

# The *Pietas Austriaca*. A political myth?

On the Instrumentalisation of Piety towards the Cross at the Viennese Court in the Seventeenth Century

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It is well known that the Habsburg practice of piety was based on the fundamental pillars of the veneration of the Virgin Mary, the cult of the saints, Eucharistic piety, and the veneration of the Holy Cross. In her fundamental work *Pietas Austriaca* (1959) Anna Coreth provides an exemplary introduction to the effectiveness of this practice of piety over the centuries and showed how the Habsburgs regarded religiously defined *pietas* (meaning both piety and the fear of God) as the most important virtue of rulers.<sup>1</sup> It was on the basis of this particular practice of piety that the Habsburg rulers from Ferdinand II onwards set themselves apart from other royal dynasties who were more concerned with earthly glory, and from the French Bourbons in particular. Unlike other monarchs who tended to emphasise their personal accomplishments, the Habsburgs<sup>2</sup> were convinced that their royal line was divinely ordained; that they had been especially chosen and entrusted with a mission; and that they had a special relationship to God in the sense that they enjoyed the divine right of kings.

The present paper intends to investigate the way in which the ritual practice of devotion to the cross has to be distinguished from the politically instrumentalised propaganda of the veneration of the cross. In this context the question arises whether *Pietas Austriaca* was not perhaps instrumentalised over the course of centuries as a welcome myth of Habsburg ‘chosenness’, one which was intensively propagated through appropriate media so as to conduct political propaganda more effectively, i.e., in the sense of a vehement and dynastically political profanation of different forms of piety. In his *Dissertatio polemica de prima origine Augustissimae Domus Habsburgo-Austriacae* (1680), Johann Ludwig Schönleben had good reason to refer to *Pietas Austriaca* as ‘*Haereditaria Pietas*’,<sup>3</sup> or a hereditarily bound form of piety.

The specific intention here is therefore not so much to address the theological content of *Pietas Austriaca*—which has already been the subject of extensive treatment by other researchers—as to investigate the many ways in which it could be exploited for political purposes. In this regard Stefan Samerski, for example, has already demonstrated that Leopold and Joseph, the main patrons, stood completely in the service of a dynastic-political *raison d'État* under the reign of Leopold I. These two patrons were closely linked to the person of the Emperor and his need for representation

with respect to genealogy, function and ritual.<sup>4</sup> Just as it was popular to equate Habsburg rulers with mythological persons, *Pietas Austriaca* formed an essential part of the Habsburgs' dynastic propaganda. In this sense it was particularly subject, in my view, to subtly differentiated mechanisms of representation which correspondingly transformed the particular manifestations of piety in the process of their mediation.

The veneration of the Holy Cross was propagated in different ways and in different media following the Council of Trent. Efforts in this regard were directed, as it were, at an archaeologically precise and comprehensive study of the circumstances surrounding the crucifixion, the Holy Cross and the form or symbol of the cross. This is amply demonstrated by such works as the multiple editions of Justus Lipsius' *De cruce libri tres ad sacram profanamque historiam utiles* (1593); Jacobus Bosio's *Crux triumphans et gloriosa* (1617), with its many sources and the special emphasis it placed on Late Antiquity and the early period of Christianity; and the three volumes by the Jesuit Jacobus Gretser entitled *De cruce Christi* (1605–1608).<sup>5</sup>

They were also accompanied by specialised studies such as Honoratus Nicquetus SJ's history of the title of the Holy Cross, *Titulus Sanctae Crucis seu Historia et mysterium tituli Sanctae Crucis Domini nostri Jesu Christi* (1670), or Thomas Bartholinus' investigations of the *Arma Christi*, which appeared under the title *De cruce Christi Hypomnemata IV* (1670). Both adopted a critical-historical approach to their subject and fall into the category of demystifications of the circumstances surrounding Christ's crucifixion. On the other hand, compendia also appeared which demonstrated the possibilities each specific religious order had to approach the history of the veneration of the cross. One such example is Magnoaldus Ziegelbaur OSB's treatise *Historia didactica de Sanctae Crucis cultu et veneratione in ordine divi Benedicti* (1746), which deals in particular with the veneration of the cross in the Benedictine Order.

Such studies, which adopted a critical-historical approach, should be distinguished from publications that dealt specifically with historical or legendary events that related to the Habsburg practice of piety and in so doing reflected a framework of discourse in which the veneration of the cross was contextualised under primarily dynastic auspices. In order to underpin the dynastic claim to the cult of the cross, Nicolaus Vernulaeus, for example, stated in his work *Virtutes Augustae Gentis Austriacae libri tres* (1640)<sup>6</sup> that God had pointed the Habsburg dynasty—like Constantine the Great years before—to the cross as a sign and pledge of victory.<sup>7</sup> In this reference to the time when the veneration of the cross started to be used for political purposes, the cult of the Holy Cross under King Rudolf I of Habsburg in particular is of central importance—such as on the occasion when (according to legend) the founding father of the dynasty held a wooden cross in the absence of a sceptre while tribute was paid to him as the newly elected king and used it to have the princes pledge their oath of allegiance to him;<sup>8</sup> in his treatise *Austriaci Caesares* (1649), the Jesuit Horstensio Pallavicini commented that Rudolf ('the Great') was simply following on from the example set by Constantine the Great on a parallel occasion: '*vincet cum magno Constantino Rudolphus Magnus*'.<sup>9</sup> On this basis the cross was also assigned the legitimising function of pointing to the expansion of Habsburg territory as a symbol of the Holy Cross—such as when Pallavicini, in one of his remarks, interpreted the expansion of the Habsburg Empire towards all four points of the compass as logical: after all, it was consistent with the shape of the cross (!).<sup>10</sup>

These diverse ways of taking Habsburg traditions of piety and turning them into myths need to be taken into consideration when we come to discuss a pivotal event in the history of the Habsburgs' imperial residence in Vienna. When the *Kammerkapelle* (the imperial family's private chapel) in the 'Leopoldine Wing' of the Vienna Hofburg was destroyed by a catastrophic fire in February 1668, it provided a new thrust to the dynasty's veneration of the cross.<sup>11</sup> Although the available sources give a precise account of the fire, which appears to have occurred on 6 February 1668,<sup>12</sup> there is no sign of a report concerning the relic of the cross which was kept there, but which somehow escaped destruction:

