# INTRODUCTION

*Portraits and Sacred Images in Early Modernity*

## Ambiguous Images

The woman in red is a saint (fig. 1). This much seems clear. She kneels next to Christ, who grasps her hand, while an angel raises a floral wreath over her head. On the ground lies a piece of paper inscribed with the words "Saint Barbara, virgin and martyr." In the scene beyond them, another woman, also dressed in red, submits to decapitation by a bearded executioner. The women's parallel poses and dress, along with the ambiguous position of the *cartellino*—set in darkened middle ground between the two scenes—imply that both women are Saint Barbara. Barbara's martyrdom in the background is narrative, derived from hagiographic texts: the future saint's own father ordered—and performed—her beheading.[1] In the foreground, the representation of Barbara is iconic, an event that occurs outside of narrative time.

Here, directly before the viewer, Saint Barbara, now rendered whole in posthumous sanctity, kneels alongside Christ.[2] Since the woman is a saint, this painting appears to be an image for devotion and prayer, its iconography and composition deriving from a long tradition of Christian art.

At the same time, a number of clues in the painting suggest that the depiction may actually be a portrait, perhaps of the person who commissioned the painting. The woman who kneels in the foreground is represented according to the conventions of period portraiture: her facial features are particularized, and, whereas Christ's face is painterly, with eyes downcast, hers is highly finished and confronts the viewer with a direct gaze. Tellingly, the angel also looks out from the picture: he, too, is a portrait, likely of the sitter's young son. This painting, then, is not only a religious painting but also a portrait, bringing together in one canvas

two categories of early modern image making that have long been understood as not only distinct but binarily opposed to each other.

The contemporary individuals inhabit the historic religious scene with seeming ease, but the painting's competing registers—present-day and profane as opposed to ancient and sacred—force the image to exist in a permanent state of tension. The Council of Trent (1545–63) had decreed that "the honor which is shown unto [devotional images] is referred to the prototypes which they represent."[3] In this conception a religious image was a tool—helpful with a task but not an end unto itself—that served to redirect a pious viewer's thoughts to the depicted holy figure. The saintly "prototype" of a religious picture could receive prayer and serve as an intercessor on behalf of the supplicant. On the other hand, portraits of living or once-living sitters could not perform in the same way; their referents, while perhaps imagined by their viewers to be sympathetic listeners, were eschatologically ineffective. In the case of an image with a doubled referent, such as the portrait of a woman in the guise of Saint Barbara, to whom was this honor referred? For early modern ecclesiastics, the question was not merely rhetorical. Prayers could be misdirected and go unheeded, while living individuals might receive veneration worthy only of saints, challenging the Catholic Church's primacy in administering religious cults. The troubling duality of a portrait-icon put souls at stake.

In the painting with Saint Barbara, the artist (perhaps the Valencian painter Mosén Domingo Saura) responded to a request common across early modern Spain and its American and European viceroyalties: to create a religious image that included a likeness of the work's patron.[4] Even within those straightforward parameters, however,

artworks that fulfilled the directive could differ radically. Some entirely collapsed the distance between the nonsacred sitters and the sacred scene, thus bringing the two spheres together. Other artworks pointedly accentuated the distance separating the heavens from the world of the profane. For example, a late seventeenth-century central Mexican portrait offers a closely observed, naturalistic depiction of two sitters, Bartolomé Andrés and Agustín Pérez (fig. 2). This painting was almost certainly one of a pair of double donor portraits set on either side of a holy image. The physical and ontological distance between the now-lost sacred scene at the center and the profane ones that framed it was such that the three canvases became separated at some point in their afterlives, with the portrait coming to function as an independent artwork.[5]

The painting of the woman as Saint Barbara is explicit in its sacred iconography. It is therefore plausible that some of its viewers may have treated the work as an object of religious contemplation. However, much the same was true of the Mexican donor portrait, even though there is no explicit religious element in the image aside from the donors' hands grasped in prayer. It, too, could have been understood to be a sacred image, becoming the focus of prayer and veneration. This book's central argument is that the early modern portrait—*any* early modern portrait—could become a sacred image. However latent, the potential was there, both provocative and irrefutable. The possible slippage from one register to the other—from sacred to profane, or from worldly to sacred—could occur in a number of ways, many of which were entirely legitimate from the point of view of the ecclesiastical establishment. The iconography of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, for example, was centered

FIG. 2    Unidentified Tlaxcalan painter, *Don Bartolomé Andrés and Don Agustín Pérez*, late 1600s. Oil on canvas, 22.25 × 27.5 in. (56.51 × 69.85 cm). Denver Art Museum, gift of the Collection of Frederick and Jan Mayer, 2014.219. Photography courtesy Denver Art Museum.

on his—purportedly accurate—physiognomic likeness. Depictions of the Jesuit saint are therefore always both portraits and sacred images. Similarly, if the sitter of a portrait was later canonized by the Catholic Church, that image would, by extension, undergo a transition to become an image of a saint. Moreover, royal portraits frequently functioned akin to sacred images in how they were treated and displayed.[6] Other cases, however, were much less orthodox. "Normal" portraits of secular sitters could be repainted, their sitters endowed with saintly attributes that transformed the paintings into images for worship. Likewise, portraits could be altered by their use and simply be treated as if they were religious images, even if no iconographic markers of sanctity were ever added to their surfaces.[7] The portrait, then, was a mutable image type. With the help of their users and viewers, these images voraciously inhabited different artistic categories, challenging, even belying, their promise of stable, static commemoration.

