lavagno, the indulgence conceded to the local confraternity certified the casting of stones to be effective in reducing divine punishment only if performed on specific days of the liturgical year. The Easter period offered the most opportunities to gain this spiritual reward. Besides the third Sunday of each month and on the feast of Corpus Christi, the indulgence acknowledged power to the rite exclusively if performed on three days of the Holy Week before Easter Sunday and the following Monday. The placement of the indulgence in the days around Easter was clearly designed to embed the ritual within the framework of sacramental confession, which had a particularly important role during the Easter period. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Holy Week represented the culmination of a season of penance and spiritual preparation, in compliance with the obligation of annual confession imposed on all adult Christians by the canon *Omnis utriusque sexus* decided by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Most believers underwent confession exclusively in this period since only those who had confessed their sins to a priest could receive communion on Easter Sunday. In this sense, confession provided the ritual means of spiritual purification by which the Church prepared the laity for the most sacred moment of the liturgical year : the ingestion of the body of Christ¹⁹. The throwing of stones contributed to structuring the experience of purification from sins by providing an additional physical dimension. There was a proportionality between the number of stones to be cast and the days permitted by the ritual to be removed from the purgatorial imprisonment. The very act of tossing a stone was charged with the power to alter the factors that determined the duration of the divine sentence. A sin was purged when a stone was thrown. The ritual marked the conclusion of the sacramental process of penance, enabling believers to permanently erase a part of sins from their souls. The process of materialization made sin a tangible object and allowed practitioners to physically dispose of it. At the same time, to the immediate experience of believers, sin acquired the material and sensory qualities of a stone. In their lived experience, sins were burdens to be freed from to enter paradise.

3. The experience of bearing the burden

- 10 The ritual introduced by bishop Giberti materialized on earth the belief that in the afterlife, sin weighed heavily on the souls of the dead and prevented them from reaching the beatific vision of God in heaven. The performance of the ritual induced the practitioners to visualize the journey of spiritual purification that awaited them in purgatory, as the tossing of stones reproduced the unburdening of dead souls from the noxious burden of sins.
- 11 Since the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Latin Christian afterlife comprised three realms : hell, heaven and purgatory²⁰. Unlike heaven and hell, purgatory was a place of transit where disembodied souls resided only for the limited time required to complete the penance for sins that were not atoned for in life. In this third location, souls prepared to ascend to heaven by cleansing themselves of the remnants of earthly sins. While the location of heaven was in the skies, hell and purgatory were usually



represented as underground places where the sinful souls suffered the penance of being deprived of the beatific vision of God. The physical separation from God was regarded as the most excruciating punishment for souls since it denied them the ultimate state of grace to which human spirits could aspire. As argued by Jérôme Baschet in his book on the medieval artistic representations of otherworldly punishments, before a new way of conceiving penances in the afterlife emerged in the fourteenth century, resulting in the pictorial rendition of the teachings on the seven deadly sins, the separation from God constituted the essential feature in the visualization of the torments that souls of sinners were fated to suffer²¹. To emphasize the capacity of sins to withdraw souls from God, the weight of stones usually tied around the necks of the sinners was presented as a means to force them into the underground realms of hell and purgatory²².

12 The subterranean permanence of the sinful souls and the requirement of purification as a precondition for ascending to heaven implied a way of understanding sins that, putting aside the theological discussion of the incorporeal nature of souls, assigned them the power to affect the physical qualities of spiritual substances. Sins made the souls of sinners heavier, « so that » at the time of death « they instantly fall into the infernal abyss », as Cornelio Musso (1511-1574), one of the most famous Italian preachers of the sixteenth century, stated in a sermon delivered in Rome during Lent in 1539²³. The physical resemblance of sin to a burden was an established feature of Christian religious imagery. As a recent study on the representation of sins in Christian culture concludes, the image of sin as a burden is one of the « most productive » metaphors by which the perception of sin is depicted in the Bible²⁴. The holy Scriptures constituted a reliable and authoritative source that preachers employed to persuade their audiences about the repercussions that sins would materially produce on the souls. For instance, the friar Marco Lancella presented to the congregation gathered in the Dominican church in Naples with thirteen scriptural passages in which sin was described as a burden²⁵ :

The soul, though by the eternal God was created for Heaven, yet bound with the heavy weight of sin cannot rise, but by the heavy burden of it, its motion will tend downward. And believe me that so burdensome is this sin, that a burden it is indeed called throughout the entire holy Scriptures.