*'ein feyerbrunst in den neu erpauten stockh gegen der pasteyen, gleich vnder den Züchern Ihrer Mt: der Verwittibten Kayserin [scil. Eleonore Gonzaga] außkhomen, dessen Vrsprung man nüehelich wissen khänen, vnd derselbe ganze stoch vngeacht aller beschehenen rettung, abgebrunnen, vnd dadurch grosser schaden an mobilien beschehen [...].'*<sup>13</sup>

A relatively close description of the place where this catastrophe took place is given in the diary of Johann Sigray, an intimate of the Pálffy family, in 1668: *'Mani viennae circa horam tertiam Matutinam actum fuit incendium in Aula viduae Imperatricis et Combusta est tota residentia ipsius Seu nomen [...].'*<sup>14</sup> According to a report by the papal nuncio Pignatelli,<sup>15</sup> chests full of precious objects as well as a solid gold crucifix and two silver candelabras were consumed by the fire in the cabinet of the Emperor's widow, Eleonore Gonzaga. After the disastrous fire, the melted case of the reliquary was later found in the ashes but the particles of the cross which had been revered by the Habsburgs centuries—in particular by Emperor Maximilian I—are supposed to have remained unharmed.<sup>16</sup> Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) had given this holy relic to his stepmother, Empress Eleonore Magdalena Gonzaga of Mantua-Nevers (1630–1686), the third consort of Emperor Ferdinand III (1608–1657),<sup>17</sup> for safekeeping during her lifetime. This precious relic is kept today in the 'monstrance of the Order of the Starry Cross' in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum (with the foot and shaft made by Hans Jakob Mair in Augsburg around 1668) (fig. 1).<sup>18</sup>

The miraculous rescue of the holy relic, which was found intact five days after the fire in the ruins of Eleonore Gonzaga's chambers, was celebrated by the foundation of the 'Order of the Starry Cross' for the high nobility on 18 September 1668.<sup>19</sup> In particular, its members were to devote themselves to the worship of the Holy Cross, as the texts of the relevant *officium* make abundantly clear. The order was re-constituted by Empress Eleonora Magdalena Theresia von der Pfalz (1655–1720), the third wife of Emperor Leopold I, and elevated to become the dynasty's highest aristocratic all-female order in 1688.<sup>20</sup> The Empress invested members<sup>21</sup> with the Order of the Starry Cross, which featured golden crosses with four diamonds (hence the name 'Order of the Starry Cross')—heraldically designed as a combination of the Mantuan Cross with the sloping single-headed black Mantuan eagle<sup>22</sup>—as well as the motto *Salus et Gloria*, on two occasions: on 3 May (The Finding of the Holy Cross) and on 14 September (The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross), *'bei den obern Jesuiten'* (meaning the Jesuits at the Kirche Am Hof in Vienna).<sup>23</sup>

The circumstances surrounding the foundation of the Order of the Starry Cross were propagated above all in a booklet entitled *Hoch-Adeliche und Gottseelige Versamblung von Stern-Creutz genandt. So von Ihr Kayserlichen Mayestät Eleonora, Verwittibten Römischen Kayserin auffgerichtet [...]* (1671),<sup>24</sup> which was written by the Jesuit Johannes Baptista Manni (fig. 2).



Fig. 1 'Monstrance of the Order of the Starry Cross', Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (foot and shaft made by Hans Jakob Mair in Augsburg ca. 1668).

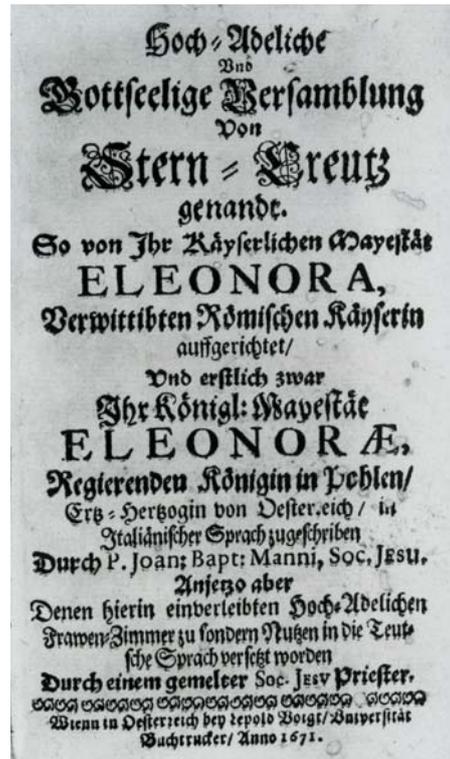


Fig. 2 Johannes Baptista Manni SJ, *Hoch-Adeliche und Gottseelige Versammlung von Stern-Creutz genandt. So von Ihr Kayserlichen Mayestät Eleonora, Verwitibten Römischen Kayserin auffgerichtet* (Vienna, 1671), title page.

This interesting publication provides the essential basics for gaining a better understanding of how the Habsburg dynasty actually performed the veneration of the cross as well as the specific circumstances surrounding the foundation of the Order of the Starry Cross. In Manni's publication on the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the Order of the Starry Cross, references to Habsburg piety are subsequently linked to the situation at the time with a report about the fire in the Hofburg in 1668,<sup>25</sup> with Emperor Leopold I's veneration of the cross, with his confirmation of the Order of the Starry Cross,<sup>26</sup> and with the manuscript of the order's deed of foundation by Eleonore.<sup>27</sup> This historical account is followed by an extensive section dealing with the ways in which piety was specifically practised by the members of the Order of the Starry Cross (*Enchiridion oder Hand-Buechlein unterschiedlicher Gebett [...] zu Ehr deß H. Creutzes [...] von Hoch-Adelichen Frawen Zimmer under den Titul deß Stern-Creutztes zu gebrauchen*);<sup>28</sup> requisite text formulas are presented for the passion prayers and for the rosary of devotion to the Five Wounds—here the character of a specifically Jesuit spirituality is particularly evident in the emphasis placed on the 'earthly' trinity of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.<sup>29</sup> This is also expressed in a curious entanglement of Christological and Marian formulas for piety which are clearly discernible in the texts.<sup>30</sup> In this particular case the fixed text for the *Ave Maria* is transposed to the Veneration of the Holy Cross: '*Gegrüsset seyst du heiliges Creutz / voll Bluts / der Herr ist mit dir / du bist gebenedeyet under den Bäumen / und gebenedeyet*

*ist die Frucht / so an dir gehangen mein Herr Jesus Christus. / Heiliges Creutz sey mein [sic!] Zuflucht jetzt und in der Stund meines Absterbens / Amen.*<sup>31</sup>