This book's title, *Praying to Portraits*, is therefore intended as more than convenient alliteration. It speaks to the reality of early modern Hispanic—but also, more broadly, Catholic European and colonial—image making, in which the capacity for creating portraitistic likenesses coincided with a religious practice that centered on anthropomorphic representation. Portraits were not only, as has been long claimed, harbingers of secular modernity and autonomous selfhood. Rather, fickle and flexible, portraits were also unique sites for mediating an individual's relationship to the sphere of the sacred. This relationship had never been straightforward or universally applicable, and it became ever more complex with the increasing diversification of the audiences that fell under the Spanish monarchy's aegis. The sacred portrait, which melded the idiosyncrasies of individual likeness with the supposed universality of the religious image, emerged as an arena in which early modern individuals wrestled with what could be known of the divine and how the divine could be experienced. Individuals turned to such images in order to perform their personal or public devotions and, by extension, to articulate their changeable, complex selfhoods, linking the mundane with the sacred, the personal with the universal. For individuals living across the early modern Hispanic world, in sum, praying to a portrait was not an unusual thing to do.

## Types of Sacred Portraits

Religious painting and portraiture have long been considered the two most important contributions of early modern Hispanic art, but they are commonly treated as distinct artistic categories.[8]

Situated in the vast gray space between them, however, is a constellation of images in which portraiture came into conversation with the sphere of the sacred; I term these works "sacred portraits." These include donor portraits, portraits of sitters in the guise of saints, "true portraits" of recently deceased but already canonized individuals, paintings of saints that merely drew on the conventions of portraiture without being actual likenesses, repainted portraits, and even royal portraits.[9] Some of these image types have been studied individually, but thus far the category of sacred portraiture has rarely been considered as an integrally connected whole.[10] This inattention may derive from the oft-uncategorizable, fluid nature of many of its constitutive image types. No less, there is the long-standing historiographic bias against artworks that do not easily align with modern artistic genres. This impasse is compounded by the fact that the policing of such image types by entities like the Holy Office of the Inquisition could result in their destruction, with their traces intermittently surfacing in the archive.[11]

When examined individually, these images (with the exception of the royal portrait) appear as curious footnotes at the margins of early modern Hispanic visual culture or as unusual variations on the seemingly monolithic categories of portraiture and religious painting.[12] As I argue here, sacred portraits were not marginal at all. Rather they were ubiquitous images, which were variously commissioned, produced, and employed across social tiers and geographies; they lay at the very center of the period's artistic consciousness. Their users and viewers ranged from aristocratic nuns in Madrid to innkeepers in Nahuatl-speaking towns in central Mexico, from Guatemalan bureaucrats to Neapolitan insurgents, and from Bolivian ecclesiastics to

the king of Spain himself. That sacred portraits were widespread, perhaps even common, in Habsburg and early Bourbon realms is not to say that they were straightforward: those works could be both orthodox and unorthodox, popular and persecuted, fully normalized and utterly scandalous. In their inherent duality—belonging to both portraiture and religious imagery—they frustrated the stability, legibility, and uniformity of those two most pivotal, theoretically fraught artistic categories of the early modern period.

But their pervasiveness suggests that they were also worth the frustration. A portrait in a sacred picture makes the depicted holy figure actualized and relatable, assisting the Catholic devotional image in its task of moving its viewers.[13] A human face, replete with idiosyncratic features, imperfections, and eyes that seek out those of the viewer, arrests the viewer's attention.[14] Any figure in a multifigural composition that makes direct eye contact with the viewer—a quintessential portraitistic convention—has such an anchoring function, as Michael Baxandall famously noted of the *festaiuoli* (revelers) of quattrocento painting.[15] There was also a second effect. As I hope to make clear in this study, enhancing a portrait with sacred elements transformed it from an image of limited relevance—cherished primarily by the people who had known the sitter—to one that from the point of view of the Catholic Church had ostensibly universal significance. Even though portraits introduced new, often completely irreconcilable tensions into institutional imagery that relied on precedent and tradition, their contemporaneity and relatability, their enargetic potential (from the classical rhetorical concept of *enargeia*—to make vivid), created new possibilities for affecting viewers.