13 As far as the preachers were concerned, it was clear that, at the moment of death, sins acted as a physical force, and that the fate of a soul depended on the additional weight they conferred. Whether souls reached heaven or fell into the depths of the earth, the movements of souls appeared determined according to a material logic. Further elements in favor of this conception came from the eschatological belief in the particular (or individual) judgment. The belief that immediately after its departure from the body, every soul was judged individually had developed in accordance with the doctrine of purgatory and gained popularity during the later Middle Ages²⁶. When the soul left the body, in the invisible presence of Christ, a tribunal decided about its destiny²⁷. In such a critical moment, a figure who frequently appeared to play a crucial role was the Archangel Michael. The first evidence of Italian paintings depicting the participation of the Archangel in the particular judgment dates back to the twelfth century²⁸. Saint Michael, the patron of the shrine on Mount Gargano, presided over a ritual weighing in which objects representing good and bad deeds committed in life were placed on his scales. On the pans of the balance that the archangel bore as a common attribute, sins were usually represented in the form of stones. The outcome of the comparison between the weight of the good and the bad deeds committed in life decided the destination of the soul. If the weight of sins had prevailed, demons would have dragged the soul to hell or purgatory.



14 Although it never received stable and official theological recognition, the idea of individual judgment remained popular among the laity throughout the Middle Ages. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, this eschatological moment was popularized in sacred dramas based on the miracles of the saints and biblical parables²⁹. The weighing of the soul also appeared in the miraculous tales composed in praise of the power of the indulgences that were assigned to devotional devices. A scene of weighing was included in one of the stories compiled in 1521 by the Venetian friar Alberto da Castello to celebrate the benefits that the praying of the rosary procured for the salvation of souls³⁰. The rosary beads, providentially added by the Virgin Mary to counterbalance all sins, reversed the outcome of an otherwise unfavorable weighing³¹.

15 According to Anselm Adornes, a merchant who visited the sanctuary of the archangel Michael on Mount Gargano on his journey back from the Holy Land around 1470, pilgrims performed the rite with the promise of obtaining a plenary remission of sins³². Thus, when pilgrims took off the stones they had been wearing around their necks during the journey to the Archangel, all of their sins were instantly forgiven. The pilgrimage provided them with a ritual model to experience, through their bodies, both the oppressive force of sins and the spiritual relief given by divine mercy. Walking the route to the shrine with a stone tied around their necks allowed pilgrims to physically confront the power that, according to the preachers, sins exerted on souls. The burden forced the body into an uncomfortable posture and contributed to shaping the sensory experience of the pilgrimage. The stones constrained the penitent to register the sensation of a weight pulling the body to the ground, and the pilgrimage offered an earthly glimpse of the torments that frescoes foretold for souls in the afterlife. The stone was only removed at the top of the mountain and left at the shrine as a ritual gift to remind the Archangel that the pilgrimage had reduced the weight of their souls. As the stones were untied from the necks, the plenary indulgence lifted all the spiritual weight that sins had placed on souls up until that moment. The completion of the journey finally gave the pilgrims hope that their souls, at the end of a strenuous path of spiritual purification, could finally ascend to paradise.

4. Conclusions

16 Although contested by the reformers for their externalized and mechanical aspect, rituals of penance at the beginning of the sixteenth century provided Catholic believers with a model for experiencing the founding tenets of religion through their lived bodies. Both rituals presented in this article impressed into the living bodies of practitioners the theological precept that sin resulted in distancing the soul from God. The stones informed the metaphors used by preachers to imprint an embodied experience of sin³³. The audience attending the sermons of Cornelius Musso, Marco Lancella, as well as other clerics, was induced to experience sin as a weight that pressed the body to the ground and which, at the end of earthly existence, would drag souls into the underground realms of punishment. The material qualities of stones made them the ideal support for rituals whose purpose was to represent on earth the purification of souls in purgatory. The release of the stones, by throwing them along the path leading to the church of Lavagno or placing them on the trees that grew around the shrine of the Archangel Michael, enriched the sacrament of penance with a physical dimension. The materialization made sin an immediate object for believers to know and experience through their bodies and senses. The focus on the material aspects associated with the earning of the two indulgences has thus shed light on the ways in which crucial spiritual phenomena of the Christian experience, such as sin and atonement, were lived. By