A central point for gaining an understanding of the aristocratic practice of piety in the seventeenth century is the fact that self-reflection and propaganda of Habsburg *pietas* were not only closely linked to the veneration of the saints and the early cult of the Holy Cross, but were also conceived as growing genealogically, as it were, from these two threads. This interesting idea of utilising members of one's own dynasty for a calendar of the saints (!) is expressed with the greatest clarity in Johann Ludwig Schönleben's publication *Annus Sanctus Habspurgo-Austriacus; sive Quingenti Sancti, Beati, & Venerabiles, utriusque sexus, Augustissimae Domui Habspurgo-Austriacae Sanguinis et cognationis nexu illigati* (Salzburg 1696)<sup>32</sup> and in church decors which are essentially based on a programme of saints that propagated Habsburg piety, such as Carpofooro Tencalla's painting for the Chapel of St. Petrus Canisius in the Kirche Am Hof in Vienna (around or after 1668).<sup>33</sup>

In addition to its triumphal aspects, the Habsburg veneration of the cross under Emperor Ferdinand II (1578–1637) had increasingly been assigned a further dimension of meaning which was above all expressed in the willingness to accept any suffering that came from God.<sup>34</sup> When on 5 June 1619 protestant nobles from Lower Austria were pressuring Emperor Ferdinand II in the Vienna Hofburg to grant them the freedom to practise their religion (an event which became known as the '*Sturm petition*'), Christ apparently whispered to the regent praying before the cross: 'Ferdinand, I won't abandon you!'. Shortly afterwards a regiment appeared in the Burghof courtyard and saved the hard-pressed ruler.<sup>35</sup> The presence of a deputation of the Austrian protestant nobles led by Paul Jakob Graf Starhemberg and Andreas Freiherr von Thonrädcl before an Emperor Ferdinand II gazing at the cross in the Vienna Hofburg in June 1619 became a defining theme in the printed graphic art of the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Usually Ferdinand II stands in the centre of such depictions, looking with great pathos up to the cross with a banner proclaiming the words of Christ ('*Ferdinande, non te deseram!*') (fig. 3).<sup>37</sup>

In early modern visual propaganda the reproduction of this moment was regarded as the most important event in the rule of Ferdinand II, as becomes clear in the frescos of his burial chapel in the Graz Mausoleum (1691–93), which were based on a design by Fischer von Erlach (1688),<sup>38</sup> and in the corresponding fresco in the *Kaisersaal*, which was painted by Melchior Steidl in 1709, and which forms part of the Bamberg Residenz.<sup>39</sup>

In the twelfth and final part of his *Annales Ferdinandeï* [...] (1726), Franz Christoph Khevenhüller published a German version of Ferdinand II's virtues and showed the dialogue between Christ crucified and Emperor Ferdinand in a large copper engraving depicting the extraordinarily Jesuit-friendly emperor as a pilgrim (!) and hence as a direct successor to St. Ignatius—a unique example in iconography (fig. 4).<sup>40</sup> Even in the mortuary roll written by the Prague Jesuit Petrus Wadding for Emperor Ferdinand II, which associated the late ruler with the various virtues of Constantine, Theodosius and Charlemagne, Ferdinand's *pietas* is emphasised in the invocation of his successor (?) with the aid of a direct reference to the cross, evidently in an interpolation of the *Te igitur* from the *officium* of the mass: '*Tu igitur Cruce insignis, Provinciarum quas Ferdinandus caelo fideles reddidit, agmina post te trahes* [...]'.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 3 Ferdinand II looking up to the cross, engraving, Prague, after 1730.

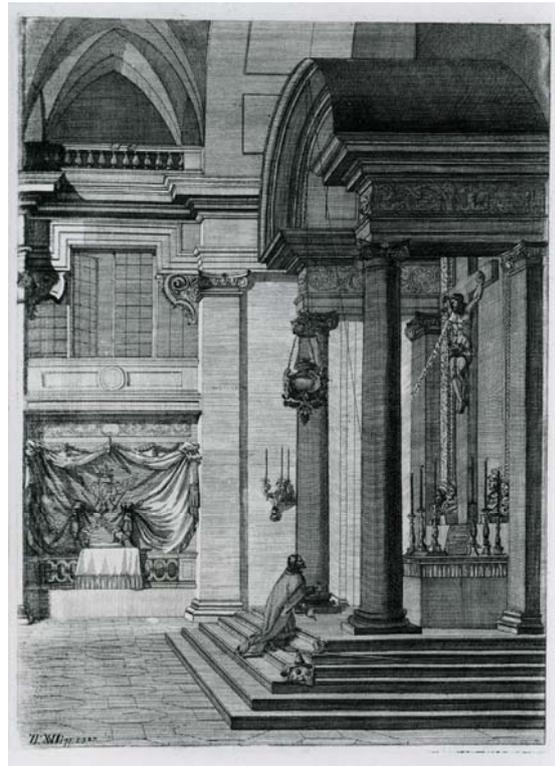


Fig. 4 Franz Christoph Khevenhüller, *Annales Ferdinandeï...* (Leipzig, 1726), 12<sup>th</sup> part, engraving, dialogue between Christ and Emperor Ferdinand II.

Not without reason, Maria Theresa also invoked this now famous legend of her predecessor when she took the cross with her to the *Reichstag* in Preßburg (Bratislava) in September 1741. Today the cross is kept in the Ecclesiastical Treasury.<sup>42</sup> After returning to the Vienna Hofburg, she had it displayed for public veneration in the *Kammerkapelle* for two weeks starting on 22 December of that year and on 5 January 1742 decreed that the cross should in general be displayed in the *Hofkapelle* every Friday because of the throngs of people who had come to see it.<sup>43</sup> Later on, in 1748, Maria Theresa ordered Ferdinand's cross to be placed in the tabernacle of the renovated imperial court chapel,<sup>44</sup> which led to the custom of presenting it to be kissed on Sundays and feast days.<sup>45</sup> Right up to the end of the Monarchy, this event under the rule of Emperor Ferdinand II formed an essential point of reference for the Habsburg ideology of piety.<sup>46</sup>

The peculiar thing about this episode in 1619 is the fact that we note an extraordinary confluence between the efforts of the Jesuit Order and the piety of the Habsburgs—as we have already clearly seen with the foundation of the Order of the Starry Cross. The pivotal words, '*Ferdinande, non te deseram!*', with which Christ is supposed to have assured Emperor Ferdinand of his support, also supply the corresponding explanation. Not only are they a quotation from the Bible (Letter to the Hebrews 13:5, 'I will not abandon you, and I will not neglect you.').<sup>47</sup> but the passage also constitutes an explicit reference to the Society of Jesus since the verse from Hebrews also provides a direct reference to the following event in the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola. On his

journey from Rome to Venice the saint was repeatedly turned away from lodgings because of a virulent plague and ended up having to sleep in the open, but received comfort and support when Christ appeared and promised not to abandon him, using the words quoted in the above passage from the Bible.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, in terms of their subject matter, the verse from Hebrews, the episode in the life of Ignatius, and the legend of Ferdinand II and the cross in 1619 all refer—with one and the same text quotation—to the assurance of Christ’s support. In the twelfth part of Franz Christoph Khevenhüller’s *Annales Ferdinandeae* the confluence he asserts between the saint and the pious emperor is even made explicitly clear in the cited pilgrim-like description of the regent.