## Portraiture and the Sacred Image

Because the difficult-to-categorize image types that I have grouped within the category of sacred portraits reside at the intersection of politics and theology, they are, by extension, inextricably linked to the Spanish monarchy's defining projects: first, the aggressive expansion of a polity and its attempts to rule an increasingly diverse set of subjects and, second, the dissemination of a confessional system, premised on orthodoxy, that was more or less uniformly applied to those varied individuals.[16] In the period under examination in this book (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), a number of pressures, including encounters with non-Christian populations and Protestant reformist criticisms, led the Catholic Church to become increasingly aware of the need to standardize its policy concerning images and to verbalize the benefits of images to spiritual practice. The Council of Trent, largely convened in order to respond to these Protestant challenges, was famously terse on the subject of creating and using sacred art in accordance with orthodoxy, but in the decades after the council, theologians began to expand on its general recommendations.[17] For instance, the Italian theologian Gabriele Paleotti believed that predication was crucial in teaching and maintaining adherence to Catholic doctrine. In terms of catechetical effectiveness, however, few things could surpass the seeing of a sacred scene. "To hear the story told of the martyrdom of a saint," Paleotti argued, "or the zeal and constancy of a virgin, or the passion of Christ himself—those are things that really hit one inside. But when the saintly martyr practically materializes in front of your eyes in vivid color, with the oppressed virgin on one side and Christ pierced by nails on

the other—one would have to be made of wood or stone not to feel how much more it intensifies devotion and wrenches the gut."[18]

Perhaps nowhere is the capacity of images to "hit" the viewer visualized more explicitly than across two engravings that appear in Diego Valadés's *Rhetorica Christiana*, largely composed in central New Spain but published in Perugia in 1579, three years prior to Paleotti's text. In the first image, a Franciscan friar preaches to a congregation of Indigenous American neophytes (fig. 3).

He uses a pointer to indicate a painting from among seven framed vignettes with scenes from the Passion that hang above his listeners' heads. The book's text explains that because the Indigenous congregants could not read, it was the images that "reveal[ed to them] the mysteries of our redemption," which became, in this way, "better affixed in their memories."[19] The second image includes many of the same protagonists, including the preacher, still wielding a pointer, and his congregation (fig. 4). Moved out of the space of the

FIG. 4    Diego Valadés, *Friar Preaching Before the Crucifixion*, in Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana* (Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579). Engraving on paper. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 1388-209.

church or atrium, they have now come to inhabit the scene of Christ's Crucifixion (which was the next vignette in the row of pictures from the first engraving). The preacher's rhetoric, combined with the affective capacity of the image, Valadés visually argues, allows the audience to become imaginatively transported into a shared space with the sacred protagonists.[20] The arguments that Valadés's text and its images make can be applied to the use of sacred images in early modern Catholicism writ large. Though I am unaware of whether Paleotti

owned or read Valadés's work, he would have likely agreed with the Mexican friar about the affective power that images could wield over those who saw—and meditated over—them.

The meteoric rise of sacred portraits from the fifteenth century onward suggests that, to early modern audiences, the inclusion of a portrait likeness in a sacred image enhanced even further the efficacy with which that image performed its functions or, to borrow from Paleotti, with which it "hit" its viewers. For instance, a moralizing true

portrait of a saint communicated to pious viewers that they, too, could work toward spiritual perfection since a real person had already achieved that goal. Or, when patrons requested that they be portrayed as saints, the emotive potential of the portrait within the devotional image allowed the patrons to—quite literally—see themselves and their familiars inserted into the holy episode they contemplated.

But, as artistic portrayals that were subject to an individual artist's invention and whim, depictions of holy figures and narratives were inherently fallible. Therefore, the insertion of a portrait—with its connotations of eyewitness immediacy and

FIG. 6 Diego Velázquez, *Pablo de Valladolid*, ca. 1635. Oil on canvas, 42.9 × 48.4 in. (209 × 123 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photo: Museo Nacional del Prado / Art Resource, New York.

veracity—or of portrait-like elements into a religious context could endow the depiction of a holy individual or scene with a sense of reality, contributing to the viewer's acceptance of their validity.[21] For example, the painter Antonio de Pereda's indebtedness to the conventions of period portraiture becomes apparent when comparing his *Christ as Savior* of around 1655 (fig. 5) to Diego Velázquez's portrait of the actor Pablo de Valladolid of 1635 (fig. 6).[22] Both figures gaze out directly at the viewer and stand in dynamic poses, seemingly caught midgesture—blessing and speaking, respectively—and placed in what Javier Portús Pérez calls "absolutely indeterminate space."[23]

The formal parallels are indisputable even if, ontologically, the two images could not be more different. Pereda recombined elements from the court portrait, capitalizing on the instant recognizability of this pictorial language to his audiences, in order to isolate and monumentalize his arresting figure of Christ. In practice, however, portraiture was plagued by the same issues of veracity as religious imagery. When portraits became separated from their sitters, the images could not easily be compared to their prototypes. Their validity had to be accepted on faith. The laboriously constructed authority of images, it turns out, could be easily dismantled.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the vernacular appropriation of official forms of using and living with images, including sacred portraits. Political and religious images were deployed across great distances and among varied populations and were tasked with maintaining stability and modeling forms of correct behavior. The heterogenous audiences who encountered them, however, were not necessarily invested in universals. Factors including their gender, ethnicity, faith, and economic standing could affect what they thought of images and how they used them. They adapted incoming models to better fit local conditions, often resulting in images that only seemingly adhered to accepted modes of art making. Or, they used images in ways that superficially aligned with established practices but that, when probed, proved to be entirely heterodox. Often, these images and their users were subjected to institutional surveillance and censorship. It is critical to stress, however, that this "misuse" of images was not simply a concern in places that were removed from the seats of institutional power. It was as likely to occur in Madrid and Mexico City

as it was in small towns like Algete in central Spain, discussed in chapter 3, and San Martín Texmelucan in central Mexico, examined in chapter 4. Perhaps paradoxically, in all those places, it was the censors who revealed themselves to be some of the most astute viewers and critics of images, both religious and profane. In turn, their struggles to determine the limits of different image types constitute some of the period's richest art-theoretical debates.