reconstructing the web of meanings that underpinned the two rituals, this article demonstrates the importance that an extensive study of the practices of indulgence would have for understanding religious experience in early modern Italy.

Notes

1 The text of the indulgence states as follows : « Est et societas in honore sacratissimi Corporis Domini nostri Iesu Christi, cui idem dominus in qualibet tertia dominica cuiuslibet mensis, in festis Corporis eiusdem Domini nostri, in die Coenae Domini, Parasceves, et in tribus festis Paschatis, perpetuis futuris temporibus duraturam indulgentiam similem elargitus est necnon et eicientibus a via, per quam itur ad dictam ecclesiam Sancti Bricii, 80 lapides, indulgentiam 80 dierum » (*Riforma pretridentina della Diocesi di Verona. Visite pastorali del vescovo G. M. Giberti 1525-1542*, ed. A. FASANI, Vicenza, Istituto per le ricerche di storia sociale e di storia religiosa, 1989, vol. 2, p. 683. For a recent assessment of the works of Giberti, see C. M. N. EIRE, *Reformations. The Early Modern World, 1450-1650*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2016, p. 124-125. The most comprehensive study devoted to this important figure in the ecclesiastical reform movement of the early sixteenth-century Italy is A. PROSPERI, *Tra Evangelismo e Controriforma*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1969.

2 On the granting of indulgences to local confraternities, see G. CASAGRANDE, « Confraternities and indulgences in Italy in the later Middle Ages », *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits : Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. R. N. SWANSON, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2006, p. 37-63. The role of the bulls of indulgence has recently been assessed as an essential component of the communication system of the Roman Church in Renaissance Europe by M. MESERVE, *Papal Bull: Print, Politics, and Propaganda in Renaissance Rome*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2021.

3 « Pietre d'ogni sorte [...] portano al collo per loro voti e devotioni » (LEANDRO ALBERTI, *Descrizione di tutta l'Italia nella quale si contiene il sito di essa, l'origine e la signoria delle città et de' castelli*, Venice, Ludovico de gli Avanzi, 1561, fol. 250v). On Alberti's work, *L'Italia dell'inquisitore : storia e geografia dell'Italia del Cinquecento nella « Descrizione » di Leandro Alberti. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Bologna, 27-29 maggio 2004)*, ed. M. DONATTINI, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2007.

4 For a broader analysis of the pilgrimage to Saint Michael's shrine on Mount Gargano, see M. SENSI, « Le indulgenze a S. Michele », *Pellegrinaggi e santuari di San Michele nell'Occidente medievale*, ed. G. CASIRAGHI and G. SERGI, Bari, Edipuglia, 2009, p. 241-268. On the origin of the shrine, see E. MAURICHI, « Il santuario di monte Sant'Angelo : storia della costruzione », *Vie e mete dei pellegrini nel Medioevo euromediterraneo*, ed. B. BORGHI, Bologna, Pàtron, 2007, p. 141-151.

5 On this vast topic, see the essays collected in *Le purgatoire : fortune historique et historiographique d'un dogme*, ed. G. CUCHET, Paris, Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2012. The development of studies on purgatory as an object of historical inquiry owes mainly to the seminal work of J. LE GOFF, *La naissance du Purgatoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1981.

6 E. DUFFY, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c.1580*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 8.

7 A. N. GALPERN, « The Legacy of Late Medieval Religion in Sixteenth-Century Champagne », *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. H. O. OBERMAN and C. TRINKAUS, Leiden, Brill, 1974, p. 141-176, here p. 149.