Fig. 5 Unsigned broadsheet (1636) which displays a maypole (a ‘fresh and green maypole’ according to the legend below).

The multiplicity of meanings which the symbolism of the cross had in Emperor Ferdinand II’s propaganda is particularly evident in an unsigned broadsheet (1636) (fig. 5) which displays a maypole or tree of life (a ‘fresh and green maypole’ according to the legend) the leaves of which are turning green and present certain virtues that supposedly embody Ferdinand II.<sup>49</sup> The thread of salvation that runs through this document becomes clear in the case of the tree, which alludes to the tree of the Cross, and in the Eucharist above it—which is explained by the banner located above the insignia. It references the passage ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering’ (Genesis 22:8),

which was Abraham's reply to Isaac's fearful question about the animal which was to be sacrificed to God. Here, the dynastic veneration of the cross is generalised and closely linked to the *Providentia* motif which was fundamental for the Habsburg dynasty in general and Ferdinand II in particular,<sup>50</sup> since the passage taken from the book of Genesis '*Gott Wirdt fürsehen*' ('God will provide') is quoted in the representational copper engraving. Hence the motto *Deus providebit*,<sup>51</sup> which was also the motto of Emperor Maximilian II (1527–1576), appears to have applied directly to the emperor and to the *Domus Austriaca* he represented. According to this perspective, Emperor Ferdinand II—or the virtues he embodied—found himself in the broad tradition of Habsburg piety towards the Cross and the Eucharist. A detail in the upper part of this engraving shows the wood of the tree now transformed into a small crucifix, which Rudolf von Habsburg, the father of the dynasty, is handing over to Ferdinand II in an ahistorical montage. This event is based on the famous legend cited at the beginning of this paper, according to which Rudolf von Habsburg is supposed to have held and kissed a wooden crucifix in the absence of a sceptre while tribute was paid to him as the newly elected king and used it to have the princes pledge their oath of allegiance to him when he was elected king in 1273. According to the legend, the words we see on the banner here, '*mit disem scepter wollen wir regieren*', are a literal quotation of what Rudolf actually said on this occasion.<sup>52</sup>

This little and somewhat unprepossessing scene assumes greater significance to the extent that Rudolf I's handing of a cross to Emperor Ferdinand III also plays an important role in an emblem with the lemma 'AB HOC SIGNO', meaning the cross, in the unpaginated book of emblems entitled *Annus primus imperii Austriaci, duodecim caesareo-mensium* (Graz 1638), which was dedicated to Emperor Ferdinand III.<sup>53</sup> Hence the wood of the cross at the very top of the maypole has been transformed in a qualitative sense through the addition of the central legend of Habsburg history. It now assumes the character of a religious object which transfers the vegetable symbolism of the tree into an obvious reminder of the presence of the Habsburg *Pietas Austriaca*. Furthermore, the hagiographic aspect of the dynasty's practice of piety is also underlined by the addition of the apostles Philip and James the Less, both of whose feast days fall on 1 May (!)—the very day to which the erection of the maypole refers. James the Younger hands over his own (!) attribute, as it were, in the sword which he gives to Ferdinand III (crowned King of Hungary in 1626 and Holy Roman Emperor in 1636), who is kneeling next to Ferdinand II. Just as the cross is the actual 'fruit' of the maypole, the crowns in the branches of the tree should be understood not only as individual achievements of the ruler (or virtues) but also as 'fruits' of the House of Habsburg—in the form of insignia.

The different forms of the Habsburg veneration of the cross which have been presented here lead to the fundamental problem area of the auspices under which the vital lines of tradition since the glorification of King Rudolf I were received in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and how they were propagated in texts and images.<sup>54</sup> Here it is apparent that the Habsburg *Fiducia in Crucem Christi* was primarily linked to the other important elements of *Pietas Austriaca* and to the political leitmotif of *Providentia*, the importance of which was to protect the Habsburg dynasty through the centuries.<sup>55</sup> Right up to the nineteenth century this 'providence' was actually the central motif in the self-projection of the House of Habsburg, in bitter opposition to a tendency, manifest since the beginnings of early modern philosophy, to view God's work on earth, and hence the relevance of *Providentia* in the history of salvation, from an increasingly critical perspective.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to its vital religious implications, the *Pietas Austriaca* which was practised under the protection of *Providentia* was a particular guarantee of the assurance of continuity. This was further underpinned by the approach taken in a compendium of Habsburg values and princes, *Princeps in Compendio*,<sup>57</sup> which was written under the influence of the Jesuits in the closest circles of the court of Emperor Ferdinand II. It might be described as a manual for the Habsburg conception of imperial office. The compendium of princes first appeared during the rule of Ferdinand II (1632). Moreover, even in the very first chapter (*‘Quomodo cum Deo se Princeps gerere debeat.’*), it formulates—in the form of a catechism, as it were—the relevance of unequivocal trust and confidence that was to be placed in God and the saints, and which supposedly distinguished the steadfast behaviour of Emperor Ferdinand II when he came under pressure from the protestant nobles in 1619, as described above.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the emphasis placed on the finality of events in the history of salvation characterises each of the two examples of the Habsburg veneration of the cross at the Viennese Court in the early Modern Age<sup>59</sup> which we have briefly presented here. The first case deals with the foundation of the ‘Order of the Starry Cross’ (1668) and how Emperor Leopold I had entrusted the relic of the cross to the safekeeping of his stepmother, Empress Eleonore Gonzaga, Emperor Ferdinand III’s widow, for the duration of her lifetime—a wise and farsighted measure which could not even be undone by major historic disasters such as the fire in the ‘Leopoldine Wing’ of the Vienna Hofburg in 1668. On this occasion the veneration of the cross stood under the same supremely ‘providential’ auspices as the demonstration of unshakable *pietas* by Emperor Ferdinand II when he prayed to the cross in June 1619. Once again in this case it is God’s guiding care and ‘providence’ which represents the pivotal moment in the sequence of events. In this sense these two examples of the Habsburg’s veneration of the cross provided highly welcome foundations for transforming events which were taken from the history of the Habsburg dynasty into a history with a dimension of destiny and truly divine providence, and for legitimising the dynasty’s political mandates by claiming that they were founded on God’s far-sighted rule—which therefore proved their righteousness. The treatment of these events in the sense of the functionalisation of piety under a central guiding motif (*Providentia*) ultimately led to a situation in which the righteousness and the piety of the House of Habsburg had to be regarded as practically invincible. But not only that: The significance of catholicism in the sense of it being a dynastic constant resided less in the acts of demonstrating such piety and far more in a cleverly presented amalgamation of political and religious pretensions. When we look more closely at the inserted inscriptions, even Elias Nesselthaler’s famous copper engraving on the cover of Johannes Ludovicus Schönleben’s *Annus Sanctus Habsburgo-Austriacus* (1696)<sup>60</sup> not only tries to embed the depiction of Emperor Leopold at prayer into an ambitious programme of virtues, but also attempts to identify the ‘House of Austria’ with the biblical *Domus* and to confer God’s promise to Abraham in the book of Genesis (15:5) on the rich descendants of the Habsburgs, on saints and secular nobles, and on church dignitaries<sup>61</sup>—all of whom are seen crowding around the Holy Trinity in the upper third of the engraving (fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Elias Nesselthaler, copper engraving on the cover of Johannes Ludovicus Schönleben's *Annus Sanctus Habspurgo-Austriacus* (Ljubljana, 1696).