## Portraiture in the Early Modern Hispanic World

In a 1942 essay on the Baroque, the art historian Enrique Lafuente Ferrari argues that "in Spanish painting, both devout and profane, everything, even the still life, is portraiture," a statement that was powerfully attuned to the breadth of the category.[24] Indeed, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Castilian Spanish, the interpretive breadth of *retrato*, or portrait, made space for a range of distinct image types that could fit beneath its rubric. City views, such as Antonio Mancelli's depiction of the main plaza in Madrid; representations of holy relics, like the *santo chiodo* or nail from the Crucifixion held in Milan (fig. 7); and images of animals and plants, particularly those deemed exotic, prodigious, or monstrous were all labeled as portraits, even as true portraits—*verdaderos retratos*—which granted them the cachet of unimpeachable authenticity. As a concept, then, the portrait was a ductile notion characterized, above all, by the credibility that it imparted to things that bore its name.[25]

The portrait's claim to truthfulness was implicit in its etymology. The lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias defined *retrato* in relation to the term

*retraer*, because the person making the portrait brings or "draws [*trae*] toward him or herself the semblance and figure that is being portrayed," suggesting a physical relationship between the image maker and the model, and, by extension, the experience of being an eyewitness, which was often understood as a guarantee of veracity.[26] Similarly, the painter and art theorist Francisco Pacheco noted that for an image to be deemed a portrait, it had to fulfill two conditions: "The first is that the portrait be very similar to the original . . . and the second obligation is that it be well drawn and painted. . . . But if either likeness or good quality are to be missing, then let likeness remain, since this is the goal of portraiture."[27] According to these distinctions, all an image needed to be a portrait was a real world prototype, with which it bore a connection through resemblance, explaining the wide variety of images, including depictions of animals, religious statuary, and even cities, that fell under this rubric.

The term's breadth notwithstanding, *retrato* was also understood as a depiction of a specific person. Even though there existed nonphysiognomic ways in which a portrait's relation to its prototype could be cemented, including textually and symbolically through inscriptions and coats of arms, there was a growing interest in physiognomic likeness in early modern Spain. In this understanding, a portrait was a rendering of the appearance of a human individual, of a face endowed with specific, even unique, physical features.[28] In rare situations when sitters are depicted multiple times, they should be recognizable from one portrait to the next based on their facial features. Of course, it is impossible to determine accuracy in depictions of once-living individuals, and neither is this a goal here. The images that are of interest are those that *present* as
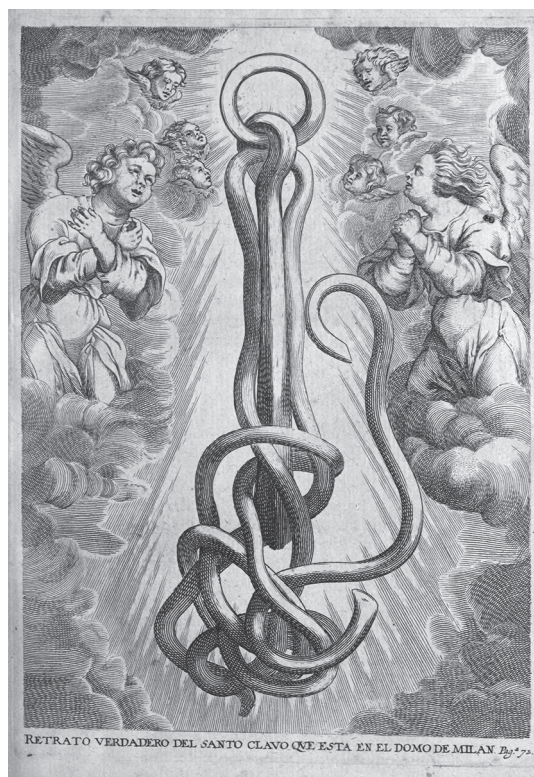


FIG. 7    Marinus van der Goes, after Peter Paul Rubens, *Retrato Verdadero del Santo Clavo que Esta en el Domo de Milan*, in Diego de Aedo y Gallart, *Viaje del infante cardenal don Fernando de Avstria, desde 12. de abril 1632. que saliò de Madrid con Su Magestad D. Felipe IV. su hermano para la çiudad de Barçelona, hasta 4. de noviembre de 1634. que entrò en la de Bruselas* (Antwerp: Jan Cnobbaert, 1635), between pages 72 and 73. Engraving on paper. Julius S. Held Collection of Rare Books, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Library, Williamstown.