8 On similar rituals of indulgence, see W. S. GIBSON, « Prayers and Promises: The Interactive Indulgence Print in the Later Middle Ages », *Push Me, Pull You. Imaginative and Emotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, ed. S. BLICK and L. D. GELFAND, Leiden, Brill, 2011, p. 275-324; A. M. MORRIS, « Art and Advertising: Late Medieval Altarpieces in Germany », *ibid.*, p. 325-345; M. CORSO, « Sulla pelle del devoto. Il corpo come elemento di confronto politico nella Controriforma », *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, 27, 2021, p. 293-306, here p. 295.

9 In contrast, detailed surveys of indulgence practices in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France are available. See E. C. TINGLE, *Indulgences after Luther: Pardons in Counter-Reformation France, 1520-1720*, London, Routledge, 2015; T. JULIEN, « La quête pour la Vierge Noire de Montserrat en France au XVIII^e siècle. Un commerce international d'indulgences post-tridentin », *L'économie des dévotions. Commerce, croyances et objets de piété à l'époque moderne*, ed. A. BURKARDT, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, p. 69-90; S. SIMIZ, « Les



confréries face à l'indulgence. Tradition, quête, accueil et effets dans la France de l'est (xve-xviii siècles) », *Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne (mi-xve-début xix^e siècle)*, ed. B. DOMPNIER and P. VISMARA, Rome, École française de Rome, 2008, p. 103-124.

10 See R. N. SWANSON, « The Challenges of Indulgences in the Pre-Reformation Church », *Ablaskampagnen des Spätmittelalters: Luthers Thesen von 1517 im Kontext*, ed. A. REHBERG, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, p. 3-17, here p. 12. The authors of two magisterial works approached the subject from a confessional point of view: H. C. LEA, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, Lea Bros & Co, 1897 and N. PAULUS, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1922-1923.

11 R. N. SWANSON, « The Challenges of Indulgences... », art. cit. n. 10.

12 C. WALKER BYNUM, *Dissimilar Similitudes. Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe*, New York, Zone Books, 2020, p. 15-57.

13 T. N. TENTLER, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977.

14 For a thorough examination of how indulgences worked, see R. N. SWANSON, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 8-22.

15 R. W. SHAFFERN, « The Medieval Theology of Indulgences », *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. R. N. SWANSON, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2006, p. 11-36.

16 R. N. SWANSON, « Praying for Pardon: Devotional Indulgences in Late Medieval England », *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. ID., Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2006, p. 215-240.

17 MARIN SANUDO, *Diarii*, ed. R. FULIN, Venice, Visentini, 1879-1903, t. 54, p. 366.

18 See E. C. TINGLE, *Indulgences after Luther...*, op. cit. n. 9, p. 48 and EAD., « French Reactions to the 1517 Debate in Theory and Practice », *Ablaskampagnen des Spätmittelalters: Luthers Thesen von 1517 im Kontext*, ed. A. REHBERG, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, p. 655-670, here p. 660-661; A. ESPOSITO, « Il ruolo delle confraternite in Italia nella pratica delle indulgenze (secc. XV-XVI) », *ibid.*, p. 389-404, here p. 403-404. See also, A. REHBERG, « Lutero e le vie della salvezza nella prassi devozionale a Roma intorno al 1500 », *Martin Lutero a Roma*, ed. M. MATHEUS et al., Rome, Viella, 2019, p. 311-347.

19 A. BAMJI, « The Catholic Life Cycle », *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. A. BAMJI et al., Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, p. 183-201.

20 For an overview on the topic, see E. C. TINGLE, « Changing Western European visions of Christian afterlives, 1350-1700: Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory », *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c. 1300-1700*, ed. P. BOOTH and E. C. TINGLE, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2021, p. 33-71, and L. PASQUINI, « I luoghi dell'aldilà: iconografia », *Un gallo ad Asclepio. Morte, morti e società tra antichità e prima età moderna*, ed. A. L. TROMBETTI BUDRIESI, Bologna, Clueb, 2013, p. 591-648.

21 J. BASCHET, *Les justices de l'au-delà : les représentations de l'enfer en France et en Italie (xii-xve siècle)*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2014, p. 56-57.