Hence the wider world of historical meaning was primarily defined by *Providentia Dei*; and the history of the Habsburg dynasty, marked by the symbol of the cross, became a history of salvation to a certain extent, with the Habsburgs cast in the role of God's chosen few. Ultimately, all this was justified by the leading role which God had supposedly assigned to the Habsburgs in the *Sacrum Imperium* ever since Rudolf I. Not without reason does a Viennese document of theses published in 1649 with the title *Campus Lillorum* invoke the function of Rudolf I as '*Caesar (sic!) Eucharistico-Marianus, Austriacus.*'

Seen from this point of view, the lettering ('AUSTRIA ELECTA') on the edge of a medal struck in 1690 by Philipp Heinrich Müller to mark Joseph's coronation as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire certainly does not refer solely to the specific (historical) act of the election itself: it also stakes out a claim to the political primacy of the Habsburgs. A publication entitled *Typus Glorae Austriacae*,

which appeared in 1658, shortly after Leopold I took office in the Holy Roman Empire, investigated the continuity of the founding father Rudolf, 'PRIMVS EX AVGVSTA AVSTRIACORVM STIRPE ROMANORVM IMPERATOR'<sup>62</sup>, up to that particular time in the symbolic form of *Pietas Augusta* (!) and, in the introductory emblem<sup>63</sup> with the Habsburg eagle sitting on a globe and gazing up at the sun, related the globe to the round form of the Eucharist gleaming in the sun. The enclosed motto 'HIC ORBIS IN ILLVM EXTVLIT' illustrates how the globe lifts up the eagle to the all-redeeming sun and how world domination and world redemption, as it were, are brought together in the symbol of circularity. It was not unusual for dynastic and Christian types to occur side by side as in this case so that they were viewed as one and the same thing. The copper engraving of Johann Baptist Jezi the Older on the frontispiece of the first volume of the famous publication *Pietas Austriaca*, written by Diego Tafuri (Innsbruck, 1655),<sup>64</sup> offers a good example of this: Hercules' hydra is killed by the 'Three Faces of Austria', which are described as an image of piety in the legend. Hence *Austria* is not only assigned an apocalyptic motif (Revelation 1:16: 'And in his right hand, he held the seven stars; and from his mouth went out a sharp two-edged sword; and his face was like the sun, shining with all its might'): the shield of the dynasty with the Habsburg lion also functions as a protective shield for a personification, triumphant along the lines of St. Michael, whose striking *Tricephalus* obviously mirrors the type of the Holy Trinity, but which had actually been forbidden in this form by the Holy See since 1628 (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Engraving of Johann Baptist Jezi the Older on the frontispiece of the first volume of the publication *Pietas Austriaca*, written by Diego Tafuri (Innsbruck, 1655).

If in conclusion we now ask how *Pietas Austriaca* was actually defined in the early Modern Age, we find ourselves back once more in the same broad complex of themes surrounding finality and chosenness in the history of salvation which is regarded as a causal relationship in *pietas*. Here, too, it is not so much a problem of defining or categorising certain forms of religiousness that might justify the criterion of Habsburg chosenness. More importantly, we need to investigate the history of salvation for its political functionality: ‘*AUSTRIACAM GENTEM Primo Ecclesiae Catholicae Apostolicae Romanae suae per dilectae sponsae, ac deinde Imperio Occidentis magna jugique PIETATE profuturam, vidit Deus, & gavisus est.*’, is Tafuri’s definition in the above-mentioned publication:<sup>65</sup> God saw that the House of Austria would first benefit the catholic, apostolic Roman Church, its beloved bride, and then the western empire, i.e. the Holy Roman Empire founded by Charlemagne, through great and constant piety; God saw this and was glad. The author underlines this aspect in his brief side comment: ‘Before the world was created (!), God saw *Austria* and was glad.’ The quotation that has been woven into this remark is taken from the Gospel according to St. John (8:56), which demonstrates God’s joy at his decision. It not only points to the account of the Creation in the first chapter of Genesis (1:31) and the repeatedly expressed satisfaction of the Creator in this regard (‘And God saw it was good’), but also to the Gospel of St. John (8:58) with Christ’s self-definition in relation to the Old Testament: ‘[...] before Abraham was made, I am.’ The use of this classic passage about the Christian perception of time and the quotation from Genesis<sup>66</sup> illustrate Tafuri’s lively interest in an instrumentalisation of *Pietas Austriaca* through a sophisticated and politically oriented theology of history which functionalises the notion of *pietas* in relation to the role of Austria in the sense that *regnum* and *sacerdotium* were able to evolve in the Western world solely through the circumstance of Austria being singled out as the empire or realm of preference. Hence the elements of Habsburg piety and recourse to the tradition of the Graeco-Roman *Providentia Augusti* were not so much regarded in terms of the specifically theological or religious aspects of their subject matter but rather as a multifunctional set and instrument of concrete political strategies.<sup>67</sup> From the Habsburg point of view, *pietas*—an essential part of ‘an ideological identity [...] for sacralizing and sanctifying the legitimacy of the dynasty’<sup>68</sup>—became an irrefutable historical and theological argument in the struggle for world supremacy.