portraits, aiming to convince the viewer that what they depict is a real, (once-)living person.[29] That portraits were understood by a broad cross section of society to be recognizable depictions of specific individuals is demonstrated by their prominence as topoi in period theater.[30] Indeed, even if an individual did not have the wherewithal to commission a portrait, they still understood what kind of image it was and how it functioned. When speaking of

portraiture in this book, I have this more constrained but still capacious definition in mind.[31]

A further note on terminology: although the word *genre* was used in the early modern period, I generally prefer the terms *artistic type* or *category*, which respond more precisely to the exigencies of dealing with images that resist clear-cut categorization. Just as we cannot say that early modern religious imagery was a genre, given the breadth of types of images that fulfilled religious purposes, so too, in the Hispanic world, the portrait was not so much a genre as a type of image defined by its claim to truthfully rendering that which is real. The artistic categories under consideration were flexible and extendable, allowing for frequent overlaps and ambiguities of classification.[32]

Historiographically, portraiture has long been understood as one of the two poles that dominated artistic production in the Hispanic world, with the other being religious painting.[33] In part, this conception derived from the fact that the modern understanding of portraiture as the painting of physiognomic likenesses, distinct from the sphere of religious imagery, was already present in early modernity.[34] For example, Javier Portús Pérez has shown that portraits were frequently grouped together in portrait galleries, separately from other types of paintings.[35] Moreover, in Spain painters had to pay the *alcabala* artisans' sales tax for portraits or still lifes but were exempt from it when taking on religious commissions.[36] Perhaps for this reason, in Peter Cherry's words, Pacheco "maintained a strict conceptual division between his extensive practice as a portraitist and his narrative pictures of religious subjects, evidently seen as two entirely different categories of painting."[37] Therefore, notwithstanding the extreme breadth of the concept of portraiture, early modern artists,

patrons, censors, and officials also understood the portrait as a highly specific, discrete artistic category: a depiction of a living individual, clearly outside the sphere of the sacred image. As the concept of portraiture evolved, it was precisely this narrower understanding of the category that emerged triumphant from the broader and more fluid set of understandings that I have outlined above.[38] These divisions and hierarchies gradually crystallized even further in the eighteenth century under the influence of burgeoning secularism, Enlightenment theory, and French academic models with hierarchies of genres, which defined what constituted the boundaries of a portrait against those of, for instance, a history painting or a still life. Portraits became cast as not only separate from but as binarily opposed to the sphere of the sacred.

## Organization

This book considers together the wide range of ways in which portraiture and religious painting overlapped in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because similar forms and practices related to sacred portraiture recurred throughout the Hispanic world, precluding a clear organization by chronology or geography, each of the four chapters that follow is structured around a distinct type of sacred portrait. The first chapter examines the phenomenon of artists depicting their patrons in the guise of holy figures, arguing against the interpretations that such images expressed the notion of sacred monarchy or that they revealed the sitters' vanity. For such images to possess even a semblance of canonical correctness, I assert, their portraitistic aspects had to be suppressed.

By performing acts of prayerful, introspective meditation before images of themselves as holy figures, sitters would have attempted to debase, rather than celebrate, their selfhoods. Notwithstanding the pious intentions of their patrons, however, both ecclesiastical censors and satirical sonnetists condemned these images for the ambiguous messages they could impart to other viewers.

The second chapter analyzes the roles of portraiture in the cults of the recently deceased Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Ávila, whose physical appearances were known with some accuracy. I suggest that such portrait-based image cults of modern saints arose in indirect response to the increasing popularity of images in which living patrons appeared in the guise of holy figures. Subsequently, institutional patrons insisted on producing increasingly portrait-like images of saints for whom there survived few or no reliable portrait likenesses, like the long-deceased Saint Benedict of the sixth century. In analyzing the testimony of a group of demonically possessed nuns, the chapter shows that period audiences were eager to accept authoritative declarations about the truthfulness of depictions of ancient and medieval saints even if their sources were suspect.

The third chapter considers the afterlives of portrait likenesses and the circumstances that could lead to their transformation into sacred images. The portrait was a labile image type, easily acquiring meanings that were at odds with the goals of its original patrons and intended viewers. The transformation of portraits into sacred pictures occurred when their later owners added to them standardized iconographic markers of sanctity, such as halos or textual inscriptions that identified their sitters as saints. The resulting images were often only slightly divergent from their earlier

versions in formal terms—the addition of a halo or a line of text hardly constituted a major overpainting campaign—but drastically different in terms of their ontology, spiritual efficacy, and potential usage. Moreover, given the multiethnic and multilingual audiences of such images, I attempt to elucidate and nuance the culturally bound forms of seeing that were present in the example of the portraits of Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, the bishop of the central Mexican city of Puebla de los Ángeles. As I will suggest, a Nahuatl-informed definition of sacred portraiture not only helps us understand how these images functioned and were understood in Puebla and its surrounding towns, including San Martín Texmelucan, but it can also be read back onto European paintings from the period, further expanding the increasingly capacious definition of the early modern portrait. To paraphrase Steven Nelson's response to "A Questionnaire on Decolonization," we can explore Madrid from the vantage point of San Martín Texmelucan and analyze San Martín Texmelucan in ways that do not center Madrid.[39]