22 In recent years, Giuliano Milani has proposed a more specific connotation for this iconographic motif. Milani contended that in many Italian frescoes painted between the 11th and 13th centuries, only the souls of usurers, traitors, and fraudsters have a sack full of stones tied around the neck. The image thus complemented the policies that Italian municipalities had implemented against economic abuses with an iconographic supplement. See G. MILANI, *L'uomo con la borsa al collo. Genealogia e uso di un'immagine medievale*, Rome, Viella, 2017.

23 « I peccati nondimeno gli fanno gravi, in tanto che morendo, subito in un istante discendono nell'abisso infernale » (CORNELIO MUSSO, *Delle prediche quadragesimali del reverendissimo monsignor Cornelio Musso, vescovo di Bitonto*, Venice, Stamperia de' Giunti, 1587, vol. 1, p. 297). On MUSSO, see C. E. NORMAN, *Humanist Taste and Franciscan Values: Cornelio Musso and Catholic Preaching in Sixteenth-century Italy*, New York, Peter Lang, 1998.

24 G. A. ANDERSON, *Sin: A History*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 16.

25 « L'anima, ancorché dall'eterno Iddio sia stata creata per il Cielo; nondimeno ligata con grievo peso del peccato, non può levarsi in alto, ma per la grave somma di quello, il suo moto tenderà al basso. E credetemi che è tanto grievo questo peccato, che è chiamato peso per tutta la sacra Scrittura » (MARCO LANCELLA, *Esposizione dell'hinno che la santa romana Chiesa canta per commune suffragio de' fedeli defonti*, Vico Equense, Giovanni Iacomo Carlino et Antonio Pace, 1598, p. 123).



26 E. C. TINGLE, « Changing... », art. cit. n. 20, p. 34-35.

27 For an analysis of how the relations between Last judgment and particular judgment unfolded in the theological thought, see J. BASCHET, « Jugement de l'âme, jugement dernier : contradiction, complémentarité, chevauchement ? », *Revue Mabillon*, n. s. 6, 1995, p. 159-203.

28 V. BRILLIANT, « Envisaging the Particular Judgment in late-Medieval Italy », *Speculum*, 84, 2009, p. 314-346, here p. 328; E. C. TINGLE, « Changing... », art. cit. n. 20, p. 35 ; on the role of the archangel see also G. CHARUTY, *Folie, mariage et mort : pratiques chrétiennes de la folie en Europe occidentale*, Paris, Seuil, 1997, p. 209-210, and A. PROSPERI, *Giustizia bendata : percorsi storici di un'immagine*, Turin, Einaudi, 2008.

29 See P. DELCORNO, « Tribunale umano e tribunale celeste. Procedure della giustizia nelle sacre rappresentazioni fiorentine », *Verbum e ius. Predicazione e sistemi giuridici nell'Occidente medievale*, ed. L. GAFFURI and R. M. PARRINELLO, Florence, Firenze University Press, p. 403-423.

30 On the rosary and on the work of Alberto da Castello, see *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. A. BRUNDIN *et al.*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 96-97, and E. ARDISSINO, « Literary and Visual Forms of a Domestic Devotion: The Rosary in Renaissance Italy », *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, ed. M. FAINI and A. MENEGHIN, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2019, p. 342-372.

31 ALBERTO DA CASTELLO, *Rosario della gloriosa vergine Maria*, Venice, 1522, fol. 227r. The tale was severely criticized by the reformer Pierpaolo Vergerio. In addition to reinforcing the belief that the execution of the ritual practices prescribed by indulgences automatically guaranteed salvation, the tale also presented the scene of the weighing of a soul which for the reformer represented a foolish belief. See V. VOZZA, *Antologia vergeriana. Scritti minori del Vescovo di Cristo: edizione e commento di una selezione di opere di Pier Paolo Vergerio il giovane (1498-1565)*, Canterano, Aracne, 2019, p. 60-61, here p. 72.

32 For Adornes' account on the pilgrimage see M. SENSI, « Le indulgenze a S. Michele », art. cit. n. 4.

33 On the strategic use of images to provoke physical sensations and reaction in the audience during religious communications, see L. BOLZONI, *La rete delle immagini. Predicazione in volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena*, Turin, Einaudi, 2002, esp. p. 219-220.

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