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## Illustrations

Fig. 1 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Fig. 2–5 Vienna, Austrian National Library.

Fig. 6–7 Photo author.

<sup>1</sup> Coreth 1982, see also the book reviews by Marc R. Forster (in *The Catholic Historical Review*, 90, 4 [2004], pp. 798–800) and Andrew L. Thomas (in *H-German, H-Net Reviews*, January, 2005); a detailed analysis of the objectives of Coreth's book is given by William D. Bowman in his introduction to the English edition (2004), pp. XI–XVIII, here p. XII: 'Pietas Austriaca as [...] the guiding principle of the Habsburgs', and p. XVII: '[...] dominant ruling ideology of the Habsburg family.' For a summarizing commentary on *Pietas Austriaca* see Bérenger 1993; Vocelka 2001, pp. 208–221; Winkelbauer 2003, pp. 185–239.

<sup>2</sup> All efforts to sharpen the view of times when, and regions where, *Pietas Austriaca* manifested itself in varying forms automatically require that more attention must be attached to the personal aims of prominent representatives of this special kind of piety, see for example Duerloo 1997, pp. 1–18; Duerloo 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Schönleben 1680, p. 136 (c. *VIII, octava praerogativa*). The following section deals with the *Pietas* of the members of the House of Habsburg individually and at great length (pp. 136–213).

<sup>4</sup> Samerski 2006, pp. 251–278.

<sup>5</sup> Hecht 1997, pp. 382–384.

<sup>6</sup> Vernulaeus 1640, p. 32; see Coreth 1982, p. 38; Oberparleiter 2007, pp. 246–252.

<sup>7</sup> Kap. IV. (*monitum*), 33; see Coreth 1982, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Coreth 1982, p. 39; Tanner 1993, pp. 188–190.

<sup>9</sup> Pallavicini 1649, p. 46. Even later, Aldus Rein, Bishop of Laibach, in his funeral speech on Emperor Ferdinand II (Rein 1637) (without pagination), referred to Rudolf's legendary investiture with the cross, portraying Ferdinand II as '*alter quidam Constantinus Magnus [...]*'. The chapter *Cultus SS. Eucharistiae* of the treatise *Divi Ferdinandi II. [...]* (1737), pp. 14–15, relates Emperor Ferdinand II to Rudolf of Habsburg and so does, in depicted form, the title page of Wurffbain 1636.

<sup>10</sup> Pallavicini 1649, pp. 45–46, see Coreth 1982, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> After the fire, the Emperor had the chapel restored first of all other rooms. Dedicated to Saint Joseph, foster-father of Jesus, in 1670, the *Kammerkapelle*, from 1672 onwards, served as the place where pregnant empresses were blessed in an official ceremony, see Samerski 2006, p. 268; for references from the architectural historian's point of view see Rizzi 1997, p. 622; Mader-Kratky 2011, pp. 437–451.

<sup>12</sup> *Hochadelige und gottselige Versammlung vom Sternkreuze* 1960, pp. 3, 20. This publication has been reprinted several times. The last edition dates from 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Vienna, Austrian State Archives, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (in the following: HHStA), ceremonial protocols (*Zeremonialprotokolle*) vol. 2 (1668), 1405–1406. The same description of the place appears in the publication *Hochadelige und gottselige Versammlung vom Sternkreuze* 1839, p. 3. The founding of the Order of the Starry Cross, on the other hand, is not mentioned in any of the ceremonial protocols.

<sup>14</sup> HHStA, collection Kos, box 1, fol. 22v.

<sup>15</sup> Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Cod. 2044; see Starzer 1891, pp. 153–154.

<sup>16</sup> Coreth 1982, pp. 42–43; Bandion 1989, pp. 83–84; cast into legendary form, the event is reported in *Versammlung vom Sternkreuze* 1839, pp. 3–7, and also in Kastner-Michalitschke 1909, pp. 18–22.

<sup>17</sup> Works of medal art commissioned by Ferdinand III—and inspired by his motto *Pietate et Iustitia*—are characterised by distinct references to the cross, too, see Wurzbach-Tannenberg I 1943, p. 323, nos. 2008, 2009; for details concerning Ferdinand III's special devotion to Maria, the Mother of God, see Weaver 2006; Weaver 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, The Ecclesiastical Treasury,—inv. no. D 25, see Leithe-Jasper & Distelberger 1998, p. 86 (fig.); Seipel 2007, pp. 108–109, no. 42. A detailed description of the history of the monstrance and its creation from various parts that had been at hand will be given in volume 1 of the new collection catalogue of Vienna's Ecclesiastical Treasury, which is presently being prepared (the author is

grateful to Dr. Franz Kirchweger from the *Kunstammer* of *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna, for this information).

<sup>19</sup> The order was confirmed by the pope on the 28 July 1668.

<sup>20</sup> Coreth 1982, p. 43. An elaborate account of Eleonora Magdalena's virtues gives Brean 1720.

<sup>21</sup> Keeper of the oldest member register is the privately run archive of the Starry Cross Order in Vienna: The *Album Nobilium Cruciferarum Deren Hochadelichen Creutz Frauen, so in den Creutz Orden angenommen und eingeschrieben seindt* lists 1035 entries for the time from 1686 to 1739. A complete directory listing the files in the archive (1668–1936) is kept in HHStA, registry AB 303a.

<sup>22</sup> In the course of time the heraldic design of the insignia (arrangement and number of eagles) would change. The insignia of Empress Eleonore Gonzaga, first Grand Mistress of the Order, was the only one that showed four eagles. The 'IHS' sign at the point where the beams of the cross intersect (with the nails of the cross) does not appear until the third Grand Mistress, Empress Amalie Wilhelmine (1673–1742), see *Hochadelige und gottselige Versammlung vom Sternkreuz genannt* 1805, copperplate engraving after p. 160.

<sup>23</sup> Lünig II/2 1720, p. 1161.