Finally, the fourth chapter focuses on the image of the king, which provides yet another conduit between the categories of religious imagery and portraiture. Royal portraits relied on external elements of display, such as the baldachin, curtain, and dais, for legibility but shared them, as well as the behaviors their viewers were expected to perform before them, with religious images. These elements and behaviors become essential to understanding the implications of an inquisitorial trial from central Mexico, which focused on the unsanctioned cult surrounding Bishop Palafox's portraits. I argue that the royal portrait's functional similarity to religious images accounts for how the controversial cleric's portraits, which I
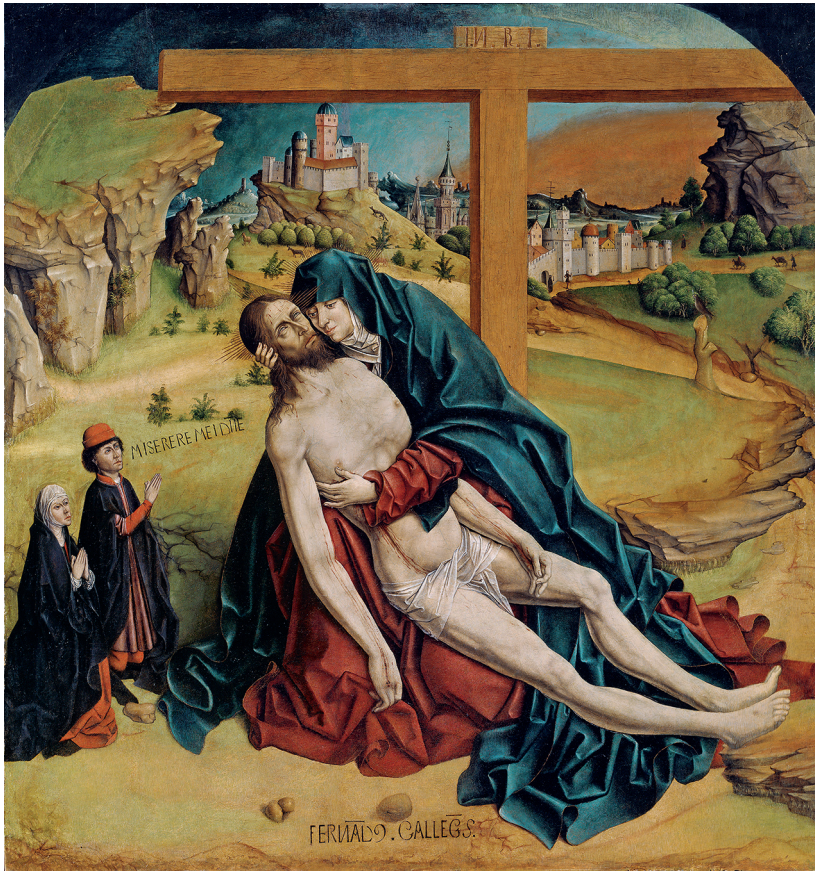
call omnivorous, could lay claim to the privileged status of both those image types.

Donor portraits (or, to use the more capacious term recently suggested by Ingrid Falque, devotional portraits) are frequent points of reference throughout the book.[40] In these images, the likenesses of a religious artwork's commissioners are included within a holy scene, ossifying the sitters into positions of permanent supplication, veneration, meditative contemplation, or votive thanks and serving for both pious and mundane commemoration.[41] The category, which developed in the Netherlands in the fifteenth century and

soon appeared in Spain and its colonial holdings, adopted a wide range of solutions for representing the relationship of the secular person to the sacred protagonists, from marking them as entirely distinct from each other to eliding their differences entirely. Early examples commonly represented miniaturized kneeling donors dispassionately observing a group of larger sacred figures at some remove, as in Fernando Gallego's *Pietá* from the third quarter of the fifteenth century (fig. 8), while in later images, such as in an early seventeenth-century painting attributed to a follower of El Greco, the donor—a man identified as Julián

FIG. 9   Follower of El Greco, *Julián Romero with Patron Saint*, 1612–18. Oil on canvas, 81.4 × 50 in. (207 × 127 cm). © Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photo © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

FIG. 10   Gaspar Miguel de Berrío, *Juan Manuel de Elgueta Rocel with Saint John of Nepomuk*, 1760. Oil on canvas, 40.56 × 32.31 in. (103 × 82 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, promised gift of the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection, Hub-6.

Romero—is depicted at the same scale and with the same degree of verisimilitude as his intercessor, Saint Julian (fig. 9).