<sup>24</sup> Manni 1671.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–18.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37–45.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46–53.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159–386.

<sup>29</sup> See *Versammlung vom Sternkreuze* 1839, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Coreth 1982, p. 43, n. 101. The statutes are listed in *Versammlung vom Sternkreuze* 1839, pp. 22–34. One section of this publication (pp. 35–115) names the *drei vorzüglichsten Festtage der hochadeligen Versammlung*: Constantine's victory and Helena's finding of the True Cross (on 3 May), the Elevation of the Holy Cross (on 14 September), and the day when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for veneration in the court chapel (on the last Thursday that precedes Palm Sunday).

<sup>31</sup> Manni 1671, p. 76. The prayer is also an integral part of the ceremonial formula spoken by the candidate when accepting the Order, see Lünig II/2 1720, p. 1161; *Versammlung vom Sternkreuze* 1839, p. 23; Coreth 1982, p. 43, n. 101.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, pp. 168–169 (holy Kunigunde) and pp. 666–667 (holy Hedwig von Andechs), see here also similar Habsburg traditions of the sixteenth century: Irblich 1996, pp. 142–148, nos. 29, 30 (chronicles, Jakob Mennel, 1518); Silver 2008, pp. 37, 59f. Besides, Schönleben points out to relations between the Habsburgs and Roman Emperor Constantine, see also Coreth 1982, p. 39, and, for basic information, Quednau 2007; Hoppe 2012, p. 177 (lit.).

<sup>33</sup> Kitlitschka 1970, p. 216, fig. 181, 182; Fassbinder 1979, catalogue, pp. 23–24, no. I/15; Graff 2000, pp. 91–95; recently: Schicht & Telesko 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Coreth 1982, pp. 40–41; see Sturmberger 1957, pp. 39–44.

<sup>35</sup> Wolfsgruber 1903, pp. 13–14; Gugitz 1952, pp. 100–101, no. 83; Kretschmer 1978, pp. 6–7 (lit.); Coreth 1982, pp. 40–41; Bösel 2006, pp. 226–227.

<sup>36</sup> Bösel 2006, pp. 226–227, fig. 3; see Vienna, Austrian National Library, Image collection, LW 73943-C, LW 74299-C; Nuremberg, German National Museum, graphics collection, inv. no. HB 19.207, see also 'The banishment of the Protestants', a fresco (1619) in the Villa Poggio Imperiale at Florence: Hoppe 2012, p. 174, fig. 96; concerning the cult of the Holy Cross during the reign of Ferdinand II: Vácha 2009, pp. 68–89.

<sup>37</sup> Already Lamormaini 1638, pp. 11–14 (German edition, chapter II), reported that the crucified Christ had spoken to the monarch on various occasions, however Lamormaini keeps the validity of this famous legend open: 'Mir ist nicht unbewusst [*sic!*], das [*sic!*] dazumalen haimblich und öffentlich von vielen gesagt worden, Christus habe auß einem Crucifix mit Ferdinando geredet, und gesaget er solle guet Hertz unnd Hoffnung haben. Ich kan [*sic!*] aber hiervon weder ja noch nain sagen. [...]', see also Coreth 1982, p. 41; for detailed information on the various *Virtutes* editions see Brockmann 2011, p. 19, n. 20. In Bratislava a now destroyed cycle of paintings in the palace (where decoration work started 1638) included Paul Juvenel's (1579–1643) depiction of Emperor Ferdinand II's encounter with King David singing the psalms, see Polleross 1995, p. 234, fig. 2. There are good reasons why this subject matter used to be of almost undiminished relevance in the Habsburg areas until far into the nineteenth century; see Telesko 2006, pp. 180, 338, fig. 10; 377.

<sup>38</sup> Lauro 2007, pp. 184–185 (fig.).

<sup>39</sup> See Erichsen, Heinemann & Janis 2007, pp. 228–229 (fig.).

<sup>40</sup> Khevenhüller 1726, pp. 2385–2389 (text), pp. 2388–2389 (copperplate engraving). Compared to the picture, the text (column 2387) reports on the circumstances of the monarch's dialogue with Christ with much more reservation; for basic information see Hargittay 2001, p. 285.

<sup>41</sup> Wadding 1638 (without pagination). In the nonpaginated text of the sermon which the Jesuit Ferdinandus Montegnana wrote on the occasion of the death of Ferdinand II (Montegnana 1637), the deceased is referred to as *fortis Athleta Ferdinandus*: in doing so, the author alludes to Paulinian terminology (1 Kor., 9:25–26; 2 Kor., 10:3–5), on the one hand, and to the honorary title which popes had granted, since the fifteenth century, for outstanding merits in defence of the Christian faith, on the other hand.

<sup>42</sup> Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, The Ecclesiastical Treasury, inv. no. E 36, see Bösel 2006, p. 225, n. 1 (lit.). In 1740 Jakob van Schuppen, then head of Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts, commissioned a replica of the crucifix, see Kretschmer 1978, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> *'Nachdeme Ihro Königl:e Mayl: das Wunderthätige Crucifix des Heyl:n Caroli Borromoi, Welches zu Weyl: Kayser Ferdinands 2.do die Worte Non Te deseram gesprochen, und bishero in der geistlichen Schaz-Cammer aufgehoben gewesen, Ihro Königl:e Mayl: aber aus besonderen Andachts Eyffer nach Presburg, und von dannen wiederum nacher Wienn in dero Cammer überbringen lassen, zur Veneration in dero Königl:e Cammer-Capellen bereits vor 14. Tügen auff den daselbst befindl:n Leopoldi Altar (fol. 422v) offentl: aussetzen lassen.'* in HHStA, ceremonial protocols [Zeremonialprotokolle] vol. 18 [1741–1742], fol. 422r-v, 5 January 1742; see Wolfsgruber 1903, p. 15; Coreth 1982, p. 41. Even the unpaginated leaflet of Dornn (about 1745) is commenting the important role of the crucifix of emperor Ferdinand. After the year 1755 a donation of a particle of the Holy Cross is recorded, see Zimerman 1895, III, nr. 12617.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfsgruber 1903, p. 16; Wolfsgruber 1905, p. 252; Schmal 2001, p. 207.

<sup>45</sup> Coreth 1982, p. 41; Schmal 2001, pp. 207–208, 218; for visual depictions of the subject see various examples in the image collection of the National Library of Austria in Vienna: LW 74078-C and LW 74298-C.

<sup>46</sup> Coreth 1982, p. 41.

<sup>47</sup> Of essential importance in this context is the change in Leopold's iconography from an emperor to a 'new' Joshua, see Schumann 2003, p. 328, fig. 33 (medal, Hans Jacob Wolrab, 1686); Ziegler 2008; Ziegler 2010, pp. 64–73, fig. 48a/b.

<sup>48</sup> Ribadeneira 1590, p. 39 (book I, chapter 10) [*Non te deseram, neque derelinquam*]; see König-Nordhoff 1982 (*ad indicem*). In the divergent opinion of Bösel 2006, pp. 227–228, this event is connected with St. Ignatius' *La Storta* vision of 1537; the evidence is insufficient in so far as it lacks a direct reference to the passage in the *Letter to the Hebrews*.

<sup>49</sup> Vienna, Image collection of the National Library of Austria, NB 740.032-C, 740.087-B, and 740.088-B; Nuremberg, German National Museum, graphics collection, inv. no. HB 18.663; for an elaborate discussion of the pamphlet see Telesko 2011.

<sup>50</sup> For basic information see Bireley 1981, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> This motto was revived in the interior decoration of Pressburg castle, made under the reign of emperor Ferdinand III (before 1647, destroyed 1747), published in Herrgott & Heer 1760, pl. CIV.

<sup>52</sup> See Treichler 1971, p. 49, no. 9 (with a good record of used sources). The third room in the treasury of the Benedictine monastery of Lambach in Upper Austria has a fresco which one of the painter brothers Grabenberger is likely to have created around 1700 and which combines the scene of Ferdinand saying his prayer in front of the crucifix with that of Rudolf von Habsburg gripping the cross instead of the sceptre, see Hainisch 1959, pp. 141–142, fig. 123. Vernulaeus 1637, pp. 29, 32–33, emphasizes the relevance of the *Divina Providentia* and describes Ferdinand II as an imitator of the imperial motto of emperor Maximilian II, *Dominus providebit*. See here also the Jesuit *Panegyricus ob victoriam Bohemicam Augustissimo Imperatori Ferdinando II. dictus* 1621, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> Telesko 2011, pp. 341–342, fig. 4.

<sup>54</sup> How much emphasis was put particularly on the issue of continuity in traditional forms of piety for the purpose of 'historic argumentation' becomes evident, in the same context, from Eucharius Gottlieb Rinck's famous narrative description of the life of Emperor Leopold I and the former's reference to the legendary moment when Rudolf I, newly elected king, gripped not the sceptre but the cross, see Rinck I<sup>2</sup>1709, p. 98, see Coreth 1982, p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> The issue of 'Providentia' is shown to be of central importance particularly in connection with Ferdinand II in Montegnana 1637—be it to make God's rule appear superior to personal ambition (*'non voluntate sua [scil. regarding the emperor Ferdinand, W.T.], sed divinae Providentiae consilio'*), or be it to recommend the deceased to future generations as an admirable example of godly providence (*'quem demum immortalis Deus*

*in singulare Providentiae suae exemplum mundo exhibuit, tot tantisque rebus, ad omnium aetatum, omnisque posteritatis admirationem, illustrem*'). Later on, the Viennese author of the treatise *Phosphori Austriaci sive compendiosae Historiae de Augustissimae Domus Austriacae Origine, Magnitudine et Potentia libri duo* 1699, p. 245, voices praise of Ferdinand's merits by referring to him as a god-like (!) prince: '*Ferdinandus II. Imp. hic est ille Diis similior Princeps, quam hominibus.*'; the issue of 'Providentia' is discussed in detail in Kusternig 2007, pp. 553–556; Strohmeyer 2009, p. 81.

<sup>56</sup> Köhler 2001, p. 1214. Undiminished belief in 'Providentia' and its influence was expressed still later by Maria Theresia, see Schmal 2001, p. 212; in a letter by Maria Theresia to her daughter Marie Christine, written before August 1765: '*es geschieht ohnehin nur das, was die Vorsehung über uns verhängt*'.

<sup>57</sup> *Princeps in Compendio. Hoc est, Puncta aliquot compendiosa, quae circa gubernationem Reipub. observanda videntur* 1668; reprinted in Redlich 1906, pp. 8–20; see also Sturmberger 1965, pp. 98–99; Bosbach & Repgen 1991, pp. 79–114; Augustin, Hengerer, Mayr, Schnadenberger & Voegelé 2008.

<sup>58</sup> *Princeps in Compendio*, 1–6 (*punctum I*), pp. 5–6: '*Denique in negotiis gravioribus & magis arduis non intermittet specialiter ad Deum recurrere, atque eadem viris piis & religiosis in preces & sacrificia commendare.*', see in this context also the treatise *Orientis occidentisque imperium Ferdinandi II. Imperatoris auspiciis conjungendum [...] (1627)*, in which the author Otto Fridericus Comes a Buchaim, an official at the imperial court, addresses the monarch in three odes named *Religio*, *Bellona* and *Fortuna*.

<sup>59</sup> The rule of Emperor Franz I. Stephan (from 1745 to 1765) apparently coincided with a renunciation of the principles of *Pietas Austriaca* and thus of the veneration of the cross, due to changes in the religious orientation, see Wandruszka 1959, p. 170; Zedinger 2008, pp. 266–268.

<sup>60</sup> Lorenz 1999, p. 20, fig. 9; Polleross 2010, p. 154.

<sup>61</sup> It was because of the attached connotation of numerous future progeny why the authors of Habsburg panegyrics repeatedly used this passage in their texts, see for example Avancini 1673 (without pagination). See here also the frequent use of biblical quotations with reference to 1 Tim 4:8: Lebzelter 1701.

<sup>62</sup> p. [2].

<sup>63</sup> p. [1].

<sup>64</sup> See Lorenz 1999, pp. 633–634, no. 334 (fig.).

<sup>65</sup> Vol. 1, pp. 65–66.

<sup>66</sup> See here also: Appuhn-Radtke 2005, p. 110 (with reference to *Sol Austriacus*, 1698, Vienna, National Library, of Austria, Cod. 8617, fol. 3r, and the quotation of *Gen.* 1:16).

<sup>67</sup> Multifunctionality in this context also means that the ways in which *Pietas Austriaca* was manifested could serve as a platform of argumentation in the sense of delivering competing narratives on national and regional levels, see for this purpose Ducreux 1999, and also under the heading *Decentralizing Pietas Austriaca*: Ducreux 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Ducreux 2011, pp. 278–279.