It is important to stress here that there was not a clear teleological movement from greater to lesser overlappings of portraiture and devotional imagery across the period in question, regardless of institutional attempts at creating one.[42] As late as 1760, the Potosí-born painter Gaspar Miguel de Berrío used a similar maneuver to Gallego in a painting depicting the medieval Bohemian saint John of Nepomuk, including a miniaturized donor, named Juan Manuel de Elgueta Rocel, on the left side of the canvas (fig. 10).[43] In both cases, the respective sizes of holy figure and donor correspond to their relative importance. Moreover, the proximity of Berrío's donor to the body of Saint John of Nepomuk is nearly the same—in inches of painted canvas—as is that of Gallego's patrons to the Virgin and Christ, even if Berío creates

FIG. 11    Francisco Caro, *Saint Francis of Assisi in the Porziuncola with Donors Antonio Contreras and María Amezquita*, 1659. Oil on canvas, 107.48 × 129.92 in. (273 × 330 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; on display at the Museo de Belas Artes da Coruña, A Coruña. Photo: Album / Art Resource, New York.

perspectival depth. The two paintings, separated by three centuries, are clearly of a kind with each other. Similarly, the painting of the woman as Saint Barbara, with which this book opens, was created nearly concurrently and in a similar geographic context as a painting by the Madrid painter Francisco Caro, to be discussed in the book's conclusion, which casts the donor portraits and the sacred scene as not only separate from each other but as entirely, ontologically distinct (fig. 11).

## Geographies and Chronologies

Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez suggests that portraits in which living individuals are purposefully depicted in the guise of saints are "in good part almost exclusively Spanish," while Cherry argues that Florentine examples of such imagery actually may have derived from an influx of Spanish fashions and individuals into Italy in the late sixteenth

FIG. 12  Giovanni Maria Butteri, *The Family of Cosimo I de Medici as Saints*, ca. 1575. Oil on canvas, 75.5 × 55.1 in. (192 × 140 cm). On display at the Museo della Villa medicea di Cerreto Guidi. Permission granted by the Ministero della Cultura / Direzione regionale musei della Toscana—Firenze.

century. Indeed, a painting like Giovanni Maria Butteri's group portrait of the family of Cosimo I de Medici as saints of circa 1575, in which the Spanish-born Eleonora de Toledo appears as the Virgin Mary, makes it tempting to connect the fashion for such portraits to a Spanish impulse (fig. 12).[44] However, there existed an earlier Florentine tradition of sacred portraits, including the portraits of Medici family members that Giorgio Vasari claimed populated Sandro Botticelli's Uffizi *Annunciation*. Moreover, such images appear

across the rest of Italy, as well as in German and Slavic speaking territories, throughout England and France, and, perhaps more than in any other region, in the Low Countries.[45] In many ways, then, nothing about the material examined here is specific to the Hispanic world.

The pervasiveness of such images suggests that, rather than identifying an origin point from whence a fashion for them spread, they should be considered as coetaneous to the rise of physiognomic portraiture in early modernity. In the

mid-fifteenth century—and sporadically even earlier—European artists returned to the painting of individualized portrait likenesses (those that depicted their sitters with idiosyncratic facial features and made claims to their verisimilitude) after the art form had nearly disappeared during the preceding millennium.[46] More important, Europe also had a longstanding tradition of creating figural religious imagery. The new category of the portrait as physiognomic likeness quickly made incursions into previously hieratic and standardized depictions of sacred figures, which were often already believed to be their authoritative portraits.[47] Even though *Praying to Portraits* shines a spotlight on the Hispanic world, the deep-rooted tensions and concerns about representation that it identifies as emerging from the intersection of portraiture and sacred imagery apply equally, I believe, to other areas of Europe. Just as the types of images examined in the following chapters appear across Europe and its colonial holdings, so, too, this book's conclusions can be broadly applied to those geographies.

This notwithstanding, the forms and theories of royal and sacred representation that were developed in the Hispanic world differ in crucial ways from those articulated in other European contexts. For example, Spanish kingship was not believed to be divinely ordained, as was the case in France or England. Royal rule was therefore not consecrated through a coronation ceremony or royal unction, and Spanish kings did not possess any distinct material insignia of royal power, such as a crown or scepter. By extension, their portraits are devoid of any material symbols of royal power. Similarly, differences can be ascertained between Italian and Spanish conceptions of the degrees of worship of sacred images. For example, the majority of Italian

texts on images maintain the absolute separation between the sacred image and its celestial referent. An author like Paleotti restricted *latria*—the highest form of adoration—to the Holy Sacrament, which was believed to actually become Christ in the process of transubstantiation. Images, he argued, could be the recipients of decreasing degrees of veneration based on whether they represented Christ, the Virgin, or the saints.[48] In a treatise published in Valencia in 1597, by contrast, the ecclesiastic Jaime Prades argued that *latria* was appropriate not only for the sacrament but also for crosses and for images of Christ.[49] Like Prades, Pacheco, who claimed to faithfully translate Paleotti's Italian text for Spanish audiences, actually argued that *latria* was appropriate not only for the sacrament but also for representations of the cross as the quintessential image of Christ.[50] This is seemingly a minuscule distinction, but its significance becomes magnified when considering that both the author, Paleotti, and the translator, Pacheco, claimed to be on the side of orthodoxy. Given that these subtle differences affected the functioning and ontology of royal portraits and religious images in Spain and its colonies, Hispanic sacred portraits also functioned differently than their European counterparts, even if this divergence was not always immediately discernable in their appearance.

The cases examined in this book span a wide geography, with particular attention paid to Spain and the Viceroyalty of New Spain. My intent in deploying a broad scope that grants equal weight to examples from Europe and the Americas is not to discredit the specifically colonial nature of some of the cases described or to elide the differences between colonial and European contexts. Rather, my aim is to show that each city or town

in the Hispanic world differed from its counterparts in the rich conglomeration of *local* factors that affected how its inhabitants experienced and understood the visual landscapes that surrounded them. In the multiethnic and multilingual Spanish monarchy, different individuals would have brought distinct arsenals of experience to bear on the same images that they would have encountered in their homes, churches, streets, and squares. Given that forms of seeing were culturally bound, certain image types would have undoubtedly registered as orthodox to some and surprising to others.

Just as the Hispanic world was not a monolith, its constitutive components, like "Spain," "New Spain," or "Peru," were diverse, multilingual places, the complexities of which are too easily elided by a generalizing nomenclature. This is not to say that crucial commonalities did not exist between them. The monarchy's inhabitants, from Madrid and Algete to Guatemala and Tehuantepec, drew on shared pictorial, cultural, and religious practices that informed their behaviors and decisions. Another, perhaps counterintuitive, commonality between these places was that their local conditions inevitably distorted the downwardly imposed universals developed by the Crown and the Church. Thus when universals, which include religious doctrine, the rule of the law, and uniform official imagery, encountered the specificities of local contexts, they were consistently questioned, subverted, and remade. In this perspective, "local" is a more accurate methodological framework than the commonly used term "popular," which implies nonelite subjects.[51] This is because the reinterpretations and variations of orthodox forms and practices related to portraiture and religious imagery occurred in similar ways in both elite and nonelite contexts. They all arose from a culture in which the sphere

of the portrait frequently intersected with, drew on, or served as the model for the sphere of sacred image making.[52] This book examines such practices both in terms of the local concerns that drove them and in relation to a bank of shared transcultural motifs, activating a wider set of considerations on the interconnected relationships of the local with the global. What it finds is that images— as well as their audiences—were mutable and nimble, mimicking established forms and practices as often as they created new ones.

The phenomenon of sacred portraiture arose around the fifteenth century and continued well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, episodically, even up to the present day. However, the long seventeenth century, during which the majority of the cases examined in this book take place, represents a particularly rich period for the study of sacred portraits. During this time, the majority of the important artistic texts that expanded upon the Council of Trent's general recommendations about religious imagery—and the largest number of ecclesiastical decrees that tried to control the proliferation of sacred portraiture— were written. It is also in this period that religious orders began to vigorously develop the portraitistic cults of their founders, including Ignatius of Loyola and other Jesuit figures, and the semiportraitistic cults of women saints, including Teresa of Ávila, who, like Ignatius, was canonized in 1622. Additionally, although the conquest of the Americas predates this general temporal frame, the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries witnessed the continued territorial expansion of the Spanish monarchy and the stabilization of its hold on its American territories. These efforts led to the diversification of its audiences, who, on paper, were expected to respond to its ostensibly

universal devotional images and political portraits in a consistent, orthodox manner.

Furthermore, the proceedings of the Holy Office of the Inquisition from this period form a vast documentary archive that has only recently been tapped by art historians and mined for art-historical inquiries.[53] The careful definition of an art object—its appearance, type, intended functions, and impact on its viewers—is an important element of inquisitorial cases about images, which often delved into the minutiae of what characterized an image type as nebulous as portraiture or of how to assess what constituted a sacred image. These proceedings should therefore be considered within the category of noncanonical art-theoretical texts alongside religious sermons and synodal proceedings.[54] Such writings rarely explicitly announce their investment in image theory but are nevertheless crucial to understanding period debates about art's roles, boundaries, and publics. This said, the Inquisition's trials, which form one of this book's documentary cores and which are a record of institutional attempts to anticipate, surveil, and police image practices that did not align with Catholic orthodoxy, were formulaic, heavily mediated, and often guided by deeply prejudicial agendas.[55] However, when read against their hegemonic viewpoints, they become a—fragmentary, speculative, but still intensely fecund—source for why early modern people did what they did with images.[56]

At the same time, this book challenges the distorted historiographic tradition that has cast the early modern Hispanic world as crushed under the inflexible and ruthlessly efficient machinery of inquisitorial control.[57] In nearly every case examined throughout, the inquisitors confronted the problem of the intermingling of portraiture with sacred imagery by defining the boundaries of each type, only for the same issue to arise a few years later in a different locale. This pattern stemmed, in part, from the inconsistency with which the Catholic Church approached portraiture. Certain branches, like the Jesuits, shrewdly capitalized on the power of likeness in the construction of image cults, while others at different times abhorred its ahistoricity as it encroached upon the authority of ancient sacred narratives. The boundary between the categories of portraiture and religious imagery was permeable; the inquisitorial task of controlling public engagements with the resulting images was Sisyphean.

Drawing on a wide range of both canonical and unstudied images and archival documentation from Europe and Latin America, *Praying to Portraits* offers the first complete account of this key category of early modern image making. Sacred portraiture allowed early modern individuals to balance the needs of selfhood and eschatology and to question how they might access, and even conceive of, that which was sacred. Seen from this perspective, the early modern portrait was not static, clear-cut, and secular. It was malleable, impermanent, and conditional, inhabiting and interacting with distinct artistic categories, including sacred imagery, with ease.